

# Constituting American Masculinity

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Narratives of the American eighteenth century almost always turn around the rejection of paternal authority and the practice of deference.<sup>1</sup> Connecting the antipaternalistic themes of Enlightenment thought to the rhetoric of the American Revolution, Jay Fliegelman writes: “At every opportunity Revolutionary propogandists insisted that the new nation and its people had come of age, had achieved a collective maturity that necessitated them becoming in political fact an independent and self-governing nation” (3-4). The intensifying critiques of patriarchy, borrowed from Locke and the republican tradition, that developed in avenues as varied as pedagogy and politics were, according to Fliegelman, the essence of a “cultural revolution . . . in the understanding of the nature of authority that affected all aspects of eighteenth-century culture” (5). The importance of Fliegelman’s analysis is that he traces the diffusion of paternal authority from a rationalistic social order to affective bonds, indicating along the way that the care and affection that defined the “new” father’s authority did not make him any less authoritative.

Although in the wake of the Revolution democratic local-level social relations moved toward displacing and replacing colonial forms of paternal authority, the Federalist nationalist program of the 1780s aimed to reassert such authority’s power, albeit in new form.<sup>2</sup> In other words, despite the cultural revolution Fliegelman identifies, “the rebellion of sons did not eliminate the need for patriarchal authority” (Kimmel 19), and the rejection of paternal authority in the name of a new fraternity was not decisive.<sup>3</sup> Rather the Revolution’s sacrifice of the father cleared the way for a new form of paternal authority, a passage from an explicit

and hierarchical patriarchal control to a more subtle and institutionalized network of control only disguised as “fraternal.”<sup>4</sup> By subjecting the populace to their desire for security, the Federalist project converted citizens as a heterogeneous collective into “the people” as a virtualized concept void of difference, reinvesting the ideal of the father in the fantasy of the people as a unified, fraternal, and contractual whole.<sup>5</sup>

If we attend to the ways eighteenth-century American men deployed republican ideology in their efforts, first, to conceptualize the American Revolution and, then, to participate in the heated debates over the constitution, we can better understand how the concept of masculinity (or, to put it in the language of republican virtue, *manliness*) functioned to perpetuate paternal control. In other words, resolving the paternalistic paradox—how the political desire that initially aimed at undermining paternal and patriarchal authority during the Revolution transformed into a desire to revive, even if in new form, that same authority during the constitutional period—requires that we explore two transformations that occurred during the last half of the eighteenth century. First, we need to understand how the republican tradition did not represent an intact and univocal voice in early America. Instead, we need to explore how the colonists’ rhetorical deployment of republican ideals changed from the revolutionary period to the constitutional period. Political theorists and historians like Sheldon Wolin, Saul Cornell, Ruth Bloch, and Christopher M. Duncan argue that the use of republican theory during the 1760s and 1770s functioned alongside a fairly radical egalitarian and democratic theory of political participation and that it was only in the Federalists’ nationalist desires that republican theory in America was decoupled from this theory. Second, we need to trace within this ideological transformation a collateral *rhetorical* transformation in the use of concepts of masculinity. In the revolutionary period the notion of manliness remained fiercely coupled to the republican insistence upon liberty. In the often volatile debates over the constitution, however, the notion of manliness underwent a necessary change in the rhetoric of the Federalists. The proponents of national government had to overcome the idea of manliness as liberty from subordination precisely because the rhetoric of their nationalist program had to define liberty by way of the security of political subordination. In short, although notions of masculinity used by both sides during the ratification debates often drew upon the same republican tradition, I intend to argue that there were significant differences between the Federalists and Anti-Federalists in both the rhetorical use of masculinity and its meaning.<sup>6</sup>

These differences did not always exist. For instance, during the revolution the rhetoric of ministers and pamphleteers emphasized the masculine qualities of republican virtue, distinguishing masculine virtue from effeminate corruption. As Ruth Bloch writes, “Public virtue was indeed possible for exceptional women, but it was never an inherently feminine characteristic” (42). In the Federalist Papers, too, Publius often figures America as a passive, diseased, and feminine body. Connecting Publius’s rhetoric to the logic of coverture, Dana D. Nelson

argues that the Federalist impulse toward unity suggests that a subordinated body politic is preferable to disorderly passions, that the country's constituents, like married women, need to be held in their place by the authority of men (42-46). In a most telling passage, Alexander Hamilton compares the political disorder of America to the inappropriate and damaging influence of Mme. de Maintenon, the Duchess of Marlborough, and Mme. de Pompadoure when he invokes "the influence which the bigotry of one female, the petulancies of another, and the cabals of a third, had in the contemporary policy, ferments, and pacifications of a considerable part of Europe" (23). Opposed to the corrupting influence of feminine passions, stood the model patriot who, as Ruth Bloch writes, "was frequently described according to classical republican ideals as a heroic orator or citizen-soldier" (44). For instance, Joseph Warren describes "fathers / looking / . . . with smiling approbation on their sons who boldly stand forth in the cause of virtue" (quoted in Bloch 44). While republican ideology was by no means perfectly unified or uniform across the colonies, those resisting the British subjugation had a shared understanding of republicanism's anti-authoritarianism and anti-paternalism. In *The Rights of Colonies Examined*, Stephen Hopkins articulates the logic of American freedom as the absence of political subordination: "Liberty is the greatest blessing that men enjoy, and slavery the heaviest curse that human nature is capable of. . . . [T]hose who are governed by the will of another, or of others, and whose property may be taken from them by taxes or otherwise without their own consent and against their wills are in the miserable condition of slaves" (507-8). James Otis, also connecting political subordination to slavery, declares, "The people never entrusted any body of men with a power to surrender [their liberty] in exchange for slavery" (443). If we consider these pamphlets alongside a pamphlet like Paine's *Common Sense* or Pennsylvania's Paine-inspired constitution, we recognize that republican theory intermingled with the theory of direct democracy during the revolutionary period.

