2013

The Schoolteacher and the Secretary: The Newspapers and Community of a Revolutionary French-American, 1754-1784

Katherine S. Madison

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wm.edu/etd

Part of the Ethnic Studies Commons, Mass Communication Commons, and the United States History Commons

Recommended Citation

https://dx.doi.org/doi:10.21220/s2-8ttk-vm08

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, & Master Projects at W&M ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations, Theses, and Masters Projects by an authorized administrator of W&M ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@wm.edu.
The Schoolteacher and the Secretary: The Newspapers and Community of a Revolutionary French-American, 1754-1784

Katherine S. Madison
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Bachelor of Arts, Carleton College, 2011

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the College of William and Mary in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

Lyon G. Tyler
Department of History

The College of William and Mary
May 2013
This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Katherine S. Madison

Approved by the Committee, March, 2013

Committee Chair
Professor Christopher Grasso, History
The College of William and Mary

Associate Professor Karin Wulf, History and American Studies
The College of William and Mary

Assistant Professor Nicholas S. Popper, History
The College of William and Mary
This thesis examines the relationship between an eighteenth-century individual, his urban community, and that community's newspapers. French-American William Clajon lived in Annapolis, New York City, and Philadelphia in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, and in each city he contributed to the local newspapers. Clajon's contributions were pragmatic and localized; he advertised his services as a French schoolteacher and he pseudonymously published his political opinions regarding the new American nation. Using Clajon as a case study, this thesis argues that the mid- to late-eighteenth-century newspaper was a medium of community. It enabled connection and interaction between persons sharing a physical, urban space through a printed representation of that locality and its inhabitants.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Schoolteacher and the Secretary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have come to fruition without the guidance and support of Professor Christopher Grasso, whose insights, edits, and suggestions encouraged me to become a better historical writer and thinker. I am also indebted to Professor Karin Wulf for her early support of this project and to Professor Nicholas Popper for his thoughtful comments.

I would also like to offer a belated expression of gratitude to Professor Serena Zabin of Carleton College, who inspired a passion for the scholarly side of early American history and who introduced me to the pleasures (and pains) of researching eighteenth-century newspapers.

Thanks, as ever, to Michael Madison and Susan Marquesen for their support.
This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Mary Massey Madison,
for being a proud newspaperwoman in another era,
and for passing on Charles Massey's legacy to another generation.
In Annapolis, Maryland in 1757, William Clajon advertised his services as a teacher in the city’s Public School. He noted in the *Maryland Gazette*: “As he does not take upon himself to Teach English Pronunciation (which will be Taught, as usual, by Mr. Wilmot) he hopes no judicious Person will make an Objection to his being a Foreigner.”¹ By 1781 this French immigrant was serving the Patriot cause in Philadelphia. In a letter in that city’s *Freeman’s Journal*, he wrote, “I am not a foreigner. I was naturalized by the supreme court of New-York, in the month of October, 1775....Together with our federal congress and their principled constituents, I am now dignified, and systematically determined always to deserve the title of REBEL, in the sense of the British parliament.”² These two newspaper clippings can help write a social history of this transformative period, tracing the trajectory of an early American immigrant allying with a new national consciousness in a Revolutionary age. In another light, they can contribute to a different social history: that of the eighteenth-century newspaper. Rather than focusing on the differences in Clajon’s self-identification, this social history examines the similarities in his use of the newspaper for such a public performance. In Annapolis, Philadelphia, and in New York City, William Clajon used the public prints. As a foreigner speaking with an accent in an advertisement or as a naturalized American “REBEL” in a politically-charged printed letter, Clajon was

¹ William Clajon, “THE Subscriber having by a great Application....,” *Maryland Gazette*, 28 April 1757, *Maryland Gazette* Collection at the Archives of Maryland Online (hereafter MGC at AMO). Note that in all historic quotations, original spelling and punctuation abnormalities have been maintained unless otherwise noted.
² William Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 12 September 1781, America’s Historical Newspapers (hereafter AHN).
actively participating in the life of his urban communities, via the inky institution of the
newspaper press.

The newspapers of mid- to late-eighteenth-century British North America have been described as disseminators of extra-local news. Historians of print culture have examined their production methods and distribution networks. Others have mined them for sources on the period. Advertisements by William Clajon, for instance, have appeared in historical journals as evidence for the organization of French education in New York City in the 1760s. Questions surrounding the use Clajon made of the public prints, however, speak to the historiographical debates concerning the relationship between newspapers and communities. This scholarship has been dominated by theories of an anonymous “print public” or “res publica of letters.” Under this definition – articulated most clearly by Michael Warner – reading the same printed material enabled individuals to imagine themselves as part of a larger, virtual community of readers. The


4 Michael Warner, The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1990), xiii, 61. Michael Warner argues that the reader “incorporates, into the meaning of the printed object an awareness of the potentially limitless others who may also be reading. For that reason, it becomes possible to imagine oneself, in the act of reading, becoming part of an arena of the national people that cannot be realized except through such mediated imaginings.” Warner’s key example is the federal Constitution. Through its invocation of “We
significant community for Warner is the new American nation – an association of citizens too large to be created and maintained on a face-to-face level and therefore best managed through the circulation and consumption of print. Other scholars have critiqued this model of the eighteenth-century virtual community. Notable is Trish Loughran in her book *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870*. In Loughran’s analysis, the physical problems of distribution denied the possibility of the creation of such imagined communities. When distribution was not a problem (as in an urban center or later in the nineteenth century, when transportation technology improved), print maintained its local and individualized signifiers and therefore, despite the idealization of the “*res publica* of letters,” could not be universalized.\(^5\) Print culture historian Charles Clark largely sidesteps this larger debate, but his theory of the “*open communion*” of the public prints contributes to the discourse. Clark argues that the eighteenth-century newspaper enabled transmission of the expressions of community identity by presenting a “remarkably unified and coherent vision of the world.” While Warner argues that it was an awareness of shared readership that cohered a virtual community through the printed word, Clark emphasizes the content of a distributed imprint and its effect on a community’s self-understanding. The mid-eighteenth-century Anglo-American Atlantic is his focus, and this diverse imperial space developed a

---

\(^5\) Loughran continues her argument by asserting that when print finally enabled translocal connection, the loss of ignorance about the lives and opinions of other citizens of the republic (especially in regard to slavery) ended in civil war. Trish Loughran, *The Republic in Print: Print Culture in the Age of U.S. Nation Building, 1770-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), xvii-158, 223-261.
“shared community consciousness” due to the consumption of the same printed content.\(^6\)

Warner, Loughran, and Clark unite under journalism scholar David Paul Nord’s assertion that “Communities are built, maintained, and wrecked in communication” – in his analysis, the communication provided by the newspaper press.\(^7\)

The idea of the imagined community or the “open communion” provided by a newspaper’s circulation among readers stresses the relationship between the press and a community’s identity. However, the communities served by the eighteenth-century newspaper, William Clajon’s history reveals, are not solely virtual ones. Nor is identity creation the only community work done by the public prints. The eighteenth-century newspaper was produced and consumed in a local, urban space. Jonas Green, located on Charles Street in Annapolis, printed and distributed the *Maryland Gazette*. Each issue

\(^6\) Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 11; Charles E. Clark, “Chapter Ten: Periodicals and Politics: Part One: Early American Journalism: News and Opinion in the Popular Press,” in *History of the Book in America, Volume I: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, 361. Clark argued that “the English-language newspapers of the eighteenth century, wherever they were printed, presented their readers with a remarkably unified and coherent vision of the world....the newspapers offered a kind of open communion; ordinary readers were invited to share with a previously privileged circle in the ritual of communal identity in which one participated by reading the news....Besides enjoying the obvious advantages of such exposure, newspaper readers were also drawn into the system of shared beliefs in which news and literature alike were almost universally embedded.” Clark, *The Public Prints*, 11. Clark differentiates from Warner less in the end result of newspaper reading (where the reader is knowingly partaking in a virtual community of those consuming the same content) than in the framing of the interaction. Warner emphasizes readers’ conceptualization of the large, impersonal reading public. Clark focuses on the readers enjoying the “ritual” of reading what they know is consumed by an indeterminate number of other readers throughout the Anglo-American Atlantic. In a later essay, Clark addresses how his framework for the “ritual” of community identity can be translated to the Revolutionary era: “One reason for the proliferation of newspapers [during the Revolution]...was the proven role of the newspaper as the best existing instrument of a shared community consciousness, a function that took on new meaning now that the community was beginning to define itself as a nation.” Clark, “Chapter Ten: Periodicals and Politics: Part One: Early American Journalism: News and Opinion in the Popular Press,” 361. See also Charles E. Clark, “The Newspapers of Provincial America,” in *Three Hundred Years of the American Newspaper*, 367-389.

featured his distinctive colophon, naming him as the local post master, printer, and bookbinder. Francis Bailey would print William Clajon's name and his self-declaration as a "REBEL, in the sense of the British parliament" in the Freeman's Journal in Philadelphia. The imprints created by these men had a role to play in their local, embodied communities. They mediated actual interaction among living souls, not just connection among fellow, imagined readers. While the potential for imaginative connection did exist, such connection was, more often than not, mapped onto the literal space of the urban community. Readers of the Maryland Gazette, for instance, could picture the "Foreigner" with a French accent in their midst before encountering him on the street, or in the schoolroom. The historiography of the eighteenth-century public prints favors content, production, distribution, and the impersonal readers whose empathic imagination is so crucial to the theory of a "print public." William Clajon provides a window into the pragmatic relationship between an individual and the newspapers he encountered within the social space of a physical, urban community.

Whether as a "Foreigner" or as a "REBEL," Clajon left traces of his life history across the various advertisements and essays that he and his associates published between 1754 and 1784. William Clajon (possibly once Guillaume Clajon) was a Parisian Huguenot who arrived in Maryland in 1753 after having lived and worked in London and travelled widely through Europe. He began to teach in Annapolis in 1754, but by 1761 he was establishing himself in New York City as a tutor of the French language. During his residence there, he met with on-and-off success. At one point he was jailed for

8 Jonas Green, "ANAPOLIS: Printed by JONAS GREEN," Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGC at AMO.
outstanding debt, but gradually he added to his business by advertising himself as a translator and by forming a public school under the auspices of the city's French Church. He was naturalized in New York in 1775 and in 1776 joined the Continental Army's staff officer corps as private secretary to Major General Horatio Gates. By 1781 he was settled in Philadelphia and making his opinions on the shortcomings of the Continental Congress and its leaders known. When he died in Philadelphia in 1784, he was over sixty years old. The Masonic Society of which he was a member organized his funeral.

This is the holistic, printed picture of William Clajon, drawn from information presented across thirty-odd advertisements and essays published in five different newspapers in three different cities. It is primarily a list of facts and dates, divested of the information most prevalent in those articles: the organization of Clajon's various educational ventures and the opinions he presented as a Revolutionary citizen. It is a picture stripped of its identifying historical context, though always placing Clajon in reference to his social role or the broad changes occurring over this transformative period. Reconstructing this biography of an eighteenth-century man who left few other records is a benefit of a twenty-first century vantage point. Clajon did not use the newspapers in Annapolis, New York City, and Philadelphia in order to leave behind a record of his life. He used the newspapers for pragmatic purposes as he lived in the

---

9 Other than the newspapers, traces of Clajon's life can be found in: Maryland General Assembly House of Delegates, Votes and proceedings of the Lower House of Assembly of the province of Maryland (Annapolis: Jonas Green, Printer to the province, 1761), Early American Imprints, Series 1, America's Historical Imprints (hereafter AHI); United States Continental Congress, Journals of Congress, containing the proceedings from January 1st, 1777, to January 1st, 1778, Published by order of Congress. Volume III (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1778), 181, Early American Imprints, Series 1, AHI; Horatio Gates, The Horatio Gates Papers (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1978).
different urban contexts of Annapolis, New York City, and Philadelphia, and as he engaged as a social actor in those communities.

Sandra Gustafson, in her monograph *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America*, posits that “Early American orators understood the contextual nature and strategic use of speech and writing as signs relating the individual body to the social body.” She defined the “performance semiotic” as the relationship between authenticity and performance in orality and print. As Clajon participated in his communities as a “Foreigner” or as a “REBEL” through the public prints, he created a link between the printed word and his living self. In what Jay Fliegelman in a related context called the “performative understanding of selfhood,” Clajon “externalize[d] the self” through publication. However, he was not defining his social identity through print, merely consciously performing a version of himself within it. In so doing, he was directly engaging with his community through the newspapers that circulated within it. The public prints mediated this relationship between the individual and the social, between the living writer and the performed character. The relationship between William

---

10 Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), xvii. Gustafson argues that it was through the relationship between orality, textuality, and performance that seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European-Americans variously “permitted the staging of a variety of social and cultural relations.” Her definition of the “performance semiotic” is more socially communal, then, than individual. Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power*, xv-xvi. However, it is still a useful concept for conceiving of the social performance Clajon enacted as he, as an individual, sought to act as a member of a social community.

