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PREVIEW

**THE MEASURE OF THE MARKET: WOMEN'S ECONOMIC LIVES  
IN CHARLESTON, SC AND NEWPORT, RI, 1750-1820**

by

**Ellen L. Hartigan-O'Connor**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor Susan Juster, chair  
Associate Professor David Hancock  
Associate Professor Carol Karlsen  
Assistant Professor Susan Scott Parrish

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For Dennis.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Charleston CCP	Charleston Court of Common Pleas (Judgment Rolls and Petitions and Decrees in Summary Process)
NCH	Newport Court House, Newport, Rhode Island
NHS	Newport Historical Society, Newport, Rhode Island
NPCCP	Newport Court of Common Pleas
RIHS	Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence, Rhode Island
RISA	Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, Rhode Island
SCDAH	South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia, South Carolina
SCCCP	South Carolina Court of Common Pleas (Judgment Rolls)
SCHS	South Carolina Historical Society, Charleston, South Carolina
<i>SCHM</i>	<i>South Carolina Historical Magazine</i>
SCL	South Caroliniana Library, Columbia, South Carolina

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## INTRODUCTION

### CULTURES OF COMMERCE IN A REVOLUTIONARY AGE

The pages of the March 8, 1770 *South Carolina Gazette* record a world bustling with transactions. Advertisements for fancy goods, notices seeking temporary labor, announcements of property to be auctioned, demands for the settlement of debts, and warnings about runaway slaves threaten to crowd out a reprinted speech from the king of England to the Parliament recommending "serious attention" to "the state of my government in *America*." In language blending aspirations to gentility and attention to the bottom line, men and women declare their economic relationships, financial woes, and goods for sale. The international context of their transactions is evident in every column of text, as the arrival of ships from ports around the Atlantic is announced, signaling the circulation of people and goods. Newspapers captured a similar story in the other growing North American port cities in the second half of the eighteenth century. Hundreds of miles to the north in Newport, Rhode Island, the *Newport Mercury* also testified to a thriving commercial world. Amid advertisements for imported goods, houses for rent, and insolvency notices, the editors inserted an ode to newspapers that promised readers the latest word on goods and services: "No matter whether good or bad / We tell you where they may be had."<sup>1</sup>

These transactions, and countless others that never came to light in print, shaped the life of the city and the lives of city-dwellers. Cities were home to interconnected markets for labor, country produce, money and currency, international commodities and imported

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<sup>1</sup>*South Carolina Gazette*, March 8, 1770 (no. 1797); *Newport Mercury*, May 14, 1770 (no. 610).

goods. In and through the urban markets, city-dwellers took each other's measure, and their own. In daily interactions, people of different races, genders, and ranks had to judge goods and one another by a set of conventions that governed market life. The criteria they used--creditworthiness, cost, reliability, quality, value--formed a commercial ethos toward goods and people that pervaded residents' lives. Between 1750 and 1820, this developing commercial culture linked the cities of Newport and Charleston, even while each city followed its own economic trajectory. Informal networks of women, connected horizontally across geographic distance and vertically along hierarchies of rank, helped create and sustain this commercial culture by exchanging and discussing goods and labor. Participating in commercial culture not only gave women economic standing, it fostered a monetary sense of the value of their bodies and work. At the same time, their economic choices blended financial calculation with social and emotional concerns in shifting measures.

Early American women sought out an urban world of enormous economic and social vitality. Poor women in search of ways to make cash, female entrepreneurs looking for clients, enslaved women seeking to reap the fruits of their own labor, free blacks in search of community, all came to cities. Urban women were among the first to take part in the economic and political transformations of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. "In America," Gary Nash has written, "it was in the colonial cities that the transition first occurred from a barter economy to a commercial one; that a competitive social order replaced an ascriptive one; that a hierarchical and deferential polity yielded to a participatory and contentious civic life; that factory production began to replace small-scale artisanal production; that the first steps were taken to organize work by clock time rather than by sidereal cycles. The cities predicted the future."<sup>2</sup> Social relationships, daily work

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<sup>2</sup>Gary Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), ix.

life, public modes of behavior, even time itself changed in response to the developing commercial economies of port cities.