As Christopher M. Duncan so cogently argues, the republicanism of the Revolutionary and confederacy periods was a much more radical republican vision than the one ultimately taken up by the Federalists. In fact, the Federalists ideology represents a substantial transformation in republican thinking, away from a participatory model of civic life toward a more paternalistic one. The division in republican thinking during the constitutional period can be roughly assigned to the major division in political theory, that between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists.<sup>7</sup> As part of the argument over the constitution, the two antagonists deployed differing rhetorics of masculinity. Whereas republican masculinity as reflected in the revolutionary pamphlets and in speeches and written texts by Anti-Federalists like Patrick Henry and Centinel aimed to oppose and subvert paternal authority, the rhetoric of masculinity deployed by the Federalists was a rhetoric of political subordination that lent itself to the larger paternalistic argumentative structure of their project. As important, then, as the explicit arguments made and their rhetorical intent, is what lies beneath them, surfacing only occasionally, but always an informing presence. Both sides of the debate

understood that manly strength served as a powerful and popular metaphor for government; Federalist and Anti-Federalist alike often structured their descriptions in terms of the effects the constitution would have on the masculinity of the republic. Thus, each vote was, in some sense, implicated in a choice among competing masculinities. Because masculinities are always co-founded with compatible forms of power and the signifiers that compose the social and moral institutions which comprise their conditions of possibility, the debate was able to recraft masculinity and its insecurities and make them fit to new languages of political action, a new regime of signifiers constellated alternatively around patriotic virtue, the threat of insecurity, and the salvation of unity.

### **Masculine Binds**

On 28 October 1787, in a letter written during the heat of post-Continental Convention debate, James Madison shared an insight into the power politics of the ratification process with his longtime friend George Washington: “There is at present a very strong probability that nine States at least will pretty speedily concur in establishing [the Constitution]. What will become of the tardy remainder? They must be either left as outcasts from the Society to shift for themselves, or be compelled to come in, or must come in of themselves when they will be allowed no credit for it” (Washington 5: 391). Madison’s take on the implications a ratifying majority would have for nonratifying states evokes much of the floating anxiety shadowing the constitutional debates. Although the Federalist proponents of the constitution were fairly confident that the document would, indeed, be ratified, they were uncertain about the effects such ratification would have on the new American democratic experiment and the constitutional ideal of union. How could the Federalists reconcile the coercive force of a ratifying majority with the actual choice of ratification? In other words, if states chose to ratify only because they felt threatened, how could this in any way be called a choice?

Beginning in 1786, when the states failed to recognize and abide by the peace treaty with Great Britain, anxieties over the “passions” involved in state politics intensified, culminating in reactions to several political and social rebellions, most notably Shays’s rebellion in Massachusetts. Those favoring a national government that would curb the emotional constituents of confederated America by establishing “some disinterested & dispassionate umpire in disputes between different passions” (Madison to Washington, 16 April 1787; Washington 5: 146) perceived the potentially rupturing force of this “passionate” political and social desire as a threat to the kind of freedom (of security, of property, of prosperity) that, for them, the revolution had taken as its object. They keenly felt the need in the face of what they often described as “madness,” “absurdity,” and “anarchy” to establish, in the words of Washington in a 1786 letter to John Jay, a “coercive power”:

We have probably had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation. Experience has taught us, that men will not adopt & carry into execution, measures the best calculated for their own good without the intervention of a coercive power. . . . To be fearful of vesting Congress . . . with ample authorities for national purposes, appears to me the very climax of popular absurdity and madness. (4: 212)

The power of constituting social and political relations, in this vocabulary, would no longer be an attribute of the people (their attributes are here reduced to an adolescent and rebellious irrationality governed by passions); rather, the people ought to be coercively formed through the energy of an authoritative congress possessed of an abstractly rational and paternalistic power. A national government would know best what is good for the people, know best how to judge the people, know best how actually to *constitute* a good people.

The Federalists deploy within their rhetorical-political program the strategic force of a ratifying majority to threaten the politically constituting interests of the people, interests that Madison-as-Publius seems to advocate with so much protective care in the Federalist Papers. In this letter to Washington, however, Madison harnesses political power and its effects to the threat of greater force rather than to rational democratic dialogue. Madison's and Washington's principles in these letters (and in Madison's letters to Jefferson, Hamilton, and others) violate those carefully constructed principles of republican democracy soon to be advocated in the Federalist series. As represented in Madison's epistolary rhetoric, the nine potential ratifying states exert a force characterized by its sovereign power over the four minority "remainder" states (Virginia, Rhode Island, North Carolina, and New York). This is especially evident in Madison's use of the term *outcasts*, which barely disguises in its passive form the power of the sovereign to banish. Only a few weeks from the publication of the first Federalist paper, security (or, rather, the threat of *insecurity*) becomes one of the primary motives the supporters of the constitution attach to their rhetoric.<sup>8</sup>

According to Madison, two inducements exist for the potentially "tardy" states to join the Union. There is, first of all, the insecurity and apprehensiveness associated with becoming "outcasts." In this instance, the nine united states stand as a threat to these individual states as both a physical *and* economic force: according to Madison, this "Union" of states is one which would not be willing to "share its common fortunes" (391) with the "remainder" states (*remainder* suggesting, before the event of union, that these states are ideally subtracted out of the future union's ledger, another act of sovereign power barely concealed beneath Madison's rhetoric). In addition to suggesting the humiliation faced by states who would join the union "when they will be allowed no credit for it," Madison, in the very next sentence, makes clear the consequences for the hesitating states: "Can either of these situations be as eligible as a prompt and manly determination to support the Union. . . ?" (391). That they hesitate already

suggests, Madison insinuates, something other than “manly determination.” At stake in the Federalist threat of insecurity, then, and what stands to be discredited, is the republican ideal of masculine honor and dignity, “manly determination.” In this way, Federalist rhetoric appeals to convention members by threatening not only political and financial, but also psychical castration. And failing to embrace the constitution only creates the threat of further shame; these states ought, instead, to develop the “manly determination” necessary for a quick and unhesitating ratification.

