

“Every wealthy Dunce is loaded with Honours”:  
William Livingston’s Cultural Imperative and the Anglophone Enlightenment  
in Colonial New York City, 1747-1755

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Simply put, William Livingston was a man on a mission. Later he would serve as governor of New Jersey re-elected every year from 1776 to 1790, the year of his death, but in early 1750s New York City he, along with two compatriots, William Smith, Jr. and John Morin Scott, undertook an enlightened project of cultural reform aimed at raising the cultural level of the city’s inhabitants and challenging the cultural hegemony of the city’s Anglican clergy. Dubbed “the triumvirate” by their opponents, they believed the Anglicans to be unenlightened advocates of enthusiasm, superstition, and intolerance and held them accountable for the city’s cultural deficiencies. They sought to enlighten the culture of the city and challenge the clergy’s role as the city’s cultural arbiters by broadly disseminating the principles of the Anglophone Enlightenment, including rationality, anti-enthusiasm, toleration, and moderation.<sup>1</sup>

Livingston's cultural project would eventually include the founding of the city’s first philosophical and literary society, its first professional organization, its first extra-congregational religious organization, and its first public library, the New York Society Library. However, prior to most of these institutional endeavors, Livingston and company founded New York’s first weekly non-newspaper publication, *The Independent Reflector*, the project’s vehicle for reaching

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<sup>1</sup> For works on the “moderate Anglophone Enlightenment” of Newton and Locke, see Roy S. Porter, *The Creation of the Modern World: The Untold Story of the British Enlightenment* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2001); Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), chs. 1-3; Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution, 1689-1720* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Roy S. Porter, “The Enlightenment in England,” in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. Roy S. Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 1-18.

a broad public.<sup>2</sup> It is important to note that the fundamental ideas Livingston propagated were neither new nor original. Rather, they had emanated out of Britain at the end of the seventeenth century and circulated throughout the Atlantic World for much of the first half of the eighteenth century. They were “in the air,” so to speak.

Culture, for Livingston, was not merely the genteel, high culture of elite gentlemen’s clubs and *belles lettres*, but, rather, something more fundamental. He viewed culture as emerging from an epistemological foundation, which then informs and encompasses most aspects of civil society including religion, politics, social organization, and education, which he saw as all being interconnected. In other words, civil society was shaped by the prevailing culture of the city rather than the other way around. Because the city’s cultural arbiters, the Anglican clergy, promoted enthusiasm, superstition, and intolerance, this had produced an unenlightened and vulgar city culture. The resulting conflict with the Anglican clergy, centered largely around the founding of King’s College, amounted to a cultural struggle, and, unlike the institution founding done by Benjamin Franklin in Philadelphia in the previous decade, Livingston’s project produced one of the most direct, incisive and utilitarian internal urban cultural critiques of the colonial period.

### **Livingston’s Intellectual Formation, 1737-1747**

As a young man, Livingston was shaped by his time at Yale College, where he was exposed to two opposing systems of thought: the English Enlightenment, especially John Locke,

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<sup>2</sup> Circulation figures for the *Reflector* are unknown. The average circulation of a colonial newspaper in the 1750s was roughly between from 500 to 1,000. As it appears to have been sold largely by subscription only, it appears likely that its print run was under 500. However, like newspapers, it was probably read aloud in public houses and copies likely may have had multiple readers. After the first few months, there was enough interest and demand for the printer, James Parker, to find it sufficiently profitable to reprint the first six issues so that new subscribers could have a complete set, which they could eventually have bound.

and the revivalism of the Great Awakening.<sup>3</sup> The former's profound effect on Livingston was plainly evident in his pastoral ode, "Philosophic Solitude," published in 1747, only a few years after leaving Yale College:

--For Profit I wou'd read  
The labour'd volumes of the learned dead.  
Sagacious Lock[e], by providence design'd  
T' exalt, instruct, and rectify the mind.