The evolution of a democratic, capitalist American society transformed personal and economic relationships between people. How these developments changed white men's lives has been a lively area of scholarly interest. The replacement of the familial artisan workshop with waged labor created more impersonal and potentially antagonistic working relationships. This change helped accelerate a new sense of social class among men, gathered along lines of shared trade interest. Contentious debates over the use of paper money to facilitate internal commerce divided communities into ranks of debtors and creditors. The men comprising these competing interests sought redress in the form of laws and in violent clashes. In response to the rising importance of forms of property other than land, political rhetoric moved from denying the legitimacy of competing economic interests to devising the best way to balance those interests. Economically, socially, and politically, historians like Gordon Wood have argued, organic hierarchies were replaced with competitive, contingent identities--for free men.<sup>3</sup>

What did these changes mean for women? Numerous studies have focused on the shifting ideological interpretations of elite and middling white women's lives. Although working for wages outside of the household became more central to family survival, positive economic valuations of women's work were replaced with ones that disparaged working women and glorified middling women's domestic lives with new urgency.<sup>4</sup> Revolutionary rhetoric praised selected forms of women's work, like spinning, but increasingly it was the emotional and moral content of female domestic work that received the most attention from writers. The language of republicanism--the discourse that gave meaning to revolutionary

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<sup>3</sup>For discussion of these transformations as part of the radical social, political, and economic implications of the Age of Revolution, see Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1991; New York: Vintage Books, 1993).

<sup>4</sup>Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), chapter 1.

acts and the new government--was framed around the exclusion of women from political participation. It simultaneously proclaimed the importance of domesticity with a political twist, in the idea of the "republican mother," a creature whose acclaim came from her devotion to training educated, independent sons. Within nineteenth-century culture, domesticity came to define and constrain "true womanhood" by race and class to those individuals whose domain was the home, where they guided the moral upbringing of children and provided a haven for middle-class men from the pressures of capitalism. As such, domesticity was both counterpart to and critique of liberal "possessive individualism." While some middle-class white women proclaimed their freedom from the "contagion" of money-making, this freedom came at a cost; by positing a division between the economic and the emotional, the ideology of domesticity served to remove social and familial concerns from the male realm of politics.<sup>5</sup>

However powerful as a cultural ideal, isolated domesticity was a poor reflection of social reality.<sup>6</sup> Studies of middling women's economic lives demonstrate that the home and the market were not at odds for most women. The farm women in rural Pennsylvania studied by Joan Jensen transformed their butter making from domestic art to production for the market to meet the demands of a changing economy, thereby helping to create a new system of commercial farming. Poor and enslaved women, like Christine Stansell's laboring New Yorkers "made their lives . . . on the streets as much as by their hearthsides," by

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<sup>5</sup>See comments of Sarah Josepha Hale, quoted in Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: 'Woman's Sphere' in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 68. On gender and republicanism, see Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Ruth Bloch, "The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 13 (1987); Joan C. Williams, "Domesticity as the Dangerous Supplement of Liberalism," *Journal of Women's History* 2, no. 3 (Winter 1991).

<sup>6</sup>Lisa Norling's study of the wives of New England whalers makes this point clearly. The wives of sea captains wrote of their own dependence while maintaining themselves with their own work. They spoke of close, affectionate marriages with men they did not see for years at a time. In this way, domesticity was prescriptive and even aspired to by many ranks of women in the nineteenth century, but it was descriptive of far fewer. It seems to me that this is the appropriate way for us to take the domesticity thesis. Lisa Norling, *Captain Ahab Had a Wife: New England Women and the Whaleshery, 1720-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

bargaining, scavenging, and performing waged work abroad and piece work at home. Free women's economic contributions in the form of cash wages, exchange commodities, and earned credit were central to family survival at a time of great economic change and uncertainty.<sup>7</sup> By highlighting the market significance of women's work and exploring the degree to which women controlled their work, these studies provide an important counterpoint to the vision of spatial and economic circumscription posited by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in her influential book *Good Wives*. Ulrich opened her book with the image of the colonial New England housewife in her domain, an invisible line drawn around her house and yard. Women did venture beyond this domain, of course, as "deputy husbands," performing economic tasks when their husbands were unable to do so. Strategic and perfectly permissible crossings of the domestic border were the exception for these rural women, however, in Ulrich's original formulation; they seem to have been far more routine in other women's lives.<sup>8</sup>

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the rise of an increasingly contractual world of business. How did this transformation affect women's economic lives over time? Some have argued that the stubborn sameness of housework and neighborly exchange contributed to white and black women being "left behind" in some sense by commercial expansion. Trained in work that had little value in the marketplace and burdened with "fewer marketable skills, fewer patronage and credit connections, and less

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<sup>7</sup>Joan Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750-1850* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); Christine Stansell, *City of Women: Sex and Class in New York, 1789-1860* (1982; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 52; Jeanne Boydston, "The Woman Who Wasn't There: Women's Market Labor and the Transition to Capitalism in the United States," *Journal of the Early Republic* 16 (Summer 1996). See also Thomas Dublin, *Transforming Women's Work: New England Lives in the Industrial Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).