Between these two inducements, though they seem perfectly compatible, there is a subtle yet powerful contradiction. While the choice involved in the second inducement is clear (have the manly determination to join the union or face castrating shame and humiliation), Madison’s insight into the motives for states actually to ratify the constitution (the “tardy” states would rather join than become threatened outcasts), injects the manly act of ratification with a certain amount of ambiguity. Is this manly determination determined by the preexisting manliness of each state? Or is it, instead, determined, retroactively, by fear of shame and/or isolation, an acknowledgment of weakness, rather than manly strength? Yet this latter would mean that the states somehow lacked the fortitude and resolve necessary to stick it out alone which would point to something, in the end, rather *un*manly (at least according to Madison’s use of it here). In this way, Madison attaches masculinity to the constitution through a rhetorical double bind. The “manliness” Madison traps in the Federalist double bind is that heroic, self-determining, free and virtuous manhood of the republican tradition that, through the revolution, succeeded in overcoming British monarchy and what the revolutionaries saw as its corrupting political structures. The political rhetoric of the revolution often connected this republican masculinity to the republican tradition’s characterization of the autonomous citizen as free, as the obverse of enslaved, as pamphleteers urged colonists to rally around the notion that British rule subordinated American men to the status of slaves. In other words, even as Madison evokes republican manliness, he undermines it in what he calls it to do: to subordinate itself to the nationalist project under the duress of threat.

In a letter to his nephew, Bushrod, George Washington underscores the logic contained in Madison’s masculine double bind when he speculates on the consequences for Virginia if it should refuse to join the union. Virginia’s opponents to the proposed constitution should be asked, Washington writes, “What line of conduct they would advise [Virginia] to adopt, if nine other States should accede to [the constitution], of which I think there is little doubt? Would they recommend that it should stand on its own basis—separate and distinct from the rest? . . . or will they advise a return to our former dependence on Great Britain for their protection & support? or lastly would they prefer the mortification of coming in, when they will have no credit there from?” (5: 422). Washington understands perfectly the power of Madison’s emasculating double bind. The choice isn’t between manly independence and manly embrace of the union, but a choice among dependencies: upon whom will Virginia be dependent? Accession to political

power, Washington argues, requires a passage through the subordinating logic of the Oedipal myth, and the gift of masculine strength and dignity proffered by a national government requires, however disavowable or disavowed, castrating dependency. To demonstrate that recommending independence (recommending that Virginia “should stand on its own basis”) is not a choice for the delegates, Washington questions his state’s “standing” in terms of its strength (or lack thereof): “I am sorry to add . . . that Virginians entertain *too* high opinion of the importance of their own Country. In extent of territory—In number of Inhabitants . . . & In wealth I will readily grant that it certainly stands first in the Union; but in point of *strength* [Washington emphasizes this quality], it is, comparatively, weak” (422). Virginia’s lack of strength, its comparative weakness (compared to what? to the nine acceding states taken together? to other individual states? or to some ideal of masculine potency?) precludes its ultimate autonomy and independence. Its flaccidity, its inability to “stand on its own basis,” renders it no choice, according to Washington, other than dependence. No matter what Virginia and the rest of the hesitating states decide with regard to the constitution, this line of argument (first on the part of Madison, then Washington) suggests, they have no self-determination regarding their masculinity—only the union can bestow that upon them, though (for this very reason) only in an intensely ambiguous fashion. Their hesitation has already trapped them in a form of political emasculation—doubly so: first, because hesitation is opposed to manly determination and, thus, signifies a castrated faculty of decision, but also because the states’ hesitation means that “manly determination” is forever deferred. If they join the union, they will appear to do so only out of fear; and if they refuse, they will be shamed by the greater power of the joined states. Curiously (for such defenders of republican strength), autonomy, especially (masculine) independence, is not an option.

In fact there seems little choice at all. Choice here is coerced by physical, economic, and psychological force: the real physical and economic threat of a majority of states united, standing over the comparatively weaker nonunited states; and the threat to what the Federalists have redefined as the preeminent characteristic of political action—manliness. A more deliberative, participatory determination with its hesitations, its characteristic moments of indeterminacy wrought by reflection and a respect of difference, becomes within the Federalists’ redoubtable logic a sign of an irremediable castration, an indication of a lack of fortitude. That is why for Washington the moment of decision revolves around the question of physical strength rather than politically efficacious reflection. Exemplifying one of the primary rhetorical postures of the Federalists, these letters suggest that embracing the union is the only choice and the only manly act available. The rhetorical move of the Federalists’ bribe which offers the seductive allure of force (strong, potent, manly) in union over the weakness of confederation implicates the very manly virtue it promises in a logical impossibility as it rearranges the terms ordinarily associated with masculine potency—substituting dependency

and union for independence and autonomy—at the same time that it legitimates manly determination as political action at the expense of democratic decision.

The Federalist political paradigm, thus, simultaneously reinvents the concept of manly determination and the concept of civic duty, though not simply in the sense that civic virtue is expressed as masculine potency. After all, the republican tradition consistently weds together masculine and civic virtue. The Federalists' deployment of republican ideals to argue *for* a form of authoritarian rule that bore a close resemblance to the authoritarian rule these very ideals had been deployed *against* during the rhetorical campaign against Britain invents both a new civic rationality and a new ideal of masculine virtue by proffering their possibility only in constitutional ratification. Although civic and masculine virtue are *beckoned to* in the call to unify, the rhetoric insists that such virtue exists only at the moment the call is answered affirmatively. The moment the nation is unified under the constitution, those previously gathered under the heterogeneous forms of political and social practice become "the people," legitimated as juridical and manly (though nonempirical and virtualized) subjects. In his reading of the constitutional period, Michael Warner makes the case that the political practices of local groups were delegitimated, defined as extralegal from the standpoint of the law, in order to establish the legitimacy that the constitution offered Americans. Thus, the Federalists legitimate manliness as national manhood at the same time as they delegitimize the confederation. For Warner, ratifying the constitution "was the practical fulfillment of the necessary conditions under which the signifier of 'the people' could *legitimate* a juridical order" (102). The performativity of the law, acquired through the retroactive anachronism of "the people" as legitimately juridical, coincides with the masculine performativity in Washington's and Madison's rhetoric of ratification. Legal legitimacy and masculine virtue are already present—but only in the future of national union.

Forming the coerced choice of ratification and guiding the Federalist program in general is the same useful contradiction that Madison's and Washington's letters deployed. The Federalist art of persuasion implicitly relies on the threat of emasculating insecurity and the production of territorial anxiety *at the same time* that it promotes the masculine virtue of the document and those who support it. Thus, according to this reasoning, it isn't that manly states may frankly embrace the union; such embrace is the only way the states can *become* manly. Saying *yes* to the constitution *performs* masculinity; declaring dependency on the erection of the union simultaneously enacts manhood: union is the only avenue to that sex which *is* one (or that sex which is *one*). This masculine double-bind consumes the history of the ratification process: manly acts are determined by a paradoxical flight from, yet into, dependency. In this way the masculine double-bind joins in and propels the constitution's conversion of the people's heterogeneous interests into the sterility of the "people" as virtualized juridical subject.



