
Cynthia S. Hamilton

Book History, Volume 14, 2011, pp. 25-57 (Article)

Published by Johns Hopkins University Press
DOI: 10.1353/bh.2011.0003

For additional information about this article
http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/bh/summary/v014/14.hamilton.html
Legh Richmond (1772–1827) is not generally recognized today as an influential author, but he penned a widely read tract, *The Dairyman’s Daughter* (1810–1811). This text achieved the status of a popular classic, moved countless readers toward religious conversion, and provided a model of effective narrative strategies for those seeking to reach a wide audience. Given its impact, Richmond’s tract deserves greater attention than it has yet received. Certainly the narrative dynamics, as written by Richmond and edited by the American Tract Society (ATS), invite a detailed examination of the text in relation to the evangelical aim of reaching and converting a mass audience.

More intriguingly, *The Dairyman’s Daughter* provides a case study of attempts by the ATS to secure a mass readership for the tract, and to ensure a “correct” reading by its audience. The latter ambition foundered on the nature of the reader’s involvement with the text. The novelistic character of the stylistic devices employed brought popularity, but prompted questions about the factual integrity of the tract as memoir. The ATS then directed attention beyond the text, toward the exemplary character of the tract’s author, and toward artifacts that underwrote the text’s factual status. This strategy merely exacerbated the “misuse” of the tract, for although it helped to authenticate the material, it pulled the reader away from what the ATS saw as a proper reading—to stimulate self-examination and spiritual growth. Instead, the text became a means of experiencing emotional excitement and sentimental gratification. The attention that was directed at the possessions of the dairyman’s daughter (Elizabeth Wallbridge) and toward

---

*I would like to express my gratitude to David Morgan for introducing me to the American Tract Society. I am also indebted to the librarians at the American Antiquarian Society and to Kristen Mitrisin at the Frank E. Gaeblein Library of the ATS for their invaluable assistance in locating material on the ATS. Thanks are also due to the Rothermere American Institute, Oxford, for a Senior Fellowship that facilitated my research on rhetorical theory.*
the places of pilgrimage associated with her life threatened the very religious message that gave these places and possessions meaning. More worryingly for the ATS, the objects and locations threatened to become subjects of idolatry in themselves.1

Interestingly, the ATS directed its criticism toward those who refused to read the text correctly, rather than at the way the text was edited and abridged for popular consumption. This failure of insight is particularly striking given the ATS’s sophisticated understanding of the requirements of mass publishing. This essay examines the dynamics that enabled the subversive readings that so disturbed the tract’s defenders. It does so in relation to theories of the “New Rhetoric” then current, which, by setting out guidelines for balancing claims based on reason, sentiment, and authority, might have enabled a diagnosis of the sources and effects of imbalance even at that time.

An Effective and Popular Tract

*The Dairyman’s Daughter* is arguably one of the most popular and influential—and neglected—works of the first half of the nineteenth century. Richmond’s tract was abridged, stereotyped, and distributed in vast quantities by the ATS, both at home and—in translation—abroad. *Zion’s Herald* claimed, in an 1836 article, that by 1828 four million copies of the tract were in circulation around the world.3 Samuel Whiting, an Englishman touring the United States in 1820, was astonished and gratified to find a worn copy in a log cabin in the Alabama wilderness.3 In 1836, the New England Institution for the Education of the Blind was paid to produce an edition with raised letters.4 By the end of the nineteenth century, it was said to have been published in over fifty languages, with many millions of copies sold.5 An article written for the *New York Evangelist* in 1901 called it the most popular tract in the English language during the first half of the nineteenth century.6 In addition to being distributed by tract societies, it was sold commercially. In 1823, an advertisement in the *Saturday Evening Post* suggested it as a suitable Christmas present for juveniles, characterizing it as “an authentic and interesting narrative.”7 Nearly a quarter of a century later, D. Appleton released a new, and much touted, edition of *The Dairyman’s Daughter: An Authentic Narrative*, just in time for the Christmas market in 1856, calling it “the most charming, instructive, and popular work of its kind ever written.”8 The very pervasiveness of this tract made it a target for *Punch*, which lampooned both its moral seriousness and its claim of evangelical efficacy.9
The Dairyman’s Daughter is not usually seen as an overly problematic text, though its debt to sentimental reform fiction and consequent uneasy generic identity, poised between sentimental reform fiction and the exemplary memoir, have often been noted in passing references. Richmond’s tract nicely illustrates the permeable nature of the barrier between secular and sacred texts, and does so in relation to the publishing history of a single text.¹⁰

Unlike later religious best sellers such as Susan Warner’s The Wide, Wide World (1850) and Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin (1851–1852), The Dairyman’s Daughter has attracted very little critical attention. The tract is not mentioned in R. Laurence Moore’s study of the way religious leaders and institutions have interacted with, shaped, and been shaped by the commercial culture.¹¹ Nor is it mentioned by David Reynolds in either Beneath the American Renaissance or Faith in Fiction.¹² Ann Douglass’s influential The Feminization of American Culture, Jane Tompkins’s important Sensational Designs, and Cathy N. Davidson’s impressive Revolution and the Word fail to mention it either.¹³ In her monumental survey of evangelical publishing from 1789 to 1880, Candy Gunther Brown makes only passing reference to Richmond’s tract.¹⁴ In Faith in Reading, David Nord provides a plot summary, but no analysis.¹⁵ Gary Kelly has looked at the status politics of the tract, seeing it as a work that romanticizes the working class, marginalizes the aristocracy, and confers moral authority on the middle class. Mark S. Schantz considers the mismatch between the preindustrial values encoded in tracts like The Dairyman’s Daughter and the life experience of its intended readership within an emerging market economy. He suggests that this mismatch is symptomatic of a deep ambivalence on the part of the ATS toward the very mechanisms that enabled its agenda of mass publishing and distribution.¹⁶ The widespread popularity of the tract would suggest that the publishing strategy and attitude toward popularization need further, and more nuanced, discussion with regard to the ATS.

In an extended examination of the text, Kyle B. Roberts uses The Dairyman’s Daughter to reassess the nature of evangelical religion. The influence that consumers of evangelical culture exerted on the textual production of tracts like The Dairyman’s Daughter, Roberts argues, suggests that popular religion not only eluded “official” control, but influenced “official” institutional practices as well.¹⁷ Tract publishers like the ATS did not respond to popular pressure unwillingly, however; they sought to produce material that was both educational and appealing to their targeted constituencies.

While the discussion that follows parallels Roberts’s fine study in many respects, the focus here is very different. Indeed, this essay pursues Roberts’s suggestion that it is worth exploring what the textual variations found in different editions reveal about the relationship between authors, publishers
and readers. As a result, this essay is also a study of unarticulated premises and unintended consequences. While my findings reinforce and build on work done by previous scholars, they question the sufficiency of earlier commentary.

Authority and Authenticity: Editing

Written by Legh Richmond in 1809, The Dairyman’s Daughter was serialized in 1810–1811, and made famous as a chapbook published under the auspices of the London Religious Tract Society (RTS). As Candy Gunther Brown has pointed out, memoirs like The Dairyman’s Daughter were considered particularly valuable by evangelicals. They were seen as a powerful tool for molding character by forging a sympathetic bond between reader and subject that encouraged the reader to emulate the habits of mind and heart exhibited by the subject, habits likely to promote a growth in holiness. The Dairyman’s Daughter owes its genesis to an acquaintance between the Reverend Legh Richmond and Elizabeth Wallbridge during the time Richmond acted as pastor for the parishes of Brading and Yaverland on the Isle of Wight. Elizabeth Wallbridge was, at that time, residing in the neighboring parish of Arreton, some six miles away. Wallbridge had already undergone her religious conversion; she did so while working as a servant in a household in Southampton. Her faith was awakened when she accompanied two of her fellow servants to a midweek sermon given by the Reverend Mr. Crabb, a Wesleyan preacher. Richmond first became acquainted with Elizabeth Wallbridge when he received a letter from her requesting that he conduct the funeral of her sister. This letter initiated a correspondence and acquaintance that formed the basis for the text of the tract.