<sup>8</sup>Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (1980; New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 13. A similar vision was suggested years ago in Mary Beth Norton's study of female Loyalists' petitions to the British government after the Revolution. The white women who wrote these official letters expressed ignorance and confusion about matters beyond their own houses, particularly the business dealings and specific property holdings of their male kin. Mary Beth Norton, "Eighteenth-Century American Women in Peace and War: The Case of the Loyalists," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 33, no. 3 (July 1976): 386-409.



capital to establish themselves," Native Americans, African Americans and white women suffered disproportionately at the hands of economic uncertainty and urban poverty.<sup>9</sup> Others emphasize the impact of greater formality in the structure and procedures of institutions like courts and churches. One of the most influential discussions of this phenomenon is Cornelia Hughes Dayton's study of women and civil litigation in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century New Haven and Connecticut. Dayton found that the eighteenth century was a period of comparative exclusion of women from expanding international commerce, even "before the nineteenth century and the separation of home and the workplace." Elaine Forman Crane's analysis of New England port cities presents a trajectory of increasing exclusion for white women that is nearly all-encompassing. She argues that a simultaneous patriarchal reaction on the part of key institutions severely restricted white women's autonomy in religion, politics, economics, and law. The result, she believes, was virtual "invisibility" of women in late eighteenth-century cities, though she stresses the paradoxical centrality of women to many of the institutions and the economy that obscured their participation.<sup>10</sup>

Several recent studies of urban women highlight inclusion rather than exclusion and describe persistent female economic visibility. Patricia Cleary's work on shopkeeping women in eighteenth-century cities and Karin Wulf's on single women in Philadelphia both find significant involvement of women in urban economic life as producers and consumers. Betty Wood's work on enslaved women in Savannah argues that increasing opportunities for slave marketeers over the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made them a very visible (and to their detractors, objectionably visible) presence in the city. These studies urge us to conceive of eighteenth-century American cities as places where women as well as

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<sup>9</sup>Ruth Wallis Herndon, *Unwelcome Americans: Living on the Margin in Early New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 13.

<sup>10</sup>Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, & Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 72; Elaine Forman Crane, *Ebb Tide in New England: Women, Seaports, and Social Change, 1630-1800* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1998).

men were visible, active community members. And they point us to a little-investigated heterosocial urban culture in which commercial activities and social relationships took shape.<sup>11</sup>

This study demonstrates the ubiquity and familiarity of urban women. It describes a world where women bought and sold, loaned and borrowed, advertised and evaluated as regular participants in the urban economy and culture. The women of Newport and Charleston lived lives that intersected at multiple points with neighborhood, city-wide, and Atlantic economies. The workings of the marketplace shaped the experiences not only of female shopkeepers, but of women who used money or credit to pay debts or extend loans, women who carried packages and shopped for others, and women whose labor supported a commercial society. While most of these women's economic lives were difficult struggles, they were struggles that took place in full view of and engagement with men's lives in the city.

Rather than trace a story of decline, this dissertation finds that many urban women experienced expanding opportunities after the Revolution. Although the laws of coverture did not change with the creation of a new polity, urban growth, international trade, and population mobility provided women and men with new opportunities for work, new connections to a wider world, and greater exposure to commercial life. While the economic and political upheavals severed many business links, new ones were forged. Pursuing this analysis into the nineteenth century reveals a varied story of change that resists a single narrative of decline or uplift. Changes in business cycles had different effects on different segments of the working community. These women's stories provide new perspectives on transformations in social and economic relationships.

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<sup>11</sup>Patricia Cleary, *Elizabeth Murray: A Woman's Pursuit of Independence in Eighteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000) and "'She Merchants' of Colonial America: Women and Commerce on the Eve of the Revolution." Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1989; Karin Wulf, *Not All Wives: Women of Colonial Philadelphia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Betty Wood, *Women's Work, Men's Work: The Informal Slave Economies of Lowcountry Georgia* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995), chapter 4.

Two recent avenues of research into urban culture provide promising models for investigating the significance and meaning of female economic participation. The first is the literature on "informal" slave economies, which explores cash-earning opportunities under slavery as well as the economic and social ties formed by exchange among enslaved people and between free and enslaved people. The second is the growing scholarship on consumption patterns in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which posits a "consumer revolution" of increasingly available goods and traces its economic and cultural implications. By examining the use and circulation, as well as production of goods, these inquiries broaden our understanding of what "the economy" and "economic life" are. Their recasting of the issue requires a complex revision of social and economic life in the early cities and raises questions about the cultural and personal meanings of economic participation. Most significantly, they present individuals previously seen as "objects" of the economy--whether as isolated beneficiaries or as commodities themselves--as active subjects within it. Moreover, the work on slave economies highlights important questions about the integration of free and enslaved, black and white people in these changing communities, themes that have received too little attention in urban histories. In methods and content, these studies have inspired my investigations into white and black urban women.