## Military Masculinity

Looking back on the events of the late 1780s Elihu Hubbard Smith in his “Biographical Account of Lemuel Hopkins” recollected that “at the time of publishing ‘The Anarchiad,’ the American Republic was united but in name. . . . The primary design of our authors . . . [was] to apply the satiric scourge, and lash those into right conduct, who could not be led into it by persuasion and a sense of duty” (quoted in Bottorff vi-vii). And, in 1820, one of the poets responsible for *The Anarchiad*, John Trumbull, wrote in reference to the series of publications that constituted the poem: “The publications of these gentleman were supposed, at the time, to have had considerable influence on the public taste and opinions; and by the boldness of their satire, to have checked and intimidated the leaders of disorganization and infidel philosophy” (“Memoir” 21). The poem thus embodies the kind of coercive antagonism present in the letters I discuss above, an antagonism that, more effectively than rational political discourse, operates by force and violence on perceived immoral disorganization. As Robert D. Arner demonstrates, the poem depicts Federalism as an ideology shaped by crisis (234-35), representing the urgency with which the nationalists promoted military intervention in the social tensions spreading throughout the country. It is not so much foreign threat that intensifies the rhetoric of insecurity in the *Federalist Papers*, for instance, but the other *inside*: the people as other. This is why the people with all their discord must be converted into the constitution’s “We, the people,” making them resonate with the homogeneous model of legal legitimacy.

Even after the idealizing utopian rhetoric of Jay’s Federalist no. 2 with its “one connected country, one united people, with the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, having similar manners and customs,” it is at bottom the forces of internal fragmentation that both define and threaten the confederated states for the Publius trinity and necessitate a reorganization of political power. Jay’s unity is an illusion not only because its artificiality is underscored by the supposed “natural” fragmentation of neighbors, but also because it merely names a strategy of power to organize force. In no. 28, for instance, Hamilton declares that “Should such emergencies (seditions and insurrections) at any time happen under the national government, there could be no remedy but force” (134). “Who would not prefer that possibility,” he goes on to argue, “to the unceasing agitations and frequent revolutions which are the continual scourges of petty republics?” (135). This is the rationale, the *rationality*, of national union for Publius; forceful action defines the national government’s role “conducive to the prosperity and felicity of the people” (134). Opposing this role defines irrationality itself: “it were irrational to believe that [the people] would be disinclined to its support” (134). That what the Federalists have in mind is other than social contract, general will, or fraternity (these are dreams in Hamilton’s reckoning) becomes absolutely clear in this letter: “[T]he idea of governing at all times by

the simple force of law . . . has no place but in the reveries of those political doctors, whose sagacity disdains the admonitions of experimental instruction” (134). Dr. Publius is much more pragmatic, much more realistic, his pragmatic realism diagnosing social difference as a disease in need of cure. “[S]editious and insurrections,” he prognosticates, “are unhappily maladies as inseparable from the body politic, as tumours and eruptions from the natural body” (134). These are “contagions” which “communicate” themselves and must be confronted by a medico-military force. The obsession with contamination, contagion, and communication colors much of the Federalist rhetoric not only in *The Federalist*, but also in the Connecticut Wits’ Federalist propaganda poem, *The Anarchiad*, which presents an overarching theory that men’s base passions are sources of a terminal and constitutional disease communicable to the apparatus of the state that need to be countered by a resurrected warrior-father.

*The Anarchiad* was published under the pretense that it had been discovered by an antiquarian society in an ancient fort taken to be further evidence of the existence of a “civilized people” (i.e. *not* Indian) in America predating the “discovery” of the New World. According to the mock preface, the survival of the manuscript itself through the wear of centuries becomes a symbol of the triumph of a divine and timeless Logos over the chaotic divisiveness of history (4). The fictional editor describes the poem as a kind of ur-poem, the source of all Western literature, and the poet, along with his people, the source of Western civilization: “Perhaps, in a future essay,” the fictitious antiquarian writes, “I shall attempt to prove that Homer, Virgil, and Milton, have borrowed many of their capital beauties from it” (5). In this way, the *Anarchiad* poets symbolized the political debates of the 1780s by situating them within a transcendent destiny originating with the discovered poem, a destiny that dictates retroactively the terms of the contemporary political situation.

Ignoring the complexity of the social events that were shaping the trajectory of the new nation, the poem seeks to frame the discussion of government within a mythologized history. Resurrecting the dead men of a lost but semidivine civilization, the Wits envision an America that isn’t a new world at all, but one that is older than the Old World itself, reinventing history as an *a priori* unity of tradition that is necessarily sheltered from the forces of decay and divisiveness. Establishing the contemporary situation as a war being waged by one part of society over another, the Connecticut Wits long for the return of the strong sovereign father. Though the allegorical narrative is clumsy, awkward, and overloaded, it provides crucial insight into a Federalist psyche full of imperial dreams. They yearn for men who can re-create the lost age of great ancestors to wage war, once again, on the infidels of truth, who will demonstrate the imminence of the present and carry out a millenary revenge to establish a new kingdom and institute a new patriarchal sovereignty. These new men will resurrect the glory of that ancient race, their ancestors, who were defeated by the savages the Europeans encountered in the earliest days of colonization. In other words, they will revive its imperial designs.