The RTS reprinted the version of Richmond’s text published in five parts in the Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine. The tract’s narrator begins by explaining the significance of Elizabeth Wallbridge’s story: “if we want to see religion in its purest character, we must look for it among the poor of this world, who are rich in faith.” Neither this attitude toward the poor nor the construction of memoirs featuring humble subjects was uncommon in nineteenth-century tract publishing. The letter that introduced the narrator to Wallbridge is included. After reading this missive, the clergyman-narrator questions the messenger, Wallbridge’s father, about the family circumstances and the death of Elizabeth’s sister. An account of the sister’s funeral is also included. Part II recounts the pastor’s
first visit to the Wallbridge home about a week after the funeral, beginning
with a description of the countryside and the meditations of the pastor as he
travels toward the cottage. The pastor’s initial conversation with Elizabeth
impresses him deeply. Another of her pious letters is included. The third part
again begins with a meditative traverse of the countryside and a reflection
on the potential of ministering to those afflicted by a consumptive illness.
In this part, the minister obeys a summons from Elizabeth in the form of a
short note requesting a visit; she feels that her own death is fast approach-
ing. A conversation between the minister and Elizabeth provides an account
of Elizabeth’s conversion, a statement of her faith, and an indication of
her efforts to bring the rest of her family into the fold. This section ends
with more descriptive passages of both the cottage and the countryside.
The fourth part again begins with a meditative passage, but concentrates on
the death of the dairyman’s daughter. The minister is summoned by a sol-
dier who is in turn questioned about his acquaintance with Elizabeth. The
tranquility of the countryside and stillness about the house of approaching
dehth are described. Most of this section is devoted to a conversation
between Elizabeth and the minister about her faith in the face of imminent
death. The final part contains a long description of the scenery and medi-
tations of the minister as he travels toward Elizabeth’s cottage and then
toward the church and cemetery. Elizabeth’s influence on her acquaintances
is discussed, her composure and tranquility in death are recounted, and the
funeral procession described. The tract ends by drawing a lesson from her
experience.

This version, as serialized in the Christian Guardian and Church of Eng-
lend Magazine in 1810–1811, was almost immediately reprinted in the
United States. One also finds an abridged version published in the July and
August 1811 numbers of the Christian’s Magazine and in the February and
March 1812 numbers of the Adviser; or, Vermont Evangelical Magazine. The
text was cut back severely into two installments from the version origi-
nally serialized in five parts. None of Part II of the RTS version, before the
health of the dairyman’s daughter declined precipitously, was included, nor
was any of Part V, the section containing an account of her funeral. Long
reveries on the part of the narrator were excised, leaving a condensed narra-
tive that focused on three scenes.

Within these scenes, dialogues carried the evangelical message, developed
the character of the dairyman’s daughter, and moved the reader quickly
through the story. The first scene used a letter to introduce the reader to
the character of the dairyman’s daughter, followed, in the text, by a con-
versation about her between the young woman’s father and minister. The
second key scene was set after the young woman, suffering from consumption, had begun her rapid decline. In this scene, dialogue was used to elicit the story of the woman’s conversion, to delineate the grounds of her faith, to emphasize her evangelical role within her family, and to establish her attitude to her approaching death. The final scene focused on the deathbed of the dairyman’s daughter, surrounded by her parents, a family friend, and the minister. Here the dialogue between the young woman and the minister demonstrated the power of her faith, both in her own life and in the lives of her grieving parents. The interchanges were shorter, reflecting the young woman’s breathlessness and weakness, and propelling the reader toward her inevitable death with greater speed.

When the New England Tract Society published its version as a tract, it restored some of the cut material, but the resulting tract still represented a substantial work of abridgement. The New England Tract Society extended the narrative to include five scenes rather than three, but as with earlier abridgements, material was excised that slowed the narrative pace or diverted attention from the core narrative. Two cut scenes were restored, but the focus was kept firmly on the dairyman’s daughter and her story, told largely through dialogue and description. A short scene describing the pastoral life of the dairyman’s daughter before her illness, Part II in the RTS version, is restored. More significant is the restoration of the funeral of the dairyman’s daughter as related in Part V of the RTS version. This scene allowed the minister-narrator the last word on the young woman’s character, on the meaning of her life, and on the lessons to be learned from that life.

Here the audience was addressed very directly, closing the frame established by the narrator’s opening comments praising the goodness to be found within the impoverished: “It is particularly gratifying to observe how frequently among the poorer classes of mankind, the sunshine of mercy beams upon the heart, and bears witness to the image of Christ which the Spirit of God has impressed thereupon.” At the close of the narrative, the same audience was addressed.

At the beginning of the tract, another audience was also courted with a certain degree of flattery: those who come from a more privileged background, “where grace has so strikingly supported its conflict with natural pride, self importance, the allurements of luxury, ease, and worldly opinions, that the noble and mighty appear adorned with genuine poverty of spirit, self denial, humble-mindedness, and deep spirituality of heart.” This constituency was also alluded to at the end of the tract; they were asked whether they, like the dairyman’s daughter, would measure up to the high standard of piety and faith required to secure salvation.
By the time it was released under the imprint of the ATS, the tract had grown from twenty-four to twenty-eight pages, including an illustration of the minister, accompanied by a soldier, on the way to the deathbed of the dairyman’s daughter. This version included some passages of the young woman’s letters that had been cut in the New England Tract Society edition. It also included more of the minister’s musings, but remained a heavily edited version of the original, a fact that was acknowledged in later ATS editions. The RTS, on the other hand, had expanded The Dairyman’s Daughter when a new version was published as part of the Annals of the Poor (1814), including more of Elizabeth Wallbridge’s letters and containing further commentary on the part of the narrator. This expanded version was published in the United States as well, as part of American editions of the Annals of the Poor and as part of editions of The Dairyman’s Daughter containing further supplementary material.

The “editorial freedom” exercised by the ATS in cutting The Dairyman’s Daughter was the norm rather than the exception, reflecting “an understanding of doctrinal texts as the common property of all Christians.” Notwithstanding this understanding, the ATS version raised the question of textual authenticity, creating a controversy that suggests a competing, and more individual, view of authorship and textual ownership. In his memoir of Legh Richmond, published soon after the minister’s death, the Reverend T. S. Grimshawe criticized the cuts made to the edition published by the New England Tract Society. “Surely an author and the public have a right to expect from an editor a faithful adherence to the original,” Grimshawe complained, “or at least that he should apprise the reader of alterations, and assign a reason for making them.” The result of the “many omissions, transposition, and alterations,” Grimshawe claimed, was “this gross mutilation of our friend’s interesting memoir”. It was, Grimshawe continued, “an imposition on the reader, and an injustice to the author’s reputation.” Grimshawe’s charge was picked up and repeated in the press, where the alterations to The Dairyman’s Daughter continued to be a contentious topic.

Rhetorical Theory and Publishing Practice

Tract societies based their publishing strategy on current ideas about sound rhetorical practice, following in the wake of the “New Rhetoric” of the eighteenth century. Virtually everyone with any formal education had received some grounding in the field, for rhetorical theory was offered as part
of the college curriculum and filtered down into the school system through the textbooks then in vogue. Kames’s *Elements of Criticism* (1762), Campbell’s *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (1776), and Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783) acted as key texts.

As with the classical rhetoric of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, the “New Rhetoric” suggested ways of influencing public opinion. It was the possibility held out by these rhetoricians of the eighteenth century, of using the press as classical orators had used the rostrum, that excited the tract societies generally, and one can see the impact of their ideas in the strategic thinking behind the tract movement itself. In more finite terms, one can see why *The Dairyman’s Daughter* became something of a model tract, for it both reflected contemporary ideas of sound rhetorical practice and provided strong supportive evidence of the efficacy of the textual devices employed to engage public interest and influence individual behavior.

On the most general level, the wide distribution of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* reflected the premises on which the tract movement was built. “An Address to Christians, Recommending the Distribution of Religious Tracts” (1814) set out four arguments for tract publication. First, it was seen as a method through which the word could be spread by those not articulate enough to speak effectively. Second, it was seen as extremely cost effective, for the tracts were generally small, were relatively inexpensive to produce, and could be passed from hand to hand, reaching a wide audience. Third, tracts were seen as more tactful than direct evangelical confrontation, which placed the potential convert in a position of inferiority. Finally, it was hoped that the tract would be “perused and re-perused at pleasure,” making it less likely to fade from the memory than an address heard only once. In all these respects, *The Dairyman’s Daughter* not only fulfilled the established criteria but also demonstrated the astonishing impact that such literature could produce.

Indeed, in 1846 the claim was made that this tract had converted more souls than any other. As early as 1812, Legh Richmond’s classic narrative was demonstrating its power; in a letter dated May 27, 1812, four “well authenticated conversions” were attributed to the instrumentality of *The Dairyman’s Daughter*. Other conversions occasioned by the pamphlet were recorded in the annals of British tract and missionary societies and duly reprinted in the American press. Such was the case with an account transmitted by the Auxiliary Tract Society at Colchester of a servant who, upon hearing the tract read to the children of her master’s family, was awakened to the perilous state of her soul. Guided to salvation by her master and mistress, the servant, who credited *The Dairyman’s Daughter* with her
conversion, gave greater respect only to her Bible. The Plymouth Dock Auxiliary Tract Society credited Richmond’s tract with the salvation of “a woman of notoriously wicked character,” whose eyes were opened to her sinful ways after reading just three pages.