11 Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 2. Fliegelman’s monograph discusses such externalization in the relationship between Jefferson and his text of the Declaration of Independence. His central question surrounds “Defining independence as a rhetorical problem” and historicizing the language of the document in the midst of the elocutionary revolution. Yet his conceptualization of performance and print is useful for this study: “Insofar as the form of that externalization is prescribed and determined by a set of rules and expectations, the natural self that is ostensibly revealed is, in fact, concealed by or collapsed into a theatricalized social construction.” How then, Fliegelman asked, would an eighteenth-century individual go about self-evidently declaring independence? Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 2.
Clajon and the public prints illustrates this point: the newspapers of the mid- to late-eighteenth century functioned as a medium of the communities that produced and consumed them. They both reflected the life of the community and mediated connection, interaction, and identity. As a schoolteacher in Annapolis, a tutor in New York City, and as a citizen of a new republican nation in Philadelphia, Clajon used the public prints as if they were an extension of the flesh-and-blood community of souls on the street — and in the printing office. The newspaper disseminated news and cohered — or fractured — virtual communities, but it also worked as a medium through which the actual community could function. From November 1754 to August 1784, William Clajon and his friends used the newspapers as a medium of their living communities, as they went about their lives.

Clajon’s name first appeared in British America’s public prints on November 14, 1754, in the *Maryland Gazette*. Approximately eighteen months before, he had immigrated to the small colony and taken up residence at the home of the Reverend Henry Addison in Annapolis.¹² Now, with the help of Addison, he was being introduced to the readership of the colony’s only newspaper. This first printed item featuring

¹² Eighteen months, it should be noted, is an extrapolation. In a future advertisement, Clajon’s employer wrote: “The Subscriber has now, as an Assistant in the Public School of this City, one Mr. Clajon, who was some Time ago recommended in the *Maryland Gazette* by the Rev. Mr. Addison (with whom he resided for 18 Months).” John Wilmot, “THE Subscriber has now. . . .,” *Maryland Gazette*, 20 November 1755, MGC at AMO. Though Wilmot’s ad was published in November 1755, the eighteen months was, in all likelihood, in reference to the 1754 date of Addison’s original, introductory advertisement. In 1781, Clajon included this line in a letter written to a Philadelphian newspaper: “I was naturalized by the supreme court of New-York, in the month of October, 1775...after twenty two years residence in her [Great Britain’s] colonies”; Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 12 September 1781. Using this measure, Clajon had immigrated to the American colonies in 1753 – twenty-two years before his naturalization in 1775. It can be presumed that he began his American residence in the port city of Annapolis, and that eighteen months later, Henry Addison was writing his introductory note for the *Maryland Gazette*. This is the likely, though not the only, reading of Wilmot’s note.
Clajon’s name was surrounded by international news and community notices. A black horse, thirteen-and-a-half hands tall, had been found at a plantation in Frederick County, while a city dweller had lost his “small black Horse, between 11 and 12 Hands high.” A man calling himself “Lancelot Jacques” was selling “CHOICE Barbados RUM” and other Caribbean delights, while one Cornelius Garretson advertised his leather-wares. The entire first page of the issue was given over to a treatise on the differences between Protestants and Catholics in this discriminating colony. Readers would learn that customs officials in an unnamed port “principal...in this Kingdom” had been dismissed for untoward conduct and that a Philippine king had been executed by the Spanish for seeking to abuse their alliance for his personal advantage. Immediately preceding William Clajon’s short ad was an announcement for the sale of slaves from the estate of the late Daniel Dulany. Following it came a notice from debtor Benjamin Berry to his creditors, informing them that he had plead for relief from the Maryland General Assembly since “all that he has in the World” would not cancel all his debts. Surrounded by the news of empire and the minutiae of the community in and around Annapolis, readers would find a printed article, signed and presumably written by Henry Addison, that introduced them to a “young Man, of the Name of Clajon.”

---

13 “Conformable to LAW,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; [Mr. Middleton], “STRAY’D, or stolen...,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; Lancelot Jacques, “CHOICE Barbados RUM,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; [Cornelius Garretson], “CORNELIUS GARRETSON,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; Sir Humphrey Lynds, “THE Points in Controversy, between Protestants and Papists...,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; “LONDON, August 7,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; “Rome, August 2,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; Daniel Dulany and Walter Dulany, “TO BE SOLD,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; Benjamin Berry, “THE Subscriber, being in Custody...,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGO at AMO; H[enry] Addison, “THERE is with me a young MAN...,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754, MGC at AMO.
This initial presentation served two entwined functions: it was an advertisement for Clajon-the-language-tutor and a letter of introduction from a figure of authority to the wide community of newspaper readers. This community stretched beyond (though it included) the face-to-face connections Clajon had undoubtedly made during his prior residence in the colony. It likewise supplemented, via correction or clarification, any word-of-mouth knowledge obtained by those outside Clajon’s personal circles of acquaintance. This introduction to the print medium read, in its entirety:

THERE is with me a young Man, of the name of Clajon, a Parisian born, and a Protestant, who, I believe, writes and speaks the French Tongue in its utmost Purity, and who taught it for some Time in London: He is likewise very well versed in the Greek and Latin Languages, and has some Knowledge of the Italian and German; having traveled through Italy and Germany as he has through most other Countries of Europe. He appears to me to be a Person of virtuous Principles, and in every Respect qualified for the Business of a domestic Tutor, or Preceptor, to a young Gentleman. Such who may be inclin’d to employ him, in that Capacity, may know the Terms, by applying either to Mr. Green, Printer, at Annapolis, or to the Person himself, at my House, on Potowmack.

H. Addison.14

Addison provided a wealth of detail about Clajon: his nationality (French), his religion (Protestant, though of unspecified denomination), his general knowledge of multiple languages (six: French, Greek, Latin, German, Italian, and, presumably, English), and his extensive European experience.15 Addison also included his personal approval of this “Person of virtuous Principles” who was “in every Respect qualified.” In essence, this first article operates as an advertisement. Clajon, the new resident with the qualifications

14 Addison, “THERE is with me a young MAN....,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754.
15 Though Addison identified Clajon as merely a “Protestant,” it is likely that he was a Huguenot. We can surmise this due to his French nationality and his later connection to New York City’s French Church, a Huguenot institution. See [William Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury, 9 March 1761, AHN; Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” New-York Mercury, 19 May 1766.
to teach European languages, was seeking pupils from amongst the readership of the
*Maryland Gazette*. In fact, the advertisement acts as a letter of recommendation from a
local minister, introducing his charge to this new clientele. As an ad, it sells William
Clajon. As a letter of introduction, it recommends him. But each form served the same
end: to gain Clajon a customer base from among his fellow, literate inhabitants of
Annapolis.

In using the public prints for this end, the dual form of this article is significant. It
is not a pure advertisement, as is Lancelot Jacques’s concise contribution that reads,
“CHOICE Barbados RUM, Muscovado SUGAR, LIMES, and SINGLO TEA in Pound
Cannisters, to be Sold Wholesale, by Lancelot Jacques.”\(^{16}\) Cornelius Garretson, the
leather worker, advertised his services like so:

**CORNELIUS GARRETSON, Leather Breeches Maker, from Philadelphia, now living in the same Shop with Mr. Waters, Saddler, near the Church, in Annapolis;**
**MAKES Leather Breeches of all Sorts, in the best Manner, as well and cheap as can be had in Philadelphia; having brought with him a large Quantity of good well-dress’d Buck-Skins.**

*N.B.* He has great Variety of Men and Womens Wash-Leather Gloves, to sell.\(^{17}\)

Clajon’s wares were neither limes nor leather gloves; they were the multiple European
languages he could teach. As education was the province of the elite, it was his character
as much as his multilinguism that was on display in the *Maryland Gazette*.\(^{18}\)

---


\(^{17}\) [Garretson], “CORNELIUS GARRETSON,” *Maryland Gazette*, 14 November 1754.

\(^{18}\) Richard Brown argues broadly that knowledge and education was often restricted to gentility and to those in positions of power. Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), esp. 3-15. Rhys Isaac also notes that, in the case of eighteenth-century Virginia, literacy and learning were tied up with authority and genteel culture: “some degree of learning was not only professed by the true gentleman, but was expected
pointed reference to the “young Gentleman” who would be an ideal pupil makes this clear. Yet viewing Clajon’s “virtuous Principles” in a narrowly marketable light does the full form an injustice. His character and experiences were not simply “TO BE SOLD” like the slaves of the late Daniel Dulany.19 His qualifications instead demonstrated the role he could play as an actor in the Annapolis community. Both as a letter of introduction and as an advertisement, this 1754 article was intended for a specific audience: Clajon’s possible clientele. And to these pupils and their associates, in this world sensitive to character and to honor, Clajon would have to be the individual described: the youthful polyglot worthy of the respect and name of the Rev. Mr. Henry Addison. This published description was thus no mere inky phantom disconnected from physical reality in a separate, printed sphere. It directly correlated to the flesh-and-blood man living at Addison’s house “on Potowmack.” This advertisement, then, established Clajon-the-Parisian-tutor as an individual with an active role in Annapolis society. And in the action of this establishment – in other words, in the action of seeking pupils through the medium of the Maryland Gazette – Clajon was already participating in the life of his newly-adopted community.

The ability to actively participate in urban life through the newspapers is what helps to define the public prints as a medium of community. On November 14, 1754, it was Henry Addison as much as (if not more than) William Clajon who was interacting with his local community using this particular means. In recommending Clajon, Addison

19 Dulany and Dulany, “TO BE SOLD,” Maryland Gazette, 14 November 1754.
was using the newspapers as an extension of his physical circles of association. That he treaded on his own name to do so not only demonstrates that he was the actual urban actor, while Clajon was only the potential actor-participant. It also reveals that the community served by the piece was localized, rather than predominantly intercolonial or imperial. The *Maryland Gazette* served an urban society that numbered around 3700 residents in 1770 – presumably less in 1754.\(^{20}\) Though the circulation of the newspaper extended throughout the colony, the entire population it served could not have been literate, even within Annapolis.\(^{21}\) The design of the Clajon/Addison piece suggests that it was meant to serve a small community of readers who knew or knew of Henry Addison. Though his ministerial title was not included in this particular advertisement, the reader would have to trust the opinion of “*H. Addison*” regarding Clajon’s qualifications – especially the “virtuous Principles” that he personally recommended.\(^{22}\) Likewise, careful

\(^{20}\) For population estimates of major colonial American cities in 1770, see John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 131. There are obvious problems with using a population estimate for 1770 to judge the size of a city in 1754. However, the necessities for finding a good population estimate for the colonial period in general are difficult. This 1770 estimate can give a rough idea of the approximate size of Annapolis of the 1750s and of the relative size of New York in the 1760s. For the difficulties in estimating colonial American population, see McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 211-235.

\(^{21}\) Though scholars have made it clear that newspaper “reading” often included “reading aloud” in coffeehouses and taverns, thereby allowing the illiterate or semi-literate members of society to consume the news and opinion the public prints carried, the relevance of such communal reading to the advertisements contained in newspapers is unclear. See Clark, “The Newspapers of Provincial America,” 384-385; Copeland, *Colonial American Newspapers*, 17-18. Though his survey focuses on the London press, Troy Bickham also notes how Anglo-American reading customs could be a public affair. Troy Bickham, *Making Headlines: The American Revolution as Seen through the British Press* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 29-39. It is also worth noting that the *Maryland Gazette* would be carried or sent beyond the general Annapolis area to other printers or to authority figures both in the American colonies and throughout the British Empire. See Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, 3-41, 65-81; Clark, “The Newspapers of Provincial America,” 367-389; Clark and Brown, “Chapter Ten: Periodicals and Politics,” 347-376. Also see Loughran, *Republic in Print*, xvii-158.

\(^{22}\) Henry Addison’s position, title, and full name can be traced thanks to the second advertisement referencing Clajon in Maryland, where he is called “the Rev. Mr. Addison.” Wilmot, “THE Subscriber has now....,” *Maryland Gazette*, 20 November 1755. Robert Barnes also lists him in his database, “School Teachers of Early Maryland” as “Addison, Rev. Henry.” Robert Barnes, “Teacher: A,” School Teachers of
readers would note that Clajon’s voice was nowhere to be found within the piece. It is Addison who suggested that the advertisement’s audience hire his boarder as an educator: “He appears to me to be...in every Respect qualified for the Business of a domestic Tutor.” It is Addison’s word and “Addison’s” name that Clajon’s potential clients had to trust. However, it is Clajon’s character that was on display, while the only detail given about Addison was the location of his home, “on Potowmack.” This dearth of personal information offered by the author suggests familiarity within the community of the Maryland Gazette’s readers. Addison was selling-and-recommending Clajon, not himself. For that, he had no need. In the sense that the Maryland Gazette of 1754 was a medium of community, it was an extension of or a supplement to the physical, living community of Annapolis residents – among whom Henry Addison needed no introduction.

William Clajon, however, did need an introduction to the community of readers of the Maryland Gazette. He also needed pupils. Due to that dual purpose, the picture a reader would get of Clajon from Addison’s advertisement-cum-recommendation was selectively drawn. It still correlated directly to the flesh-and-blood man; but instead of containing every detail of Clajon’s life experiences and personality quirks, it narrowly focused on the significant traits to suit the social role of “Preceptor, to a young Gentleman.” In so doing, this November 14 advertisement represents a theatricalized

---

Addison’s portrayal of Clajon was both performed and authentic. As performed, it presented a specific version of Clajon for an intended audience and an intended purpose. It gave the details necessary to portray a suitable social actor in the role of tutor, such as his multilingualism and his European experience. As authentic, it was tied to the living man rather than to an imagined character on the stage. Yet it was still staged authenticity, designed to draw a specific picture of Clajon, taken from his true character, for his potential clientele among the readers of the *Maryland Gazette*. They were the audience of the advertisement, and the audience to Addison’s theatricalized performance of Clajon’s identity.