The poems began appearing in October 1786 and ran through September 1787. Even at this early date, the poets responsible for *The Anarchiad*, Joel Barlow, Hopkins, David Humphreys, and Trumbull, had set their sights on the “scene of anarchy and confusion” that, in Trumbull’s view at least, threatened to “involve the country in the horrors of civil war” (“Memoir” 20). They considered themselves “friends of order, justice and regular authority” who “endeavoured to counteract this spirit by every effort in their power—by remonstrance, argument, ridicule, and satire” (20). Losing the virtuous political righteousness maintained during the revolution, the poets insist, the American patriots sink into a spiritual death, enabling mobs and factions to arise, like the living dead, to render chaos. In a speech by Anarch to Beelzebub, “for the purpose of persuading him to come over and help his faithful friends” (8), Anarch inverts one of Jesus’s central miracles, demonstrating the consequences of the spiritual death pervasive in the former colonies:

Near Hartford stream, where groves perpetual bloom,  
And onion gardens breathe a glad perfume,  
Though sunk in dust, to his own stench a prey,  
Again our *Laz’rus* shall ascend *to day*;  
Thy potent voice shall burst the deathful chain,  
And raise him active in thy toils again. (9-10)

Anarch and Beelzebub’s Lazarus are the dead come to life, not as living, but as death itself, ascending into the paradisiacal Hartford, a contrary force to the perpetual bloom of Connecticut life which embodies the organic order of traditional monarchical ideals. Symbolizing the antagonistic and corrupting political energy of New England, this Lazarus and his service to anarchy threaten not only the natural order, but nature itself.

As anarchy spreads, contaminating the social body, America’s vital reason dissipates. The public mind succumbs to its diseased body leaving behind only a corpse:

Now sinks the public mind; a death-like sleep  
O’er all the torpid limbs begins to creep;  
While conscience, harrowing up their souls, with dread,  
Their ghosts of empire stalks without a head. (20-21)

To resurrect the union’s body from the living death of anarchy, Federalist masculinity would need to include not only those attributes of power that would be ascribed to it by Madison, Washington, and Hamilton (coercive force, lack of difference, and dictatorial strength) but also a rigid and divine militarism:

Here shall I [Anarchy] reign, unbounded and alone,  
Nor men, nor demons, shake my baseless throne;

Till comes the day—but late, oh, may it spring—  
 When their tumultuous mobs shall ask a king;  
 A king, in wrath, shall heaven, vindictive send,  
 And my confusion and my empire end. (21-22)

Just as Jesus returns to earth as a vengeful force in the New Testament apocalypse, the savior of America must come “in wrath.” Perhaps that is why the *Anarchiad* poets choose Hesper, the Greek version of Lucifer, rather than the more conflicted figure of Jesus to duel with Anarchy: “In sun-bright robes, that dazzled as he trod, / The stature, motion, armor of a god, / Great HESPER rose” (22).

As defending warrior of America’s spirit, Hesper beckons to, not citizens in rational political debate, but militaristic force:

‘Bid other GREENES and WASHINGTONS arise!  
 Teach those who suffer’d for their country’s good,  
 Who strove for freedom, and who toil’d in blood,  
 Once more, in arms, to make the glorious stand,  
 And bravely die, or save their natal land.’ (23)

Revolutionary military heroes are summoned (some from the grave) to organize a militia against the political insurgents. The poets make clear that the meaning of the blood shed by those who fought in the Revolution is at stake in the decisions made in the constitutional convention. The Anti-Federalists are pitted against the summoned heroes in an allegorical replay of the War for Independence. They need to be taught how to again fight for freedom or face the wrath of a new force. Echoing the call to arms in Massachusetts to fight Shays, the poets describe the attributes of the force that will restore order in the convention:

‘Yes, they shall rise, terrific in their rage,  
 And crush the factions of the faithless age; . . .  
 Restore the reign of order and right,  
 And drive thee [Anarchy], howling, to the shades of night.’ (23-24)

The *Anarchiad* poets ultimately hang their desire for a forceful government on the Philadelphia convention. Published on the eve of the assembly, the tenth poem of the series delineates exactly what was at stake for the advocates of a strong national union. The poets allegorize the convention as “the great and final conflict” between Anarch and the forces of order, as “Hesper [Hamilton] . . . makes his last solemn address to his principal counselors and sages, whom he had convened in Philadelphia” (54). Resurrecting the revolutionary dead, the poets locate the contemporary political struggle within a framework of imperial destiny, rewriting the meaning of the revolution in terms better fit to their agenda. A personified “splendid victory” bids “each glad State” “[t]o bliss unbounded stretch their ardent eyes, / And wealth and empire from their labor rise” (54-55).

America's trajectory toward imperial wealth, imaged by the poets as its fate, is threatened so long as a national union is not achieved. And the protectorates of this destiny, the "slain . . . heroes" (55) and "veterans" (56) of the revolution, bear witness to and suffer at the sight of what the poets deem the "discord" of "Faction" (57):

Behold those veterans, worn with want and care,  
 Their sinews stiffen'd, silver'd o'er their hair;  
 Weak in their steps of age, they move forlorn,  
 Their toils forgotten by the sons of scorn;  
 This hateful truth still aggravates their pain,  
*In vain they conquer'd! and they bled in vain!* (56-57)

The forces of "Faction . . . riot" (57), yet before "union'd empire" is "lost in empty dreams" (58), the now enraged Revolutionary dead "descend" from heaven, aiding those, like them, who are "touch'd with heavenly fire," to "pour just vengeance on their country's foes" (58): "Each on his steed of fire . . . grasps his flaming sword: / The burning blade waves high, and, dipt in blood, / Hurls plagues and death on discord's faithless brood" (58). Divine military muscularity defines the curative energy of union and stands as guardian of a healthy America's imperial destiny and protects the "freedom" (redefined as commercial freedom and freedom of military movement) the revolutionary fathers died for:

. . . know, ye favor'd race, one potent head  
 Must rule your States, and strike your foes with dread,  
 The finance regulate, the trade control,  
 Live through the empire, and accord the whole. (63)

These lines allegorize energetic government through unity as military might. The "potent head" will regulate and control, will "strike . . . foes with dread." Only such a union could counteract what nationalists described as the diseased body of the confederation. The erection of a strong potent figure emblemizing the fiercely militaristic and vengeful resurrected revolutionary dead would sterilize the national body (the true, but retroactively attributed, destiny of the revolution), cleansing it of the symptoms of difference in order to advance toward its imperial destiny.