Investigating the activities of slaves who sold the fruits of their gardens, who bought and sold goods on behalf of their masters and mistresses, who appropriated and traded goods among themselves, who hired out their labor to employers, and who obtained goods for sale in urban markets, unveils the variety and scope of activities that were in some way "market transactions." What were the social ramifications of these transactions? Robert O'Connell argues that commercial values and a shared understanding of the "laws of the market" made enslaved sellers and free buyers "momentarily equal" in the Charleston

marketplace.<sup>12</sup> In a commercial world, possession of cash or goods of value earned one access to these moments of qualified equality. His interpretation, while not denying the grave power disparities between market participants, suggests how a market orientation created moments of a "middle ground" of negotiation.

Informal networks shepherded goods from original possession to final sale. These links between individuals, fueled by sales and profit, emerge from under the shadow of better-documented transactions and challenge the picture presented there. Our maps of economic life have focused on established spaces like the exchange building, the merchant's warehouse, the coffeehouse, and the bank. Economic networks studied thus far emerged in part from relationships forged in those institutions, between merchants and planters, importers and craftsmen, traders and investors. Betty Wood's portrait of Savannah, in contrast, presents an economic world of enslaved women and men formed in city streets and canoes on the river, in garden plots and kitchens. In what amounted to widespread economic and social networks, urban and rural slave men and women exchanged goods and information. Informal networks also intersected regularly with the "official" white economy; for example, slaves regularly acted as intermediaries in transactions between whites, a role that invested them with considerable economic and social discretion, qualities their masters and mistresses relied on.<sup>13</sup>

If the story of "informal" slave economies analyzes the moment of purchase in new ways, the history of consumption calls new attention to the end point of trade--the way that goods were used. Historians of the consumer revolution have shown that not only was consumption an economic act, it was fraught with social and personal meanings. T. H. Breen has explored the ways that British imports fostered a shared culture among disparate

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<sup>12</sup>Robert Olwell, *Masters, Slaves, and Subjects: The Culture of Power in the South Carolina Low Country 1740-1790* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 173, and chapter 4, *passim*.

<sup>13</sup>Wood, *Women's Work*. See also Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake & Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

North American colonists. Richard Bushman's investigation of a culture of gentility, which emerged with the imported goods of the consumer revolution as its material base, offers insights into mixed cultural and material foundations of class.<sup>14</sup> This connection between social meaning and economic activity should be more fully explored for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's lives. Consumption on a day-to-day basis was in the hands of women, increasingly so in the years after the American Revolution. Free women came into their own as consumers at a time when more and more goods were purchased, and at a time when those purchases had profound consequences for the national economy and polity. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a woman wearing a calico gown and drinking tea in her parlor was engaging in a political act with wide-ranging implications. Consumption, then, defies categorization as either "public" or "private" and provides us a way to rethink women's lives as economic beings and active participants in the social transformations brought about by the widening reach of the market.

British historians present consumer culture as broadening for white women. Studies of urbanization in Britain have painted a rich picture of commercial life in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries with women at the heart of many new institutions and practices. The proliferation of public social and cultural institutions like assembly rooms, parks, theaters, and benevolent societies, as well as expanding opportunities in commerce and shopping, drew well-to-do women ever more publicly into urban life. As Amanda Vickery has shown, consumer culture and material life was a significant tool of self-definition and community formation for genteel Englishwomen. To be sure, English cities were much larger, and were productive and cultural centers of much greater significance than American cities. In 1750, there were 51 cities in England and Wales with

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<sup>14</sup>T. H. Breen, "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690-1776," *Journal of British Studies* 25 (October 1986):467-499; "'Baubles of Britain': The Americans and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988): 73-104; "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community in the Eve of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 50, no. 3 (July 1993): 471-501. Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

populations over 5,000, in contrast to the 5 British North American cities of that size; by 1801, the number in Britain had grown to 94. But while port cities of eighteenth-century America may have lacked the volume of assembly rooms and public parks, they were full participants in an Atlantic world of commerce. British and North American cities shared a material world and were linked economically and culturally by trade.<sup>15</sup>