One year later, on November 20, 1755, William Clajon was re-introduced to the audience of the *Maryland Gazette* as a language tutor at the Ann Arundel County Free School. This new performance, staged by schoolmaster John Wilmot, is in form and in function a reproduction of Addison’s original piece. Printed on the fourth and last page of the issue, between an advertisement for a newly-printed book and a notice for a stolen horse (this one a “Strawberry-Roan Gelding, about 14 Hands high”), the article read:

---

Gustafson uses a theatrical term to elucidate her conceptualization of the performance semiotic: “I have examined the ways that verbal forms mirror and create social order through the staging of authenticity and power in the performances that shaped the cultures of early America.” Gustafson, *Elocution is Power*, xxv (emphasis mine). Jay Fliegelman, too, used a theatrical term in his discussion of the “performative understanding of selfhood”: “theatricalized social construction.” Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, 2.

See also Greg Dening, “Introduction: In Search of a Metaphor,” in *Through a Glass Darkly: Reflections on Personal Identity in Early America*, eds. Ronald Hoffman, et. al. (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 4-5: “Our authors, looking through a glass darkly, will find reflections of identity in early America in limen of different sorts.…[S]elf-description is caught in the texts that the early America players made of their lived experience, their autohistories, their stories, their diaries. But self-description, even when it is caught in texts, is much more transient than that….To see the role and persona in identity, we need to be, not just observers, but theater critics too.…Self-presentations are dramatized….That is theater.”

“Lately PUBLISHED…,” *Maryland Gazette*, 20 November 1755, MGC at AMO; William Dallam, “STRAY’D or stolen from the Subscriber, at Baltimore-Town…,” *Maryland Gazette*, 20 November 1755.
THE Subscriber has now, as an Assistant in the Public School of this City, one Mr. Clajon, who was some Time ago recommended in the *Maryland Gazette* by the Rev. Mr. Addison (with whom he resided for 18 Months) as a Man of virtuous Principles, and very well qualified to teach the LATIN, GREEK, and FRENCH LANGUAGES. He is willing to undergo any Examination, to satisfy such as are inclin’d to employ him, of his Sufficiency for the Charge; and begs Leave to assure them, that his utmost Regard to the Improvement of such as shall be committed to his Care, shall never be wanting.

JOHN WILMOT.

The said Clajon proposes to keep an EVENING-SCHOOL, to teach young Gentlemen the FRENCH LANGUAGE, in a very plain and easy Method, and on very reasonable Terms. He is to be spoke with either at the Free-School, or at Mr. Evitt’s.25

Wilmot, like Addison before him, was introducing, selling, and recommending Clajon to an audience of Maryland’s newspaper readers – for the Frenchman was changing his role in Annapolis society. Once a private tutor, he was now to be a public schoolteacher. The difference is subtle, but it was significant enough to warrant publication in the *Maryland Gazette*. Contained within the public prints, this advertisement would be read by the same audience who had learned of Clajon from Addison but was intended for a different subset of readers: present and potential pupils of the Free School. To this new group, Clajon was presented as a speaker of four languages who had both Rev. Henry Addison’s praise and long-time schoolmaster John Wilmot’s approval. Wilmot’s recommendation is implicit; unlike in Addison’s previous ad, he did not explicitly praise Clajon’s “Sufficiency for the Charge.” The interested reader and potential pupil was to judge for himself through “Examination.” Clajon’s “virtuous Principles” were those noted by Addison the previous year. This article can be read as publicity for the Public School

---

25 Wilmot, “THE Subscriber has now…,” *Maryland Gazette*, 20 November 1755.
establishment staffed by this new employee, with a new program under his direction. But as it relates to Clajon’s person, it functions just as Addison’s original advertisement did. The identity of the living, breathing Clajon (residing at “Mr. Evitt’s”) was selectively performed in print, by Wilmot, to serve community ends. Through publication – literally, through making public – in the newspaper medium, a new audience would be made aware of Clajon’s new role in their shared society.\footnote{Warner takes a different view of the meaning of “publication” to an eighteenth-century audience, but reaches the same conclusion. “So for the early colonists, being public did not entail a special communicative context such as publication, and publishing did not have the meaning of making things public….Insofar as publishing is public, it is as an extension of personal visitation.” Warner, \textit{Letters of the Republic}, 35.}

William Clajon tried his own hand at this metaphorical theater of print a few months after the appearance of Wilmot’s advertisement, on February 12, 1756. Less concerned with his character and more by the services he was offering, in this advertisement Clajon was attempting to attract a new audience of pupils to supplement his work at the Free School:

\begin{quote}
THIS is to give Notice, That if any young LADIES or GENTLEMEN are willing to learn the French Language, and can conveniently begin together, or at the same Time, the Subscriber will keep a School for that particular Purpose, Thrice a Week, at any House they shall please to pitch upon, between the Hours of Twelve at Noon, and Two Afternoon, where he will teach them on the most moderate and reasonable Terms, and in the easiest and most concise Manner.

WILLIAM CLAJON.\footnote{William Clajon, “THIS is to give Notice,” \textit{Maryland Gazette}, 12 February 1756, MGC at AMO. As Clajon was still teaching at the Free School in 1757, it can be presumed that this tutoring scheme was a supplement to his work there. See Clajon, “THE Subscriber having by a great Application…,” \textit{Maryland Gazette}, 28 April 1757.}
\end{quote}

Like Wilmot before him, Clajon was now the “Subscriber” to the \textit{Maryland Gazette} who contributed in writing to its pages. It was his name, as a print contributor and community
actor, that was printed below the material contents of the article. However, this advertisement had little to do with Clajon’s character. The only personal information that could be teased out of the piece would be his ability to speak “the French Language” in addition to English. While prior advertisements could derive a connection between the printed page and the physical world through a performative link between Clajon-the-educator and the man living with Rev. Addison or at “Mr. Evitt’s,” no performance of identity was staged in this first attempt. Instead, the connection lay with the audience and the unidentified – yet physical – “House” of their choosing within which the proposed school would exist. In this imaginative community tie, and in the article’s very real desire to gather a new group of students out of the local audience of newspaper readers, this advertisement represents a use of the public prints as a medium of community engagement. It was published because Clajon had a new teaching scheme and sought a new audience of new pupils for it. No real change in William Clajon’s social role had taken place, for this new project was an addendum to his teaching work at the Free School. Therefore, no real performance of identity occurred. Clajon portrayed himself as a language teacher by the simple fact of his establishing a language school; no recommendations or advantageous character traits were noted. For all that, this advertisement still enabled the Maryland Gazette to function as a medium of community. With this ad, the newspaper reader was being invited to participate in an actual (though not yet existing) “School” for the teaching of “the French language.” The ad mediated the human interaction between Clajon and his pupils that took place in the living, physical space of the city. An authentic performance of Clajon’s social identity helped to
serve that end. But, as this February 12 advertisement shows, it was not strictly necessary to facilitate Clajon’s participation in Annapolis society as a schoolteacher (or his students’ participation as his students) – participation that was partially enabled through the mediating function of the newspaper.

The first published article written by Clajon, however, was simple and informal compared to Addison’s piece, Wilmot’s advertisement, and his own, later contribution to the *Maryland Gazette*. In 1757, Clajon was still teaching at the Ann Arundel County Public School. On April 28, he advertised that he had added English to his teaching repertoire. Published on the inside page of the issue, directly below a notice from the printer, Jonas Green, entreating his subscribers to pay “or they will have no more Papers sent them, and some Methods used to obtain their Arrearages,” the advertisement read, in full:

THE Subscriber having by a great Application acquired a reasonable Knowledge of the ENGLISH GRAMMAR, he proposes to Teach the same at the FREE SCHOOL of Annapolis. Those Parents who cannot afford their Children spending several Years in the learning of Greek and Latin, may, by this Proposal, procure to them the only Benefit commonly expected from these Languages, THE LEARNING OF THEIR OWN: Besides, their Daughters can as easily enjoy the same advantage. As he does not take upon himself to Teach English Pronunciation (which will be Taught, as usual, by Mr. Wilmot) he hopes no judicious Person will make an Objection to his being a Foreigner; and that, as his Proposal is of a self-evident Advantage to Youth, he will meet with good Encouragement. His Terms are very moderate, being only Thirty Shillings, additionally to what is allowed to Mr. Wilmot.

WILLIAM CLAJON.

N.B. This will make no Alteration to the Price given me for Teaching French, Latin, and Greek.28

---

In contrast with this second advertisement, Clajon’s first piece seems underdeveloped. Its language is informal – for example, in the phrase, “at any House they should please to pitch upon” – and its assertions easy, rather than verifiable by authority. The 1756 article was a pure advertisement, intent on attracting whatever “young LADIES or GENTLEMEN” wanted to learn “in the easiest and most concise Manner” what the undescrbed William Clajon offered to teach at “any House” in the vicinity. In this later piece, recommendation is again engaged in reaching a new audience of potential pupils for this experienced schoolteacher.30 Though the main function of this ad was to facilitate physical interaction within in the social space of community, Clajon’s choice to include character references in this second attempt demonstrates the significance of performance to the mediating role of the newspaper.

In his own 1757 advertisement, Clajon was relying on his own recommendation, rather than those of Addison and Wilmot, to assuage the doubts of potential clients. Perhaps, after four years’ residence in the small colony and two years of experience at the Public School, Clajon was well known enough within Annapolis society for his name to stand alone. The ad’s matter-of-fact reference to “his being a Foreigner,” without any

29 Compare “at any House they shall please to pitch upon” with the more formal language of Clajon’s later advertisement in New York City: “Those Gentlemen who incline to be taught, are desired to apply immediately, that the Classes may be form’d, as not more than six, nor less than four can be in a Class, and after a Class has begun, another Person cannot be taken into it, as it would retard the Progress of the rest. He proposes to wait on the Ladies at their Houses, if a proper Number of them will meet together.” [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury, 9 March 1761.

30 This advertisement, it must be remembered, could be read by old as well as new clients. The ad itself could not be selectively placed before the most particular audience Clajon wanted to reach. The newspaper was, in this regard, undiscriminating. As Clark noted, “Unlike today’s reader, the consumer of printed news and opinion in the eighteenth century could not easily pick and choose his reading by placement and headline.” Clark, Public Prints, 7. For the benefit of current and former students, Clajon included a postscript note: “This will make no Alteration to the Price given me for Teaching French, Latin, and Greek.” While making public a change in his social personality, Clajon wanted his current body of pupils to know that it would not affect them.
additional explanation, suggests that newspaper readers knew of his French accent – or at least presumed it, based on a knowledge of his French heritage. Clajon’s confidence would have to stand in for the word of a local minister or the community’s most senior educator – though readers could be left in no doubt of any connection with John Wilmot, whose name Clajon referenced twice. Absent his French pronunciation, however, little information is explicitly given about Clajon and his capabilities as a teacher. Instead, with Clajon as the writer (and on his second attempt), such ability is demonstrated to the reader. In his willingness to set aside the teaching of “English Pronunciation” to Wilmot’s “usual” hands, Clajon showed his understanding of his potential clients’ concerns; the known foreigner in their midst would not disturb the pronunciation of any of Maryland’s youth, were he hired to teach them. He understood that not all of the newspaper’s audience desired or could afford lessons in scholarly languages, so proposed a system to benefit others. He praised the good judgment of his readership by labeling them “judicious persons.” In short, he showed himself to be a socially-aware man, fully attuned to his place in society and his relationship to his clients and the audience of the *Maryland Gazette*. Rather than stick with the model of his first advertisement, Clajon instead moved to a formula similar to that used by Addison and Wilmot. As a demonstrated, rather than presented, identity, the performance contained within this advertisement is subtle. But it is entirely theatrical, and authentically so. Clajon was attempting to attract new pupils for his new teaching scheme, and in so doing was purposefully demonstrating to them his fitness for the job.

---

31 See below for extended discussion on the relationship between a newspaper’s content and the knowledge of readers.
social identity as a schoolteacher, but he was performing his capabilities for that position. He was performing, in print, for the benefit of securing a clientele and for the possibility of tweaking his role in society to include English teacher, in addition to French tutor and Greek and Latin schoolteacher.

Addison, Wilmot, and Clajon all used the newspaper as a medium of their urban community. The advertisement of Cornelius Garretson, leather-worker, provides a solid comparison to their use of print. Published in the *Maryland Gazette* on November 14, 1754 (and quoted in full above), Garretson’s advertisement provides no real detail about his character. The only information his readers could gather about him from this brief article was his prior residence in Philadelphia, his current whereabouts at Mr. Water’s saddling shop, and his ability to make leather breeches “in the best Manner, as well and cheap as can be had in *Philadelphia*.” That selective information was all that was needed. Garretson was participating in Annapolis society as an artisan. His minimally artisanal identity, but no additional facet of his character, was being performed in the *Maryland Gazette* as a small part of advertising the sale of his crafted leather wares. Clajon, by contrast, was participating in his community as a teacher. More extensive details about his experience and character were presented to the Maryland reader to inform that particular social identity. Clajon’s “wares” were intrinsic to his character. He was offering to nurture an educational relationship between himself and his students as much as he was promoting his ability to teach, to use Garretson’s phrase, “in the best Manner.” Yet both men were using the newspaper to selectively stage their selected
social identities in order to facilitate interaction with the Annapolis readers who would encounter them and the services they offered.