He accepted Lockean epistemology, that the mind is a blank slate, that knowledge comes from our senses, yet, as our senses are imperfect, the knowledge gained from them can at best be probable.<sup>4</sup> Livingston took away two fundamental implications from Locke. First, if you could not be wholly certain of anything, you had no rational justification for enthusiasm of any kind, leading him to a moderation in thought or tempered skepticism. A "Man of Sense and Impartiality," would, he wrote, always "preserve the golden Mean."<sup>5</sup> Secondly, he learned that culture was a social construct. That is to say, if you changed the environment, you could potentially change the person.

Through the combination of his reading and his exposure to the Great Awakening during his stay at New Haven, Livingston came to detest the revivalists' pessimistic view of human nature and their enthusiasm, which, he said, "cannot bear the touchstone of reason." In the mid-1740s, he wrote to a friend, "I can never persuade myself that such convulsions . . . are any sign that Christianity prevails amongst a people . . . [and] furnish only matter for strife &

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<sup>3</sup> For a full inventory of the library just after Livingston's graduation, see Thomas Clap, *A Catalogue of the Library of Yale-College in New-Haven* (New London: T. Green, 1743). Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Though the "New Learning" was not yet fully integrated in the curriculum, Livingston encountered Locke, Newton, and Shaftesbury through the college's library.

<sup>4</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Printed by Eliz. Holt, for Thomas Basset, at the George in Fleet Street, 1690), Bk. i, ch. i, §6. This is a necessary simplification of Locke's epistemology, which required experience or sensations be reconciled through rational reflection to produce knowledge.

<sup>5</sup> "Of the Veneration and Contempt of the Clergy," *The Independent Reflector*, no. XXXIV, July 19, 1753, 135.

Contention.”<sup>6</sup>

### **A Discourse of Cultural Criticism, 1749-1752**

In the early 1740s, following college, Livingston began a law apprenticeship in New York City. There, he found two things quite disturbing. First, there was a younger generation of activist Anglican clergy intent on dominating the other denominations despite the fact that Anglicans constituted only ten percent of the colony.<sup>7</sup> Second, he was aghast at the city’s cultural deficiencies, initially in terms of liberal education, arts and sciences, and *belles lettres*. In 1749, he set out his critique of city culture in a number of pamphlets and newspaper essays, having written,

This Province above any other, has felt the Miseries of Ignorance, and they still remain our sorest Afflictions. A sordid thirst after Money, sways the Lives of our People; while Learning, and all those Arts, that raise the Dignity and Happiness of Humane Nature, lie despised and neglected. [. . .] Ignorance, horrid Ignorance! Reigns in every Art, Trade, Business, and Character.<sup>8</sup>

Along with Smith, Scott, and a few others, he founded a philosophical club and contrasted it with the city’s existing “Weekly Clubs, and Societies,” which were full of “noisy fops” who “Bluster away the Evening” and “Smoke their Pipes with a senseless Stupidity” while making “effeminate Observations on Dress, and the Ladies.”<sup>9</sup> The club’s goal, he wrote, was to “improve the *Taste*,

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<sup>6</sup> William Livingston to Noah Welles, May 27, 1742, Johnson Family Papers, Yale University.

<sup>7</sup> These clergy, based in and around New York City, included Henry Barclay, Thomas Bradbury Chandler, Samuel Auchmuty, and Samuel Seabury, all of whom eventually became loyalists. For an insightful exploration between the colony’s High-Church Anglicanism and the subsequent emergence of Tory loyalism, see Donald F. M. Gerardi, “The King’s College Controversy 1753-56 and the Ideological Roots of Toryism in New York,” *Perspectives in American History* XI (1977-78): 145-96.

<sup>8</sup> *New-York Weekly Journal*, February 13, 1749. The club’s membership is unknown, however Milton Klein claims that James Alexander and William Smith, Sr. were “senior members.”

<sup>9</sup> *New-York Weekly Journal*, March 20, April 3, 1749. Part of the response’s vehemence derived from the fact that a previous letter from a Society member to the *Weekly Journal* had targeted specific individuals “by the initial and final Letters of their Names.” However, the author has not been able to find any extant copies of the essay(s) alluded to in the issues above.

and *Knowledge, to Reform, and Correct, the manners of the Inhabitants of this Town.*”<sup>10</sup> These clubs were largely populated with unlearned and, in some instances, uneducated merchants.