One sees similar accounts of conversions in the United States. An actor who chanced upon a copy of the tract was converted, denounced his former profession, and became a minister of the gospel. It was credited with bringing another family, fallen on hard times, to Sabbath school, and with the salvation of an elderly man who had requested a copy “for sport.” This unpromising prospect was converted together with his family and six persons in his neighborhood. Nor was it just people who were illiterate or poor who credited the tract with their salvation; a merchant from New York City, later a director of the ATS, expressed his personal debt to Richmond’s tract, encountered on a voyage from Holland to the United States in 1817 when it was shown to him by the ship’s mate.

The pattern that one glimpses here, of a tract passed from hand to hand with a personal recommendation, suggests that The Dairyman’s Daughter was acting as an emissary of Christian salvation in just the way envisaged by the ATS. A resident of Savannah, Georgia, while visiting her sister in Charleston, was given a copy of the tract with her sister’s recommendation; after reading the tract, she became less thoughtless and more religiously minded. Returning to Savannah with extra copies, she distributed these to family and friends; the tract then made further converts.

The Dairyman’s Daughter was therefore a tract that was “perused and re-perused at pleasure.” Such close and repeated reading of a particular text was seen as an important part of the process of conversion and of the continuing religious education of an individual. The American Tract Magazine noted that The Dairyman’s Daughter had touched the heart of a dying man who had habitually abused his wife and children, a man who had resisted previous tract appeals. “When I came to the dying scene, I discovered, for the first time, that his heart was touched,” the tract visitor recalled. “This he requested me to read again and again. He was never tired of hearing it. I read it to him till he could almost repeat the whole of it. He became an altered man.” It was not unusual for this tract to become a treasured part of a small library.

The ability of the tract to speak with greater eloquence than the person who distributed it is illustrated by an account of an illiterate family saved upon hearing the tract, which had been left with them, read by a passing traveler. “I have heard some pulpit eloquence, but never did I see the hearts of all present so completely prostrated as were those of this little family at
listening with attention to that fine Tract, the ‘Dairyman’s Daughter.’”

The traveler’s comment almost exactly mirrors one of the key arguments for tract publication.

The editing, production, and distribution of *The Dairyman’s Daughter*, like that of other tracts, also reflected, in a more detailed way, contemporary assumptions about sound rhetorical practice. All the major treatises on rhetoric suggested that appeals needed to be targeted at specific audiences. In shaping its publication program, ATS demonstrated an astute awareness of its targeted constituency. Its efforts were directed at a readership characterized by educational deficiencies and scant resources. Seamen were an early and continuing constituency, as were immigrants, children, and the infirm. Such targeting is visible in the titles of tracts: *To Children and Youth, on the Importance of Prayer* (#29); *Advice from a Master to his Apprentice when leaving his service, and entering on life for himself* (#100); *To the Sick, who are without hope in Christ* (#110); and *The Mariner’s Psalm* (in #101). Tract distribution had been seen from the beginning, in the words of an executive committee address (1825), as “a method by which the blessings of a religious education may, to no inconsiderable degree, be extended to the lower ranks of society with peculiar facility.”

*The Dairyman’s Daughter*, with its focus on a woman of humble social standing, may be seen as targeting just such an audience, as is further indicated by the closing commentary in the tract: “My poor reader, the Dairyman’s Daughter was a poor girl, and the child of a poor man. Herein thou resembllest her: but dost thou resemble her, as she resembled Christ? Are thou made rich, by faith?” Given such strategic thinking and direct address, the much wider appeal of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* may appear surprising. Nonetheless, a broad social spectrum is catered to through the text’s recognition of, and appeal to, readers from a variety of backgrounds. In the preceding paragraph one finds the reader, “rich or poor,” addressed directly. Different versions and bindings helped to signal the appropriateness of the text for middle-class readers, and when *The Dairyman’s Daughter* was incorporated into the *Annals of the Poor*, a more explicit appeal was made to a wealthier readership.

Even the ATS version demonstrates the way a single work can effectively and efficiently target multiple audiences, extending rather than abandoning its original remit. The story of the declining health and death of Elizabeth Wallbridge provides role models for the rural poor, city servants, soldiers, parents, and children. The humble country dwellers may identify with the dairyman’s daughter or with one of her parents. And while the daughter is
held up as a model of Christian virtue, she has not always behaved in so exemplary a manner. In describing her past mistakes, the process of her conversion, and the taunts and insults she endured from former friends after her conversion, this young woman invites comparisons at several points of her life, while her responses to situations provide models for the reader caught in a similar plight. The fact that the dairyman’s daughter has been both a country dweller and a servant tempted by the vanities of city life further extends the range of experience available for identification. In her attitude to her own declining health and approaching death, she provides guidance on faith and fortitude in the face of adversity, and invaluable information on how to achieve the good death.

The tract’s wide appeal and efficacy made The Dairyman’s Daughter a model tract. The didactic content and effective narrative strategies of The Dairyman’s Daughter made it a useful illustration of the soundness of the publishing strategy of the ATS. The guidelines issued by the ATS on what made for an effective tract were clear and blunt. Tracts should be non-denominational and contain pure, scriptural instruction. Clarity was essential: “the meaning should be not only so plain that it may be understood, but so plain that it cannot possibly be misunderstood.” But the tract also had to be entertaining, and the advice proffered was brutally frank: “A plain didactic essay on a religious subject may be read by a Christian with much pleasure; but the persons for whom these Tracts are chiefly designed, will fall asleep over it. This will not do; it is throwing labor and money away.” Narrative was seen as a way of blending entertainment with instruction: “Where narrative can be made the medium of conveying truth, it is eagerly to be embraced, as it not only engages the attention, but also assists the memory, and makes a deeper impression on the heart.” Dialogue was also seen as a useful tool: “The conversation draws the reader insensibly along,” the guidelines noted. “He is generally one of the speakers introduced; he finds his own sentiments and reasoning attacked and defended; he feels every argument that is adduced; and the subject fixes itself strongly and deeply in his mind.” The ties cemented between the speaker and reader thus encouraged the emotional engagement so important in effective rhetoric.

Nonetheless, some aspects of the textual dynamics of this model tract raised serious issues for the ATS, illuminating a clash between its pragmatic approach to mass publishing and its deep-seated hostility to the fictional and inauthentic. Fiction seemed to threaten the veracity and authority of the tract movement itself, but the narrative devices used in fiction made the tracts more attractive to their target audience. In their editing of The
**Dairyman’s Daughter**

ATS had struck a balance so fine that it was easily destabilized. But the organization never located the genesis of the problem within the text itself. Furthermore, the strategic response of the organization to accusations of the tract’s fictional character not only failed to silence critics, but exacerbated the problem. Attention shifted away from a careful and contemplative reading of the text itself, as readers became interested in authenticating relics, as well as with the places associated with Elizabeth Wallbridge’s suffering and death. The character of this attention augmented, rather than diminished, the tract’s sentimental appeal, an undesirable result.

**Authority and Authenticity: Memoir versus Fiction**

Though not a fictitious history, *The Dairyman’s Daughter* uses a host of novelistic devices to present the story of Elizabeth Wallbridge’s conversion and death, particularly in the edition popularized by the ATS. Here, narrative and dialogue are used to engage the reader’s attention. The scenes chosen for extended treatment are ones involving heightened emotion. The minister’s visit to the grieving family, Elizabeth’s sickbed, and her deathbed take up much of the narrative. In the ATS version, the minister’s prolonged meditations on nature and life, longish letters expressing Elizabeth’s piety, and extraneous commentary are removed. Dialogue and direct description carry the narrative forward. As the story nears its climax, the exchanges between Elizabeth and her pastor pick up pace, propelling the reader toward the moment of death. Parallel scenes are used with skill. The narrative begins as arrangements are being made for the funeral of Elizabeth’s sister. After this funeral, attention shifts to a more extended account of Elizabeth’s own illness, death, and burial. The interest and curiosity prompted by the initial scene are gratified, in large measure, as attention shifts to a parallel case. Two funerals for two sisters. Comparisons are inevitable, which lead the reader toward a fuller, direct engagement with the lessons of the narrative.

In his treatise on rhetoric, Hugh Blair was particularly astute in recognizing the didactic potential of what he termed “fictitious histories.” He noted that such works might “furnish one of the best channels for conveying instruction, for painting human life and manners, for showing the errors into which we are betrayed by our passions, for rendering virtue amiable and vice odious.” But the tract societies were antagonistic toward fiction as a medium of instruction. Indeed, in a much reprinted letter, Richmond
himself warned his daughters to “shun everything of the romance and novel kind; and even in poetry, [to] keep to what is useful and instructive, as well as pleasant.”

By the early 1850s, the ATS had issued tract #515 against “novel reading.”

As David Nord and Candy Gunther Brown have pointed out, while religious publishers had an almost magical faith in the immediate power of the word to change the mindset of the individual reader, they also advocated a particular form of reading that was “slow, deliberate, repetitive, and reflectively studious.” This method of reading was well suited to absorbing the theological content of a text. The immediate and deleterious impact of sensational, emotive literature was feared, both in itself and because it developed a reading style that was more cursory.

