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# 10

## “SEVERAL SIGOURNEYS”

CIRCULATION, REPRINT CULTURE, AND  
SIGOURNEY'S EDUCATIONAL PROSE

*Amy J. Lueck*

In her now-famous essay “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney,” Nina Baym argued that Sigourney’s literary range “inevitably allows for the construction of several Sigourneys who are unknown to modern criticism.”<sup>1</sup> Since 1990, when Baym revealed Sigourney as a student of history and a writer of historical prose, scholars have filled the gap she identified with a variety of Sigourneys, identifying her “generic plurality” as a means to “achieve multi-positionality as a woman poet,” as Paula Bernat Bennett writes, and noting that Sigourney’s wide-ranging oeuvre does not readily lend itself to a reading of the author as a sentimental poetess.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, scholars like Bennett, Wendy Dasler Johnson, and Elizabeth Petrino have taken up the call to reinvent, reconsider, or, as Dasler Johnson strives to do, revive Sigourney as a complex poet worthy of scholarly consideration. But while such scholars acknowledge Sigourney’s range of genres, few have focused on her prose. Even as they acknowledge it, they leave it, as Allison Giffen says, “all but overlooked.”<sup>3</sup>

In this chapter, I fill this gap by focusing on the reinvention of Sigourney as an educator who used her prose to advance her educational causes. Many scholars have remarked on her educational program, and she herself was “admittedly always the teacher,” identifying herself as “a schoolmistress and a literary woman.”<sup>4</sup> For example, in chapter 12, Ricardo Miguel-Alfonso pays similar attention to Sigourney’s didactic use of history and biography, which connects hers to the educational projects of Ralph Waldo Emerson and the other transcendentalists. In *From School to Salon*, Mary Loeffelholz offers perhaps the most extended attention to the centrality of schooling

to Sigourney's writing and life. Loeffelholz suggests that we "consider the school as the common social location . . . of Sigourney's poetic and prose genres, inseparable from their matrix of republican ideas."<sup>5</sup> That is, she frames schooling and Sigourney's identity as a teacher—rather than the home and motherhood—as central to the writer's work "as a whole."<sup>6</sup> In her attention to the school, Loeffelholz raises a question that is central to my own essay: "Is the authority of the teacher modeled on that of the mother, or that of the mother on the teacher?" She answers, "For Lydia Sigourney, the role of the teacher came first, not just biographically but historically, ideologically, and almost, it seems ontologically."<sup>7</sup> I would add that, while Sigourney positioned herself in relation to domestic culture in her early work, she developed an increasingly professional authorial persona in relation to education that drew on the authority of mothers but was increasingly distanced from the home. In other words, she spoke to maternal teachers in her earlier essays; but by the late 1830s and 1840s, as the schoolroom became an accepted site of practice for women students and teachers, she increasingly intervened in conversations about formal, extra-domestic schooling. Further, in Sigourney's broad circulation of her educational essays, we can clearly trace the evolution of her ideas about education and gender and about herself as a woman educator, which changed as the cultural terrain around women's education shifted, particularly in regard to what Loeffelholz calls the emergence of the "domestic-tutelary regime," in ways she did not always control.<sup>8</sup>

Although critics have focused on Sigourney's role as a writer of educational narratives, they have yet to explore how the culture of reprinting has affected her development as a writer and a thinker.<sup>9</sup> Since her own time, she has been well known for actively republishing her work. Often sending the same work to multiple magazines, she then periodically gathered them together to be issued as a book.<sup>10</sup> An essay might appear in some half-dozen forms over the course of a decade, traversing from magazine print to book and back again. Many scholars have discussed Sigourney's recirculation of her work, sometimes disparagingly, as in the early assessments of scholars such as Gordon S. Haight (1930) and Ann Douglas Wood (1972).<sup>11</sup> But Sigourney was not unique in this way. Instead, as Meredith McGill argues in *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting*, recirculation was a significant practice in nineteenth-century literary culture, which was characterized by "its exuberant understanding of culture as iteration and not

origination."<sup>12</sup> In this context, editors constructed distinct Sigourneys for their own and their publications' purposes, and Sigourney revised her own self-presentation, adapting and responding to various reader demands. As Jennifer Putzi demonstrates in chapter 2, "the composition, circulation, and publication processes involved in the production of a . . . poem [may be] . . . collaborative." This collaborative process was central to Sigourney's production, shaping what Putzi calls her "stages and styles of authorship" over the course of her career. As a perhaps less intentional extension of this process, the reprinting of Sigourney's essays reflected both authorial decisions and a culture of circulation that outstripped authorial and editorial control.<sup>13</sup>

The changes that Sigourney and her editors made to her essays as they were reprinted over time gesture to and participate in the revision of cultural beliefs about who had the authority to speak on educational matters and on what grounds. Sigourney and other nineteenth-century women authors understood those limits well.<sup>14</sup> Appeals to home education and to the mother's domestic role were strategies to enlist women readers' interest in education, the plight of teachers, and the need for advanced education for women—and to build community among those readers. That is, when we study Sigourney's periodical prose, we can observe that maternal teaching and domesticity are invoked in the service of increased educational and teaching opportunities for women and may not have been wedded to the literally maternal and domestic.

