

Thornton had earlier worked on her own memorial, a scrapbook of material about Washington.

The varied activities recorded in Anna Maria Thornton's diary provide a good overview of the forms of cultural activity in the decades after the Revolution. The diary needs to be combined with other evidence, however, before we can assess the prevalence of various activities, the segments of the population involved in their pursuit, and the broader significance of the different components of popular culture. For those purposes we can draw upon other diaries, letters, and account books as well as newspaper advertisements and evidence from inventories to make that assessment, bearing in mind that all print sources are necessarily biased toward the more affluent and literate groups within the population.

As the Thornton diary clearly reveals, many of the pastimes in which Marylanders participated were based in the home, some involving individuals or small groups and others encompassing larger social gatherings. They ranged from reading, card playing, games, and musical entertainment to receptions and dances. Reading as a form of amusement, rather than a religious activity, may have been more broadly based than we might at first assume. Even among the poorest group within the population—those with less than £50 of personal property—nearly half of the estates owned books.³ The men appraising these estates generally identified the books only as "some old books" or "a parcel of old books," but there is no reason to assume that the parcel contained only a Bible or other religious works. In some instances, the contents are identified as a "large Bible and some books" or a "dictionary, Prayer Book, *Family Physician* and 6 old books," suggesting that the unnamed books could well be works of fiction or other reference works. Among the wealthier groups, the percentage of book owning rose, reaching 100 percent among the very wealthiest group, those with more than £1,000 of personal property (a group that represented less than 5 percent of the population).

What types of books did these Marylanders own? Rarely are specific titles listed for the poorer owners, but John Logan did possess a six-volume *History of the United States*, Elizabeth Browning included a *History of the World* among her books, Samuel Clayton owned five volumes of the English magazine *Spectator*, and John Duncan a volume entitled *Memoirs of Signor Gaudenzio di Succri*. Among the book owners with larger collections, practical works dominated; reference works such as dictionaries, law books, medical guides, arithmetic books, and gardening handbooks made up the bulk of many collections. But Marylanders at all social levels were also reading the classics of Greek and Roman literature, histories of the French Revolution, the *Tatler* as well as the *Spectator*, the poetry of Alexander Pope and John Milton, biographies of Napoleon Bonaparte and Charles XII of Sweden, novels like Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield* (which Anna Maria Thornton read), *Tristram Shandy*, and *Tom Jones* as well as the plays of Shakespeare.