If R. Laurence Moore is correct in his assertion that the plethora of cheap, ephemeral publications issued by publishers like the ATS encouraged the rapid acquisition and consumption of reading matter, then the very method employed by the ATS for countering the problem of inattentive reading may actually have exacerbated the habit of cursory reading, and helped to accelerate a shift in the mode of consumption from “intensive to extensive reading.”

Because The Dairyman’s Daughter used stylistic devices associated with popular sentimental fiction so effectively, devices that courted direct emotional engagement, the tract became embroiled in a heated controversy over its generic identity: was it a work of fiction that engaged the reader on false principles, or was it a memoir of an extraordinary young woman? What is interesting about this controversy is that the battle was not waged over the relative usefulness or uselessness of a whole genre, but over the generic identity, within a highly judgmental set of generic categories, of a single work. Furthermore, this debate raged despite the highly publicized usefulness of the tract itself, registering the level of discomfort felt by the ATS and other champions of evangelical publishing in connection with the incorporation of tropes—such as the deathbed scene, and stylistic devices, such as constructed dialogue—associated with the popular sentimental fiction of the period. In this situation, the readers’ tears of repentance blended uneasily with those shed as a result of sentimental excitement.

A letter to the editor published in the Reformer of May 1826 complained: “As the circulation of fiction in the same style with truth, especially when they both proceed from the same fountain, tends to the disparagement of the latter, I have been long pained, in common with many others, on account of the publication of fictitious Tracts.” From current arguments on the potential benefits of fictional tracts, the author of this complaint deduced
that *The Dairyman’s Daughter* was a work of fiction.\textsuperscript{70} Accusations of the fictional nature of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* elicited heated denials and the presentation of much evidence to validate the factual basis of the narrative. A widely reprinted article from the *American Tract Magazine* (1827) noted that it was a matter of principle with the Publishing Committee of the ATS “not to publish fiction in the style of truth,” and used the speculation over the fictional character of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* as a case in point. “The name of the revered and now lamented author, is attached to the Tract, and he declares, at the commencement of it, that the character ‘is given from real life and circumstances,’ and further, that the Dairyman’s Daughter lived and died a few miles from his own residence,” the article noted before proceeding to cite the evidence of “credible witnesses” to the tract’s authenticity.\textsuperscript{71}

The question of the authenticity of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* did not go away, however, for under “Charge of Fiction in Tracts” in 1830 the *American Tract Magazine* complained that unbelievers “often represent the publications of the ATS to be fiction; and what is worthy of observation, bring the charge most frequently against the Dairyman’s Daughter, and other Tracts, the evidence of whose authenticity is spread before the public from the most creditable sources.”\textsuperscript{72} A similar complaint is made in “American Tract Society” published in the *Episcopal Recorder* in 1831. “The general indiscriminate charge that Tracts are fiction deserves not a moment’s consideration,” the article states, “and it is a curious fact that, so far as such a charge has been made definite, it has been directed prominently against Tracts whose authenticity is established by the most unquestionable evidence.”\textsuperscript{73} Once again, *The Dairyman’s Daughter* is cited as a prime example.

The indignation expressed at attacks against the authenticity of its tracts in general and of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* in particular was not misplaced, for questioning the veracity of the society’s claims undermined the credibility of the tract itself, the reputation of its author, and the standing of the ATS more generally. As those who rose in defense of both Legh Richmond and the ATS recognized, the authority of the rhetorical voice was a very serious issue. Following Aristotle, classical rhetoric had postulated three types of appeal: those that constructed rational arguments and appealed to the understanding (logos), those that sought to arouse the emotions (pathos), and those based on the authority and reputation of the speaker (ethos). On these grounds alone, the efforts to further enhance Richmond’s reputation made after his death in 1828 were significant. Richmond’s death stimulated a host of testimonials to his piety, the publication of two rival editions of Grimshawe’s memoir of Richmond, and articles on his exemplary relation-
ship with both his children and his mother. In rhetorical terms, all these laudatory accounts bolstered his authority. One account of his death emphasized that two days before his passing, he had received a letter mentioning the conversion of two people through *The Dairyman’s Daughter*. Too feeble to open the missive himself, he was deeply interested in its contents. The account notes the author’s humility.

The stern defensive posture taken by the ATS masks a rather more complex degree of ambivalence toward the use of novelistic techniques. Indeed, as David Nord has pointed out, there was little difference in the style of engaging narratives like *The Dairyman’s Daughter* and the sentimental, romantic novels deplored by the ATS. “The whole has the interest of an engaging fiction, and yet the author testifies that ‘the characters are real, and not fictitious,’” the *American Tract Magazine* noted in its favorable review of the newly released tract no. 227, “On the Objections Commonly Urged Against the Holy Bible,” by the Reverend William C. Brownlee, D.D. The following year, under the rather ambiguous heading of “Novel Tract Publication,” it welcomed “an interesting little volume” entitled *The Stanwood Family; or History of the American Tract Society*, published by the Massachusetts Sabbath School Union, which used dialogue between the members of a family circle to instruct children on the history of the ATS. “The book, as to the construction of the family circle, and the order of their conversations, is fiction,” the review conceded, “but all the essential information presented is fact.” Clearly the society was not only in the process of negotiating the territory of the permissible, but was also giving careful consideration to the material on which it was willing to hazard its authority.

In 1830, the Publishing Committee of the ATS charged two delegates, Rev. Dr. James Milnor and Rev. Mr. McIlvaine, with inquiring into the issue of fictitious tracts in relation to the publication policies of the London RTS, the source of numerous ATS tracts. Unfortunately, Milnor learned that the London committee did not “positively exclude all publications that might be considered as coming under this denomination [of fictional tracts].” But he was able to reassure the ATS Executive Committee that “such narratives as are avowedly authentic, are only published by the Committee under a full persuasion derived from satisfactory evidence of the actual occurrence of all that they relate.” He added a further reassuring note regarding what was positively excluded from its lists of publication: “In such publications as do not come under this description, all that is unnatural, forced and marvelous; also all love stories, or things calculated unduly to excite the passions and expectations, are particularly avoided.” Milnor’s report went on to outline
the problematic ground where the exactness of factual detail battled with the presentation of a more effective and less exacting idea of authenticity:

But when incidents have really occurred, though in the cases of various individuals rather than one, and they are combined in a natural and instructive manner, the Tract is true to nature, and in the view of that Committee hardly to be called a fiction. The combination of circumstances is only intended to make the instruction more clear and impressive. The story is only the vehicle—the attention of the reader is not fixed on the story as the end; but only as the means to a further end, namely, the instruction of the reader. Such a use of fiction is not conceived to be improper in that Society’s publications.80

Interestingly, this report is followed, in the American Tract Magazine, by an account of the Reverend Dr. Milnor’s pilgrimage to the Isle of Wight to visit the grave, church, and home of the dairyman’s daughter.81

The importance of The Dairyman’s Daughter as a tract that was extremely effective and which was based on facts that were easily verifiable can be seen again and again within the context of a continuing controversy over the status of the ATS’s publications. In November 1831, the American Tract Magazine was forced to announce that three of its tracts had recently been “expunged from the series” on the basis that two had been found to be works of fiction, and the authenticity of the third “was very questionable.”82 The difficulty of ascertaining proof positive of the factual nature of all its publications was conceded in the same statement, but the notice of retraction was also accompanied by a reaffirmation of the authenticity of The Dairyman’s Daughter.83 At the same time, the American Tract Magazine issued a call for “authentic narrative tracts,” based on its conviction that such works were “among the most useful class of the Society’s publications, and specially adapted to arrest the attention of the great body of the community.”84 It is telling that the tract was credited with saving “a thoughtless giddy girl” who was “fond of reading, though not very choice as to what it was,” suggesting that it appealed to those addicted to novel reading precisely because it used many techniques familiar to the readers of sentimental novels.85 One can therefore see the way the very novelistic devices that called the tract’s authenticity into question also extended its appeal to an audience whose thoughtless and indiscriminate reading the ATS sought to target in a more prescriptive way through tracts like “Novel Reading.”