The evolution of Sigourney's engagement with education aligned with both the nation's growing trend toward public schools and her professionalization as an author. Through an examination of Sigourney's personal and business letters, Melissa Ladd Teed traces the emergence of a professional teaching persona that was evident in the circulation of her prose. In the 1830s-era transition from the model of the "genteel amateur" to a "commercialized literary marketplace," Sigourney was an "overlooked but important architect."<sup>15</sup> To follow this evolution, I have analyzed Sigourney's educational essays, which originally appeared in journals such as the *Juvenile Miscellany* (1830), the *Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette* (1833), and *Godey's Lady's Book* (1840) and were reprinted in a wide range of journals, including the *Southern Literary Messenger* (1838) and the *Maine Farmer* (1836). Like Giffen, I have concluded that, though "much of her work is the product of a conservative sensibility," her investment in traditional domestic values and codes "is more complex than scholars have given her credit

for.”<sup>16</sup> By attending to the changes in her educational ideas across their various iterations, we can recognize the progressive nature of Sigourney’s educational writing and the ways she used—and was used by—reprint culture.

Though I will move through these essays in rough chronology, I begin here in the middle, with Sigourney’s 1837 introduction to the third edition of *Letters to Young Ladies*, which lays out some key terms that link her earlier and later engagements with education, just as the volume itself spanned that period across reprintings. In this introduction, she established the link between mothers and teachers as audiences for her educational prose. She acknowledged that “only a small portion are engaged in the departments of publick and systematick instruction” but argued that “the hearing of recitations, and the routine of scholastick discipline, are but parts of education. It is in the domestick sphere . . . that woman is inevitably a teacher.”<sup>17</sup> By extending the definition of teaching, Sigourney extended the definition of teachers; and by including all mothers under the mantle of teachers, she was able to argue for women’s advanced education: “Of what unspeakable importance, then, is *her* education, who gives lessons before any other instructor.”<sup>18</sup> This appeal, of course, was not hers alone but a popular argument mobilized by Mary Wollstonecraft, Emma Willard, and other advocates of women’s education.<sup>19</sup> Yet the logical arrangement of this early essay suggests that Sigourney was also using maternal teaching to foster among the larger population of mothers a sense of value for and solidarity with teachers, which she accomplished in part by her alignment of “parents, preceptors, or legislators” as the guardians of education.<sup>20</sup>

When she added this essay to the third edition of her book, Sigourney most likely understood that it would not be read exclusively by young women but also by their “preceptors, parents, and legislators.” Thus, the essay takes the opportunity to enforce the importance of female education, demonstrating Sigourney’s responsiveness to her own circulation patterns and her ability to use revisions to attend to multiple audiences with different readerly investments. Even as she constructed herself as a staid supporter of a separate sphere for women, her prose demonstrates that she participated in redefining that sphere across reprintings. In particular, she used the trope of motherhood (biological and figurative) to advocate for increased educational opportunities for girls in both learning and teaching by blurring the distinctions between mothers and teachers. Writing about this same passage, Loeffelholz notes, “The category ‘mothers,’ for Sigourney, is a subset of

the category 'teachers,' the second, broader category identical with womanhood itself."<sup>21</sup> The extension of the logic of republican motherhood beyond the family was not a new phenomenon, but writers like Sigourney played a role in transforming this rhetorical move into a social shift.<sup>22</sup>

Sigourney's essay "Biography of an Infant" exemplifies the complicated effects of recirculation on her educational project and the extension of domestic teaching into extra-domestic spaces.<sup>23</sup> In that piece, written for and published in the March 1830 issue of the *Juvenile Miscellany*, she described a boy of two and a half years who evidenced "a degree of learning and intelligence, to which infancy has usually no pretensions."<sup>24</sup> He showed remarkable development in literacy, natural history, and geometry in his early years, but his premature death cut short his progress. At the end of the biographical account, Sigourney articulated what was often an unstated motivation for her prose sketches—to entertain children while teaching their parents: "This sketch which was commenced for the entertainment of youthful readers, seems to bear a moral for parents."<sup>25</sup> The moral, of course, is the importance of parents' early instruction of young children. As with many of her periodical and book publications, she designed this piece for multiple audiences (children and their parents) and multiple purposes (entertainment and modeling), yet all of these audiences and purposes were firmly located in the home.