The culture of gentility, which relied on the goods of the consumer revolution for its fullest expression, was both domestic and public. Studies of gentility in the early American South have suggested that white women used stylish presentations of food, fashionable clothing, and polite conversation around tea tables to express cultural and economic power.<sup>16</sup> "She-merchants"--those women who trafficked in the signs of gentility and made their living by providing city-dwellers with access to and knowledge about imported consumer goods--wielded a similar form of power in city shops. Patricia Cleary's study of female shopkeepers argues that their participation in the consumer revolution made them culturally influential in their communities and economically significant in commercial and credit ties between Europe and America. Her approach suggests how consumer culture and economic history can be bridged in ways that yield new information about women's lives.<sup>17</sup>

Thus an examination of enslaved as well as free women in urban economies presents us with new ways to frame economic activity and new models for understanding the intersection of social and economic life. Laurel Ulrich used the metaphor of "checkered cloth" to describe life on the Maine frontier of the early republic in order to capture the places of intersection and those of "harmonious separation" between men's and women's

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<sup>15</sup>Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). For urban populations, see P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 8; Bureau of the Census, *A Century of Population Growth: From the First Census of the United States to the Twelfth, 1790-1900* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1909), 11-14.

<sup>16</sup>Cynthia Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women's Place in the Early South, 1700-1835* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

<sup>17</sup>Cleary, "'She Merchants'" and Elizabeth Murray.



lives.<sup>18</sup> Complex and diverse urban centers were undoubtedly more of a bold plaid than an orderly check. Commerce and domestic life were densely interwoven; informal economies of enslaved workers, of wealthy white women, of urban and rural families intersected at multiple nodes.

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This dissertation examines women's economic lives in Newport, Rhode Island, and Charleston, South Carolina between 1750 and 1820. Urban women in these cities were central to an expanding commercial culture that joined people separated by geography, wealth, social position, and gender. As imported wares of greater variety became more available and less expensive, they created new opportunities and responsibilities for more women. Female retailers opened shops to profit from the increased demand for such goods. Mistresses employed their servants and enslaved workers in procuring goods and processing them for household use. Free female shoppers and retailers sought out credit to enable them to purchase goods, creating formal lines of credit that bound them within their communities. Working women used cash earnings or their skills as sewers, spinners, or dairymaids in exchange for items that signaled participation in transatlantic notions of style. Poor women and elites, enslaved African Americans and the daughters of slave merchants talked about goods and commerce in a way that was mutually intelligible.

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<sup>18</sup>The records of midwife Martha Ballard reveal that although male and female household economies were "harmoniously separate," "female trade was interwoven with the mercantile economy." Separation of male and female activities did not consign women to domestic barter and men to external commerce. In other words, this was no simple division of male and female "spheres," hers private and his public. This observation was even more relevant for urban men and women. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A Midwife's Tale: The Life of Martha Ballard, Based on Her Diary, 1785-1812* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 84. An extensive literature explores the concept of separate male and female "spheres" of life in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. See Linda Kerber's discussion of this historiography in "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History," *Journal of American History*, 75, no. 1 (June 1988): 9-39.

Commercial culture was constructed of networks of women and men. Commerce relied on connections at all levels--from the chains of credit that bound customers to retailers to shopkeepers to merchants, to the neighborhood circles of exchanged favors and work, to the family connections that circulated goods, matched workers and employers, and settled financial arrangements. These personal and business networks transmitted commercial practices and thought over a wide area. Commerce was still, after all, a matter of personal connections and risks. In the early nineteenth century, corporations, banks, insurance companies, and bureaucratic tools for managing business and economic matters were still in early stages. While women were excluded from many of the formal financial and political institutions, their economic lives were relational and interconnected, making them regular participants in an economy that bound all members of society together.

Commercial culture was nourished by the mobility of people and things and the fluid, contingent spaces of early cities. Each city's wharves witnessed the arrival of people--free and enslaved--along with goods on a constant basis. Whether they were fugitive slaves or unmarried white mantuamakers, the city offered women opportunities for employment and a population of prospective customers unavailable in more rural areas, making access to the city important to women looking to support themselves. The possibility of self-support was joined by economic instability, however, and people moved out of as well as into the city as their fortunes changed. Residents rented living and working space and relocated frequently in pursuit of a better location or lower rent.

Mobility also extended urban networks and culture. Exchanges made possible by regular transportation and the frequent arrivals and departures of individuals from the countryside or from other cities drew distant communities together. On wharves and in city marketplaces, urban and rural women as well as men met in public to form economic links that crossed wider distances than those between neighbors. Through connections of family and friends, women sent goods to distant communities, creating a shared material life stocked by urban shops and markets. In the letters that accompanied these goods, well-to-