Clajon's model of publication changed when he advertised for the sale of something detached from his character and social role. Sometime between 1756 and 1758, Clajon married the wife of the late Gamaliel Butler, Mary Butler Clajon. Butler had left inventory from his shipyard business in his wife's possession, and in May 1758, William Clajon advertised for its sale: "TO BE SOLD by the SUBSCRIBER, in ANnapolis, SPECIAL GOOD BLOCKS, of all Sizes, by Wholesale or large Quantities, at Seventeen Pence a Foot. WILLIAM CLAJON."

Like Lancelot Jacques, the purveyor of Barbados rum whose short advertisement was printed near Addison's introductory piece in 1754, Clajon-the-wholesaler needed to make no extensive appeal to his audience. His character and craftsmanship were not performed because they were not relevant to this simple, commercial role. Jacques and Clajon did not produce the goods for sale. They only marketed them. To act as a wholesaler — at least, to act as a wholesaler within the printed confines of the Maryland Gazette — they needed only to list their wares. Garretson and Clajon-the-educator performed their identities in print because they were using the medium to participate as social actors in the Maryland

---

32 William Clajon, "TO BE SOLD by the SUBSCRIBER," Maryland Gazette, 4 May 1758, MGC at AMO. Two clues lead us to believe that William Clajon married Mary Butler Clajon between the years 1756 and 1758 (or, at the latest, 1761). Mary Butler appeared in The Maryland Gazette in May 1756, advertising for the various services of "the SHOP of her late Husband Mr. Gamaliel Butler," which included making and selling blocks. She appeared again in the Annapolis papers in 1764, by which time William Clajon had been located in New York for at least three years; she was still settling the estate of Butler. In the meantime, a petition had been brought before the Maryland Assembly by Mary and William Clajon, regarding the outstanding debts of Butler's estate. "MARY BUTLER," Maryland Gazette, 27 May 1756, MGC at AMO; Mary Clajon, "THERE still remaining...," Maryland Gazette, 8 March 1764, MGC at AMO; Maryland General Assembly House of Delegates, Votes and proceedings of the Lower House of Assembly of the province of Maryland, 12, 26, 32-35, 38, 55, 135.
community served by the gazette. They did so because the public prints were an extension of the physical, social space of the community in which Cornelius Garretson was a leather artisan, just arrived from Philadelphia, and William Clajon was a language teacher with a character suitable to teaching gentlemanly youth. Their printed, authentic performances suited their social roles as living men in the physical community. A simple seller of goods did not have the same social responsibilities, though one could still use the public prints to connect with newspaper readers and to attract buyers for “CHOICE Barbados RUM, Muscovado SUGAR,” or “SPECIAL GOOD BLOCKS.”

Sometime between 1758 and 1761, William Clajon relocated to New York City. In the New-York Mercury of March 9, 1761, he published a lengthy advertisement, introducing himself to a new urban audience:

WILLIAM CLAJON,
IN order to satisfy those Gentlemen and Ladies, who desire to be taught the French Language grammatically, and with a true Pronunciation, having, according to his proposals, been examined at the College in this City, by the Rev. Mr. Carle Minister of the French Church, and the Rev. Mr. Testart, another French Minister, in Presence of the Rev. Doctor Johnson, President of the College, and fully satisfied them of his Capacity; has open’d his School, at the House of Mr. Townsend, Merchant, near the Fly Market. Those Gentlemen, who incline to be taught, are desired to apply immediately, that the Classes may be form’d, as not more than six, nor less than four can be in a Class, and after a Class has begun, another Person cannot be taken into it, as it would retard the Progress of the rest. He proposes to wait on the Ladies at their Houses, if a proper Number of them will meet together.
He takes no Children; his design being to perform within Six Months, what he promises to do, viz. to give a true Pronunciation to his Scholars, to enable them to translate French into English, and English into French, so as to fit them to improve afterwards without any other Help, than the Method he will advise them to take. He therefore undertakes to teach no others, but such as are willing and capable of Improvement; and is determined not to sacrifice his Honour and Character either to the Caprice of Children, or to the Lavishness of some Parents.

24
He has compiled a Compendious Grammar of the English Language for such Gentlemen and Ladies as are unacquainted with Grammer.33

Before encountering this piece, thorough readers would find an assortment of articles that fell under the category of “the freshest ADVICES, Foreign and Domestic,” as proclaimed by the Mercury’s banner. The entire first page of the issue reprinted the two speeches of the Houses of Parliament to the new King of England, George III, and “His MAJESTY’s most gracious ANSWER” to both. The second page contained, in both French and English, “General GAGE’S Answer to the Address of the Inhabitants of MONTREAL” – the city newly conquered by British troops in the ongoing Seven Years’ War. Alongside this reminder of imperial might was a list of figures purporting to announce “The present State of Matrimony in South Britain”; according to the newspaper, there were 191,023 “Married Pairs living in a State of open war under the same Roof” and only 1,102 “Married Pairs reputed happy in the esteem of the World” (there were an additional 135 who were “comparatively happy” and only nine who were “absolutely and entirely happy”). A less intriguing but more useful notice listed the price of various foodstuffs in New York (such as £2.8.0 for Muscovado Sugar). On page three, a schoolteacher named Samuel Giles sought pupils for his new school for “Mathematicks,” to open in “May, in the corner House of Petty-coat-Lane.” His advertisement assured readers that his father, schoolteacher James Giles, would “continue to teach...at the School-House where they now teach,” despite the son’s relocation. Though Clajon’s advertisement contained

33 [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury, 9 March 1761.
similar content to Giles’s, the two were located on different pages.34 “WILLIAM CLAJON” could be found heading the last article on the fourth and last page, directly below a printed notice for a runaway mulatto slave.35

The New York City that Clajon had made his home by 1761 had a population nearing 25,000.36 In this advertisement, the first in his new city, Clajon was reaching out to some of these inhabitants – the literate, the educated, those with means who desired education, and (above all) to those reading the New-York Mercury. He adhered to the method of publication he had learned in Annapolis, using the newspapers to advertise and recommend himself as a French teacher. The two French ministers and “the Rev. Doctor Johnson, President of the College” stood as his recommenders in place of Addison and Wilmot. As important denizens with command over moral and educational authority, they could vouch for the capacities of Clajon as he fulfilled his chosen social role. As

34 Why this occurred is not certain. It is worth noting that Clajon’s advertisement appeared on the fourth page of the issue, while Giles’s appeared on the third. David Copeland notes that “printers had to produce at least part of their newspapers before the day of publication in order to get their newspapers out on time.” Therefore, some pages filled only with advertisements could be printed in advance. New ads could be inserted on the second and third pages (the last to be printed) at a later date. Copeland, Colonial American Newspapers, 275-276. However, it cannot be known with any certainty whether the separation of these ads was a result of the timing of their submission to the printer or a consequence of some other consideration.


36 McCusker and Menard, Economy of British America, 131. Again, this number is based on a 1770 estimate.
author of this advertisement, Clajon presented himself as a teacher concerned with the management of his school and the satisfactory experience of his pupils. He provided extensive detail about the organization of his classes, such as the number of students (between four and six), the gender distribution (men and women to be divided, though always taught in groups), and the syllabus (translation and pronunciation of French). The language he used in his advertisement was formal and proper. He showed genteel- and social-minded concern for his “Honour” and the reputation of his “Character” – qualities indicative of a well-educated man. The importance of this intelligence lay in its ability to communicate information about the sort of educator and social presence that William Clajon would be in New York. He demonstrated social sensitivity and knowledge of his subject – and he could refer to authority on these matters. Standing alone, this ad nicely exemplifies the use Clajon made of the public prints as a teacher seeking pupils for his classes.

The next twenty advertisements and notices that Clajon published in the New York City newspapers maintained this performative style. In them, Clajon consistently presented himself as a tutor-cum-schoolteacher, reaching out to an audience of potential pupils. But these ads demonstrate more than the role the public prints played in facilitating interaction between social actors. In their aggregate, they reveal a distinct facet of this mediating role. As the newspapers functioned as a medium of the community they served, they reflected the knowledge of that community – whether that information was originally supplied by the newspapers or gleaned in day-to-day

37 See note 18 above.
interaction. This facet had come into play between Clajon’s first and second advertisements in Annapolis when the readers of the *Maryland Gazette* were invited to remember who William Clajon was from prior knowledge, rather than be re-introduced to him at such a late date. The newspapers were attuned to the knowledge of the community they served. Audience memory and audience interaction – not just authorial performance – were key in making the public prints useful to their urban locale. This community knowledge was reflected in the use contributors, like William Clajon, made of the newspapers.

Clajon’s first advertisement in New York introduced him to the readership of the *New-York Mercury*. The next eleven did not introduce him at all. Instead, they presumed an awareness of him among their audience that was either based on his earlier print-enabled introduction or (always a possibility) developed within physical circles of association as he lived, and interacted, with people socially. Clajon’s first advertisement began with his name, and then proceeded directly to present a thorough, introductory performance of his educational self: “WILLIAM CLAJON, IN order to satisfy those Gentlemen and Ladies, who desire to be taught the French Language...has open’d his School.” The next advertisements Clajon published began with a declaration of his already-established status in the community: “William Clajon, WHO began last Winter to *teach the* French language, *in this city,*” “WILLIAM CLAJON, Teacher of the FRENCH Language,” “WILLIAM CLAJON, Who lately Taught the French Language *here,*” and
"William Clajon, Continues to teach The French Language in this Town.‖ These epithets referred to a known quantity, a known individual. This William Clajon was known by select New Yorkers through direct contact or via the printed page. To those readers with less perfect memories, these ads referenced an individual who was now knowable. If his name was unfamiliar, this style of address demonstrated he was obviously known by others in their shared community served by the New-York Mercury—and, as of 1764, by the New-York Gazette. Rather than introduce Clajon anew, these ads required readers to recall that this man who "Continues to teach the French Language in this Town" existed in their midst and had for some time. No detailed introduction was present or required. Clajon was an established presence in New York City, the moniker of "Teacher of the FRENCH Language" serving to remind the newspapers' audience of his already-stated qualifications and the social role he was enacting as he, like they, lived in their shared community.

In each of these eleven advertisements—many of them reprints spread out over five years and across two newspapers—Clajon was reaching out to new clients.39 The

---


39 "New clients" also encompasses former pupils who might have drifted out of touch with their former tutor. (And it bears reminding that current pupils read these advertisements, as well. Their constant interaction with their tutor, however, makes them an unlikely target audience.)
second advertisement he published in the city (in November 1761) specifically entreated potential clients to return to his classes, for “he has been acquainted with that his not being properly encouraged was entirely owning to the above disappointment” of not receiving “those books he thought best calculated for his method of teaching” in time.40 Later advertisements also spoke openly of wanting “greater Encouragement” for his classes, showing both his need for students and a reason for publication.41 Such direct references to the purpose of his ads were not always present, as in the two notices Clajon published in mid-1762 that read:

WILLIAM CLAJON,
Teacher of the FRENCH Language,
IS removed to the House of Capt. Evert Everson, in Beaver Street, where the Printing Office of Mr. Parker and Company, was formerly kept.
He continues teaching the said Language as usual.42

Even without acknowledging the fact, in this notice Clajon was still seeking “Encouragement” for his work – or, pupils for his classes. The simple remark, “He continues teaching the said Language as usual,” served to inform readers that Clajon was a teacher for hire and that they could become his students, if they were so inclined. That Clajon elected to re-publish many of the same articles also spoke to the simple purpose of

42 [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury, 24 May 1762. A reprint was published the following month. [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury, 28 June 1762.
publication – to reach as many potential pupils as possible. Of the eleven articles he published after his introductory piece, there were only four variations in content. Many were printed in the *New-York Mercury* and the *New-York Gazette* on the same day, thus expanding his audience and reaching even more potential students.

Within this extended audience, Clajon’s *knowability* was a key supplement to the information provided within (and the performance enacted by) his various advertisements. The overwhelming content of these advertisements was either an elaboration on a new class organization or notice of his changing address, as in the 1762 article quoted in full above. In noting his removal to a different house in the same section of New York City, Clajon was merely updating readers’ knowledge of him – and reminding those both familiar with him and not that he was available for teaching French, “as usual.” Even Clajon’s more detailed ads exchanged a lengthy introduction for a presumed knowledge of the author. Between November 12 and December 10, 1764, Clajon published six identical advertisements in the *New-York Mercury* and the *New-York Gazette* that read:

WILLIAM CLAJON,

*Who lately Taught the French Language here, after having been examined with respect to his Capacity as a Teacher, by the Revd. Mr. Carle, late Minister of the French Church, as also by the Revd. Mr. Tétart, before the Revd. Dr. Johnson, late President of King’s College;* HAS again opened his School, at the House of Mr. Samuel Israel, over against the Queen’s Head Tavern, near the Exchange. ---- His Friends having persuaded him that he might expect greater Encouragement, should he reduce his Price; he informs the Public that he has accordingly reduced it, tho’ a good Number of Scholars had agreed to enter with him on the old Terms. ---- He translates English into French, and French into English, and hopes the many Gentlemen he has endeavoured to oblige heretofore, who have been pleased to express their Approbation of his Translations, and
have experienced his Secrecy, will both recommend and employ him, now that he makes it a Branch of his Profession.