A month later, Sigourney's article was reprinted, with significant changes, in the *Western Recorder* of Utica, New York, under the title "Infant School System." The editor noted that "it is not indeed said that the subject of this article was a *member* of the infant school. He probably was not. Yet the method which was pursued in unfolding his mind was precisely that which distinguishes the infant school system of instruction."<sup>26</sup> This version excised Sigourney's account of the young boy's death as well as her moral at the end, instead embedding the piece into an adjacent discussion about so-called infant schools for young children, which were usually organized outside the family home and which Sigourney had not mentioned in her original piece. Though publications such as the *Western Luminary* (of Lexington, Kentucky), the *Philadelphia Recorder*, and the *New York Observer* reprinted Sigourney's original essay, the changes in the *Western Recorder* were an early extension of Sigourney's theory for teaching reading outside the home, though Sigourney herself had not yet written about that extension. The situation exemplifies how reprint culture could outwit the

vigilant literary management of authors like Sigourney, who was known for her cautious negotiation of the literary marketplace.<sup>27</sup>

Although the reprinting in the *Western Recorder* seems to have been beyond Sigourney's designs, even the original version of "Biography of an Infant," as published in the *Juvenile Miscellany*, was part of the conversation about extra-domestic schooling. At that time the magazine was edited by Lydia Maria Child, who had a distinct interest in promoting female educational opportunities and extending women's domestic instruction beyond the home. Sigourney's essay appeared in the company of articles such as "School Hours; Chapter Two. The Solar Microscope," in which female students discover the structures of a housefly's wing by examining it under a microscope in a classroom, and "Letter to a Sister," in which a schoolteacher encourages his sister to study chemistry and offers many facts about that science for the benefit of eavesdropping readers.<sup>28</sup> Thus, Sigourney's piece became part of a larger conversation about expanded educational opportunities and education reform, and the editor who decided on its placement suggested a connection between her domestic essay and formal schooling that later exchange editors picked up on and extended.

By examining these articles in their original context, we can see how Sigourney's project linked to the rhetorical and political work of the magazines in which she appeared. As Lorinda B. Cohoon has argued, children's periodicals like the *Juvenile Miscellany* allowed authors to draw on "the domestic sphere to meditate on public issues," for they "depicted women commenting on childhood citizenship and intervening in the educations of boys and sometimes girls."<sup>29</sup> Borrowing from the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Cohoon frames children's literature as a "smooth nomad space" in which women authors could negotiate the "striated sedentary space" of political discourse and advocate for change.<sup>30</sup> Within the "smooth" space of children's publications such as the *Juvenile Miscellany*, authors like Sigourney directed the educational pursuits of both mothers and children. I identify a similar "smooth nomad space" in the reprinting and recirculation of Sigourney's work, whereby editors, often male, reframed and extended her ideas into more political and progressive contexts. Paul B. Ringel also discusses these subtle processes of cultural transformation, arguing that the key to success in the children's magazine industry was its ability to construct an editorial formula that could "monitor and adapt its appeals" in a "gradual and intermittent" process of

shaping values in the face of "constantly changing relationships with the expanding market economy."<sup>31</sup> In other words, while many of Sigourney's essays use the domestic scene and women's responsibilities as their backdrop, essays like "Biography of an Infant," nominally directed at mothers in their domestic practice, moved readily into other educational debates because Sigourney's rhetorical project was ultimately reform-minded. She was looking forward toward advances in education rather than backward toward conserving the home, and the editorial formula of the magazines in which she was featured supported and extended this agenda.<sup>32</sup>