What the city needed, the triumvirate thought, was more college-educated, liberal and civic-minded gentlemen like themselves. Also, no colonial city without its own college could claim to be enlightened. Hence, in 1749, Livingston issued a pamphlet entitled, *Some Serious Thoughts on the Designs of Erecting a College*, in which he wrote,

The want of a liberal Education has long been our Reproach and Misfortune. Our Neighbours have told us in an insulting Tone, that the Art of getting Money, is the highest Improvement we can pretend to: That the wisest Man among us without a Fortune, is neglected and despised; and the greatest Blockhead with one, caress'd and honour'd: That, for this Reason, a poor Man of the most shining Accomplishments, can never emerge out of his Obscurity; while every wealthy Dunce is loaded with Honours.<sup>11</sup>

Needless to say, none of this endeared him to the city's relatively unlearned merchant elite, who knew they were the “noisy fops” and “wealthy Dunces” to whom he was referring.

### **The Independent Reflector, 1752-1753**

Livingston's project began in earnest at the end of 1752 with the publication of *The Independent Reflector*, a four-page weekly publication in the format of *The Spectator* and *The Independent Whig*, containing one essay of usually either social commentary, cultural criticism, and political thought. Occasionally, they would address such practical matters as the transportation of felons or improving firefighting techniques. The *Reflector* lasted for only one

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<sup>10</sup> *New-York Weekly Journal*, February 13, 1749. The acerbic nature of his critique notwithstanding, Livingston's observations are consistent with those recorded by Dr. Alexander Hamilton, a Scottish-born doctor, gentleman, and member of “The Tuesday Club” from Maryland, who kept a diary of his visits to New York City in the summer and fall of 1744. See Alexander Hamilton, *Gentleman's Progress: The Itinerarium of Dr. Alexander Hamilton, 1744*, ed. Carl Bridenbaugh (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948). For studies on politeness, civility, and clubs in eighteenth-century American culture and their role in forming civil society in the colonies, see Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Vintage, 1993); David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues & Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); David S. Shields, “Anglo-American Clubs: Their Wit, Their Heterodoxy, Their Sedition,” *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 51, no. 2 (1994): 293–304.

<sup>11</sup> [William Livingston], *Some Serious Thoughts on the Designs of Erecting a College in the Province of New-York. Shewing The eminent Advantages of liberal Education, more especially with regard to Religion and Politicks. By Hippocrates Mithridates, Apoth.* (New York: Printed by John Zenger, 1749).

year, a mere fifty-two issues. Livingston wrote to a friend that the purpose of the journal was “for correcting the taste and improving the minds of our fellow citizens.”<sup>12</sup> At the time of its publication, it was the only non-newspaper periodical in the entire colonies.

Despite the insights that they offer into both the cultural state of the city and Livingston’s project of cultural reform, these essays have received surprisingly little scholarly attention. The *Reflector* was the first completely original publication in the colonies written by a colonist devoted to direct cultural criticism.<sup>13</sup> A complete edition came out in 1962 edited by one of colonial New York’s finest historians, the late Milton M. Klein.<sup>14</sup> Since then, there has been no serious study devoted to the *Reflector*. Historians who have made use of it, largely in the late 1960s and early 1970s, read it as a political document in the context of the “republican synthesis,” the ideological interpretation of the Revolution then prevailing. For example, Bernard Bailyn wrote, in *The Origins of American Politics* (1968), that the *Reflector* was “for the most part a compendium of the standard formulas of eighteenth-century political thought.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Livingston to Welles, February 18, 1749, JFP, Yale.

<sup>13</sup> The *Independent Reflector* was not the first wholly original publication produced by colonials. At Boston, in 1721, James Franklin began publishing *The New-England Courant*, which consisted of entirely original writings. However, these writings were largely in the form of letters in which the writers, members of the “Hell-Fire Club,” wrote as fictional characters much as Joseph Addison did in *The Spectator*. While many of these letters contained strands of social criticism, they were indirect and not part of a larger agenda of reform. *The New England Weekly Journal* (1727–1741) also began with homegrown essays but a lack of material eventually led to the inclusion of pieces taken from other sources. Other non-newspaper periodicals prior to the *Reflector*, primarily magazines, may have contained some original material but generally were filled with material gathered by the publisher from British magazines and other colonial newspapers. And, though provincials—most notably Benjamin Franklin—often wrote essays that were printed in newspapers, the *Reflector*’s understated significance to colonial print culture, in relation, lies in the fact that it was its *own* wholly original, *dedicated* serial publication. The sheer act of conceiving and actually founding a publication that had no direct or immediate colonial precedent speaks to the zeal with which Livingston approached cultural reform in the city.