November 12. 43

This ad broadcast Clajon’s move from “the House of Capt. Evert Everson” to that of “Mr. Samuel Israel.” It also announced that he was adding the role of translator to his social personality. Beyond that, it served to remind and reassure the readers of the two newspapers that William Clajon continued to teach the French language, despite the hiatus hinted at in the phrase “HAS again opened his School.” The language of this advertisement reveals that its readership had previously-acquired knowledge of the author and his circumstances. Clajon did not specify the newly-reduced price of classes, yet his phrasing assumed that “the Public” knew of – and objected to – the “old Terms.” He likewise gave no specifics of his classroom organization, as he had in his first New York ad. Compared to that original advertisement, this one is neither detailed nor introductory. There was no need to be so specific, since (to some) Clajon was already known and (to others) he could easily be known, due to the general community’s familiarity with him. 44

This article’s very hint of Clajon’s teaching hiatus – taken some time between 1762 and 1764 – demonstrates that knowledge of Clajon did not only circulate within the newspapers, but moved around the living community in other, less tangible ways. Clajon was known enough within the community served by the Mercury and the Gazette that he

43 The particular punctuation of the article quoted here can be found in [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Gazette, 12 November 1764. Variations can be found in: [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury 12 November 1764; [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Gazette, 19 November 1764; [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Gazette, 3 December 1764; [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Mercury, 3 December 1764; [Clajon], “WILLIAM CLAJON,” New-York Gazette, 10 December 1764. Despite the later date of many of the advertisements, the “November 12” tag remained on several.

44 Compared to his 1762 note, these 1764 articles are much more detailed. Their length is attributable to the amount of new information conveyed. Clajon announced not only a new location, but a new price for classes and a new service for clients.
could rely upon this knowledge of him and his movements as an actor in New York City society while reaching out to an extended audience of newspaper readers – some of whom knew him and some of whom did not. He could trust his knowability within the society, and the movement of knowledge outside of the newspapers to satisfy the curiosity of inquiring minds.\footnote{Loughran similarly suggests that, even in the Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary print public, such knowledge of authors and contributors circulated through the local communities that produced newspapers. Loughran, \textit{Republic in Print}, 33-103, 131-141.} His long series of New York advertisements between mid-1761 and early 1766 simply announced changes in his circumstances and reminded the readership of his availability, should they seek his services. Despite the general awareness of Clajon and his social role within the New York City beyond the printed page, however, such knowledge did not negate the necessity for printing these advertisements. With them, Clajon could reach beyond his physical circles of association to an extended community of New York newspaper readers he did not know. While these men and women could seek what information they desired about Clajon from their community’s shared knowledge, these advertisements brought Clajon – and, more importantly, his services – to their attention. Without knowing that he existed, the communal knowability reflected in these ads would be insignificant. Clajon sought clients from among both those he knew and those he did not. Therefore, he had to circulate his name, via the newspapers, beyond his immediate acquaintance.

On May 19, 1766, Clajon published an advertisement with extensive exposition in the \textit{New-York Mercury}. This notice ostensibly announced Clajon’s new partnership with the city’s French Church, for “THE Minister and Elders of the French Church, desirous
to encourage a French School, have granted me leave to teach in their Consistory-Room, situate in the Yard of that Church, where I purpose to open a public School, on Monday the 26th Inst.” In this new school, Clajon would again exercise his polyglot talents and teach “the French, Latin, and Greek Languages, besides English Gramm[ar].” As in Maryland, he would “not presume to teach English Pronunciation” so would “not take Children who cannot read English fluently.” The curriculum would include “the use of Maps, the Elements of Geography and History, and the general Principles of the English Constitution,” in a year that had seen the repeal of the Stamp Act. He outlined exact prices: “36s. entrance, and 36s. per Quarter” for one course of study, “20s. entrance, and 20s. per Quarter” for another, and “24s. per Month, and 24s. entrance,” for “those of riper years, who incline to learn the French Language.” Echoing the social responsibility demonstrated in his first New York advertisement, he noted that “My method shall be varied so as to suit the learner’s views, age, &c. taking care to give but few rules properly exemplified.” He was taking care to reinforce his attention to the needs of his clients and demonstrate his educational prowess. To round out the familiar profile, he “continue[s] to teach privately, as usual.”

Despite the length of this advertisement and its unprecedented amount of detail surrounding his class organization, this piece is in function no different from any of his earlier articles in either Maryland or New York. Even in the two most extraordinary

---

contributions to this ad, Clajon was consistent in his use of the public prints. The first read:

Experience has convinced me, that it is highly necessary to caution people against the unreasonable assertion of those who maintain obstinately, that a Foreigner hates the British constitution, and that he cannot have a just notion of it. It is granted, a stupid, illetrate Foreigner can not; but Montesquieu, and many others, have taught their Countrymen to reverence that constitution which they have partly lost, and which puts it in the power of the British Nation, to [give] to their Laws the highest degree of perfection human nature can reach. Is there a good Man acquainted with that constitution, who does not wish his country may be blessed with it? Would it was taught in every school on the Globe!

The second ended the long piece, and read as follows:

Above five years ago, when I came to this City, every one of my scholars had agreed to pay each Month beforehand; but unfortunately, I have not strictly enforced that rule; the consequence was, that I have been arrested, when the money due to me for teaching, could have overpaid all my debts; and after a long confinement, and a much longer time still, before I could obtain a Letter of Licence, I was more encumbred than before, whilst those who were indebted to me, having left this City, I have lost even the most distant prospect of payment. I hope therefore, that far from being offended at my insisting now on the terms I proposed five years ago, the judicious will approve the reasonableness and necessity of every scholar’s paying before hand, each Month or Quarter, according as he agrees either by the Month or Quarter. That custom is followed in most places abroad, and many are the good effects resulting from it.

My ambition being to extricate myself by industry, and an unwearied application, from my present undeserved difficulties, the public may depend on my doing my utmost to deserve encouragement.

None of this information – from the defense of constitutional theory to his public admission of the shame of debtors’ prison – was admitted without a purpose. Clajon wanted to teach English constitutionalism but had to defend his passion and his understanding because he was a (recognizable) Frenchman. To explain the tighter controls regarding payment and confront the negative effects to his reputation from his
incarceration, he was candid about debtors’ prison yet still careful to maintain a social consciousness regarding what (and who) placed him there. In tactfully blaming the cause of his debt on men who were no longer members of the city’s community, he demonstrated both honesty and concern for propriety; this reflection of his character was enhanced by his commitment to the “industry” required to extricate himself from financial difficulty and, as always, the attention to the community’s needs that accompanied each of his proposed educational ventures. In this advertisement, details about his life, social status, and political opinions were included so as to gain control over his reputation and encourage New Yorkers to both send their children to the French Church’s Public School and themselves to his evening classes. Every detail encouraged a performance of Clajon as a socially respectable schoolteacher (who needed pupils for his classes). 

The performance extended in this advertisement – which was reprinted the following week in both the New-York Gazette and the New-York Mercury – further indicates Clajon’s awareness of and concern for what knowledge of him circulated within New York City society. Clajon’s care to admit to and explain away his stint in debtor’s prison suggests that his incarceration was known by an indefinite number of New York inhabitants. Unaware potential clients, in seeking additional information about this teacher from within the community, could discover this circumstance, but not necessarily Clajon’s explanation for it. The inclusion in this advertisement of such a lengthy justification, which differentiated it from Clajon’s other articles, was an extenuating

---


36
circumstance. But it reflected the same understanding of and use for the public prints that Clajon had earlier maintained. In writing this lengthy explanation, Clajon worked to uphold his character and his honor – two traits he exposed his concern for in both his earliest New York advertisement and in his later contributions to the Philadelphian newspapers. He had to regain the trust of his audience and the custom of his clients if he hoped to continue his business and not be jailed for debt again. That Clajon chose to be so honest about a demeaning experience evinces a concern that, within the extended readership of these two newspapers (in which some readers knew Clajon and some did not), misleading information could circulate about him. The newspapers, while one medium of community, were not the only method of disseminating information about that community. With this 1766 advertisement, which was reprinted in two newspapers the following week, Clajon was taking care that his explanations would reach an extensive audience of both potential pupils whose concerns could be soothed and fellow New Yorkers whose opinions of him could be improved by this information. The urban newspaper was a medium of extended – but very much localized – community.

In 1768, Clajon was still living in New York City. He had not published an advertisement of any length since May 1766. But on July 5, 1768, “Wm. Clajon” was noted in the “LIST of LETTERS remaining in the Post-Office of New York,” published

48 See below for a discussion of Clajon defending his character in the newspapers. See also Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” Freeman’s Journal, 12 September 1781. Clajon’s concern for his character can also be clearly seen in a series of letters written between Gouverneur Morris, Horatio Gates, and himself (preserved in The Horatio Gates Papers). In this exchange, Clajon was attempting to receive satisfaction for an offense to his honor (from Morris) that had occurred nearly a decade previously. Clajon to Gates and Morris, 23 May 1780, in The Horatio Gates Papers (Sanford, N.C.: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1978), 11:548-561.
in the *New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*. William Clajon may have disappeared from the public prints, but he still lived within the community they served. Whatever profession he had selected for the remainder of his residence in New York City— or even if he continued to serve as a schoolteacher-cum-translator— he made no use of the city’s public prints to advertise his role in the community. Earlier in the decade, the *New-York Mercury* and the *New-York Gazette* may have enabled Clajon to extend his reach beyond the circles of daily contact, but they were not a replacement for actually partaking, as a flesh-and-blood actor, in the life of that community. They were a tool Clajon used for specific, social ends— to announce his presence, to gain a clientele, to explain his actions. Even in entreatng Clajon to retrieve his letters from the care of the postmaster-cum-printer, the *New-York Gazette* was serving an entirely localized, pragmatic function. The urban newspaper was a tool for the use of its community, and though it may have been a medium of community, it was not the community itself. It played a community function in its most basic purpose: disseminating news. It also did so when it enabled Clajon to advertise his services or when it notified Clajon and others that they had unclaimed mail.

Between 1768 and 1781, William Clajon’s name disappeared from newspapers. In the interim, Revolutionary fervor swept through British North America, transforming colonies into states and colonial Britons into American citizens. Clajon’s life was not

---

untouched by such changes. The native Frenchman was naturalized in October 1775, becoming a colonist of the British Empire as established in New York. The next year, in June 1776, Clajon accepted a staff officer position in the Continental Army, becoming the private secretary to Major General Horatio Gates. This post would take him out of New York City and, while not directly onto the field of battle, into the arena of political reporting and paper wars. In January 1777, the Continental Congress supplemented his secretarial position by appointing him Interpreter to the Northern Department, ostensibly against his wishes. By December 1779, he was settled in Philadelphia and sending regular reports to Gates filled with political gossip and news regarding the direction (and misdirection) of Congress.\(^{50}\) Many of these letters, bundled in the Horatio Gates Papers, have survived the intervening centuries. They paint a portrait of a meticulous, strong-willed character with rigorous beliefs and an unforgiving concern for his reputation.\(^{51}\) They also demonstrate that Clajon still found use for the public prints when he was not contributing to their pages. In his capacity as a private secretary, Clajon would forward copies of the Philadelphian newspapers to Gates. “I send you sundry News Papers,” he

\(^{50}\) For Clajon's naturalization and a summary of his service as a Continental Army staff officer (including his objections to his position as Interpreter to the Northern Department), see Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” Freeman’s Journal, 12 September 1781. For his naturalization, also see Kenneth Scott and Kenn Stryker-Rodda, Denizations, Naturalizations and Oaths of Allegiance in Colonial New York (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., Inc., 1975), vi, 19. In Scott and Stryker-Rodda, his name is misspelled “CLAJONT, WILLIAM.” Information on his staff positions can also be found in Clajon to Gates, Philadelphia 23 May 1780, in Horatio Gates Papers, 11:548; United States Continental Congress, Journals of Congress, containing the proceedings from January 1st, 1777, to January 1st, 1778, Published by order of Congress. Volume III, 181. In a letter to Gouverneur Morris in 1780, Clajon wrote that he “came to Philadelphia, on the 23rd of last December.” Clajon to Morris, Yorktown, 27 March 1780, in Clajon to Gates, Philadelphia, 23 May 1780, in Horatio Gates Papers, 11:551, 11:548.

wrote in December 1781, a common event in their extant correspondence.52 The enclosed issues—now lost—were likely valued for the news and opinion they contained, and on one occasion Clajon thought their contents, though "not new...must at least entertain you [Gates]."53 Clajon served Gates and the Patriot cause until his death in July 1784, having last advertised his services as a tutor and schoolteacher eighteen years before.

The newspapers that Clajon forwarded to Gates in the 1770s and 1780s differed in several key respects from the colonial American presses he first encountered in the 1750s. As the Revolution altered the course of Clajon's life, so it transformed American newspaper print. Still vehicles for the dissemination of news, opinion, and advertising (as, indeed, they still are today), the public prints of the early eighteenth century became partisan presses by the turn of the nineteenth. Impartiality as a printing ideal was replaced by the heavy hand of the printer-publisher, whose personal politics shaped the content of his imprint. Most printers in the Revolution adopted a manifestly Patriotic stance towards the news they edited and the opinions they published, though few broadcast a Loyalist message and some ineffectively sought political balance. Distribution networks made the press a natural political vehicle, and the public prints continued to serve a political purpose long into the Early Republican period. The ability of the public prints to widely and effectively spread an anti-British message has led some historians to credit them with American success in the Revolution. This transition from

53 Clajon to Gates, Yorktown, 15 June 1778, in Horatio Gates Papers, 7:812. If Clajon took advantage of the newspapers for any other reason—such as purchasing advertised books or seeking other advertisers—it is not known.
ideally apolitical to predominantly partisan was not an overnight event, but grew with American Revolutionary fervor. Anti-British partisan opinions were expressed in the New York City newspapers of the 1760s alongside Clajon’s various advertisements. By the time Clajon was living in Philadelphia, the public prints housed a fully-fledged republican print sphere of opinion and debate that sought to influence readers in both the local and newly national communities – idealized as the “res publica of letters.” This was the context in which Clajon sent newspapers to Gates to keep his commander informed of public opinion and political news. This was also the context into which William Clajon, as a pseudonymous denizen of Philadelphia, projected his own opinions about the Revolutionary government centered there.