This point is exemplified by Sigourney's essay "On Domestic Industry: Addressed [*sic*] to Young Ladies," published in the *Ladies' Magazine and Literary Gazette* in 1833, in which she explicitly connected her domestic focus with her educational project. Turning from a catalogue of domestic activities that "combine amusement with utility," she "entreat[ed]" her young readers "to show that love of books is not inconsistent with what republican simplicity expects from his daughters, and that knowledge need be no hindrance to duty."<sup>33</sup> While the article's early paragraphs about sewing, knitting, spinning, and cooking assume a tone of casual advice and reflection, the final paragraphs transform suddenly into polemic, beginning with "It need not follow that a thorough knowledge of house-keeping is incompatible with intellectual tastes and attainments."<sup>34</sup> The structure of the piece reveals Sigourney's awareness of and anxiety about the claims of opponents who pitted the cultural value of the home against the extension of female education. Her autobiography expresses this same anxiety about her own professional activities: "It was my desire to bear a part in [the household] operations, and to prove that the years devoted to different pursuits had created neither indifference nor disqualification for domestic duty."<sup>35</sup> This fear was shared by women writers and women learners, who were both "unwelcome" in the dominant culture and therefore, as Dasler Johnson writes, "Always conscious of the eye of the beholder."<sup>36</sup> Sigourney's concern that young women might affirm the fears voiced by critics of women's education and writing by squandering their educations or dedicating themselves too thoroughly to their intellects at expense of the home appears too often in her work to overlook. It suggests (as Teed does) that Sigourney attended to the domestic scene strategically, at least partly anticipating a critical audience that would be averse to her educational project.



Sigourney's "Duty of Mothers," reprinted in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1838, shares this anxiety about hostile criticism and supports female education through appeals to the notion of republican motherhood that her southern audience may have found particularly persuasive, "repeatedly urging" young educated women to demonstrate "that by a participation in the blessings of education, you are made better in every domestic department, in every relative duty."<sup>37</sup> This message was reinforced by the magazine's publisher and editor, Thomas Willis White, who departed from the publication's rule of "leav[ing] our readers to form their own judgments upon the labors of our contributors, without comment or commendation from ourselves" with the hopes that "by so doing, it shall arrest the attention of our readers generally."<sup>38</sup> His editorial intervention relocated Sigourney's essay, pushing it toward formal school settings, perhaps in recognition of the larger educative project of her work. Indeed, the essay's placement in this particular journal already implies that it had a general audience beyond mothers, but White also explicitly recommended that female schools use Sigourney's essays as "chaste models of composition, or repositories of all that is pure in sentiment and sublime morals."<sup>39</sup> Importantly, however, this extension into the schoolroom was accomplished not by the writer but her editor.

The ease with which Sigourney's essays circulated across audiences and contexts suggests that her contemporaries, unlike modern readers, might not have seen her work as clearly gendered. This difference may have allowed the writer and her editors to reposition her arguments for various audiences. But some editorial interventions push her work more forcefully into alternative conversations. One such case involved her essay "Domestic Employments." As far as I can tell, it first appeared in the 1834 edition of *Letters to Young Ladies*, though it may have circulated in another form first. In 1836, however, it was repositioned by the following commentary in the *National Intelligencer* (commentary that was reprinted in the *Maine Farmer* and elsewhere):

[Sigourney's essay] is addressed to her own sex. . . . The general conclusions apply, if possible, with more force to the opposite sex, upon whom the sterner duties of life depend. In softening and sweetening the duties of private life, are the obligations less binding on men than on women? The fact is, that it demands exactly the same amiable qualities in every member of a family, to make the domestic hearth the heaven of happiness.<sup>40</sup>

The essay is about preparing young middle-class women to earn a wage in the event of a reversal of fortune. Yet the editor’s framing commentary alters the rhetorical context of the piece, undercutting its political tenor by changing the inflection of gender from feminine to masculine and thus redirecting it to men. By claiming that the essay’s conclusions “apply, if possible, with more force to the opposite sex” (that is, to young men), the editor effectively reclaimed wage earning as a male domain.<sup>41</sup> Simultaneously, he extended the concluding lesson that “there is no need that domestic duties should preclude mental improvement or extinguish [the] mental enjoyment” of both young women and young men.

While Sigourney often wrote about domestic employments, contextualizing those writings in a network of circulation helps us to understand how her essays would have been received and repositioned to favor either her own or her editor’s opinions about women’s education. A pointed example is her essay “Maternal Effort,” published in *Ladies’ Garland and Family Wreath* in 1839. The piece, which tells the story of a family that learns to work after a reversal of fortune, opens with “It is the duty of mothers to instruct their daughters how to sustain reverses of fortune.” Sigourney’s preface and title provide a strong frame for interpreting the narrative, and they are followed by several paragraphs that pursue the importance of “active industry” in females.<sup>42</sup> In other versions, however, the essay does very different work. For instance, the version in the *Common School Journal*, published nine years later in 1848, excises the final paragraphs of the original essay, which pin the issue most clearly to women. Moreover, while the piece still begins with an emphasis on mothers’ duty, either Sigourney or the editors retitled it as “The Father—An Instructive Sketch.”<sup>43</sup> Another version, in the *Christian Observer* (1850), excises all framing commentary, leaving a narrative that emphasizes the actions of the family unit and the dangers of wealth. It, too, has a new title—“Don’t Become Rich Again,” a line drawn from the story.<sup>44</sup>