<sup>14</sup> William Livingston and others, *The Independent Reflector, or Weekly Essays on Sundry Important Subjects More particularly adapted to the Province of New-York*, ed. Milton M. Klein (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963).

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York: Vintage, 1968), 128, 114. Also, see Joseph J. Ellis, *The New England Mind in Transition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973), 284.

Furthermore, partly because of the focus on politics and factionalism as the defining features of colonial New York history, both the *Reflector* and the King's College debate it sparked have been reduced to examples of both factional propaganda and political power struggles.<sup>16</sup> They have largely ignored the cultural aspects of the *Reflector* and the connection between the *Reflector* and Livingston's subsequent cultural activities.<sup>17</sup> It is my contention that there was something much deeper going on in the *Reflector* than merely Whig republicanism or factional politics as usual. The *Independent Reflector* was not just a political journal but a significant part of Livingston's wider project of cultural reform, or what I call his "cultural imperative." For this reason, it seems to me that *The Independent Reflector* may be a neglected document in the study of the Enlightenment in America.

Before Livingston could move forward with the cultural reform he had in mind for New York City, he had to break down the Anglicans' cultural hegemony or what one historian has called the "traditional religious superintendency of culture" in the city, which he perceived to be based on irrational enthusiasm and superstition that promoted intolerance and passive obedience disguised as order.<sup>18</sup> His attack involved numerous anticlerical essays each seemingly more vituperative than the last. The High-Church Anglican clergy's vehement responses illustrate the perceived threat posed to Anglican cultural dominance, which despite its tenuousness due to their

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<sup>16</sup> For examples of the factional interpretation, see Patricia U. Bonomi, *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971); Roger J. Champagne, "Family Politics versus Constitutional Principles: The New York Assembly Elections of 1768 and 1769," *The William and Mary Quarterly, Third Series* 20, no. 1 (1963): 57–79; Mary Lou Lustig, *Privilege and Prerogative: New York's Provincial Elite, 1710-1776* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995).

<sup>17</sup> Charles E. Clark, "Early American Journalism: News and Opinion in the Popular Press," in *A History of the Book in America, Volume 1: The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, edited by Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 359. In his sole mention of the *Reflector* in an essay on colonial periodicals, Clark described it as being "devoted entirely to political writings."

<sup>18</sup> Donald F. M. Gerardi, "The American Doctor Johnson: Anglican Piety and the Eighteenth-Century Mind," PhD diss., (New York: Columbia University, 1973), 258. Also, see Joyce D. Goodfriend, *Before the Melting Pot: Society and Culture in Colonial New York City, 1664-1730* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 6, which concurred that "the central expression of culture in New York City was religion."

small numbers had gone largely unchallenged in the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

### The “Enlightened” Reflector

The *Reflector* contained a number of recurring enlightened themes including anti-enthusiasm and superstition, toleration, rational religion, anticlericalism, meritocracy, and the utility of liberal education. Although some politically-minded historians suggest that the conflict began in March of 1753 with the first essay discussing King's College, in fact, Livingston began his attack in earnest with the sixth issue, “A Vindication of the Moravians, against the Aspersions of their Enemies,” The Moravians were a small group of humble German pietists based in New Jersey against whom the activist Anglican clergy had preached publicly. Livingston’s defense of them amounted to a manifesto of the *Reflector*’s key themes. He criticized the clergy for acting like “little popes” who attacked other sects “for believing in Christ, without worshipping the Clergy,” and reminded his readers, “Defamation uttered from the Pulpit, is still defamation.” In this essay, along with another a few months later, he also set out his own version of rational or “Primitive Christianity.”<sup>20</sup> For Livingston, “whoever believes, that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah, sent of God, to instruct Mankind, and *practices* the Morality he taught; is to all Intents and Purposes, a compleat Christian.”<sup>21</sup> He called for a simpler Christianity shorn of theological corruption by clergy with their “cabalistical jargon,” “learned Absurdity,” and “scholastic Gibberish!”<sup>22</sup> In the end, he could not understand why “there should

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<sup>19</sup> The church’s position in the colony was due to its protection by royal governors earlier in the century, especially Lord Cornbury, and the affluence and power of its congregation, as most major officeholders in the colony belonged to the Anglican Church.