In mid-1781, William Clajon published five pseudonymous essays in the recently-established Freeman’s Journal: or, the North-American Intelligencer: one signed “Sine

Quibus Non,” two signed “Legality,” and an additional two by “An Anti-Quibbler.” These various articles took the standard form of letters to the printer or to a fellow pseudonymous author. Through them, Clajon was expressing his disappointment with proposed actions by the Continental Congress and its representatives. As a citizen of Revolutionary Philadelphia, he was engaging in a republican print discourse about the direction of his national community. The first of these five letters, signed “Sine Quibus Non,” was published in the *Freeman’s Journal* on July 11, 1781. In it, Clajon laid out his objections to a proposed treaty in which Great Britain would exchange Canadian land for American clemency of Loyalists. “Many sophisms have been strenuously maintained for disgusting our *rulers* from the acquisition of Canada,” he wrote. “Many are the artifices which effectually ruined every project, proposed or *adopted*; for annexing that important territory to our confederation. And, can we fancy that the same insidious tongues and pens are not still *retained* in the enemy’s pay?” This letter occupied half the second page of the *Journal*’s issue. It was remarkably short on any solid details about the proposed arrangement. The event and its particulars must be inferred from the context of Clajon’s opposition, suggesting that the readers of the *Freeman’s Journal* (the audience Clajon was writing for) already knew the essential information. In this essay, they would

---

57 Clajon is known to be the author of “Sine Quibus Non,” “Legality,” and “An Anti-Quibbler” from letters he wrote to Horatio Gates. Clajon to Gates, Philadelphia, 7 August 1781, in *Horatio Gates Papers*, 13:374; Clajon to Gates, Philadelphia, 6 September 1781, in *Horatio Gates Papers*, 13:393. The discussed essays do not include the several “errata” published in reference to these essays. See “The Hint signed ‘Sine Quibus non’ will have a place in our next,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 4 July 1781, AHN; “ERRATA in the first and third lines of the last paragraph but one of the piece signed LEGALITY in our last....,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 July 1781, AHN; An Anti-Quibbler [William Clajon], “To the PRINTER,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 August 1781, AHN. Clajon was also the author of a piece signed “A Freelander,” which is lost. Clajon to Gates, Philadelphia, 14 April 1781, in *Horatio Gates Papers*, 13:214.

58 Sine Quibus Non [William Clajon], “For the FREEMAN’S JOURNAL,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 11 July 1781, AHN.

42
encounter impassioned objections on the basis of European imperial history and rhetorical flourishes labeling the project and its defenders “insidious,” “Perfidious,” and “wicked.” Clajon was making his voice heard within his shared community of readers and citizens. He was seeking to influence opinion and perhaps alter the outcome of this negotiation. For, as he concluded:

Public confidence would be immediately reestablished, should congress publish their irrevocable resolution not to admit the least stipulation in favour of persons, who being born, or having settled within our territories, have acted as enemies to our independence. They should declare that we will not sheathe our swords before Britain has evacuated and ceded to us the thirteen states in our confederation. Congress ought to declare, that these are the outlines of our SINE QUIBUS NON.

The final words in this letter formed Clajon’s pseudonymous signature, emphasizing the political, opinionated nature of this contribution to the public prints. With this essay, Clajon was using the newspapers as did others in this highly politicized world of print. He was acting politically, raising public awareness and attempting to direct public opinion through republican print discourse. Clajon was no longer using the public prints to mediate actual interaction in his local community. As “Sine Quibus Non,” Clajon was using the newspapers to mediate republican discourse in an idealized, print sphere. Rather than function as a medium of an actual community, he was using the newspapers as a medium of a virtual one.

Throughout July and August 1781, as “Legality” and as “An Anti-Quibbler,” Clajon would continue to make his opinions known within this Revolutionary community.

---

59 Sine Quibus Non [Clajon], “For the FREEMAN’S JOURNAL,” Freeman’s Journal, 11 July 1781.
60 Sine Quibus Non [Clajon], “For the FREEMAN’S JOURNAL,” Freeman’s Journal, 11 July 1781.
of print. Prompted by the election of Thomas McKean to the presidency of the Continental Congress, Clajon, as “Legality,” published the following in the July 18, 1781 Journal:

But, what can be thought of a people, whose chief rulers are quietly permitted to violate that constitution upon which their power is established?

Whether these reflections and their consequences be applicable to the state of Pennsylvania, may be easily determined by those who will recur to the twenty-third section of the “Plan or frame of government,” which is the second chapter of the constitution of that state. It is expressed in the following words, viz.

“The judges of the supreme court of judicature...shall not be allowed to sit as members in the continental congress.”...Now, after the reading of these, who can with truth assert, that the chief justice of Pennsylvania, A DELEGATE from the state of Delaware, has a legal seat in congress?61

Clajon’s argument was clear, and – in keeping with an implication of his pseudonym – elucidated along legal principles. As of July 10, McKean was serving simultaneously as Chief Justice of Pennsylvania and as President of the Continental Congress as a delegate from Delaware. In holding both these positions, he was arguably violating his oath of office for, according to “Legality,” the Pennsylvania constitution expressly forbade such duality. In publishing this argument, Clajon could only hope to make fellow readers aware of this issue, and potentially to cause enough commotion that McKean would lose one (or both) of his offices. “Ought not the illegality now pointed out,” he wrote, “be immediately confuted if untrue? – And if proved, ought not the disqualified delegate be

61 Legality [William Clajon], “A HINT,” Freeman’s Journal, 18 July 1781, AHN. The newspaper could still play an informative role. Though it was not the only outlet for the news, the Freeman’s Journal announced McKean’s election to the presidency of Congress in its July 11 issue: “The honorable SAMUEL HUNTINGTON having informed the united states sin congress assembled, that the state of his health would not permit him to continue longer in the exercise of the duties of his office, congress yesterday proceeded to the choice of a president, and have elected the honorable THOMAS M’KEAN.” “The honorable SAMUEL HUNTINGTON...,” Freeman’s Journal, 11 July 1781, AHN.
recalled?" Clajon would have no success, but this subject would engage the writers and readers of the *Freeman’s Journal* for several weeks.

“Legality’s” attack was answered the next week by “Jurisperitus.” On July 25 this pseudonymous writer refuted Clajon’s analysis by providing an alternate reading of the law: while McKean was constitutionally unable to sit in Congress as a delegate from Pennsylvania, he argued, nothing prevented the Chief Justice from serving as a delegate from another state. “Jurisperitus” concluded his letter with an attack: “That though it is natural for puppies to bark at any great or new object; it is not for men of glass to throw stones.”63 “Legality” responded the next week in kind:

THE open attempts made in your Journal, of the 25th instant, to justify an illegality, which is injurious to the dignity of our Congress, and to the constitution of Pennsylvania, must deeply affect every principled member of our confederation....The writer who assumed the name of Jurisperitus in your last number...did not write LAW....But, whatever deference he may deserve, when personally known, LEGALITY maintains, that the 23rd section of the constitution is clear, absolute and positive. It is to stand, until it shall be altered by the same power which framed it....Neither panegyric nor satire becomes LEGALITY; no – he will not even glance at the illiberalities which some imagine they see in Jurisperitus.64

“Jurisperitus” did not respond, but Clajon was not finished with his reproof. Adopting the persona of “An Anti-Quibbler,” Clajon changed tactics. The legalese of “Legality” was replaced by a mocking tone directed less against “Jurisperitus’s” arguments than against his presumed character:

---

63 “Jurisperitus” was further certain that there was no malevolent intent in McKean having accepted both offices, and as only malevolence or unsuitable behavior could instigate impeachment of McKean, the Chief Justice-cum-Congressional President was duly safe. Jurisperitus [pseud.], “To the PRINTER,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 25 July 1781, AHN.
64 Legality [Clajon], “To the Printer of the FREEMAN’s JOURNAL,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 1 August 1781, AHN.
SIR, YOUR signature announced an uncommon proficiency in the law; but your impartial readers soon perceived that you were not blessed with that advantage....But it is believed, that your awkward vindication of the chief justice’s sitting in congress, though in manifest violation of his official oath, was calculated to provoke some well meaning, but unwary reader to attack him. You have appeared in the character of a disguised enemy to the chief justice, to the constitution of Pennsylvania, and to our confederation. .... Infatuated man! Can you at this time mistake the temper of your countrymen?65

The next week, the Freeman’s Journal printed “The POSTSCRIPT to JURISPERITUS, &c. omitted in our last, for want of room,” in which Clajon reproduced a conversation that “An Anti-Quibbler” had held with a grammar student over the many errors in “Jurisperitus’s” essay.66 It was his last word, as “Legality” or “An Anti-Quibbler,” on the subject.

Throughout this month of argumentation, Clajon and his jurisprudential opponent were not the only voices arguing over McKean’s double service in the newspapers. “Legality,” “An Anti-Quibbler,” and “Jurisperitus” all shared column space with various authors using such pseudonyms as “A Citizen of Philadelphia,” “Philadelphus,” “Latimer,” and “Senator.”67 “Tenax” was the pseudonym of Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant, former Attorney General of Pennsylvania. He contributed a piece alongside “Legality’s” first essay on July 18, 1781 and found himself the second victim of “Jurisperitus’s” July 25 response. Sergeant (as “Tenax”) continued to write for the Freeman’s Journal on this same topic over the coming weeks. While Clajon dueled with

65 An Anti-Quibbler [Clajon], “To JURISPERITUS,” Freeman’s Journal, 15 August 1781, AHN.
66 An Anti-Quibbler [Clajon], “The POSTSCRIPT to JURISPERITUS, &c. omitted in our last, for want of room,” Freeman’s Journal, 22 August 1781, AHN.
“Jurisperitus,” Sergeant waged his own paper war with the writer “A.F.,” who wrote some “QUERIES to TENAX” for the August 8 issue of the *Journal*. Though not ostensibly connected to the Philadelphian community by anything other than choice of topic (for Philadelphia, in 1781, was both the capital of Pennsylvania and the location of the Continental Congress), the *Freeman’s Journal* was enabling local Philadelphians to participate in a shared discourse about the direction of their confederation and their state. The *Freeman’s Journal* was both reflecting the debates of the community and providing an outlet for their production; it was serving as a medium through which complaint, controversy, and (ideally) solution could be debated and decided. It was serving to make these debates public—and to reflect public opinion, as well.

While engaging with this thriving Revolutionary debate, Clajon and his associates were not acting as themselves. William Clajon was not performing a theatricalized version of his physical self as he had in Annapolis in the 1750s and New York in the 1760s. Instead, Clajon adopted whatever disembodied mask suited his purposes, and signed his letters with a name to match. As “Legality,” he calmly laid before the audience of the *Freeman’s Journal* the legal objections to McKean’s illegal double appointment on the bench and in Congress. But since “Neither panegyric nor satire becomes LEGALITY,” he signed his next, sardonic essays with “An Anti-Quibbler.” This persona spilt more ink tearing down the quibbles of “Jurisperitus” than admonishing McKean. “Jurisperitus” was likewise a pseudonym, though Clajon felt the name ill-
suited to such a weak legal argument. As “An Anti-Quibbler,” he predicted that “you will no longer assume a character which you have so ill supported, although I expect to see you in another disguise.”69 Clajon’s various pseudonyms were but “disguise[s],” each one a mask to be put on or put off to suit the writer’s argumentative needs. The practice of adopting such pseudonymous personas to engage in public, political debate was a common affair. Indeed, it enabled republican print discourse to function. As a mask, or “disguise,” the pseudonym enabled a writer to engage in serious, frivolous, or charged debate without the threat of direct reprisal. Paper wars could, after all, result in very real duels to salve an offended honor or a wounded reputation. Likewise, a pseudonymous signature decontextualized the author’s argument from the local context in which it was produced. This both rendered invisible to the reader any known biases of the author and enabled geographically distinct individuals to share a print discourse without the fear of irrelevance.70

To the extent that William Clajon performed within the

69 An Anti-Quibbler [Clajon,] “To JURISPERITUS,” Freeman’s Journal, 15 August 1781.
70 The relationship of anonymity/pseudonymity to the “res publica of letters” is articulated most clearly in Warner, Letters of the Republic, 34-43. See also Anderson, Imagined Communities, 9-36; Grasso, Speaking Aristocracy, 299-304. Loughran and Clark take issue with the necessity for anonymity. Clark argues that anonymity was a “convention” of opinionated discourse, but that “often...their real identity was obvious to most readers. Clark, “Chapter Ten: Periodicals and Politics: Part One: Early American Journalism: News and Opinion in the Popular Press,” 350. Loughran claims that “a great many unknown writers, far from being no one, are almost always understood to be someone....general readers did not need to know the precise details of a pseudonymous person’s identity in order to discern the kind of person who might be lurking beneath such a persona.” She further complicates the picture of pseudonymous authorship as one never fully distanced from the body of the author or the knowledge of the local community, similar to the argument made in this study: “anonymity was not always received as a sure signature of disinterest, nor was it always an attempt to screen partiality (or hide licentiousness). It was, instead, a complex response to a public sphere that was for many of its participants a highly local affair, one in which writers often knew their readers (and knew that their readers knew them), leading them to fear personal reprisal.” Loughran, Republic in Print, 131-141. Joanne Freeman provides a useful analysis of the ways paper wars could, in the Early Republican period, cause affronts to a person’s honor so severe that the only remedy was to challenge the offender to a duel. Joanne B. Freeman, Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 11-159. See below for Clajon’s own awareness of the necessity for pseudonymous authorship within the sphere of republican print. See note 83
theater of print in Philadelphia, he performed “Legality,” “An Anti-Quibbler,” and “Sine Quibus Non.” In the world of republican print, to participate in the Revolutionary discourse meant to ignore the connection between performance of self and participation in the community.