Though it is not clear if Sigourney oversaw those particular changes, similar shifts in other essays during the late 1830s and 1840s suggest that she may have been adapting her work to the changing culture and her own changing circumstances. For instance, as more young women began attending school during this period, the agenda of her essays shifted from advocating for advanced learning to supporting teachers and schools more specifically. Even if, as seems likely, she did not oversee the changes in the

examples I cited earlier, those revisions would have shown her that the reading public was receptive to her as not only a maternal figure but also a professional teacher and author. As Loeffelholz argues, Sigourney “monitored her own reception and shifted her own self-construction as an author, including the field of her own interdependent literary genres, in response to a changing field of literary possibilities.”<sup>45</sup> Teed reports that Sigourney’s representative George Griffin even advised her in 1835 “to speed up her work on female education so that she would not be preempted,” advice that hints at Sigourney’s strong affiliation with this issue in the literary marketplace as well as the shifting terrain in which she engaged with it.<sup>46</sup>

Sigourney remained on the forefront of educational writing through the updating of her essays, whether or not those updates were to her credit (or even to her liking). Russ Castronovo notes that “form is a dynamic process, an ongoing adjustment to and engagement with social and historical content.”<sup>47</sup> Put into conversation with reprint culture, the shifting form of each of Sigourney’s essays demonstrates this insight. They adjust to and engage with social and historical content and context across each reprinting. In this way, acknowledgment of reprint culture confounds any straightforward reading of authorial control, distributing the author function across various unknown agents. Sigourney was swept along with the tides of circulation as much as she was directing them. Over time, though, she did adjust her rhetorical strategies to suit the changing rhetorical context.

Rather than arguing that mothers need education to teach their families, Sigourney’s essays by the late 1830s were increasingly directed at teaching as a wage-earning activity, and her most common refrain became an appeal to “reverses of fortune.”<sup>48</sup> In essays such as “Charity of Wages” (1838) and “Superficial Attainments” (1840), she drew a strong connection between education and women’s ability to sustain themselves in poverty, highlighting teaching and learning in relation to extra-domestic economies, though she did not leave the powerful warrant of the home far behind. For example, in “Charity of Wages,” published in the *Ladies’ Companion*, education is depicted as enriching domestic economies when the daughter of an unfortunate family brings home a book that her female teacher has loaned her, which the daughter will read to her mother while she works.<sup>49</sup> As the daughter reads to the mother, she is reversing the domestic scene of instruction: now the daughter is the instructor, with the aid of her teacher’s insight. Both the domestic economy and extra-domestic work of

the schoolteacher and the students are validated in this narrative moment, which has become the inverse of what Sarah Robbins calls a "domestic literacy narrative."<sup>50</sup>

It is no coincidence that "Charity of Wages," hinging as it does on the increasingly important notion of women's labor after the financial crash of 1837, was reprinted by at least six periodicals.<sup>51</sup> Other essays, such as "Superficial Attainments," which appeared in the July 1840 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*, similarly directed Sigourney's readers toward more serious study in the face of uncertain futures, admonishing them to "be studious to prepare yourselves, for every duty that may devolve upon you."<sup>52</sup> The audience, however, was not only the family that might face a reversal of fortune but also the wealthy family that might support education by advocating for fair wages for teachers and the establishment of schools to train students in the useful arts. True benevolence, she suggested, is in such training for future work. Positioning the discussion of women's wages in terms of middle-class women's benevolent activities is a prime example of how Sigourney invoked larger political and social concerns in her writing while remaining within the accepted norms of discourse for female authorship.<sup>53</sup>

The growing connection between education and the possibility of earning a wage de-centered the domestic economies that were so clearly tied to mothers and home learning in Sigourney's earlier essays, but a focus on the morality and importance of mothers remained a powerful strategy as Sigourney began to address teachers. While she was no longer speaking to or about mothers when she discussed teachers in her article "Primary Schools," published in *Godey's Lady's Book* in 1840, she made a case for the increased "honour" owed to teachers and relied on the trope of motherhood for its effect: "Teachers of primary schools! have you ever thought that the words which you utter to the little ones at your feet, the counsels which now they seem so lightly to regard, may grave themselves as with the point of a diamond, and go with their souls to the judgment of the Great Day? Have you not, indeed, a dignified vocation, standing as you do, next to the mother, and she next to God?"<sup>54</sup> This call to the teacher highlighted the connection Sigourney had made between mothers and teachers throughout her essay career, in which the female teacher, as moral guide and model, stood in for (and next to) the mother in an educational role that was nothing short of divinely directed. But significantly, this particular appeal was made to and on behalf of teachers themselves. In this

way, the equivalency of mothers and teachers persisted but in the form of its own mirror image: whereas once mothers needed education because they were teachers, now teachers needed support and respect because they were like mothers.