With The Dairyman’s Daughter, the stakes were so high precisely because evidence of the tract’s popularity and efficacy was so abundant. The
direct impact of the tract on a small audience of passengers confined to the shelter below decks due to inclement weather during a passage up the Delaware River by packet boat can be seen in a short anecdote published in the *Religious Intelligencer* in 1830:

A number of Tracts were lying on the tables, and among them, some copies of the Dairyman’s Daughter. The passengers, actuated by various feelings, took them up, and began to read. To me the story was familiar. I had read it repeatedly; and I confess I never can read it—call it weakness if you will—but I never can read it without its awakening my warmest sympathies, and causing a delicious throbbing in every fiber of my heart. I therefore watched its effect upon others. Several had perhaps never seen it before, and they perused it with intense eagerness. I need not attempt to describe their emotions. Before they were aware of it, tears filled their eyes, and trickled down their cheeks. I saw that some strove to conceal their feelings; and observing that other eyes were upon them, they affected to seem indifferent, but they could not throw by the book. Yes, one did throw it by; and (forgive him Heaven!) he did it with a sneer! But his heart smote him. The Holy Spirit whom he had grieved interposed and, for a moment, he stood petrified. Then, regardless of the storm without, he rushed to the cabin stairs, and as he ascended he dropt into the Tract box—a dollar. His conduct was observed by all the passengers, and all acknowledged that the hand of God was there.86

Though the efficacy of the tract was never in doubt, the question of its authenticity proved even more complex than the issue of its factual nature might suggest.

**The Impact of External Authentication**

To meet the continuing charges that *The Dairyman’s Daughter* was a work of fiction and that the ATS version of the text was a violation of the author’s intentions, the society shifted attention away from the text itself, pointing to specific artifacts and locations as additional grounds for verification. The material culture surrounding Elizabeth Wallbridge—her cottage, gravestone, Bible, and chair—became objects used as validation.87 But the public who embraced these objects often did so not with a view to collecting evidence of the text’s validity, but from curiosity or a desire to experience a heightened
emotional bond with the subject of a cherished narrative. In the process, the artifacts from the life of Elizabeth Wallbridge were transformed from evidence into relics and places of pilgrimage. The evidence that Roberts provides indicates that readers’ hunger for mementoes and locations associated with The Dairyman’s Daughter went well beyond the requirements of authenticating the text. Indeed, the evidence points to the strength of the sentimental bond felt by readers toward Elizabeth Wallbridge as she is presented in The Dairyman’s Daughter. As a result, Wallbridge became something of a “celebrity” in her own right, taking her well beyond the realms of the text’s spiritual employment. Yet Roberts does not take this hint, either to look back at the text for the dynamics that helped to create such celebrity or to examine the implications of this celebrity in relation to the agenda of the ATS publishing policy. Nor does Roberts explore what such readings indicate about the consumption of the text in relation to ideas of “proper” reading then current.

The ATS’s response to the issue of authenticity became counterproductive insofar as it encouraged sentimental engagement at the expense of a more careful consideration of the theological significance of the narrative. A sharp division was drawn between intellectual engagement and the excitement of the imagination and passions. Only intellectual engagement could lead to the reformation of character; the identification courted through sentimental involvement led only to “self-absorbed excess.”

Once again, nineteenth-century rhetorical theory is instructive, for it points to the different strategies suggested by the need to instruct and to persuade. “In enquiries after mere truth, in matters of simple information and instruction, there is no question that the passions have no concern, and that all attempts to move them are absurd,” Blair advised in Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres. But if the tract societies were to reach an audience of the unconverted, there was clearly a need for persuasion as well, which necessitated engaging the emotions. In The Philosophy of Rhetoric, George Campbell made the case for a balanced blend of the rational with the emotive. To persuade, Campbell asserted, it was necessary both to awaken a desire in the audience and to convince them that a connection existed between the gratification of their desire and the course of action recommended to them. “The former,” Campbell argued, “is effected by communicating lively and glowing ideas of the object,” while the latter is obtained “by presenting the best and most forcible arguments which the nature of the subject admits. In the one lies the pathetic in the other the argumentative.”

It was this balance, so finely wrought, particularly in the ATS version of the text, that was disrupted as the public was invited to become, in life or
through written accounts, literary pilgrims and trophy hunters who bonded with their literary heroine through material culture rather than through spiritual identification. The emotional currency with which the resulting sentimental bond was forged disrupted the balance between logos and pathos recommended by rhetorical theory, trivialized the import of Elizabeth’s story, and strengthened the very link between *The Dairyman’s Daughter* and the sentimental culture—and novels—that the ATS was at such pains to deny. The abiding curiosity reflected in accounts of Elizabeth Wallbridge’s chair, grave, and cottage suggested that the ATS’s very insistence on using material culture to justify its narrative served to encourage rather than prevent the public from reading *The Dairyman’s Daughter* within the framework of sentimental culture.

Interest in the material artifacts of Elizabeth Wallbridge’s life became self-generating, creating a widely shared framework for interpreting the tract. In 1836, the chair used by Elizabeth Wallbridge during her final illness was presented to the president of the ATS by William Torrey. The letter explaining the significance of the chair and suggesting its appropriate usage was printed in the summary report of the society for that year. “Permit me to suggest, that this chair be occupied by the President at the meetings for business, and placed upon the platform at the anniversary meetings of the society,” Torrey wrote. “That the great Head of the church may grant unto all who conduct the affairs of your important institution the fervent and self-denying spirit of the sainted Richmond, and the child-like faith of her, who ‘being dead yet speaketh.’” The text of a document signed by Jane Wallbridge, Elizabeth’s sister-in-law, authenticating the chair’s provenance, was appended to the letter. A short report of the annual meeting published in the *Christian Secretary* in 1836 objected to all the fuss and cautioned against the dangers of focusing attention on this piece of furniture:

Nothing could be more eminently adapted to lay in the minds of the zealous, a foundation for superstitious reverence for relics, after the manner of the Papists, than the above exhibition under such circumstances, connected with the preceding remarks about the numerous conversions effected by the blessing of God upon the tract, “Dairyman’s Daughter,” and the serious and tender impressions resting upon the audience at the moment of the presentation. It would be the easiest thing in the world by a few such movements, to prepare minds to call it St. Elizabeth’s chair, and then to part it into fragments, and let each auxiliary society have a post, a round, or piece of cushion, to exhibit at its own anniversary.
The chair was again placed on display at the anniversary meeting of 1845, attracting fascinated notices as well as rebukes at the “Popery” of such displays of relics. It featured in an essay, “Remarkable Chairs,” published in *Graham’s American Monthly Magazine* in 1855, along with the throne used for the coronation of English monarchs and the chair in which the English reformer John Wickliffe died. Chairs owned by William Shakespeare; John Carver, of Plymouth Colony; Governor Winthrop, of Massachusetts Bay Colony; and Abraham Pierson, the first president of Yale University, were also described and illustrated. In this august company, the reader is provided with a lengthy commentary of Elizabeth Wallbridge’s chair, while “a correct daguerreotype is placed before our readers, because we are sure it will give them pleasure.” An anecdote is provided to further support the factual nature of Richmond’s account:

Some years ago, a worthy clergyman called at the Tract house, in New York, to have some conversation on the subject of their publications. He was accidentally seated in this chair, and began to express the doubts he had heard, and indeed, which he himself felt, whether some of the narratives were not works of fiction, and especially referred to “The Dairyman’s Daughter.” What was his surprise when he was told of the rigid inquiries which Dr Milnor had made on the spot, and especially when he found that he was sitting in the very chair in which she passed her declining days. He went away more than satisfied.

As “Silent Teachers” points out in 1856, “Little did that suffering woman think as she sat weak and weary, drinking the words of life from the lips of the man of God, that years after her death her dying words and Christian experience would be printed in many languages, and be the means of converting multitudes of souls. Less could she foresee that the rustic chair in which she sat would be carried across the ocean, be preserved as a precious remembrance by praying Christians, and be placed side by side with the pulpit of one of the most eloquent preachers who ever lived.” The message is quite clear; no one is too humble to be used by God as an instrument of eloquent argumentation. The chair was placed on display in the main exhibition hall at the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876 and again at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893.

Nor was it just Elizabeth Wallbridge’s chair that received such continued, fascinated attention. Her cottage and grave became places of pilgrimage as well. Legh Richmond had himself attended to the erection, in Arreton
churchyard, of a stone marker for Elizabeth Wallbridge on September 18, 1818. He recorded the occasion in his diary. By 1823, a more elaborate tribute had been erected, paid for by subscription. The event was noted by the Christian Guardian, the magazine in which “The Dairyman’s Daughter” had first been serialized. In 1824, a detailed account of a pilgrimage undertaken the previous year appeared in the Religious Intelligencer. The travelers had visited Elizabeth’s cottage, now occupied, since the decease of her parents, by her brother and his wife. Delighted by the opportunity to meet her relatives and inspect the family Bible, they then proceeded along the route taken by the funeral procession to the grave of Elizabeth’s sister Hannah, with whose death the story begins, and of Elizabeth’s own. The epitaph reads:

To the Memory of

ELIZABETH WALLBRIDGE,

“The Dairyman’s Daughter, who died
May 30, 1801, aged 31 years
She “being dead, yet speaketh.”