In some sense, the logic of the *Anarchiad* is very different than the logic of the double-bind I describe in the first section. The manhood the Wits describe is a conquering manhood, fighting in grand republican style the forces of corruption in the body politic. Yet, the poem's fantasy of the United States' imperial destiny is hardly republican. Coupled with this fantasy is the figure of the revolutionary veteran citizen-soldier, but one drawn to extinguish the very democratic practices the revolution engendered. What appears in this poem, then, is a republican manhood turned against itself. How could one and the same "manly determination"

be called upon to both continue and resist the democratic practices of America under the confederation? In other words, how could both the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists appeal to republican manhood without producing in their rhetoric some fundamental difference? In the final section below, I want to argue that in the same way that the Federalists' vision of an imperial extended republic violates traditional republican ideals about civic virtue, it is incompatible with traditional republican ideals about masculine virtue. More than that, though, I want to argue that beyond constraining the exercise of republican civic virtue, the constitutional moment reoriented the notion of masculinity itself.

### **The President's Whip: Militant Paternalism**

That the ratification debate was infused with often competing concepts of masculinity—and its political, moral, and military potency—indicates the instability of the concept and the instability of men's self-conception *as* men. In other words, that the Federalists repeatedly held out masculinity as something to be accomplished, rather than something simply to be, points to a fundamental cultural, if not individual, gender insecurity. By no means, however, were Madison, Washington, and other Federalists the only ones to cast the lure of masculinity into the political debates surrounding constitutional ratification. The Anti-Federalists often invoked masculine attributes to describe their favored form of government—small confederated republics—and alluded to a vision of masculinity whose attributes included autonomy, independence, self-reliance, and an antipaternalistic disposition. Patrick Henry, in the first of his two famous June speeches, equates “manly fortitude,” an entrenched masculinity threatened by Federalist encroachments, with the proper character of republics: “Here [the constitution] is a revolution as radical as that which separated us from Great Britain. It is as radical, if in this transition our rights and privileges are endangered, and the sovereignty of the States be relinquished: And cannot we plainly see, that this is actually the case? . . . Is this . . . relinquishment of rights worthy of freemen? Is it worthy of that manly fortitude that ought to characterize republicans” (Ketcham 200). Henry insinuates that the constitution's construction of a national government threatens the “manly fortitude” developed in rejecting monarchy and which, thus, defines American republicans as “freemen.” Like Washington, Madison, and the Connecticut Wits, Henry beckons to manhood, but in his rhetoric the concept of manhood is put to the same use it was in the rhetoric of the revolution. Henry pits manhood (a manhood not unlike the Federalists' manhood: one of “manly determination,” “manly fortitude”) against the subordination he sees in the constitution, arguing that the “relinquishment of rights” implied in a national government diminishes “manly fortitude” and is not “worthy of freemen.” The implication here is that insofar as the civic sphere imagined by the Federalists does not rise to the level required by virtuous men, is not “worthy” of them, it is not, properly speaking, manly. For Henry, weakness lies not in a lack of resolve to ratify the constitution. Rather, weakness abides in

those who are duped by Federalist ideology, who persist in a kind of republican false consciousness: “[A] number of the people of this country are weak enough to think these things are too true” (Ketcham 200).

In Henry’s view, the artificiality of the Federalist argument lacks the strength of truth; or so he implies in a rhetorical gesture whereby he implicates the opposition in constructing “fashions.” He accuses the opposition of making him out to be old fashioned even as he argues that their position has no substance beyond the ornate refinements of sophistic argumentation which is more fashionable (and, by implication, more effeminate) than Henry’s manly attachment to rights: “Perhaps an invincible attachment to the dearest rights of man, may, in these refined enlightened days, be deemed *old-fashioned*” (Ketcham 200). Republican manhood speaks old-fashioned common sense and is suspicious of “enlightened” political discourse which attempts to emasculate republican manhood by erecting “imaginary dangers” like Shays’s Rebellion to threaten its security: “On a fair investigation we shall be found to be surrounded by no real dangers. We have the animating fortitude and persevering alacrity of republican men to carry us through misfortunes and calamities. . . . it is the fortune of a free people, not to be intimidated by imaginary dangers. Fear is the passion of slaves” (Ketcham 210).<sup>9</sup> In other words, Henry penetrates the logic of the Federalist double-bind, recognizing in it the production of the very fear that it proposes to assuage. According to Henry, the false, emasculating Federalist ideology of insecurity, is meant to enslave republican men by intimidation. Through a logic of transitivity, Henry insinuates that whereas republican government is that of free people, the constitution represents a government for slaves. Although both sides would agree that republican concepts like “manly determination,” “manly fortitude,” and “liberty” over “slavery” are to be valued, it is clear that they disagree over the form of government to which these concepts are best suited.

The Anti-Federalists thus also aimed to tap into masculine insecurities, into the fear that this enslaving Federalist logic and its consolidated government threatened to diminish the strength of republican men as it usurped their power to change government: “I have just proved,” Henry intoned,

that one tenth, or less, of the people of America, a most despicable minority may prevent [governmental] reform or alteration [see note 2]. . . . When the people of Virginia at a future day shall wish to alter their Government, though they should be unanimous in this desire, yet they may be prevented therefrom by a despicable minority at the extremity of the United States: The founders of your own [Virginia] Constitution made your Government changeable: But the power of changing it is gone from you! Whither is it gone? It is placed in the same hands that hold the rights of twelve other States; and those who hold those rights, have right and power to keep them. (Ketcham 210)

Again Henry poses the danger as an opposition between old-fashioned strength and enlightened ornamentation: “[The] power [of Virginia] is reduced to little or nothing: Their garrisons, magazines, arsenals, and forts, which will be situated in the strongest places within the States: Their ten miles square, with all the fine ornaments of human life, added to their powers . . . will reduce the power of the [states] to nothing. The voice of tradition, I trust, will inform posterity of our struggles for freedom” (Ketcham 211-12). For Henry the test of republican manhood is whether it can erect itself, armed with the truth, in opposition to this emasculating and mystifying Federal program, no matter how great the odds: “It is said that eight States have adopted this plan. I declare that if twelve States and an half adopted it, I would with manly firmness, and in spite of an erring world, reject it” (Ketcham 200).

In this analysis I do not mean to suggest that the entire ratification debate comes down to a question of whose definition of masculinity was more seductive. In fact, the rhetorical lure of masculinity generally plays merely an ancillary role in larger arguments about representation, taxation, and rights. At the same time, though, it is clear that beneath the arguments over the merits of the constitution masculine identity is at stake, that at least one of the fault lines of this American identity crisis runs right through men’s self-conceptions *as men*. In other words, insofar as each side appeals to republican manhood to embrace its aims and insofar as each side puts forward a very different vision of civic virtue to which that republican manhood will be coupled, the concept of republican manhood itself is at stake. As I argued above, that masculinity could be put to such varied uses and implicated in such varied visions indicates, at the very least, its lack of conceptual rigor if not a functional instability. Once these men decide on the Federalists’ nationalistic program with its paternalistic impulse, manhood will be affixed to the civic virtues it promotes and will thus, perhaps as an unintended consequence, eventually lose its republican meaning to the sometimes overt paternalism of the Federalist project.