Sigourney's mobilization of the tropes of family and motherhood increasingly enabled movement of the female body beyond the family home. More precisely, as Jessica Enoch argues, it enabled the movement of the school into the feminine sphere.<sup>55</sup> While this development can be read as an extension of women's sphere beyond the home, Enoch explains that the movement to accept women in the classroom was accomplished by bringing the realm of teaching within the privatized realm of the mother, "renovating" the nineteenth-century school "both discursively and materially, from a public, exposed, masculine space to an enclosed, private, and feminine space."<sup>56</sup> Indeed, we can see in essays like "Primary Schools" the evidence of this rhetorical move to renovate schools discursively by placing women and their associated morality at the center of the educational project through their relation to mothers.

Sigourney also sought to intervene in the material renovation of schools. During 1840, as she was composing "Primary Schools" for *Godey's Lady's Book*, she published "The Perception of the Beautiful" in the same journal. Exemplifying Enoch's claim about "renovating," this essay argues that the design of schoolhouses should "aim at somewhat of the taste and elegance of the parlour."<sup>57</sup> While her arguments were couched in material concerns about unhealthy structures and ventilation, Sigourney was also focused, as the title suggests, on designing schoolhouses that would cultivate students' perception and appreciation of beauty as an area of study and development, not merely as spatial ornament. In later versions in the *Common School Assistant* (1840) and the *Connecticut Common School Journal* (1840), Sigourney reframed the essay, foregrounding the issue of schoolroom design as an increasingly hot reform issue. Fifteen years later, a significantly abbreviated version circulated again in the *Connecticut Common School Journal* (1855) retitled this time as "The Beautiful and Tasteful in Education."<sup>58</sup>

The frequent changes in Sigourney's reprinted essays gesture to her concerns about reform but also to her vulnerability to the literary marketplace and reprint culture. While her educational project remained consistent in its attempt to align mothers and teachers for the benefit of advanced education, the function of motherhood as a signifier for her readers shifted as

women’s education became increasingly common. As Loeffelholz affirms, Sigourney lived and wrote through transitions in the literary cultural field, particularly in relation to cultures of schooling, and “shaped her career to them as they, in turn, took some of their form from her widely popular example.”<sup>59</sup> In short, we cannot understand her educational and rhetorical project without considering the multiple genres in which she wrote and the audiences for whom she wrote as well as the ways in which her writings and her name circulated and took on meaning in the economies of literary exchange. Even as her essays (and sometimes her imaginative work) build on the established ground of domestic teaching, they reveal the complex discursive field into which Sigourney wrote, highlighting how editorial commentary, decisions, and placement framed the works’ reception and shaped their effect. Because each essay inflects and is inflected by the conversation that occurs across the pages of a publication, the reprinting and recirculation of essays can extend and sometimes produce important shifts in that conversation. Examining her essays as they circulated across periodical venues provides insight into how Sigourney responded to and was received by the larger culture of publication and democratic discourse on the subject of education, placing her in the network of literary and cultural forces to which she belonged and that she so ably navigated, even if she did not always control them.

#### NOTES

1. Nina Baym, “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney,” *American Literature* 62 (1990): 390.
2. Paula Bernat Bennett, “Was Sigourney a Poetess? The Aesthetics of Victorian Plentitude in Lydia Sigourney’s Poetry,” *Comparative American Studies* 5, no. 3 (2007): 274.
3. Allison Giffen, “Dutiful Daughters and Needy Fathers: Lydia Sigourney and Nineteenth-Century Popular Literature,” *Women’s Studies* 32 (2003): 261. Not everyone other than Giffen overlooks Sigourney’s prose, though by and large scholars do not focus on it specifically or exclusively. On Sigourney’s didactic stories, see Ken Parille, “‘What Our Boys Are Reading’: Lydia Sigourney, Francis Forrester, and Boyhood Literacy in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* 33 (Spring 2008): 4–25; and Sarah Robbins, *Managing Literacy, Mothering America: Women’s Narratives on Reading and Writing in the Nineteenth Century* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004). On her histories, see Sandra A. Zagarell, “Expanding ‘America’: Lydia Sigourney’s *Sketch of Connecticut*,” Catharine Sedgwick’s *Hope Leslie*,” *Tulsa Studies in Women’s Literature* 6, no. 2 (1987): 225–45; and Baym, “Reinventing Lydia Sigourney.”
4. Barbara Downs Wojtusik, “Lydia Huntley Sigourney” in *Dictionary of Literary Biography: The American Renaissance in New England*, ed. Wesley T. Mott (Detroit: Gale, 2001), 243–92; Lydia Sigourney, *Letters of Life* (New York: Appleton, 1867), 268.