STRANGER, if e’er, by chance or feeling led,
Upon this hallow’d turf thy footsteps tread,
Turn from the contemplation of this sod,
Lowly her lot on earth—but He, who bore
Tidings of grace and blessings to the poor,
Gave her, His truth and faithfulness to prove,
The Choicest treasures of his boundless love.
(Faith, that dispell’d affliction’s darkest gloom,
Hope, that could cheer the passage to the tomb,
Peace, that not hell’s dark legions could destroy,
And love, that fill’d the soul with heav’nly joy.)
Death of its sting disarm’d, she knew no fear;
But tasted heav’n e’en while she linger’d here.
Oh! Happy saint, may we, like thee, be blest—
In life be faithful, and in death find rest.

At a meeting held in New York City for the support of tract publication in November 1830, James Milnor read from journal entries written during his trip to the Isle of Wight. He had followed a similar itinerary to that just described, and his commentary excited enough interest to warrant subsequent publication of this section of his journal. Even after the publication and extensive reprinting of his journal, interest in Milnor’s account led him to
continue his public readings from his journal, as he did at the sixth annual meeting of the ATS in 1831. Milnor's accounts of his visit to the locales described in “The Dairyman's Daughter,” “The Young Cottager,” and “The African Servant” inspired a number of American visitors to follow his itinerary. Accounts of other pilgrimages appeared in the New York Observer in 1832 and 1833 and were subsequently reprinted. Such tract tourism continued to be reported in the press for the rest of the nineteenth century. When Samuel H. Stearns visited the Wallbridge cottage in July 1836, he was asked to sign a guest book in which he noticed the names of Samuel Green of Boston and Heman Humphrey of Amherst. By this time the local children had become adept at leading tourists to the grave and garnering pennies in the process. It was not unusual for visitors to take a souvenir, such as a flower. Despite the reverence shown to the sites associated with “The Dairyman's Daughter,” an imperiousness and unpleasant form of voyeurism is sometimes visible, reinforcing Brown's point about the self-centered nature of such sentimental interest. One visiting minister demanded food from Elizabeth Wallbridge's aging sister in law and insisted that he be allowed to see Elizabeth’s only surviving brother, though he was thought to be still in bed. The visitor climbed the ladder to the loft room where the dairyman’s daughter had died and opened the door to find the old man kneeling at prayer: “not willing to enjoy the sight alone I hastened to bring my partner,” the minister explains. By the time Samuel Irenaeus Prime’s Travels in Europe and the East was reviewed by the Southern Quarterly Review, the journey to the grave of Elizabeth Wallbridge had become something of a trope of travel writing, and was duly noticed as such. Prime himself had expressed surprise that “the guide books to the Isle of Wight said nothing of the grave of [Elizabeth Wallbridge], more widely known and more beloved in memory, than the queens and princesses and noble ladies, whose palaces and monuments have distinguished more splendid tombs than the one to which I am about to make a pilgrimage.” When, in 1878, the New York Observer and Chronicle ran a short piece titled “Epitaphs in Isle of Wight Churchyards,” it ended by commenting that the words on the tombstone of Elizabeth Wallbridge were too familiar to include. Upon his visit in 1884, William P. Breed commented on the fact that a steady stream of pilgrims “from every part of the Christian world” still made their way to the cottage and grave eighty years after the death of the dairyman’s daughter. He expressed his surprise that the cottage had not been purchased by some benevolent individual or institution and set up as a memorial to Richmond and the piety of his subject.
By this time one can question whether the authentication originally sought in support of Legh Richmond’s authority and the reputation of the ATS had not been supplanted by the same curiosity and desire for personal connection that carried readers of Susanna Rowson’s fictional *Charlotte Temple* (1791) to the heroine’s supposed grave in New York. By this stage, the narrative techniques so often associated with sentimental novels, such as the heroine’s rapid declining health and the prominence given to her death surrounded by weeping family, had tied the tract firmly to the very literature deplored by the ATS. Clearly the Christian message presented within the tract remained, but the delicate balance between rational disputation and emotional appeal that sound rhetorical practice demanded had, to some extent, been compromised by the emotive power of the blend. In short, the tract became almost too successful, and as such it was used in ways that promoted not only the evangelical agenda of the ATS but also values that subtly undermined its core philosophy.

In its selection and editing of *The Dairyman’s Daughter*, the ATS demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the requirements of polemical publishing. And in its approach to mass publishing more generally, it exhibited a strategic understanding of what literature could achieve when targeted at a mass audience. In its publications, it showed how well-written tracts could effect a change in the attitude and behavior of a targeted constituency. The success of its self-conscious approach to spreading the Word left a significant social legacy, offering strategic hints for reformers who followed, such as those engaged in the temperance organizations and the antislavery movement. Within this context, the importance of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* needs to be appreciated, not just as an evangelical tract that boasted thousands of converts, but as a model for a literature capable of destroying the complacency of its readers, transforming the values by which they were guided, and motivating a significant reformation in their behavior. In this regard, the reception and publishing history of *The Dairyman’s Daughter* demonstrate the efficacy of the rhetorical assumptions that prompted reform publishers to remain sensitive to the needs of their target audiences. But the popularization of the story of Elizabeth Wallbridge also offers some salutary lessons on the ethical ambiguities implicit in the very devices used to appeal to and hold the attention of a mass audience. Within more secular movements, the impact of such devices would prove less troubling, but within the context of the ATS’s antagonism toward fiction and emphasis on proper reading methods, the society’s most successful tract also became one of its most controversial, for the tract’s construction placed it squarely within contested territory. For all their astuteness, the ATS never
identified the problem as one emanating from within the text itself. Instead, they projected the problem outward onto individuals who used the text “improperly.”

Notes

1. As Colleen McDannell has pointed out, a fear of just such an eventuality stood behind the Calvinistic critique of material religious culture. See Colleen McDannell, “Material Christianity,” in Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 1–16.


8. In 1856, D. Appleton had advertised this edition for some time as “nearly ready.” American Publishers’ Circular and Literary Gazette [New York] 2 (September 20, 1856): 580. It was finally released in November 1856, available in cloth, with gilt, or in morocco leather, for twice the price, at $3.00. The advert stated: “This exquisite Christian idyll, by the Rev Legh Richmond, may be regarded as, upon the whole, the most charming, instructive, and popular work of its kind ever written. The gentle daughter of the humble cottager has become the religious teacher of millions. Her memory is embalmed in hearts, with the tender and pure reverence due to such a saint. Mr. Richmond’s beautiful and touching memoir of her is, by the common consent of critics, reckoned among the classics of our language. The religious world will be gratified that such a production has been brought out with appropriate richness of typography and artistic illustrations. The book, printed on fine vellum paper, of a cream tint, with engravings after Birket Foster and others, must become the Religious Souvenir of the season.” See American Publishers’ Circular and Literary Gazette [New York] 2, no. 44 (November 1, 1856): 676. It was pushed as a fine gift book for the Christmas holidays. See ibid., 704. It was lavishly advertised for the rest of the year.
In 1829, William Stavely advertised *Annals of the Poor*, including “The Dairyman’s Daughter” as “a new edition, enlarged, with an introductory sketch of the author, by the Rev. John Ayre, A.M.” See “Annals of the Poor,” *Philadelphia Recorder* 7, no. 42 (January 16, 1830): 167. The advertisement ran for some weeks. This edition was given favorable notice in *ibid.*, 166. It was issued that same year by Crocker & Brewster of Boston and by J. Leavitt of New York; these editions attracted the comment: “The perusal of the Dairyman’s Daughter, has given delight probably to millions of pious minds, and has been the happy means of calling many to the love of the Savior. It has been translated into twenty-two languages, and is included in the series of almost every Tract Society. An abridgment of the narrative has long been circulated in the form of a tract; but in this volume, it is presented in full, with various letters written by the interesting subject of the narrative.” See “Annals of the Poor,” *American Baptist Magazine* [Boston] 10, no. 3 (March 1830): 85. *Annals of the Poor* was also advertised under the imprint of G. Lane and P. P. Sandford.” See “Published by G. Lane and P. P. Sandford,” *Christian Advocate and Journal* [New York] 18, no. 13 (November 8, 1843): 51. It was also advertised under the imprint of Lane & Tippett, with three engravings, priced at 50 cents; see *Christian Advocate and Journal* [New York] 20, no. 32 (March 18, 1846): 128. A short review of the *Annals of the Poor* appeared in the *New York Evangelist*: “This is a re-publication of the Dairyman’s Daughter, and other popular works of this useful and distinguished writer. Mr. Richmond has a strong hold upon the affections of the Christian public, and this collection of his writings will be most cordially welcomed.” See “Literary Notices,” *New York Evangelist* 12, no. 24 (June 12, 1841): 94. The appearance of *Annals of the Poor* as part of R. Carter’s Cabinet Library was also favorably noted in “Notices of New Publications,” *New York Evangelist* 17, no. 41 (October 8, 1846): 164. This Carter Cabinet edition was also welcomed by the *Christian Advocate and Journal*: “This excellent work has long since acquired its proper place in public estimation, especially among the pious and we have nothing left to us but to notice the issue of this improved edition.” See *Christian Advocate and Journal* [New York] 21, no. 15 (November 18, 1846): 58. The same edition was noticed by *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine*, which noted: “These simple narratives are as familiar to most of our readers as household words; and the publishers have acted wisely in adding them to their ‘Cabinet Library’ of moral and religious works.” See “The Book Trade,” *Hunt’s Merchants’ Magazine* [New York] 15, no. 6 (December 1846): 624. The Carter’s Cabinet Library edition was also advertised in the *Ladies Wreath, a Magazine Devoted to Literature, Industry, and Religion* [New York] 1, no. 10 (February 1, 1847): 348. 9. See “The Ballet on the Platform,” *Punch*, no. 1285 (February 24, 1866); and “The Ticket of Leave,” *Punch*, no. 750 (July 7, 1855). 10. See, for example, Candy Gunther Brown, *The Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789–1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 133. While Brown suggests that a reading community could derive sacred messages within a secular text, *The Dairyman’s Daughter* suggests that an audience might derive sentimental enjoyment from an evangelical text without undergoing a conversion experience. R. Laurence Moore approaches the divide from the other direction, placing an undifferentiated tract literature in relation to tracts exhibiting moral sensationalism, such as those of Parson Weems. See R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17–27. 11. See Moore, *Selling God*. 12. See David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989); and David S. Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction: The Emergence of Religious Literature in America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981). 13. See Ann Douglass, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Avon, 1977); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860*
14. See Brown, _Word in the World_, 79. Brown cites the tract as an example of the chains of influence through which one text inspires another one, which, in its turn, inspires another.