Clajon took pains to keep his characters distinct, and to maintain at least the façade of separation between himself (as “William Clajon”) and the similarly-opinionated “Legality” and “An Anti-Quibbler.” In print, “An Anti-Quibbler” could “vouch for LEGALITY” but do no more.71 Clajon elaborated on this division the following week, in his second response as “An Anti-Quibbler” to “Jurisperitus”: “I shall glance at your manner of attacking the defenders of positive laws, and in particular, the writer known to you by the name of Legality, for whom I declared that I could ‘vouch.’ He is my friend.”72 Even when writing under his own name, as he was driven to do in late August 1781, he maintained the smokescreen separating “William Clajon,” “Legality,” and “An Anti-Quibbler.” Although he (as himself) wrote that, “I not only vouch for them both, but cheerfully consent to be answerable for them, before a competent board or tribunal, for their respective publications, from the 13th number of the Journal to this day,” he sustained the independent character of his pseudonyms, always referring to “Legality,”

for Sergeant’s response, as “Tenax,” that supports Loughran’s view of the pseudonym in Early Republican debate.

72 An Anti-Quibbler [Clajon.] “The POSTSCRIPT to JURISPERITUS, &c. omitted in our last, for want of room,” Freeman’s Journal, 22 August 1781. Clajon maintained the illusion of a physical division between “Legality” and “Anti-Quibbler” throughout this second essay: “Two or three days after the chief justice of Pennsylvania had been promoted to the presidency of congress, the person who is so obnoxious to you in the character of Legality, had a conversation with a gentleman who told him in my presence, that the 23d section excluded the judges of the supreme court from sitting in congress....My friend retired, read the constitution, and was convinced that the complaint was well grounded....Upon this principle he wrote the short and decent HINT, published in the Freeman’s Journal, number XIII. This is the man whom; without knowing him, you charged with being actuated by ‘malice and envy.’”

49
“Antiquibbler,” or “him,” rather than “I.” Even when attributing to “Legality” and “An Anti-Quibbler” his own personal characteristics, he kept up the façade:

“Legality” and the “Antiquibler[”] in the journal, are like me strangers in Pennsylvania, to which neither of them any more than I took the local oath of allegiance, but we all belong to another of the confederated states, and have the honour to be in the federal service. We are equally destitute of wealth, connections and influence, and consequently more exposed to oppression, more interested than the most opulent, in the moral rectitude of our rulers, and in a scrupulous adherence the federal laws of our republican system.

In many respects, for Clajon to “vouch” for “Legality” and “An Anti-Quibbler” (and for “An Anti-Quibbler” to “vouch” for “Legality”) was tantamount to declaring his authorship of their essays. But though Clajon did “vouch” for them, he kept a paper-thin distance. His admission to “consent to be answerable for them” could hide nothing, but it did insist upon the importance of a division between the pseudonymous signature and the living actor behind it. Clajon maintained the veneer of republican print discourse and its requirement of pseudonymous authorship. He recognized (and defended) his right to anonymously participate in Revolutionary debates. To contribute to the newspapers, he needed to keep his printed opinions separate from the flesh-and-blood man with paper and quill in hand, whose character as a French native and officer under Major General Gates’s command could bias a reader’s understanding of his arguments.

When Thomas McKean entered the fray on August 22, 1781 – the same date Clajon published his second letter signed “An Anti-Quibbler” – he sought to connect his pseudonymous slanderers with their flesh-and-blood personalities. His short essay abuts

---

73 William Clajon, “To the honourable THOMAS M’KEAN,” Freeman's Journal, 29 August 1781, AHN.
74 Clajon, “To the honourable THOMAS M’KEAN,” Freeman’s Journal, 29 August 1781.
75 See note 70 above.
Clajon’s pseudonymous “POSTSCRIPT to JURISPERITUS, &c.,” on the second page of the Freeman’s Journal, providing an ironic, if unintended, colophon to Clajon’s latest essay. It read, in full:

To the PRINTER.

SIR,
TO prevent mistakes, I desire you will publish, in your next paper, the names of the late writers under the signatures of Tenax, Legality, Anti-Quibbler, &c.
Tenax is JONATHAN DICKINSON SERGEANT, esquire, attorney at law. As in his last pretty piece he tells us he is “a painter,” I shall leave it to himself to finish his own portrait.
LEGALITY, and most, if not all the others, are the signatures of a gentleman whose name, I am told, is WILLIAM CLAJON.
He is a French gentleman, and, though, I believe, he has never taken the oath of allegiance to the commonwealth of Pennsylvania, appears to have its constitution more at heart than any officer in it. He receives from congress sixty-six dollars per month as secretary to general Gates and interpreter for the northern department, in which stations he does no duty, and therefore he may usefully employ himself in writing against sinecures and double appointments.
After this, I flatter myself, it will be unnecessary to request my friends, not to take any further notice of such publications, as they can make no unfavourable impressions.

I am, sir,
Your very humble servant,

THO. M‘KEAN.76

McKean’s short notice carried the full weight of his name and position. He singled out for censure the two writers who had done more, in the preceding months, to question the constitutionality of his political authority than any others. This censure, however, was done not by refuting their arguments or defending his own position, but by naming Sergeant and Clajon as his pseudonymous critics. McKean unmasked them – and in so doing, he threw doubt over the validity and republican disinterestedness of their

---

76 Thomas McKean, “To the PRINTER,” Freeman’s Journal, 22 August 1781, AHN.
respective essays. After this unveiling, such publications could “make no unfavourable impressions” on McKean’s character among the readers of the *Journal*, for “Legality” (and, it is implied, “An Anti-Quibbler”) was irrevocably connected to “a French gentleman” who “has never taken the oath of allegiance to the commonwealth of Pennsylvania” and who “does no duty.” This brief description was McKean’s own staging of Clajon’s identity; it connected the written character with the living actor but was set in an unflattering light to diminish the weight of “Legality’s” arguments. In naming Clajon, and in emphasizing the double appointment held by this now-known individual, McKean withdrew his critic from participation in the republican print discourse concerning this topic. In this limited sense, the performative function of the public prints was not only unnecessary for the new print public to function. Authentic performance – both drawn from reality and staged in a certain light – restricted participation in the republican print discourse.\(^7\)

McKean’s short letter demonstrates that the newspaper still could and still did function as a medium of the local, urban community, even after its broad transformation into a politicized instrument for national debate. In revealing Clajon’s authorship, McKean was drawing on the wellspring of knowledge of the local Philadelphian community and “outing” him to the local community of readers. Despite the care Clajon

---

\(^7\) Loughran details a similar situation involving the knowledge of Tom Paine’s authorship of *Common Sense* within Philadelphia. While the pamphlet was published anonymously, knowledge of Paine’s authorship became known within the urban context relatively quickly. Thanks to the critical work of printer Robert Bell, Paine became quickly associated with a grasping, low-class, English background that became inalterably connected to the tagline “Written By an Englishman” printed inside the pamphlet. Despite his aspirations towards an idealized, disinterested republican print sphere (though he still boasted of his authorship), Paine was not able to escape “the limits of the particular moment and scene in which he found himself” or “the actually existing social hierarchies of Revolutionary Philadelphia.” Loughran, *Republic in Print*, 33-93.
took, in print, to keep his pseudonymous characters distinct, his authorship of his various essays was not entirely unknown within Philadelphia. In his second contribution as “An Anti-Quibbler,” Clajon referenced sharing his drafted essays with a local acquaintance: “I had written thus far, when I waited on a gentleman I wished to consult before the delivery of this for the press.”\textsuperscript{78} Clajon admitted to his authorship of “Sine Quibus Non,” “Legality,” and “An Anti-Quibbler” in his correspondence with Horatio Gates.\textsuperscript{79} Even “Jurisperitus” was known, or rumored to be known, within Philadelphia (though his identity remains hidden today). Clajon, as “An Anti-Quibbler,” remarked of his opponent: “You doubtless wished that he [McKean] should be considered as the author; nay, did you not whisper, or did you not direct your associates to whisper, that he wrote your own performance?”\textsuperscript{80} McKean likewise had to discover the identity of “Legality” by inquiry; in his letter he confessed that his “name, I am told, is WILLIAM CLAIJON.”\textsuperscript{81} The knowability of these authorships directly connected the printed word (however purposefully anonymous) with the local, living community. The “gentleman” Clajon consulted before publishing “An Anti-Quibbler” would know the identity of that piece’s pseudonymous author when reading the essay in the published paper; the identity

\textsuperscript{78} An Anti-Quibbler [Clajon], “The POSTSCRIPT to JURISPERITUS, &c. omitted in our last, for want of room,” Freeman’s Journal, 22 August 1781.

\textsuperscript{79} See note 57 above for reference to the letters admitting his identity of “Sine Quibus Non,” “Legality,” and “An Anti-Quibbler.” Clajon did, however, only make his authorship of “Legality” and “An Anti-Quibbler” known to Gates after McKean published his revelation. This can be presumed, however, to be a choice Clajon made since “he is a Whigg and your Friend.” Clajon was careful to defend and apologize for his actions: “I have been for the Confederation against Mr. McKean under the Signatures of Legality and an Anti-Quibbler in the Journal. He discovered and attacked the Author, who was forced to answer him in the Manner you will see in the inclosed Papers. I am sorry for this Contest; for he is a Whigg and your Friend; but the Confederation is above every other Regard. The Decency with which I acted even when under the Mask procures me the Esteem of his warmest Friends, though they lament the Occasion and his indiscreet attack.” Clajon to Gates, Philadelphia, 6 September 1781, in Horatio Gates Papers, 13:393.

\textsuperscript{80} An Anti-Quibbler [Clajon], “To JURISPERITUS,” Freeman’s Journal, 15 August 1781.

\textsuperscript{81} McKean, “To the PRINTER,” Freeman’s Journal, 22 August 1781 (italicized emphasis mine).

53
of "Jurisperitus" was speculated on, and the rumors circulated their way back into print; Thomas McKeans had only to ask within his community to discover the authors of published essays critiquing his positions of power. And in publishing the names behind these signatures, McKeans was reaching out to "my friends" in the community, widening the circles that could claim this local knowledge. He was extending the knowledge to the wider community of the Freeman's Journal's readers, the core of whom lived in Philadelphia and, though consuming news and opinion of national import, consuming it within their local, urban context.82

But there remained an uneasy relationship between the republican print discourse and the concerns of the local community. The uneasiness lay in how both roles were mediated through the locally-produced and locally-consumed newspaper. William Clajon's two published responses to McKeans's exposing letter demonstrate that discomfort. The first essay, published in the Freeman's Journal on August 29, 1781 and occupying over half of the second page of the issue, was where Clajon claimed to be "answerable" for the conduct of "Legality" and "An Anti-Quibbler." 83 In this lengthy letter addressed "To the honourable THOMAS MCKEAN," Clajon explicitly defended his

---

82 See note 70 for Loughran's discussion of the knowledge of pseudonymous authors within a local setting.
83 A third of the remaining space on the page was given over to "Tenax's" response to McKeans's letter. Unlike Clajon, Sergeant responded under his pseudonym and not his real name. Sergeant argued that "THERE must be an uncommon perversion of understanding in that man, who can seriously believe that the force of arguments depends on the person who uses them. Truth is truth, and reason is reason, whether they come from the mouth of a school boy or a president of congress; and it is therefore no way of answering the arguments of Tenax and Legality, to run into the little dirty business of hunting out the name of an author." Tenax [Sergeant], "To the PRINTER," Freeman's Journal, 29 August 1781. Sergeant might take issue with the necessity of anonymity for the "republican print sphere" to function, but that was to idealize republican print. To continue to write as "Tenax" and not as Jonathan Dickinson Sergeant was to participate in a Revolutionary print discourse where "truth" and "reason" reigned supreme, not the power or character of any individual.
right (and his responsibility) to participate in republican print discourse and to do so pseudonymously:

Weak minds commonly judge of the merits of a cause by comparing the relative consequence of the parties....For this and no other reason Legality and the Anti-Quibbler concealed their names. They well knew that they were men of no consequence, and that their obscurity, if known, might injure a good cause, when opposed by great men.... Of whatever state we may be members, under our system, it is our unalienable right, indispensable duty, and evident interest, that no delegate may sit in our federal congress, in violation of the official oath which he has taken to his respective state. In that assembly he votes for the whole confederation. This is the principle of laudable selfishness, on which Legality and Anti-Quibbler will at all times justify their conduct. I trust, sir, it will justify mine in becoming answerable for them.\(^{84}\)