5. Mary Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon: Reading Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 36.
6. *Ibid.*, 35.
7. *Ibid.*, 36.
8. *Ibid.*, 33.
9. Parille, "What Our Boys Are Reading"; Robbins, *Managing Literacy, Mothering America*.
10. Melissa Ladd Teed, "A Passion for Distinction: Lydia Huntley Sigourney and the Creation of Literary Reputation," *New England Quarterly* 71 (March 2004): 63.
11. Gordon S. Haight, *Mrs. Sigourney: The Sweet Singer of Hartford* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930); Ann Douglas Wood, "Mrs. Sigourney and the Sensibility of the Inner Space," *New England Quarterly* 45 (June 1972): 163–81. For an example of scholarship that does attend to different versions across reprintings, see Paula Bernat Bennett, "Emily Dickinson and Her Peers," in *A Companion to American Literature and Culture*, ed. Paul Lauter (Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 307.
12. Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834–1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 4.
13. Sigourney was not alone in being subject to such shifting valuations. Tracing the literary reception and legacy of Frances Sargent Osgood, Mary G. DeJong demonstrates how an author's literary reputation intersects with those of other authors and with the shifting currency of terms like *woman poet* ("Her Fair Fame: The Reputation of Frances Sargent Osgood, Woman Poet," *Studies in the American Renaissance* [1987]: 266).
14. In discussing Sigourney's employment of "sentimental poetic conventions of her day," Elizabeth A. Petrino emphasizes her ability to "challenge political injustices" from "within the dominant rhetoric" ("Nineteenth-Century American Women's Poetry," in *The Cambridge Companion to Nineteenth-Century American Women's Writing*, ed. Dale M. Bauer and Philip Gould [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 128). The same insight can be gleaned from Sigourney's mobilization of tropes of femininity and domesticity, which served as a powerful rhetoric from within which to advocate change.
15. Teed, "A Passion for Distinction," 58.
16. Giffen, "Dutiful Daughters and Needy Fathers," 256.
17. Lydia Sigourney, *Letters to Young Ladies* (New York: Harper, 1837), 11. *Letters to Young Ladies* was originally published in 1833, without the introductory essay quoted here: "Address to the Guardians of Female Education." The essay was republished as "To the Guardians of Female Education," *Literary Emporium* 3/4 (September 1846): 265–68.
18. Sigourney, *Letters to Young Ladies*, 13.
19. Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman: With Strictures on Political and Moral Subjects* (Boston: Edes, 1792); Emma Willard, *An Address to the Public; particularly to the members of the Legislature of New-York, Proposing a Plan for Improving Female Education* (Middlebury, Vt.: Copeland, 1819).
20. Sigourney, *Letters to Young Ladies*, 15.
21. Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon*, 36.
22. On Sigourney's domestic literacy narratives and their appeals to republican motherhood, see Robbins, *Managing Literacy, Mothering America*.
23. Lydia Sigourney, "Biography of an Infant," *Juvenile Miscellany* 4 (March 1830): 40–50. It was quickly republished in the *Youth's Companion* 3 (March 1830): 166–67; and as "An Extraordinary Child" in both the *Western Luminary* 6 (April 1830): 164, and the *Philadelphia Recorder* 8 (April 1830): 4. All of my subsequent quotations refer to the *Juvenile Miscellany* version.
24. Sigourney, "Biography of an Infant," 48.
25. *Ibid.*, 49.
26. Lydia Sigourney, "Infant School System," *Western Recorder* 7 (April 1830): 60.