17. See Gary Kelly, “Romantic Evangelicalism: Religion, Social Conflict, and Literary Form in Legh Richmond’s ‘Annals of the Poor,’” _English Studies in Canada_ 16, no. 2 (June 1990): 165–183; and Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion,” 233–270. Roberts provides a useful overview of the publishing history of _The Dairyman’s Daughter_ as tract and book, of the transatlantic context in which the tract emerged and continued to play an important role, of the translation history of the tract, and of the rise of material culture associated with the tract. While my own essay covers much of the same ground, it does so from a very different perspective, highlighting different sources and different issues. Roberts’s article and mine can therefore usefully be read as complementary.

18. See ibid., 245.


20. Richmond took up his ministry in the Isle of Wight in 1797. His acquaintance with Wallbridge probably dates from around 1799. See, for example, “The Dairyman’s Daughter,” _Zion’s Herald_ [Boston] 7, no. 43 (October 26, 1836): 170.


22. See _The Christian Guardian and Church of England Magazine_ [London] 2, nos. 14, 15, 17, 20 (1810); 3, no. 3 (1811). These instalments of _The Dairyman’s Daughter_ were attributed to Simplex.


25. Candy Gunther Brown points out the utility of such scenes in forging an emotional bond between reader and subject and of encouraging the reader’s emulation of the piety on display. See Brown, _Word in the World_, 91.

26. It is likely that this was the edition published in Virginia in 1813. See Legh Richmond, _The Dairyman’s Daughter: An Authentic and Interesting Narrative_ (Harrisonburg, [Va.]: Davidson & Bourne, 1813). It was the edition serialized in _The Layman’s Magazine_ [Martinsburg, W.Va.] in 1815–1816. See December 28, 1815; January 11, 18, 25, February 1, 1816.

27. Roberts does not discuss this early magazine version of _The Dairyman’s Daughter_, but for an excellent and detailed publishing history of this work in both tract format and as a book within the transatlantic context, see Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion,” 243–251.


29. Ibid.

30. See _The Publications of the American Tract Society_, vol. 1 (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.). The volume can be dated by the address of the ATS at 144 Nassau Street. According to the American Antiquarian Society, this dates the edition at between 1827 and 1832. Roberts does not deal with the differences between the New England Tract Society version and
that of the American Tract Society; indeed, these apparently are assumed to be the same version, but with different typesetting.


35. Ibid.

36. See “Mutilation of the 'Dairyman's Daughter,'” *Episcopal Watchman* [Hartford, Conn.] (January 10, 1829): 343. The same charge is repeated in a letter to the editor of the *Episcopal Watchman* [Hartford, Conn.] 5, no. 34 (January 3, 1832): 134, where the ATS is accused of biased editing so as to slight the Episcopalian Church.

37. David Reynolds sees the Scottish Common Sense philosophers, and practitioners of the “New Rhetoric” such as Hugh Blair, as highly influential in the transition from logic-based theology to sentimental religious fiction. See Reynolds, *Faith in Fiction*, 4.

38. See Nan Johnson, *Nineteenth Century Rhetoric in North America* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 65–66. John A. Nietz also notes the importance of the works of Blair, Campbell, and Whatley. See John A. Nietz, *The Evolution of American Secondary School Textbooks* (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle, 1966), 12–16. Though ATS reports and policies do not make direct reference to the rhetoricians or their tenets, there would be no need for them to do so, for as Nan Johnson and others have demonstrated, these ideas pervaded the intellectual culture of the period. Although he does not discuss contemporaneous rhetorical principles or practice, R. Laurence Moore does note that within the marketplace of culture in the nineteenth century, evangelists were compelled to adopt “techniques of persuasion” in order to have an impact. This is, of course, the realm of rhetoric. See Moore, *Selling God*, 38.


40. “A Tract Missionary, 'The Dairyman's Daughter,'” *New York Observer* 24, no. 32 (August 8, 1846): 126. No statistics were provided to substantiate this claim. Roberts discusses the impact of this tract as well, providing other examples. See Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion.”


44. The responses to The Dairyman’s Daughter are similar to those of other tracts as documented by David Nord. See Nord, Faith in Reading, 131–149.


49. See Nord, Faith in Reading, 123–124; and Brown, Word in the World, 123–124. It should be noted that Brown’s example is drawn from a later period.


51. See, for example, the account of the Irishman contained in “From the Churchman: The Irish Episcopal Catechist,” Episcopal Recorder [Philadelphia] 11, no. 35 (November 30, 1833): 1; and that of a sailor recounted in “What Is the Value of a Tract?” New York Observer and Chronicle 20, no. 11 (May 12, 1842): 1.

52. J.B., “Religious,” 34. An account of this incident was widely published; see also Religious Intelligencer [New Haven, Conn.] 9, no. 42 (March 19, 1825): 671; Christian Journal and Literary Register [New York] 9, no. 4 (April 1, 1825): 125; and Western Luminary 1, no. 44 (May 11, 1825): 695.

in order with a brief description of each, then cross-referenced by subject and by constituency, with sections labeled “For Children and Youth,” “For Seamen,” and “For the Aged, Servants, and Emigrants.”


59. As David Nord has noted, the tract is “a splendid exemplar” of the engaging style recommended by the ATS for tracts destined for popular consumption. See Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 119.


61. As David Nord has noted, while the ATS deplored “bad books” of all types, including those that supported “Popery” or that questioned the foundations upon which Christian faith was based, it “reserved its deepest fear and loathing for popular fiction.” Nord shows that popular fiction was shown to be as dangerous as alcohol at a time when the temperance movement was on the rise. See Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 116.


63. Novel reading is presented as a waste of time and money; more seriously, it is indicted as inciting criminal behavior, distracting individuals from their duty, encouraging a lack of piety, and presenting virtue and vice in a false and morally confusing way. The tract ends with targeted advice to parents, young people, pastors, and booksellers. “A bad book is poison,” parents are told. “If you love misery, furnish novels to your children.” Young persons are advised to “listen to the voice of kindness, which says, Beware, beware of novels.” Pastors are told to “do all in your power to break up a practice which will ruin your young people, and render your ministry fruitless.” Book sellers were admonished: “You may make money by depraving the public morals, but for all these things God will bring you into judgment.” See “Novel-Reading, #515,” in *Tracts of the American Tract Society*, vol. 12, General Series ([New York]: [American Tract Society], n.d.), http://www.archive.org/stream/tractsofamerican12amer#page/n390/mode/1up.


65. See Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 116–117, on the ATS’s dire warnings against cursory reading. See also Brown’s discussion of the advice manuals describing proper reading methods in Brown, *Word in the World*, 116. See also her comments on the difference between this form of reading and that ascribed to novel reading (ibid., 97).

67. Roberts also locates The Dairyman’s Daughter within this wider context, attributing the calls for supporting documentation to uneasiness over the tract’s identity as “an authentic narrative” as well as to general curiosity. Roberts also sees the testimony of the efficacy of the tract as in itself a means of authentication; it would seem, however, that the impact of the tract inflated rather than suppressed this controversy. See Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion,” 259–263.