<sup>20</sup> Low Church latitudinarians such as Archbishop Tillotson controlled the Church of England for much of the early eighteenth century. This caused a disconnect between the High Church Anglican clergy in the middle colonies and the Church leadership in England. Samuel Johnson spent most of his adult life unsuccessfully imploring successive Archbishops of Canterbury to establish a bishopric in the colonies.

<sup>21</sup> [William Livingston], “A Vindication of the Moravians, against the Aspersions of their Enemies,” *The Independent Reflector*, no. VI, January 4, 1753, 23.

<sup>22</sup> “Primitive Christianity short and intelligible, modern Christianity voluminous and incomprehensible,” *The Independent Reflector*, no. XXXI, June 28, 1753, 123.

be a Necessity for countless Systems to explain what could not be misunderstood, and to illustrate with endless Comments, what was wrote in Sun-Beams.”<sup>23</sup> His reasoning for attacking enthusiasm was wholly Lockean. As he put it, “A proper Consideration of the Frailty of human Nature, might convince them, that their most darling Tenets, founded only upon probable Evidence, may possibly be false.”<sup>24</sup> By focusing on the humble Moravians, Livingston implied a charge of hubris against the Anglican clergy, and, by calling for a simpler Christianity, he appeared to render the role of the clergy superfluous. It is no surprise then that the Anglican reaction was swift. They did not appreciate public challenges to cultural authority by questioning their virtue and piety and they accused the *Reflector* of being a “freethinker” and an “atheist.” In answer to his anticlericalism, they wrote, “Whoever despises a Minister despises Jesus Christ.”<sup>25</sup> The essay on the Moravians and the reaction it aroused set the stage for the debate over the founding of King’s College just a few months later.

### **The King’s College Debate, 1753-1755**

The biggest battle in this cultural struggle was undoubtedly the debate over the founding of King’s College, now Columbia University. Livingston, with the support of many Dissenters, wanted the college to be chartered by the Assembly. Going further than many of his supporters, Livingston even proposed that the college be non-sectarian. The Anglicans, threatened by the Congregationalist Yale College to the north and the New Light College of New Jersey to the south, wanted the college to be chartered by the King as an Anglican institution. In 1752, Trinity Church, the leading Anglican congregation in the city, donated land for the college with the expectation that Anglican liturgy be used at the college, while the Assembly raised £3,433 through public lotteries for the establishment of the college. The debate took place largely in the

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> [Livingston], “Vindication of the Moravians.”

<sup>25</sup> *New-York Mercury*, February 12, 1753.

city's newspapers and in the *Reflector* as well as other pamphlets published by both sides, the opposition led by Livingston and the clergy led by Samuel Johnson, a fellow graduate of Yale College and the most renowned Anglican cleric in the colonies who had been deeply committed to the "New Learning" of the English Enlightenment in his youth but subsequently rejected it when he realized its implications for religious orthodoxy.

Livingston's vision for the college was to be a place that would do more than train Anglican clergy. It should serve all denominations equally, its Board of Trustees should reflect the denominational composition of the colony, and its goal should be to instruct students in more utilitarian studies than merely Greek, Latin, and theology. Livingston wanted a college that would focus on liberal learning in order to produce students who were rational and independent thinkers dedicated to improving the colony, while the Anglican clergy wanted a college steeped in religious instruction that would "rear up good men for Church & State," that is, to produce the next generation of both Anglican religious and political leadership.<sup>26</sup>