27. Teed, “A Passion for Distinction,” 61.
28. “School Hours; Chapter Two. The Solar Microscope,” and “Letter to a Sister,” *Juvenile Miscellany* 4 (March 1830): 13–25, 71–75.
29. Lorinda B. Cohoon, “‘A Just, A Useful Part’: Lydia Sigourney and Catharine Maria Sedgwick’s Contributions to *The Juvenile Miscellany* and *The Youth’s Companion*,” in *Enterprising Youth: Social Values and Acculturation in Nineteenth-Century American Children*, ed. Monika Elbert (New York: Routledge, 2008), 3.
30. *Ibid.* Also see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1987).
31. Paul B. Ringel, *Commercializing Childhood: Children’s Magazines, Urban Gentility, and the Ideal of the Consumer in the United States, 1823–1918* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), 5.
32. The very choice of the prose form suggests a progressive agenda if we follow Russ Castronovo’s argument that prose itself is “progressive.” Recognizing “formal choices as emblematic of a deeper political concern for disseminating information and propagating opinions,” he uses a charming analogy to explain the significance of the form: “If verse and prose were electoral candidates, verse would be the incumbent and prose would be the voice of change and new ideas.” In this way, we are encouraged to read Sigourney’s prose productions as forward-looking even in their mobilization of incumbent images of the home (“Poetry, Prose, and the Politics of Literary Form,” in *A Companion to American Literary Studies*, ed. Caroline F. Alexander and Robert S. Levine [Chichester, U.K.: Blackwell, 2011], 20).
33. Lydia Sigourney, “On Domestic Industry: Addressed to Young Ladies,” *Ladies’ Magazine and Literary Gazette* 6 (July 1833): 292.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Sigourney, *Letters of Life*, 267–68.
36. Wendy Dasler Johnson, “Reviving Lydia Huntley Sigourney,” *Transatlantic Poetess* 29–30 (February–March 2003): n.p. Also see Teed, “A Passion for Distinction.”
37. Lydia Sigourney, “Duty of Mothers,” *Southern Literary Messenger* 4 (December 1838): 787.
38. *Ibid.* On the journal-related relationship among Sigourney, White, and Edgar Allan Poe, see Robert D. Jacobs, “Campaign for a Southern Literature: The Southern Literary Messenger,” *Southern Literary Journal* 2 (Fall 1969): 66–98.
39. Sigourney, “Duty of Mothers,” 787.
40. Lydia Sigourney, “On Domestic Employments,” *Maine Farmer* 4 (December 1836): 360.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Lydia Sigourney, “Maternal Effort,” *Ladies’ Garland and Family Wreath* 2 (January 1839): 153–54.
43. Lydia Sigourney, “The Father—An Instructive Sketch,” *Common School Journal* 10 (September 1848): 268.
44. Lydia Sigourney, “Don’t Become Rich Again,” *Christian Observer* 29 (May 1850): 72.
45. Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon*, 36.
46. Teed, “A Passion for Distinction,” 59.
47. Castronovo, “Poetry, Prose, and the Politics of Literary Form,” 19.
48. Sigourney, “The Father—An Instructive Sketch,” 268.
49. Lydia Sigourney, “The Charity of Wages,” *Ladies’ Companion* 12 (December 1838): 81.
50. Robbins, *Managing Literacy, Mothering America*, 2.
51. “Charity of Wages” was reprinted in the [New York] *Family Magazine* 6 (May 1839): 358; [Philadelphia] *Ladies’ Garland and the Family Wreath* 2 (February 1839): 191; *Christian Register and Boston Observer* 18 (March 1839): 1; [Cincinnati] *Western Christian Advocate* 6 (June 1839): 28; [Lowell] *Ladies’ Pearl* 2 (March 1842): 212; and [Philadelphia] *Friends’ Weekly Intelligencer* 6 (March 1849): 5.
52. Lydia Sigourney, “Superficial Attainments,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book* 21 (July 1840): 29.



53. Teed, "A Passion for Distinction." Also see Paula Bernat Bennett, who traces the role of sentimentalism in social reform efforts, particularly among "high sentimental difference feminists" such as Sigourney (*Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women's Poetry, 1800–1900* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003], 51).
54. Lydia Sigourney, "Primary Schools," *Godey's Lady's Book* 5 (May 1840): 219.
55. Jessica Enoch, "A Woman's Place Is in the School: Rhetorics of Gendered Space in Nineteenth-Century America," *College English* 70, no. 3 (2008): 275–95.
56. *Ibid.*, 276.
57. Lydia Sigourney, "The Perception of the Beautiful," *Godey's Lady's Book* 20 (January 1840): 9.
58. Lydia Sigourney, "On the Perception of the Beautiful," *Common School Assistant* 5 (March 1840): 35; Lydia Sigourney, "On the Perception of the Beautiful," *Connecticut Common School Journal* 2 (February 1840): 117; Lydia Sigourney, "The Beautiful and Tasteful in Education," *Connecticut Common School Journal* 2 (April 1855): 240.
59. Loeffelholz, *From School to Salon*, 33.