Perhaps no other figure embodies the ambivalence of national manhood than George Washington. On 30 October 1787, just days after reading Madison’s letter about manly determination, Washington received a letter from Gouverneur Morris in which Morris encourages him, in striking terms, to accept the national presidency once the constitution has been adopted. Underscoring the arguments made by recent scholars, Morris indicates the power Washington (indeed, his very name) held in the national imagination: “I have observed,” he writes, “that your Name to the new Constitution has been of infinite service. I am convinced that if you had not attended the Convention, and the same Paper had been handed out to the World, it would have met with a colder Reception, with fewer and weaker Advocates, and with more and more strenuous opponents” (Washington 5: 399-400). This power associated with Washington’s name and figure yields enormous strategic value. Not only has Washington’s signature “been of infinite service,” but, Morris writes, “should the Idea prevail that you would not accept of the Presidency it would prove fatal in many Parts” (400). Thus, Washington



in many ways *already* unites the country, keeping its “many Parts” functioning together.

Morris puts his finger on an aspect of Washington’s power, however, that goes beyond sympathetic or affectionate identification when he expresses his own cynicism about America’s constituents. Part of the value of Washington’s power, for Morris, is that it opposes what Morris defines as the weakness of human nature and its tendencies toward immorality: “[Y]ou will agree with me that Men must be treated as Men and not as Machines, much less as Philosophers, & least of all Beings as reasonable Creatures; seeing that in Effect they reason not to direct but to excuse their Conduct” (400). For Morris (and Morris is sure that for Washington, too), the people *need* a leader who will not excuse but will correct their conduct, a leader who knows what is best for them and who can shape their actions accordingly. Those sympathetic imaginary bonds between the people and the president must be tempered with a more coldly rational force. This is what makes Washington, in the words of Morris, “best fitted to fill that Office”:

Your cool steady Temper is *indispensably necessary* to give a firm and manly Tone to the new Government. To constitute a well poised political Machine is the Task of us common workmen; but to set it in Motion requires still greater Qualities. . . . The Exercise of Authority depends on personal Character; and the Whips and Reins by which an able Character governs unruly steeds will only hurl the unskillful Presumer with more speedy & headlong Violence to the Earth. The Horses once trained may be managed by a Woman or a Child; not so when they first feel the Bit. And indeed among these thirteen Horses now about to be coupled together there are some of every Race and Character. They will listen to your Voice, and submit to your Control; you therefore must say I *must* mount this Seat. (400)

Although Morris was not the first of Washington’s correspondents to associate him with the presidency, he was the first to offer an argument that Washington accept the office. And what an argument it is. This is not the feminized body of the sentimentally imagined Washington. Here he is still the general (in fact, Morris addresses him as general in his closing), a taskmaster presiding over the “common workmen,” the cold, hard stage driver with whip in one hand and a tight grip on the reigns with the other.<sup>10</sup> Force again becomes the predominating theme of national unity to which the whole country, different as are its parts, must “submit.”<sup>11</sup> Washington, “firm and manly,” will function as the mirror image for a strong and unified national imaginary, giving shape and lending totality to the factional and diverse body of the people. Washington’s image will realize Jay’s

depiction of a homogeneous America, and his voice will submit the polyvocality of the confederation to the control of a manly univocality.

The manly strength exerted by Washington supplements the rhetorical strategy in the Federalists' constitutional discourse and indicates a radical blind spot in the view that eighteenth-century America overwhelmingly rejected patriarchal authority. The form of control that Morris hears in Washington's voice and sees in his strong grip enables him to forcefully occupy a position the demands of which cannot be performed by just anyone, however. Most who would assume the reigns of such authority would be "hurled" "violently" to the earth. In Morris's rhetoric Washington assumes an Apollonian corona in contrast to the usurping Phaeton who, unable to subordinate the unruly steeds, and threatening order with conflagration, must be struck down. Only he who can force, by the violence of the whip, the heterogeneous components of the country into submission may securely lay claim to the office. Washington must "train" the unruly states and their diverse constituents before they can be controlled. And the strength and efficacy of his regimen would be such that even a "Woman" or "Child" could then manage them.

Even if it calls men toward the assumption of a managerial ideal, as Dana D. Nelson argues in *National Manhood*, the constitution offers them this role and the promise of its security only through their subordination to the stern, authoritative control of a manly executive. In the end it is the power of Washington's unified and unifying manly image and tone to release men from the anxious ambivalences of a masculinity caught in the double bind of political castration (that double bind created by Washington himself, along with his Federalist allies) that signals the decades-long closure of any materially efficacious debate about democratic social relations in the early republic. The idea of security and of personal happiness was, for the American eighteenth-century man, forcefully bound to the progress of powerful and authoritarian manly state structures (especially the structure of the presidency as embodied by Washington), because these implied a stable social fraternity realized in and protected by the "manly tone" that emanated from nowhere but the state itself. The irresistible advance of the paternalistic institutions of the state and their installation at the heart of the very social relations they supplant was in large part permitted by the masculine fantasy of its own representation in a great man who might put to rest, once and for all, the anxieties induced by the question of manhood in America. Washington as president marks the obsolescence of any discourse about fraternal social relations outside the parameters of the paternal state and tacitly inscribes, albeit in negative, the anxiety of each man on the unified surface of the president's image.

## Notes

1. Though their explanations differ, many scholars detail the diminishing practices of patronage and deference in colonial America in the years before and during the Revolution, including Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1991); Joyce Appleby, *Republicanism and*

*Liberalism in the Historical Imagination* (1992); and, more recently, Michael Zuckerman, "Authority in Early America" (2003).