68. In his discussion of “secular appropriations of moral sensationalism,” Moore provides useful background that helps to explain at once the determination of the ATS to draw a line between its own publications and those of moral sensationalist writers, and to distance its own publications from those of a more emotive and lurid character. See Moore, Selling God, 23–27.


70. For a more general overview of this debate, see Brown, Word in the World, 96–99. Brown cites Reynolds’s comments, in Faith in Reading, on the use of fiction to convey a religious message, and cautions: “Unfortunately, in recovering women’s religious fiction, it is all too easy to confuse the adoption of imaginative styles for doctrinal liberalization, the narration of secular experience for secularization, and the voicing of women’s concerns for replacement of male intellectual rigor with weakly feminine emotion” (ibid., 99).


74. During his visit to England, Rev. Dr. Milnor spoke at the anniversary meeting of the British Foreign Bible Society, paying tribute to Legh Richmond and noting that Rev. Mr. Grimshawe’s memoir had been published in the United States in a cheap form and enjoyed wide distribution. See “British Anniversaries,” Episcopal Watchman [Hartford, Conn.] 4, no. 6 (June 19, 1830): 47; and “British Foreign Bible Society,” Christian Secretary [Hartford, Conn.] 9, no. 23 (June 26, 1830): 89. For a short biography of Richmond, see Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion,” 238–240.

75. The efforts of the ATS to bolster the authority and reputation of Legh Richmond in the wake of this controversy bring into question Moore’s supposition that within a more commercial culture such as that developing in the United States in the nineteenth century, a more anonymous relationship between authors and readers was developing, wherein the author’s reputation was irrelevant. See Moore, Selling God, 31–32.


77. See Nord, “Religious Reading,” 245–246. Nord gives careful consideration to the publishing strategy of the ATS in relation to the responses of its target audience, concentrating primarily on the reception of the books that the society sought to use to deepen its audience’s religious education after their conversion by tracts. Nord looks primarily at evidence derived from colporteur reports from the Pine Barrens region of New Jersey in the 1840s and 1850s. Nord repeats this argument in Nord, Faith in Reading, 113–150.

83. Ibid. This report, together with the call for original, factual narrative pieces that could be published as tracts, was reprinted as “American Tract Society,” *Episcopal Recorder* [Philadelphia] 9, no. 33 (November 12, 1831): 129.
87. Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 121–122. Roberts also notes the important role that material culture played in supporting the authenticity of the tract. See Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion,” 259–266.
88. This is precisely the emotional bond described by Colleen McDannell when discussing the use of relics within Protestant material culture. McDannell makes it clear that such relics were important—and not uncommon—despite their problematic status within Calvinistic theology. See, for example, her discussion of Methodist relics in Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 43–44.
92. David Nord notes that this was precisely the need, as recognized by the ATS; see Nord, *Faith in Reading*, 114.
96. Mallah, reporting on the anniversary meeting of the ATS, noted that the chair had been displayed by N. Adams, who had called for the society “to publish just such books as those who sat on such chairs want.” See Mallah, “The Christian Alliance and the ATS,” *Christian Reflector* [Boston] 8, no. 20 (May 15, 1845): 78. A report published as “Home a Sacred Place,” *Christian Watchman* [Boston] 26, no. 20 (May 16, 1845): 80, seemed as enamored of the Chinaman in full national dress as with the chair also on display on the platform. The *United States Catholic Magazine and Monthly Review* noted the alarm expressed by those
who feared that such displays would lead to an unseemly veneration for relics, reprinting an article from the *Banner of the Cross* under the subheading “Protestant Relics.” See “Domestic,” *United States Catholic Magazine and Monthly Review* [Baltimore] 4, no. 7 (July 1845): 468. Under “Interesting Relics,” the *New York Evangelist* noted that the chair was on display at the Tract House in New York City. See “Interesting Relics,” *New York Evangelist* 23, no. 46 (November 11, 1852): 183. The same short notice appeared in “Interesting Relics,” *Albion, a Journal of News, Politics and Literature* [New York] 11, no. 46 (November 13, 1852): 547, where it was attributed to the *Journal of Commerce*.


98. M. E. W., “Silent Teachers,” *New York Evangelist* 27, no. 49 (December 4, 1857): 234. Elizabeth Wallbridge’s chair was displayed alongside the traveling pulpit used by George Whitfield.

99. See the short, untitled notices published in the *Christian Secretary* [Hartford, Conn.] 55, no. 36 (October 5, 1876): 2; in “Gleanings,” *Christian Union* [New York] 47, no. 14 (April 8, 1893): 681; and in “Brieflets,” *Zion’s Herald* [Boston] 71, no. 16 (April 19, 1893): 124. The ATS was given a gold medal by the Columbian Exposition for its display, which included religious books and tracts as well as Whitefield’s pulpit and Elizabeth Wallbridge’s chair. See “News and Notes,” *Literary World* [Boston] 24, no. 25 (December 16, 1893): 454.

100. The diary entry reads: “18th. A stone was this day put up for the Dairyman’s daughter, in Arreton church-yard. ‘Post tot naufragia tutus’ [After shipwrecks, safety]. ‘To God be all the praise.’ See Irah Chase and H. J. Ripley, “The Young Cottager,” *Christian Secretary* [Hartford, Conn.] 5, no. 51 (January 10, 1829): 202.


102. J.F., “Epitaphs of ‘The Young Cottager,’ and ‘The Dairyman’s Daughter,’” *Religious Intelligencer* [New Haven, Conn.] 9, no. 10 (August 7, 1824): 150. The date provided by the epitaph is, we are told, incorrect. The actual date of death was May 3, 1801. The account of the visit seems to have been taken from the *London Baptist Magazine*. See “The Grave Yard,” *Western Recorder* [Utica, N.Y.] 1, no. 17 (August 17, 1824): 1.

103. “Tract Meeting in New York,” *New York Evangelist* 1, no. 34 (November 20, 1830): 135. The article ends with the expressed hope that the journal “will, in some form, be early laid before the public, and it cannot fail to be read with the deepest interest by every friend of religious tracts.” A similar account of the meeting appeared as “Tract Meeting in New York,” *Western Recorder* [Utica, N.Y.] 7, no. 48 (November 30, 1830): 190. An account of Milnor’s reading from his journal was also carried in the *Episcopal Watchman*, where it is attributed to the *New York Observer*. This account concludes with the expressed hope that the journal account will be published. See “Legh Richmond’s Tracts,” *Episcopal Watchman* [Hartford, Conn.] 4, no. 29 (November 27, 1830): 232. Milnor’s journal entry was later published as “Dr. Milnor’s Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Christian Secretary* [Hartford, Conn.] 9, no. 46 (December 4, 1830): 181; “Dr. Milnor’s Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Philadelphia Recorder* 8, no. 36 (December 4, 1830): 142; “Dr. Milnor’s Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Episcopal Watchman* [Hartford, Conn.] 4, no. 30 (December 4, 1830): 1; “Dr. Milnor’s Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Religious Intelligencer* [New Haven, Conn.] 15, no. 27 (December 4, 1830): 419; “Dr. Milnor’s Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion’s Herald* [New York] 5, no. 15 (December 4, 1830): 15; “Dr. Milnor’s Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Western Luminary* [Lexington, Ky.] 7, no. 25 (December 22, 1830): 301; “The Scene of Legh Richmond’s Labors,” *Christian Watchman* [Boston] 11, no. 52 (December 24, 1830): 1; and “The Scene of Legh Richmond’s Labors,” *Boston Recorder* 15, no. 52 (December 29, 1830): 205. Rev. Dr. Milnor’s description also formed the basis for “Visit to the Isle of Wight,” *Philadelphia Recorder* 8, no. 49 (March 5, 1831): 194. This article was reprinted from the *New York Observer*. 


112. See Cathy N. Davidson, “Introduction,” in Susanna Rowson, Charlotte Temple (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), for further information regarding readers’ responses to the text, and the tourism that the text spawned. Moore also deals with Charlotte Temple, but as an example of sensational moralism; he reads the text exclusively in terms of its problematic sexual propriety. See Moore, Selling God, 24. Davidson’s reading in the introduction is much more nuanced, as is her discussion of the subversive nature of reading. See Cathy N. Davidson, “Ideology and Genre,” in Davidson, Revolution and the Word, 38–54. Roberts notes the connection, but does not analyze the implications of the similar fan behavior. Roberts, “Locating Popular Religion,” 265.

113. It is astonishing that the ATS, like its most famous tract, has failed to receive the scholarly attention commensurate with its importance, for as David Nord convincingly argued in 1984, it was the missionary impulse that, in his words, “lay at the foundation of the popularization of print in the 19th century.” And as Nord also pointed out, the ATS was one of the most important publishing forces behind this evangelical impulse. See David Paul Nord, The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815–1835, Journalism Monographs (Columbia, S.C.: College of Journalism, University of South Carolina, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, May 1984), 23.

114. Ibid.