In order to protect his disinterested pose, Livingston did not respond directly to Anglican criticism in the *Reflector*. So, in September of 1753, Livingston and company founded another weekly publication, *The Occasional Reverberator*, to do just that. But after six months of a particularly vehement media exchange, the Anglican establishment began to put pressure on Livingston's publisher, James Parker, who was also the government printer. He was threatened with the loss of his government contract if he continued publishing the *Reflector* and the *Reverberator*. Parker ceased publication of the *Reverberator* in October of 1753 after only four issues and the *Reflector* was ceased the following month. In January of 1754, Livingston published a final thirty-one-page issue of the *Reflector* entitled, *Preface*, and carrying the tagline,

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<sup>26</sup> Samuel Johnson to William Samuel Johnson, June 1754, *Samuel Johnson, President of King's College: His Career and Writings*, 4 vols., ed. Herbert and Carol Schneider (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 1: 191.

“Printed (until Tyrannically Suppressed) in 1753.” It was meant to be placed at the front of any bound volumes of the journal and recounted the debate over the college.

This did not end the press war, however. It continued, but Livingston and company were now serious *personae non gratae* among the city’s Anglican elite and had trouble getting their essays published in either Parker or Gaine’s newspapers. Having no outlet for his cause frustrated Livingston to no end. Finally, in November of 1754, Livingston bought the front page of Gaine’s newspaper, *The New-York Mercury*, for an entire year and began a new essay series entitled *The Watch-Tower* to continue his attacks on the clergy and the college.

Clearly, Livingston would not be deterred from his self-appointed mission as the cultural savior of New York City. Thus, even being named to the college’s Board of Trustees in 1753 failed to pacify his opposition, as the Anglican trustees had hoped. Instead, he drafted an alternative charter to the one drawn up by the Anglicans and submitted it to the Assembly for approval. Nevertheless, on October 31, 1753, King’s College was founded through a royal charter, ensuring Anglican control. Nevertheless, Livingston continued to lobby the Assembly to withhold the public lottery funds that had been raised for the college. Livingston’s agitating eventually forced the Anglican leadership to recoil from its original plans and make a number of significant concessions including liturgy agreeable to the Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian churches, allowance for students to attend other churches, and non-Anglican representation on the Board of Trustees.

### **Conclusion**

In the end, Livingston and company did not win outright. However, they significantly challenged the cultural hegemony of the Anglican clergy, who, were forced to recoil from their previous religious and political aggressiveness. Also, their heated and vicious responses did not

make them appear in a very favorable light to many of the city's inhabitants. Nevertheless, for our intents and purposes here, the success or failure of the project matters not. That it was undertaken, along with the enlightened motivation behind it and the cultural critique it produced, is enough to consider this a noteworthy moment in the Enlightenment in America. By recognizing the cultural nature of the *Reflector* and its enlightened, utilitarian aims, we may begin to conceive of the public sphere in colonial America as not solely providing the means for those who compose civil society to engage in a rational-critical debate about government, but also of civil society itself, a process which the recent historiography suggests emerged in the early republic period around the problem of forging a national identity.<sup>27</sup> On an even larger scale, there is the possibility that we may begin to develop a fuller picture of the practical, utilitarian application of Enlightenment thought in colonial America, which until now has been reserved largely, if at all, for the intellectual political thought of the revolutionary period.<sup>28</sup> If, as Robert Darnton has written, the Enlightenment was not just “a set of propositions” but “a movement, an attempt to change minds and reform institutions,” we may have no better example of the Enlightenment in America—perhaps, even, an American Enlightenment—than the cultural imperative of William Livingston and company in 1750s New York City.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For the notions of “rational-critical debate” and “public sphere,” see Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1991). On the “New New Political History” of the early national period, see *Beyond the Founders: New Approaches to the Political History of the Early American Republic*, eds. Jeffrey L. Pasley, Andrew W Robertson, and David Waldstreicher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> For studies of the Enlightenment in America with their primary focus on the last quarter of the eighteenth century, see Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976); Donald H. Meyer, *The Democratic Enlightenment* (New York: Putnam, 1976); Henry Steele Commager, *The Empire of Reason* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1977); Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); Darren M. Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007).

<sup>29</sup> Robert Darnton, “Two Paths Through the Social History of Ideas,” *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 359 (1998): 280.