2. There remains much scholarly debate about whether we can accurately describe these practices as democratic. Although historians generally assert that democracy did not function as a coherent and/or acceptable political model until the Jacksonian era, the idea and practice of popular democracy was actually quite common in the decades after the Revolution and, specifically, during the period of the constitutional debates. For instance, Saul Cornell identifies two prolific anti-Federalist writers, Centinel and Philadelphensis, as representing the "voice of radical democracy" (99). Joshua Miller points to several groups that he argues practiced and promulgated radical and direct democracy: among others, the Revolutionary Party in Philadelphia, 1776, the North Carolina Regulators, and the people who lived in 1776 on the borders of Virginia and Pennsylvania and declared independence from those states (55-60). He, like Marc Kruman, also points to the Pennsylvania Constitutionalists as radical democrats (62). I use the terms "democracy" and "democratic" in the sense outlined by these scholars. See Sheldon Wolin, *The Presence of the Past* (1989); Marc Kruman, *Between Authority and Liberty* (1997); Joshua Miller, *The Rise and Fall of Democracy in Early America, 1630-1789* (1991); Saul Cornell, *The Other Founders: Anti-Federalism & the Dissenting Tradition in America, 1788-1828* (1999); Ed White, "The Value of Conspiracy Theory," (2002). Each of these scholars articulate eighteenth-century forms of democratic practice as developing and operating under concepts of representation that, even if not as coherent as "Jacksonian democracy," do not easily map onto republican or liberal ideology.

3. Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" provides a visual illustration of the post-Revolutionary substitution of one father for another. When Rip awakens after the war and returns to the village inn, it has been transformed: "He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe, but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was stuck in the hand instead of a scepter, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON" (11). As Christopher Looby notes in his analysis of Irving's fable, "The decisive detail is Rip's *recognition* of the change as one of semiotic substitution, his immediate demystification of the new order of authority" (43).

4. See, e.g., Carol Patemen, who argues that the "momentous transition from the traditional to the modern world . . . involved a change from a traditional (paternal) form of patriarchy to a new *specifically modern* (or fraternal) form: patriarchal civil society" (35). For her, patriarchal power does not necessarily refer to societies where fathers rule. Rather patriarchal power captures the specificities of domination and subjection institutionalized in the structures of government and in the web of social knowledge and truths. Pateman explains that "[t]he forms of subjection specific to civil society are . . . developed by the complicity of subordinates as well as by force—complicity made all the easier . . . when consciousness is informed by patriarchal forms of liberty and equality" (51). The very concepts and practices that were evidence of patriarchy's defeat (liberty and equality) are actually subsumed within a more normalized form of patriarchal power that pervades civil society. In other words, as Enlightenment critique rapidly dissipated traditional forms of authority, new networks of social control that defined individuals and their social relations assumed their place, operating through different tactics, but largely by the same paternalistic principles.

5. See Joshua Miller, *The Rise and Fall of Democracy in Early America*, on the conflict between direct democracy and representation and the diminishment of the people's capacity for political action in a national government (51-103). Miller also argues that the Federalist's rhetorical conflation of democracy and popular sovereignty depended on the definition of "the people" as "we, the people of the United States," rather than the citizens of towns, counties, and states (107). See also Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies*, for his analysis of the role played by the paternalistic Federalist rhetoric of insecurity in converting "the people" as a multitude into "the people" as a virtualized object of representation (see esp. 155-75). John Jay's *Federalist* no. 2 most clearly represents the idealizing fantasy of unified coherence with its "one connected country, one united people, with the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, having similar manners and customs."

6. My focus on the rhetoric of republican masculinity in revolutionary pamphlets and in the oral and written record of the constitutional debate, however, should not imply that I see early American ideology as monolithically republican. I recognize that the political ideas of the "founders" were often hybrid expressions of liberalism, republicanism, Puritanism, moral-sense philosophy, literary sentimentalism and a host of other competing theories. Yet, it is clear that the concepts of masculinity injected into the political opposition over the constitution are informed by the notion of republican virtue. As Hannah Pitkin argues, the very term virtue is rooted in manliness: ". . . [*Virtú*] derives from the Latin *virtus*, and thus from *vir*, which means 'man.' *Virtú* is thus manliness, those qualities found in a 'real man'" (25).

7. See David Held, *Models of Democracy*: "In America republican concepts remained contested, but their connotation shifted strikingly, and the meaning of the ideal of the active citizen was altered. In the debate surrounding the U.S. constitution, some of America's 'founding fathers' repudiated ancient and renaissance republicanism and sought to initiate a new republican order for

a country with a large population, extended territory and complex commercial networks” (54-55). As Held points out, whatever democracy exists in Madison’s theory is a “protective democracy,” a first step toward liberal democracy (see 56-95). Antonio Negri adds an important point to Held’s description, arguing that “What becomes essential” to grasp in analyzing the constitutional period are “the reasons why American constituent power, which in the democratic period had adjusted its Machiavellian and Harringtonian strength to the new American relations, here changes nature and transforms freedom, shifting it away from its meaning as active participation in the government to a negative meaning—that of an action, or the fruition of its own good, under the aegis of the law” (158). See also Christopher Duncan and Joshua Miller.

8. The effectiveness of this strategy is evident in that many of those who refused to support the document in Philadelphia later retracted that position, supporting the adoption of the unamended constitution because, as one of the original anti-Federalists, Edmund Randolph, governor of Virginia, put it, they “fear[ed] disunion, eight States having already ratified” (Ketcham 482).

9. The Federalists would engage in similar feminizing tactics. See Smith-Rosenberg, 854-56, for her analysis of Federalist attempts to characterize the Shaysites (and other rural debtors) as effeminate.

10. One member of the Constitutional Convention compared the Federalists’ treatment of the nation to “a number of jockeys who had thirteen young colts to break; they begin with the appearance of kindness, giving them a lock of hay, or a handful of oats, and stroking them while they eat, until being rendered sufficiently gentle they suffer a halter to be put around their necks” (qtd. in John C. Miller 173). Miller suggests that Hamilton’s approach, on the other hand, “was to break the spirit of these mettlesome colts with a whip and then lock them up in the stable” (173).

11. Federalist newspaper editors converted Washington’s endorsement of the constitution into a threat. One editor attributed the following words (widely printed) to Washington: “Should the States reject this excellent Constitution, the probability is, an opportunity will never again offer to cancel another in peace—the next will be drawn in blood” (Jensen, *Documentary History* #233).

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