According to this defense, the mistake, as Clajon saw it, of the President of the Continental Congress was so egregious an error that he, as a “member” of the federal union, had to exercise his “unalienable right” to publish it, and make it known to the reading public. It was his “indispensable duty” to enter the world of republican print discourse. And he sought “obscurity” – or, pseudonymity – because its opposite would “injure a good cause.” Only in signing “Legality” and “An Anti-Quibbler” instead of “William Clajon” could he hope to make his voice heard. The rest of this first letter alternated between shocked rhetoric at his unmasking, couched deference towards

\(^{84}\) Clajon, “To the honourable THOMAS M'KEAN,” *Freeman's Journal*, 29 August 1781. It bears mentioning that in this letter Clajon referred to the debate over McKean’s service as one of the “local disputes of this state.” By that, however, he means as the debate touched on the wording of the Pennsylvania constitution and McKean’s service as the commonwealth’s Chief Justice. However, as is evident in the above quote, he recognized the national significance of his argument, for it affected the federal Continental Congress. In his next essay, he wrote: “My letter printed in the Freeman’s Journal, Numb. 19, demonstrates, in my humble opinion, that the contest referred to, is not local, but concerns the whole confederation. I had therefore a constitutional right to declare my sentiments on the subject, without taking a local ‘oath of allegiance’ to the state where the dispute originated.” Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” *Freeman's Journal*, 12 September 1781. The particular complaint about Clajon intruding upon local matters only arose once Clajon was known not to be a settled Philadelphian. In the anonymous print sphere, his extra-local origin was no impediment to the potential influence of his argument because it was not known.
McKean’s person, and repetition of the same unconstitutional argument surrounding McKean’s service in court and in Congress. In directly addressing his national designs, and in continuing to speak towards national ends, Clajon was attempting to continue to take part in republican, national debates – though under his unconcealed name. In continuing his defense two weeks later, Clajon would move from a topic of national importance to one of personal note.

In the essay Clajon published in the *Freeman’s Journal* on September 12, 1781, he performed himself in print in order to vindicate his honor and to correct any misunderstandings held among the newspaper’s readers. He prepared for this defense at the end of his first essay, with the following:

> My honour, Sir, having been attacked by you, I find myself under the necessity of addressing the public, to remove the prejudices conceived from the positive charge of a person in your eminent station. My enemies likewise, under colour of defending you, propagate many reports highly injurious to me. These must be checked; and it is my intention next week to publish my own defence, without referring to your appointment, or reflecting on your attack upon me....Not to be crushed under the weight of your charge is all I can expect.\(^\text{85}\)

Clajon began his September 12 essay with a similar calling: “I am indirectly charged with being a foreigner, and an over-officious champion for the constitution of Pennsylvania....To each of these accusations I shall answer as concisely as I can.” He proceeded to methodically answer each charge McKean had laid at his door. He was not

---

\(^{85}\) Clajon, “To the honourable THOMAS M’KEAN,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 29 August 1781. The piece did not appear “the next week,” but the one following. Clajon gave a reason in the September 5 *Freeman’s Journal*: “SIR, I Could not with propriety write my defence, the publication of which was promised in my letter printed last week in your Journal, until I had obtained an official copy of a paper alluded to in that letter. The multiplicity of business prevented the secretary of congress or his deputy from supplying me with it before Saturday evening. Many avocations, needless to mention, necessitate me to defer it till next week.” William Clajon, “To the PRINTER,” *Freeman’s Journal*, 5 September 1781, AHN.
a foreigner, as he had been naturalized in New York in 1775. He had the right, as a
citizen of New York, to “partake of all the rights to which the New-Yorkers are entitled,
within and without the territories of the confederated states.” He held no sinecure, nor
did his essays complain about the practice of holding “double appointments” when not
restricted by law. Clajon even took issue with McKean’s singling out his salary as a staff
officer in the army, dedicating half of his entire letter to a history of his Revolutionary
service and the justification for his “sixty-six dollars per month.”86 This detailed letter
was meant to reach those who had read McKean’s piece three weeks prior. It was meant
to refute the “injurious” performance of Clajon’s identity in the earlier letter, piece by
piece, and to stage a new, better-informed “William Clajon” for the benefit of these
readers. As the heading of the piece underlines, Clajon was reaching out “To the
PUBLIC” under his own name, to perform himself in print, and for the specific purpose
of connecting the flesh-and-blood man readers could encounter on the street or in
conversation with the ink-drawn man readers did encounter on the page.87 William
Clajon was using the public prints as he had done almost thirty years before in Annapolis
and twenty years before in New York City.

Yet, in perfecting readers’ understanding of his situation and character, Clajon
was not solely reaching out to readers who were likely to encounter him or seek him out
on the streets of Philadelphia. He was, in this performance, also defending the opinions
expressed in “Legality” and “An Anti-Quibbler” by refuting the arguments set forth by
McKean for invalidating them. He was participating as a Revolutionary citizen in

86 Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” Freeman’s Journal, 12 September 1781.
87 Clajon, “To the PUBLIC,” Freeman’s Journal, 12 September 1781.
republican print and as a Philadelphia denizen in his local newspaper. He was using print to achieve both ends, and in so doing he demonstrated that the line between the republican print sphere and the roles played by the traditional newspaper was blurry, at best. The ideal, anonymous/pseudonymous print public could be easily interrupted by local concerns and thwarted by local knowledge. At the same time, local knowledge and concerns could reflect – or even hope to influence – national debate. McKean and Clajon, in their respective essays signed with their own names, showed that there was intent used in connecting the newspaper with its urban locality and there was explicitly articulated intent to engage in an anonymous, republican print discourse. Both were achieved through the *Freeman's Journal*, but both overlapped. The "res publica of letters" did not live up to its ideal.

The Revolutionary-era newspaper was not entirely composed of politicized debates intended for local and extra-local audiences. Twenty-six years after Henry Addison introduced Clajon-the-Frenchman to an Annapolis audience, and twenty years after Clajon introduced himself as a French tutor to the *New-York Mercury*’s readers, the following piece appeared in Philadelphia’s *Freeman's Journal:*

*The FRENCH LANGUAGE.*

88 In his discussion of John Trumbull, Christopher Grasso similarly argues that print could serve several, overlapping functions at once, and be used for all those functions by the same individual. “[T]hat Trumbull did all of this in a dozen years suggest that these traditional, republican, and liberal constructions of public writing – along with a conception of literary practice drawn from the sociable community of polite letters – should be considered less as successive stages or distinct epochs than as overlapping and even concurrent possibilities. But,” he cautions, “we need to be as cautious of the notion of ‘concurrent possibilities’ as of ‘discontinuous epochs.’” Grasso, *Speaking Aristocracy*, 323-324. See also Clark, “The Newspapers of Provincial America,” 384-385.

89 This line of thought is, to a great extent, how Loughran challenges Warner’s conception of the national print public. Reducing her argument to its simplest point, she asserts that the newspaper was locally produced and locally consumed. To see otherwise would be to rid it of its intended historical context. Loughran, *Republic in Print*, xvii-158.
JAMES ROBINS, a native of Paris, continues to teach the French language in this city with great success. The Gentlemen and Ladies, with whose instruction he has been intrusted for some months past, can, with more propriety than himself, and with greater impartiality, inform the public what his talents and capacity are.

As autumn now approaches, when the sweet reviving zephyrs will succeed the scorching heats of summer, he takes the liberty of exhorting all the amiable young persons of both sexes in this city, to take the advantage of that season, in order to learn from him this language in perfection, and with the most elegant pronunciation.

By his easy, expeditious method of instruction, if his pupils will give a proper application, they may attain all the necessary knowledge of this polite language in a few months, and by the exercise of patience, moderation, and every other quality requisite for the advancement of education, he hopes to avoid giving that disgust, particularly to the fair sex, that is often occasioned by the unskilfulness, impatience, or inattention of teachers.

The said James Robins having completed a liberal education at Paris, and having for upwards of forty years passed his life in travelling the four quarters of the world, and lived in all nations, invariably frequenting the best company in each, it is presumed that he has had every possible opportunity of knowing and practising good and avoiding evil; and that he possesses, in the highest degree, all the qualities that are requisite to give complete satisfaction to the public on the subject of the education of those young persons who shall be intrusted to his care.

He teaches young Gentlemen and Ladies at their respective lodgings, and will give punctual attendance at specified hours.

Gentlemen and Ladies desiring to see him, will please to send their directions to Mr. Robert Bell’s book-store, in Third-street, near to St. Paul’s church, and they shall be waited upon without disappointment or delay.90

90 [James Robins], “The FRENCH LANGUAGE,” Freemans’ Journal, 29 August 1781, AHN. Identical reprints of this advertisement were published in the Freeman’s Journal on September 12 and September 26. [James Robins], “The FRENCH LANGUAGE,” Freeman’s Journal, 12 September 1781, AHN; [James Robins], “The FRENCH LANGUAGE,” Freeman’s Journal, 26 September 1781, AHN. In October, Robins had “hired a house in Race-street,” which prompted another slew of advertisements. [James Robins], “James Robins,” Pennsylvania Packet, 23 October 1781, AHN; [James Robins], “James Robins,” Pennsylvania Packet, 30 October 1781, AHN; [James Robins], “James Robins,” Pennsylvania Packet, 6 November 1781, AHN. In December, Robins, “in order to express his respects for our illustrious general, exhibited at his house in Sixth street...an Emblematical Representation.” “Mr. JAMES ROBINS,” Freeman’s Journal, 5 December 1781, AHN. The next year, he advertised that he would “Open again his SCHOOL.” [James Robins], “James Robins,” Pennsylvania Packet, 26 September 1782, AHN; [James Robins], “JAMES ROBINS,” Freeman’s Journal, 9 October 1782, AHN; [James Robins], “James Robins,” Pennsylvania Packet, 15 October 1782, AHN; [James Robins], “JAMES ROBINS,” Freeman’s Journal, 16 October 1782, AHN; [James Robins], “JAMES ROBINS,” Freeman’s Journal, 23 October 1782, AHN.
With all the changes wrought by the Revolution, the newspaper still served as a vehicle for advertisers to seek out new clients. But, much like William Clajon in prior decades, James Robins was doing more than advertising his services as a schoolteacher with this piece. He was using the public prints as a medium of his local, Philadelphian community. He was reaching out to readers who did not know him (though who could easily know of him), but who could now seek him out or, in encountering him or his name in passing, recall his position and their relationship to it in their shared society. The late eighteenth-century newspaper remained a medium of its community, whether in mediating debate or mediating community interaction. Still, this was just one of the many roles the newspaper held. It was a carrier of news, a communicator of product, and an instrument for official proclamation and political broadcast. It informed, taught, sold, and entertained. It was a bulletin board for community occurrences, events, and other notices. When William Clajon died in Philadelphia on July 30, 1784, it was announced in that city’s *Independent Gazetteer* the next day, alongside a notice calling on “THE Brethren of the several Lodges, and all others of the ancient Society of Free Masons...to attend, in form, the funeral of our late brother...at 4 o’clock this afternoon.”91 A few weeks later, “ELEAZER OSWALD, Administrator” used the same gazette to reach

---

Clajon’s creditors and debtors as he settled his estate.\textsuperscript{92} Clajon’s local newspaper made note, and spread the word.

William Clajon played no more particular role in eighteenth-century history than did most men (and women) of his time. But the record preserved of his life in the eighteenth-century newspapers makes him a useful historical subject. Clajon used the public prints, and through his use can be seen reflected the role the newspapers played for him as a living member of his respective communities in Annapolis, New York City, Philadelphia, and the new American nation. The historiography of the eighteenth-century colonial, Revolutionary, and Early Republican newspaper trends towards what the public prints contained and what they did; they published various types of news, distributed opinion, and created (or fractured) a national consciousness. Examining William Clajon’s relationship to the various newspapers in his life shows how the newspaper was used. The public prints were not an institution disconnected from the living people and the social contexts that made them and gave them form and function. As important as it is to analyze the connection between the nation and its press, it is likewise important to recognize and outline the relationship between individuals and the newspapers they produced, encountered, and consumed. Examining William Clajon’s connection to print over the thirty years between 1754 and 1784 forms a piece of the puzzle, and an especially illuminating one at that. In this period, Clajon may have transformed from a “Foreigner” into an American “REBEL,” but in defining himself by each of those titles

\footnote{\textsuperscript{92} Eleazer Oswald, “ALL persons who have any just claims...,” Independent Gazetteer, 21 August 1784, AHN. Oswald repeated his request two weeks later. Eleazer Oswald, “ALL persons who have any just claims...,” Independent Gazetteer, 4 September 1781, AHN.}
he was engaging with his local community through the press. That is how William Clajon used the public prints, and his use speaks to a more personal, more social view of the newspaper in early American history.
Bibliography

Primary Sources:


Maryland Gazette, Annapolis, Maryland. Maryland Gazette Collection at the Archives of Maryland Online.

Maryland General Assembly House of Delegates. Votes and proceedings of the Lower House of Assembly of the province of Maryland. Annapolis: Jonas Green, Printer to the province, 1761. Early American Imprints, Series 1. America’s Historical Imprints.


Secondary Sources:


