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ANTIQUITY AND LOYALIST COUNTER-NARRATIVE IN  
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ANTIQUITY AND LOYALIST COUNTER-NARRATIVE IN  
REVOLUTIONARY AMERICA, 1765-1776

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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*To my mother and father,*

*Loida and Carl*

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores one aspect of the American founding that scholarship has not yet fully investigated, namely, the ways in which loyalist advocates used the ancient literature of Greece and Rome to make their case against the Revolution. Neither an apologetic for the loyalist side of the revolutionary controversy nor a survey of loyalist intellectual thought, this study examines how the loyalist persuasion, much like the spirit of Whig patriotism, stemmed naturally from longstanding and earnest convictions concerning the tenets of English liberty, ideas anchored in the models and antimodels of classical antiquity. Like their patriot countrymen, loyalists shared an intense concern with conspiracies against liberty and a profound interest in the literature of the ancient past, and they looked to the classics to help them interpret the signs of the times and add rhetorical force and legitimacy to their polemic. While underestimating the important ways loyalists looked to antiquity to make their case against the Revolution, we have come to assume that classical republicanism naturally favored a radical response to the transatlantic crisis in the 1760s and 70s. However, a closer examination of the loyalists' use of the ancient literature reveals evidence to the contrary; the classical canon served both patriot and loyalist political strategies in the pre-revolutionary years. Affirming the significance of antiquity in the colonies for all British Americans, the author seeks to recapture a broader view of the ideological origins of the American founding, examining the loyalists' use of the classics to assess the influence of the ancient literature in the colonial imagination and fully appreciate the radicalism of the decade leading up to 1776.

## INTRODUCTION

I now come to speak of times and events of such magnitude and importance as to have engaged the attention, not of many single individuals only, or many single nations, but of the world, and the effects of which the world is likely long to feel. . . . Men so studiously conceal and disguise the true motives of their conduct, and the real and ostensible causes of action are at such variance, and they are moreover oftentimes so very unreasonable, and inconsistent, that when the truth is predicated of them, it actually appears improbable and incredible. . . . On my guard against all such sources of deception and error, I now undertake to speak of the side I took in this great controversy.

Jonathan Boucher

Looking back over the colonial debate of the pre-revolutionary years, Jonathan Boucher, the Anglican cleric and loyalist advocate from Maryland, set out to reveal the true motivations of the patriotic movement and describe his rationale for opposing the American Revolution.<sup>1</sup> In his sermons and letters, Boucher reflected the sentiment of many fellow conservatives who perceived the Revolution to be an unnatural, unjustifiable fabrication, the design of a few usurpers who enticed their countrymen to rebel against the crown under the pretense of patriotism. Loyalists like Boucher argued that true liberty already existed in America and could only exist within the framework of the English constitution, the great bulwark of freedom in the modern age and the embodiment of all that the ancient writers had envisioned concerning the virtues of republican government. Rebellion was more than defying royal authority—it was the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist, 1738-1789, Being the Autobiography of The Rev'd. Jonathan Boucher, Rector of Annapolis in Maryland and afterwards Vicar of Epsom, Surrey, England*, ed. by his grandson, Jonathan Bouchier (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, Inc., 1967), 103-104.



utter rejection of the classical tenets of liberty that had been affirmed and sustained by the laws and precedents of the English system of government. This ideological, moral aspect of loyalist thought, steeped in the rich tradition of ancient Greece and Rome, has been largely omitted from studies of the loyalist persuasion and absent in the wider analysis of the American Revolution.

This study is not an apologetic for the loyalist side of the revolutionary controversy, nor is it a survey of loyalist intellectual thought. Rather, it seeks to explore one aspect of the American founding that scholarship has not yet addressed, namely, the ways in which loyalist advocates used the classics, the ancient literature of Greece and Rome to make their case against the Revolution. The supposition that the classics were influential, even essential in the ideological origins of the American Revolution has been studied at length. However, while paying great attention to the patriot side of this observation, and very little to the loyalist counterargument, historians have led readers to presume that the political ideals of the ancient world naturally fostered the rise of a revolutionary mentality in late eighteenth-century America such that the Revolution, from an ideological point of view, was the inevitable outcome of centuries of classical republican discourse reaching back through the Enlightenment and the Renaissance to the canon of classical literature. One reason for this oversight in the scholarship has been the way in which historians have assessed the influence of the classics as secondary to the Whig discourse of the revolutionary period.<sup>2</sup> The premise that Whig writers used the classics primarily as supporting references and illustrations, secondary to their greater political agenda, predisposed the scholarship to assume a natural affinity

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<sup>2</sup> Carl Richard suggested this to be the case in his analysis of the influence of the classics on the founders. See Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 121-122.

between the writings of Aristotle and Cicero and the Whig-patriot side of the revolutionary debate; it also overlooked the potential of the classical literature to speak directly to the transatlantic world on such themes as civic virtue, liberty and the threat of tyranny. This natural association of the classics with the founders implied that those who opposed the Revolution must have been guided by something less noble than the high-principled, “self evident” tenets of classical republicanism. The fact the loyalists acquired the stigma as the losers and villains in America’s struggle for independence contributed to that assumption. However, the civil divide that pitted loyalists against patriots in the pre-revolutionary years was a sudden, unanticipated phenomenon; before 1765, no such political divide existed in the colonies, yet within a short decade, the subjects of America were at war with one another. Historically, the inhabitants of the thirteen colonies viewed themselves as British Americans, loyal subjects of the crown, and the privileged sons of English liberty.<sup>3</sup> Those who would later describe themselves as loyalists and patriots shared a common colonial heritage, a reverential devotion to the principles of the English constitution, and a universal fascination with the writers of ancient Greece and Rome and the ideals of classical republicanism. Acknowledging the significance of this common substrate at the outset of the revolutionary debate, this study seeks to recapture a realistic appraisal of the ideological origins of the American founding, examining the loyalists’ use of the classics to assess the influence of the ancient literature in the colonial imagination and fully appreciate the radicalism of the decade leading up to 1776.

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<sup>3</sup> See Janice Potter’s analysis on the principled tenets of loyalism in Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 15-38.

The political debate of the pre-revolutionary years can be described as a civil war of ideologies between British subjects who shared a similar colonial heritage and cherished the same classical principles of liberty, yet ultimately interpreted and applied those tenets in diametrically opposite ways in response to the transatlantic crisis of the 1760s and 70s.<sup>4</sup> Before the civil divide, in principle, the terms “loyalist” and “patriot” were applicable to all subjects of the English crown who were both loyal to their sovereign, George III, and patriotic in their commitment to the principles of the English constitution. Upon George III’s accession to the throne in 1760, John Adams was not alone in praising the patriot king as a “friend of liberty”—the great defender and symbol of the republican monarchy, the freest system of government known to the modern world.<sup>5</sup> In an ideological sense, the subjects of British America proceeded together along an eighteenth-century Appian Way, viewing themselves as the rightful heirs of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the modern reflection of their ancient Roman ancestors.<sup>6</sup> Under the banner of English liberty and classical republicanism, the colonists walked in unison until a seismic shift in the 1760s disrupted the American landscape and fractured the sociopolitical core of British American identity. In the wake of Parliament’s controversial revenue measures, the terms “Tory” and “Whig” came to signify the division between loyalist and patriot sentiment in the colonies. Although colonial politics did not replicate the dynamic of England’s Tory-Whig party construct, the conservative and radical currents of that political discourse influenced

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., viii.

<sup>5</sup> Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 26.

<sup>6</sup> The Appian Way, “*Via Appia*,” the most famous road of the Roman Republic, stretching from Rome to Brundisium, named in honor of the Roman Censor Appius Claudius Caecus (340-273 B.C.) who built the first section of the road.

those who would come to define themselves as loyalists and patriots in the American debate. Like the Whig-patriots in America, those British Americans who remained loyal to the king and described themselves as Tories did so to distinguish their conservative response to the changing political climate of the pre-revolutionary years. However, these terms, as Mary Beth Norton described, blurred the significance of the ideological heritage that American loyalists and patriots shared in common.<sup>7</sup> Speaking to this point, Daniel Leonard, an early Whig supporter who eventually switched sides and advocated the Tory cause, expressed his frustration over this confusion in his MASSACHUSETTENSIS letters. In Leonard's view, in opposing the authority of the British ministry, American Whigs had simply lost their moorings, forgetting that American liberties had always been sustained by the principles of the English constitution: "The terms whig and tory have been adopted according to the arbitrary use of them in this province," Leonard asserted, "but they rather ought to be reversed; an American tory is a supporter of our excellent constitution, and an American whig a subverter of it."<sup>8</sup> In concert with Leonard, Norton advised that historians ought to view the political debate in the decade leading up to 1776 not as struggle between Tories and Whigs, but as "a contest between different varieties of Whigs" who may have diverged along the *Via Appia* with respect to their view of parliamentary authority, but continued to maintain a common faith in the rudimentary principles of republican government as outlined by the political commentators of ancient Greece and Rome. Like their patriot

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Beth Norton, "The Loyalist Critique of the Revolution," *The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality: Papers presented at the first symposium, May 5 and 6, 1972* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1972).

<sup>8</sup> Massachusetts [Daniel Leonard], April 3, 1775 in *Novanglus and Massachusettensis; or Political Essays, Published in the Years 1774 and 1775, on the Principal Points of Controversy, Between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (Boston: Hews and Goss, 1819), 225-226.

counterparts, loyalist writers viewed themselves taking up the mantle of Cato and Cicero in the defense of liberty, holding the moral high ground in the colonial debate while invoking the classical themes of liberty and tyranny to persuade their countrymen to return to the ancient principles of English liberty which the colonies had always embraced.<sup>9</sup>

The premise that the classics reflected an essential component of eighteenth-century thought, not only in an academic, intellectual sense, but also morally and ideologically, is an overarching theme of this study. When British Americans designed their arguments around select metaphors from the ancient world or quoted the classical authors directly, they did so not simply to adorn their work with Greco-Roman “window dressing,” but to convey meaning, appeal to sources of legitimacy, and articulate their most fervent beliefs concerning liberty and tyranny.<sup>10</sup> As Eran Shalev observed, the ancient world of the Mediterranean was as vivid in the transatlantic imagination as the Anglo-American world, supplying the building blocks for “legitimizing and constructing reality in terms of a republican past.”<sup>11</sup> The ancient authors appeared to be speaking directly to the political aspirations and fears of British Americans with injunctions to vigorously defend their liberties against the threat of corruption and tyranny. As Gordon Wood asserted, classical republican *values* “existed everywhere” among educated subjects of the transatlantic world, particularly in British America where “the republicanizing of monarchy” had awakened a heightened interest

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<sup>9</sup> Norton, “Loyalist Critique of the Revolution,” 130.

<sup>10</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 26. Bailyn suggested that even though references to classical antiquity “were everywhere” and comprised the most conspicuous trend in the literature of the eighteenth century, these references were nothing more than “window dressing,” expressions of rhetorical flourish providing “a vivid vocabulary but not the logic or grammar of thought.”

<sup>11</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 4.

in the classical tenets of English liberty.<sup>12</sup> The ancient literature described how “the greatest republics in history”—Sparta, Athens, and Rome—had flourished and finally succumbed to corrosive forces that precipitated their demise. Political writers on both sides of the Atlantic were intensely interested in understanding the reasons for these failures, viewing the classical world as a type of laboratory for conducting republican “autopsies” on the subject.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, as Shalev observed, British Americans “habitually reflected on and represented their experiences through the classics,” and they interpreted their contemporary context through the lens of classical narrative, framed by such heroes as Cicero and Cato and archetypal villains like Catiline and Caesar.<sup>14</sup> The colonists encountered these ancient literary figures, not only through the vibrant political pamphlets and commentaries of the period, but directly through their education in the classical literature. Praising the erudition of America’s freeholders in this regard, Thomas Jefferson declared in a letter to J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur, “ours are the only farmers who can read Homer.”<sup>15</sup> In this way, as Carl Richard contended, “the classics exerted a formative influence” in their own right, fostering a continuity of principle between the subjects of British America and their Greco-Roman ancestors who were “bound together by the strong fibers of a common tradition,” informing shared perceptions about virtue, tyranny, and human polity.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 51; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 99-109.

<sup>13</sup> Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, 49-52.

<sup>14</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 2.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “From Thomas Jefferson to St. John de Crèvecoeur, Paris, Jan 15, 1787,” *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>16</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 7-9.

The pervasive influence of the classical canon in British America stemmed largely from the priorities of formal and informal education in the transatlantic world and the prerequisite for professionals and gentlemen to learn Greek and Latin as an entrée into professional and civil society. As Caroline Winterer described, from the beginning of the first settlements in Virginia and Massachusetts, “reverence for ancient models helped to structure ethical, political, oratorical, artistic, and educational ideals,” giving rise to a culture of classicism that formed a common vocabulary for how citizens communicated about every area of American life.<sup>17</sup> Across the Atlantic, the universities of Oxford and Cambridge had fully embraced the new curriculum in classical humanism by 1700, setting an agenda for classical training in the colonies. Students aspiring to attend college had to demonstrate an ability to read Cicero and Virgil in Latin and the New Testament in Greek. For that purpose alone, grammar schools and private tutors aligned their curricula to join with the colleges in serving as eighteenth-century “nurseries of classicism.” Apart from any formal language training, a working knowledge of classical references became “universal” even for those colonists with the most basic level of education.<sup>18</sup> Esteemed as a repository for the timeless, moral principles associated with virtue and corruption, clergymen intermingled secular and sacred, citing Greek and Roman authors in their sermons. As Winterer described, “Next to Christianity,” classicism was “the central intellectual project in America” throughout the eighteenth century.<sup>19</sup> The increase in print materials during the period significantly expanded the participants and broadened the content and application of classical

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<sup>17</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 2, 10-12. See also Bailyn, *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 1.

references in the popular press. The number of master-printers in the colonies more than tripled between 1720 and 1760, increasing from nine to forty-two.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, whereas higher education had previously focused on preparing clergymen for ordination, colonial colleges, which had grown in number from four to nine by 1776, began accommodating those preparing for other professions such as law and medicine. Culturally, a working “knowledge of Rome and Greece was believed to lie at the core of true erudition,” and a formal classical education was essential for anyone seeking admittance to the professional, gentlemanly class of society.<sup>21</sup>

This study looks to the newspapers and pamphlets of the pre-revolutionary years to examine how loyalists invoked classical imagery and concepts to appeal to a wide colonial readership. There were forty-four newspapers in British America by 1775, and they occupied “an essential niche in the social ecology” of the colonial landscape. During the political debates in the decade leading up to 1776, a host of pseudonymous writers representing a range of conservative and radical views published opinion pieces in colonial papers invoking classical themes to legitimize and illustrate their arguments. The authors’ selected pseudonyms further demonstrated the influence of the classics in colonial discourse, often naming specific heroes of the classical world such as “Cato” and “Leonidas,” or Latinizing modern names such as “Americanus” and “Massachusettensis” to add rhetorical force to their polemic. Tory-loyalist and Whig-patriot essays followed similar patterns in this regard, summoning the honor and

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7-16. There were four colonial colleges in 1746: Harvard, 1636; William & Mary, 1692; Yale, 1701; and the College of New Jersey (Princeton), 1746. By 1776, five additional colleges were established: College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), 1751; King’s College (Columbia), 1754; Rhode Island College (Brown), 1764; Queen’s College (Rutgers), 1766; and Dartmouth College, 1769. See David S. Zubatsky, “The History of American Colleges and their Libraries in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: A Bibliographical Essay,” *Occasional Papers; University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science* 140 (October 1979), 17-49.



prestige of the Greco-Roman tradition to validate their letters and pamphlets. Although the newspaper owners themselves often reflected a particular conservative or radical view and tailored their publications accordingly, the pseudonymous essays were frequently reprinted across the colonies and obtained access to a wider audience than any other medium. In this way, colonial newspapers helped foster “the construction of communal identities” as loyalist and patriot writers competed to shape the colonial discourse.<sup>22</sup>

Although historians of the American founding have often highlighted the significance of the classical literature in the pre-revolutionary years, the historiography has emphasized the influence of the ancient writers on the patriot side of the debate while underestimating how the same body of literature might have influenced those who elected to remain loyal to Britain. This study is the first of its kind to examine the ways in which loyalist advocates looked to the classics to make their case against the Revolution. Bernard Bailyn pointed to this gap in the historiography when he observed that although historians have illuminated “the pattern of fears, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions” that motivated the revolutionaries, “they have not yet made clear why any sensible, well-informed, right-minded American with a modicum of imagination and common sense could possibly have opposed the Revolution.”<sup>23</sup> It is surprising that in all the work that has been done on loyalist ideology, no one has yet considered how the classics motivated and shaped the nature of loyalist polemic during the great colonial

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<sup>22</sup> Eran Shalev, “Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms during the American Revolution and Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Summer 2003), 159-161.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), x. Bailyn introduced his biographical study on the life of the loyalist governor of Massachusetts, Thomas Hutchinson, in an effort to “convey something of the experience of the losers in the American Revolution” and “help make the story whole and comprehensible.” (x-xi).

controversy. Given the dearth of analysis on this question, one might assume the tenets of the classical canon were only relevant or intellectually compatible with the Whig-patriot *weltanschauung*. The most apparent explanation for this myopic treatment of the classics has been the general subordination of classical studies within the wider intellectual history of the American founding and the tendency of historians to view the ancient literature as a subset of Whig political ideology.<sup>24</sup> While emphasizing the influence of the patriotic discourse in the eighteenth century, the “republican synthesis school,” which traced the radicalism of the Revolution to the “Whig science of politics” and the transmission of those intellectual currents from Britain to the colonies, inadvertently minimized the influence of the classical canon as a carrier of ideology in its own right.<sup>25</sup> While illuminating the importance of this political correspondence, the emphasis on Whig ideology and subsequent assimilation of the ancient literature within the revolutionary discourse has led us to believe the classics naturally favored a radical rather than a conservative response to the transatlantic crisis of the 1760s and 70s.<sup>26</sup> However, British Americans were thoroughly immersed in the classics, culturally and intellectually, long before radical Whig pamphlets engulfed the popular press, and the models and antimodels of the ancient world extended beyond the limitations of any one political agenda in the eighteenth century. As Winterer observed, “Classical imagery in and of itself did not point to revolutionary ideology,” but rather, colonial actors “reinvented” the classical referents “to suit the ends of a new political program. The

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<sup>24</sup> Richard, Winterer, and Shalev have advocated a reassessment of the intellectual history of the Revolution by means of classical studies.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Shalhope described the contributions of Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood and J. G. A. Pocock as forming a new “republican synthesis,” an instrument of historical analysis illuminating the function of republican ideology during the Revolution. See Robert Shalhope, “Toward a Republican Synthesis: The Emergence of an Understanding of Republicanism in American Historiography,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 29 (January 1972).

<sup>26</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 120-121.

classical world, whether in words or pictures, was no more inherently republican, peaceful, and enlightened than it was monarchical, violent, and ornate.”<sup>27</sup> In their public discourse, British subjects commonly referred to the writings of Cicero, Virgil and Homer to inform and legitimize their political views. Before the transatlantic tensions of the 1760s, by virtue of their esteem for the classical tradition, British Americans celebrated “the might and glory of the British Empire” as a modern reflection of the Roman Republic. Like Rome, England boasted in its republican form of government composed of monarchical, aristocratic, and popular elements, just as the ancient political writers had prescribed.<sup>28</sup> The Whig writer Thomas Gordon echoed this sentiment in 1721 when he declared the English constitution to be “the best republic in the world with a prince at the head of it.”<sup>29</sup> This monarchical vision of classical republicanism and association with the Roman motif influenced American sentiment toward the British Empire in 1760 just as Whig radicals later turned the tables after 1765 and associated the British ministry with the oppression of Julius Caesar; “Once Britain donned the garb of a Roman victor, it was only too easy for Americans a decade later to imagine the metropolis as wearing the blood-stained toga of a tyrant.”<sup>30</sup> In the pre-revolutionary years, British Americans, whether Tory-loyalist or Whig-patriot, found the models of antiquity sufficiently diverse and malleable to support their competing political agendas. One man’s heroic patriot was another’s treacherous

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<sup>27</sup> Caroline Winterer, “From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America,” *The Journal of American History* 91 (March 2005), 1268.

<sup>28</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 50-51.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Gordon, “No. 37. Character of a good and of an evil Magistrate, quoted from Algernon Sidney, Esq.,” in John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato’s Letters, or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, Four Volumes in Two, Vol. 2, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995); Addison Ward, “The Tory View of Roman History,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 4 (Summer 1964), 418.

<sup>30</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 51-52.

tyrant, and the colonial debate on these questions waged in the public press, invoking all the imagery and rhetorical force associated with the great political battles of the Roman Republic—distant echoes of Cicero’s orations against Catiline and Cato’s opposition to Caesar.<sup>31</sup> In our preoccupation with the Whig-patriot side of the classical contest, we have not only underappreciated the action on the other side of the battlefield, we have acquired an incomplete understanding of the nature and meaning of the larger campaign.

In his semi-autobiographical *Letters From an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur represented the archetype of how American defenders of the British crown used the classics to articulate the loyalist persuasion. Although his essays were not published during the heat of the colonial debate, Crèvecoeur’s *Letters and Sketches* encapsulated all that the conservative writers of the period argued on behalf of the loyalist cause—not only with respect to the logical inconsistencies they perceived in the revolutionary argument, but also in the difficulties British Americans encountered on a very human level as they attempted to negotiate the sociopolitical upheaval of the pre-revolutionary years. In this way, Crèvecoeur’s work is essential to our understanding of the loyalist persuasion, affording a microcosm view of the experience of those British Americans who opposed the radical, arbitrary nature of a movement that had suddenly disrupted their pastoral, tranquil existence and threatened to destroy everything they cherished about life on the American frontier. Crèvecoeur’s portrait of the colonial landscape before the Revolution presented a neoclassical, idyllic world where the industrious yeoman farmer epitomized the civic virtue, order, and communal spirit of the Roman Republic. In

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<sup>31</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 26.

Crèvecoeur's view, the revolutionary movement represented all that was contrary to that pastoral vision—the collapse of the balanced constitution, the fury of an unchecked mob, and the sudden manifestation of all that the ancient writers had warned concerning the vulnerability of republican governments to anarchy and tyranny. To illustrate the turbulence of the period, Crèvecoeur turned to the ancient figure of Belisarius, describing how the experience of the loyalist farmer in America mirrored the virtue, hardship, and endurance of the heroic general of Byzantium who was unjustly betrayed and condemned by his fellow countrymen. Crèvecoeur's use of the classics demonstrated how loyalist writers, much like their revolutionary counterparts, looked to the ancient literary canon to legitimize their arguments, and more importantly, express their most fervent beliefs concerning the unnatural rebellion that plunged the colonies into the cataclysm of internecine conflict.

Crèvecoeur's perspective on the Revolution framed the analysis of the loyalist persuasion in historic and intellectual context. The British subjects of America, whether conservative or radical, shared the same colonial heritage, had always seen themselves as loyal to the crown, and were committed principally and ideologically to a classical model of republican virtue. Loyalists naturally pointed to the classics to legitimize their arguments, much like their Whig counterparts, because British subjects on both sides of the Atlantic adhered to the same core elements of English liberty that Enlightenment writers had repeatedly attributed to the legacy of republican Rome. Before the factious political debates of the 1760s and 70s, political adversaries like John Adams and Thomas Hutchinson shared an inviolate faith in the principles of the English constitution, the legal system they esteemed to be the eighteenth century's embodiment

of all that the ancient writers had envisioned concerning the defense of liberty under an ideal form of republican government. The ideology of civic virtue lay at the heart of that classical vision, asserting that republics ultimately reflected the character of the body politic and were always vulnerable to the threat of human corruption. The gravitational pull of the classical world in this regard was particularly potent in the colonies, challenging Americans to embody the patriotic spirit that emboldened heroes like Cato and Cicero, Brutus and Cassius to stand firm against encroaching tyranny and prove themselves worthy of self-government. While Whig-patriots assailed the British ministry for corrupt policies and warned of an impending Caesar-like tyranny from above, Tory-loyalists perceived the real malfeasance to rest in the motivations of their radical countrymen who were inciting a Catiline-like conspiracy below, leading the colonies headlong into rebellion simply to satisfy their self-serving ambitions. Thus, the loyalist persuasion, much like the spirit of Whig patriotism, stemmed naturally from longstanding and earnest convictions concerning the tenets of English liberty, ideas anchored in the models and antimodels of classical antiquity.<sup>32</sup>

No other motif from the classical canon resonated with the loyalists' perception of the radicalism of the revolutionary movement like the conspiracy of Lucius Catiline, the Roman patrician who devised a scheme to assassinate the prominent members of the Senate, burn Rome to the ground, and establish himself as dictator in 63 B.C. Sallust's history of Catiline's sedition immortalized Cicero as the guardian of Roman liberty for his role in detecting and defeating one of the most infamous plots in the ancient world. Much like the Julius Caesar metaphor, the Catilinarian trope was a commonplace in the political literature of the eighteenth century, popularized by Thomas Gordon and

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<sup>32</sup> See discussion of models and antimodels in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 53-122.

Conyers Middleton who warned of internal threats to republican governments, sounding a clarion call to all Englishmen to take up the Ciceronian mantle and stand guard against the evils of political corruption. Enlightenment rationalism, in combination with the horror stories of the ancient past, amplified conspiratorial fears in the colonies as British Americans attempted to posit explanations for the unanticipated transatlantic crisis in the 1760s and 70s. Although fears of monarchical power and tyranny from above predisposed Whig-radicals to look to the Caesarian model, Tory-conservatives, who viewed the monarch as the ultimate defender of constitutional liberty against the tyranny of mob rule, naturally gravitated to the ancient legend of Catiline. As radical rhetoric continued to mount in the press, Joseph Galloway and other conservative writers advanced their arguments to counter what they perceived to be a rising insurgency fueled by self-serving demagogues, a conspiracy of Catilines willing to reduce the English constitutional order to ashes. Like their patriot countrymen, loyalists shared an intense concern with conspiracies against liberty and a profound interest in the literature of the ancient past, and they looked to the classics to help them interpret the signs of the times and add rhetorical force and legitimacy to their polemic.

The colonial defenders of British authority waged an active campaign against the revolutionaries in the press, turning to the vivid imagery and language of the classical world to expose perceived contradictions and malicious motivations in the patriot agenda. The gladiatorial battles in the arena of public discourse between such opponents as Daniel Leonard and John Adams, or Samuel Seabury and Alexander Hamilton, represented the clash of two opposing narratives on the nature of classical liberty. Leonard, a Massachusetts lawyer, and Seabury, an Anglican cleric, were among

those who defended the loyalist cause to check what they understood as the core, irrational premise in the patriot argument—the notion that liberty was obtainable outside the framework of the English constitution. Loyalist advocates rejected radical claims that the tenets of classical republicanism justified colonial opposition to royal authority. The English constitution had always embodied the principles of classical liberty and continued to do so, even despite Parliament's misguided revenue policies of the 1760s; Whig-patriot assertions to the contrary were both erroneous and disingenuous. In Ciceronian fashion, the loyalist writers took the radicals to task for intentionally sidestepping constitutional reform initiatives to promote rebellion. The patriots' scurrilous tactics betrayed their true intentions, using trumped up charges against the ministry and inflammatory rhetoric to manipulate the public and incite anarchy to secure their own rise to power. Nothing in the current constitutional system prohibited the colonies from seeking redress, so what else could possibly explain the rampant spirit of sedition? The loyalist writer Andrew Oliver turned to the classics to describe how the phenomenon of rebellion had exceeded all proportion, expanding outward from Boston across the colonies like the hydra of Greek mythology, spreading its poisonous venom and resisting all attempts to subdue it. The specter of sociopolitical fragmentation incited by James Otis, Samuel Adams and the dissenting clergy immediately conjured up scenes of Catilinarian conspiracies, assassinations, mob violence, and tyranny. Loyalist advocates like Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson, and Anglican minister Jonathan Boucher of Maryland, struggled to curb revolutionary sentiment with the logic of rational, classical appeals to history and political philosophy. Such loyalist strategies were too confined by the limits of their



own conservative, reasoned attempt to explain the complexities of the political world and persuade the mob to return to its senses. Even Samuel Seabury, whose innovative *Farmer* letters represented one of the most creative efforts to appeal to a wider American audience, was ultimately unable to stem the tide of the revolutionary movement. Despite their limited influence, conservatives were no less passionate in advocating their side of the political debate; loyalists looked to the classics not only to counter the narrative of their radical opponents, but to explain to a deluded public that the timeless principles that had framed the genius of the English constitution and the tenets of classical republicanism were one and the same.

A close examination of the relationship between the loyalists and the classics reveals that those who elected to oppose the Revolution and defend British authority in the colonies did so for moral and ideological purposes, similar to their patriot adversaries, looking to the ancient literature to help them convey the weight of their principled assertions, appeal to legitimacy, and articulate their most fervent beliefs concerning the defense of liberty and the encroaching threat of tyranny. This observation is significant, not only because it leads us to appreciate an essential component of loyalist ideology, but also because it affords a clearer understanding of the influence of the classics in the pre-revolutionary years and the ideological content of the great controversy in the decade leading up to 1776.

J. HECTOR ST. JOHN DE CRÈVECOEUR AND  
THE LOYALIST PERSUASION

Perhaps more than any other writer of the revolutionary period, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur captured a human portrait of the American landscape, illustrating how British Americans negotiated the turbulent and unforeseen political and social changes in the decade leading up to 1776. His use of the classics highlighted what became the essence of the loyalist persuasion: Fear of an unchecked *demos* giving rise to mob rule and the destruction of civic virtue. In a series of twenty-four essays, Crèvecoeur's semi-autobiographical *Letters From an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* described the odyssey of his surrogate protagonist, Farmer James, who began his American saga as a freeholder on the idyllic frontier, only to have his aspirations crushed by the societal fragmentation and exigencies of the patriotic movement. Crèvecoeur's name, literally "broken heart," seemingly presaged the trajectory of the author's travails as a British subject in America—an eighteenth-century Odysseus whose episodic journey reflected the experience of many British Americans caught in a maelstrom of moral endurance during a decade when loyalty to the crown became a euphemism for treason.

Crèvecoeur painted a neoclassical vision of the colonial frontier, defining America as "the most perfect society now existing in the world," where the enterprising farmer was to the colonies what Cincinnatus was to Rome—the product and sustainer of

republican order and civic virtue.<sup>1</sup> However, Crèvecoeur's optimistic vision was balanced against his experience during the Revolution, using all the admonitions the classical writers had articulated on the delicate balance of mixed constitutions and their susceptibility to conspiracy, anarchy, and tyranny. Lamenting the strife of the civil conflict he witnessed in the decade leading up to 1776, Crèvecoeur surmised, "I am conscious that I was happy before this unfortunate Revolution. I feel that I am no longer so; therefore I regret the change."<sup>2</sup> In this regard, one of Crèvecoeur's most potent critiques of the patriotic movement was his essay, *The American Belisarius*, a metaphorical synopsis of his own experience based on the history of the warrior-hero of Byzantium who, although betrayed, imprisoned, and cast aside by his rivals, remained true to his principles and loyal to his emperor. Crèvecoeur's use of the Belisarius motif not only reflected the popularity of the trope in the literature and art of the eighteenth century, it also illustrated the way in which loyalist writers like Crèvecoeur used the ancient writings to assert their neoclassical vision of America and counter what they viewed as the dangerous and tyrannical rhetoric of their patriot opponents.

Crèvecoeur looked to the classics not simply to enhance the rhetoric of his argument, but to demonstrate how the loyalist critique of the Revolution was anchored in the ancient principles of republican government, the same Greek and Roman references the revolutionaries had hijacked to justify their seditious claims against the crown. Crèvecoeur was a loyalist, not simply because he opposed the Revolution, but because he remained true to what he valued most—his identity as a British American, a

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<sup>1</sup> J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters From an American Farmer and Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America*, ed. and intro. Albert E. Stone (New York: Viking Penguin, 1981), 67.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 204; Norma A. Plotkin, "Saint-John de Crèvecoeur Rediscovered: Critic or Panegyrist?," *French Historical Studies* 3 (Spring 1964), 399.

subject of the crown living under the freest system of government in the world and heir to the ancient principles of liberty.<sup>3</sup> The fact both Whig-patriots and Tory-loyalists ascribed to these classical ideals and embraced them as their own suggests the degree to which the ancient world served as the repository for the eighteenth century's highest ideals with respect to civic virtue and liberty. By studying Crèvecoeur's *Letters and Sketches*, we can observe similarities between the ways loyalists and revolutionaries leveraged the classics in their joined concern with the agrarian ideal and trace how and why their paths diverged as British Americans teetered into the cataclysm of revolution and internecine conflict. Crèvecoeur used the classics not to decry the tyranny of the modern day Caesar, as did so many revolutionaries; instead, like many other loyalists, he focused more on the threat posed by a Catiline-like conspiracy and the fury of an unchecked mob. As such, Crèvecoeur represented the archetype of how American defenders of the British crown used the classics to articulate what we can call the loyalist persuasion.

Crèvecoeur's *Letters and Sketches* were semi-autobiographical works, reflecting his experience as a British American living on the colonial frontier during the period leading up to 1776. Whereas Crèvecoeur's twelve *Farmer* letters were published in London for the first time between 1782 and 1783, twelve additional essays, later titled *Sketches of Early America*, remained hidden from public view until their discovery and publication in 1925.<sup>4</sup> The knowledge of Crèvecoeur's *Sketches* was of considerable

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<sup>3</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 203; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Crèvecoeur's twelve additional essays were discovered in Normandy in 1923 by Henri L. Bourdin who also gave them the title *Sketches of Eighteenth-Century America* for their 1925 Yale Press publication. See Albert E. Stone's introductory essay in Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 23; Jeffery H. Richards, "Revolution, Domestic Life, and the End of 'Common Mercy' in Crèvecoeur's 'Landscapes,'" *William and Mary Quarterly* 55 (April 1998), 281-282.

importance to the historiography on the Revolution, prompting a revision in the way historians viewed Crèvecoeur's commentary on the American founding. Previously type-cast as a theorist of American colonial identity, earlier scholarship emphasized Crèvecoeur's idyllic formulation of American exceptionalism and underestimated the sophistication of his critique of the Revolution. The famous English writer D. H. Lawrence ridiculed Crèvecoeur for portraying a deceitfully Romantic version of colonial life that had more in common with Crèvecoeur's preconceived emotional idealism than any realistic appraisal of the American experience. Lawrence minimized Crèvecoeur's contributions, suggesting that when the real America failed to live up to his idyllic vision, Crèvecoeur simply "trotted back to France in high-heeled shoes, and imagined America in Paris" instead.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the discovery of Crèvecoeur's *Sketches* revealed a darker vision of the American experience, a world turned upside down by the torrent of revolutionary forces, leaving loyalists and neutrals no middle ground on which to stand. Crèvecoeur's *Sketches* illustrated how the Revolution's convulsive rejection of a British colonial America replaced Crèvecoeur's previously understood idyllic portrait of the American landscape with a corrupt, chaotic, and violent rendition of it.<sup>6</sup>

Crèvecoeur's polemic was rustic and academic, optimistic and skeptical, drawing upon the literature of antiquity to support the contrasting elements in his rhetorical style. On the one hand, Crèvecoeur's protagonist throughout most of the

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<sup>5</sup> D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, ed. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey and John Worthen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 39; Mark Dexter Todd, "Fragmentation and Representation in the Works of Crèvecoeur: A Bakhtin Reading" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1992), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Bryce Traister, "Criminal Correspondence: Loyalism, Espionage and Crèvecoeur," *Early American Literature* 37 (2002), 482; Richards, "Crèvecoeur's 'Landscapes'," 282.

*Letters and Sketches* was “Farmer James,” a simple-minded, sentimental idealist who naively reported what he observed and experienced on the American landscape. Crèvecoeur’s selection of a farmer to serve as his eyewitness to history invoked the virtue and idealism of the classical agrarian motif, the life of the virtuous Roman farmer idealized by such poets as Virgil and Horace. However, although a farmer himself, Crèvecoeur was anything but simple-minded and naive.<sup>7</sup> A highly educated gentleman and world traveler, Crèvecoeur was a philosopher and realist who frequently doffed his farmer persona throughout his essays to provide the fabled lessons he intended his readers to glean through the triumphs and tribulations of Farmer James’ American odyssey. Whereas Farmer James assumed America would always reward his honest labor and virtuous conduct, Crèvecoeur the author knew better, seeing the grand trajectory of the Revolution in full perspective, knowing that virtue could appear as a fading mirage in the face of impending corruption, chaos, and arbitrary power.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, Crèvecoeur’s use of the classics included direct and indirect references to the ancient literary sources to summon all the admonitions the classical writers had articulated on the delicate and uncertain balance between the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements of republican government. Crèvecoeur’s most important essay in this regard was his *American Belisarius*, the story of a loyalist-farmer caught in the tempest of revolutionary fervor, a modern reflection of the famed Byzantine general who, in spite of his innocence and virtuous character, suffered betrayal, tortuous imprisonment, and humiliating abandonment.

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<sup>7</sup> Myra Jehlen, “J. Hector St. John Crèvecoeur: A Monarcho-Anarchist in Revolutionary America,” *American Quarterly* 31 (Summer 1979), 205.

<sup>8</sup> Mary E. Rucker, “Crèvecoeur’s ‘Letters’ and Enlightenment Doctrine,” *Early American Literature* 13 (Fall 1978), 193-194, 199, 205-206.

As historians like Carl Richard observed, “no theme was more ubiquitous in classical literature than that of the superiority of the rural, agricultural existence,” not only for its esthetic qualities, but also for the tangible and intangible benefits it afforded the republican model of government.<sup>9</sup> Aristotle, Polybius, Plutarch, Livy, Tacitus and Sallust were among those historians who acclaimed Sparta and the Roman Republic not only for their balanced constitutions, but also for their agriculturally based societies. The antimodels of the age were Athens and Carthage, both seen by classical historians as the commercial centers of vice and corruption. One of the contributing factors to the fall of the Roman Republic was the infection of commercialism following Rome’s victory over Carthage, “the Punic Curse” that ultimately transformed pastoral, communal Rome into an imperial city full of avarice and ambition. For this reason, in the Augustan Age, the poetry of Virgil, Horace and Ovid glorified Rome’s agricultural past and called upon Romans to once again return to the plow. In his *Georgics*, mirroring the rich tones Crèvecoeur employed to glorify the American landscape, Virgil extolled the Roman farmer who lived simply and honestly, “far off from clashing weapons” with untroubled sleep—where “young people grow up strong, hardworking, satisfied with poverty” because “their gods are holy” and their “parents are revered”—“Surely, when Justice left the earth she stayed last with these folk, and left some tokens here.”<sup>10</sup> For Virgil, the virtue associated with the agrarian lifestyle was not simply the imagery of the pastoral landscape, but the adversity the farmer had to overcome in his

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<sup>9</sup> Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 159.

<sup>10</sup> In Greek, “*Georgics*” means “farming.” Virgil, *Georgics*, 2.458-474 in Dorothea Wender, *Roman Poetry from the Republic to the Silver Age* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980), 59-60. Cited by Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 159.

constant fight against nature to carve out a fruitful and peaceful existence. In this way, Virgil's farmer embodied a courage and honor similar to that of the warrior in battle.<sup>11</sup>

Crèvecoeur's attraction to the classical farming genre was likely influenced by his familiarity with Virgil's poetry as well as the works of contemporary authors who drew parallels between the Augustan Age and the world of the eighteenth century. On December 16, 1771, *The Boston Post-Boy* published an essay by the English Tory writer Samuel Johnson entitled, *General Thoughts on Agriculture*.<sup>12</sup> A tribute to the life and contribution of the English farmer, Johnson cited the classical literature to support his assertion that the farmer represented "the most necessary and most indispensable of all the professions," not only feeding populations at home and abroad, but supplying the raw materials vital to the nation's manufacturing and commercial activities. As Johnson noted, the Roman soldier and statesman, Cato the Censor, who authored a treatise on agriculture, *De Agricultura*, referred to the corn of Sicily as the storehouse and "nursing-mother of the Roman people," the vitality of both the city and its armies, and praised the raising of cattle as "the most certain and speedy method of enriching a country."<sup>13</sup> Plato and Aristotle joined Cato in his praise of agriculture, and Cicero, commenting on the writings of Xenophon proclaimed, "How fully and excellently does he, in that Book called his *Oeconomics*, set out the advantages of husbandry, and a

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<sup>11</sup> See Dorothea Wender's introduction in *Roman Poetry from the Republic to the Silver Age*, 46.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Johnson, "General Thoughts on Agriculture, Ancient and Modern," *Boston Post-Boy*, December 16, 1771; Johnson's essay was originally published in the February 1756 edition of the London magazine, *The Universal Visitor* under the title, "Some Thoughts on Agriculture, Both Ancient and Modern: With an Account of the Honour due to an English Farmer." See Arthur Murphy, *The Works of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., A New Edition, in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. 2 (London: Luke Hanford, 1801), 384-390.

<sup>13</sup> Marcus Porcius Cato, "the Elder" (234-149 B.C.). Cato described farmers as that class from which "the bravest men and the sturdiest soldiers come"—"their calling is most respected, their livelihood is most assured and is looked on with the least hostility." Cato (the Elder), *De Agricultura*, in *Cato and Varro, On Agriculture*, trans. W. D. Hooper and H. B. Ash (Cambridge: Loeb, Harvard University Press, 1934), 3.



country life.” Similar to the way Cato famously decried the corruption of Carthage in his day with the tagline “*Carthago Delenda Est*,” Johnson denounced cities as the incubators of “luxury, avarice, injustice, violence and ambition.”<sup>14</sup> In sharp contrast to the populated city, the pastoral landscape cultivated a virtuous character where “the hard and laborious life of the husbandman” subdued the proliferation of such vices. The honest labor of the farmer, Johnson observed, “inclines him to justice, temperance, sobriety, sincerity, and every virtue that can dignify human nature.” The story of Cincinnatus, the famed Roman general and statesman who was called away from his plow to defend Rome against the *Aequi* invaders in 458 B.C. illustrated how these virtues formed the essential ingredients of republican character vital to sustaining and defending the civic order. In poetic verse, Johnson highlighted the noble decision of Cincinnatus to forgo political position and return once again to his farm following his celebrated victory:

*The Romans, as historians all allow,  
Sought, in extreme distress, the rural plough;  
Io triumphe! for the village swain  
[Cincinnatus] Retir'd to be a nobleman again.*<sup>15</sup>

Like a Roman Cincinnatus caught between a desire for “the rural plough” and the political realities disrupting the agrarian landscape around him, Crèvecoeur’s personal dilemma shaped his critique of the Revolution in his *Letters* and *Sketches*. Perplexed by the moral choices confronting him, Crèvecoeur asserted, “If I attach

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<sup>14</sup> “*Carthago Delenda Est*,” “Carthage must be destroyed.” Cicero among others noted that Cato ended many of his public speeches with the phrase. See Charles E. Little, “The Authenticity and Form of Cato’s saying ‘*Carthago Delenda Est*,’” *The Classical Journal* 29 (March 1934), 429-435.

<sup>15</sup> Johnson, “General Thoughts on Agriculture.” Io was the princess of Argos whose beauty so captivated Zeus that he transformed her into a white heifer to conceal her from Hera, his wife.

myself to the mother country, which is 3,000 miles from me, I become what is called an enemy to my own region; if I follow the rest of my countrymen, I become opposed to our ancient masters”—“Alas, how should I unravel an argument in which Reason herself has given way to brutality and bloodshed! What then must I do?”<sup>16</sup> Despite the complexities of the “intricate maze” confronting him, Crèvecoeur’s ability to overcome adversity and adapt to the sociopolitical turmoil surrounding him became one of the most notable constants linking the disparate chapters of his eighteenth-century odyssey. Interestingly, the author who would eventually write so strongly in favor of the British crown began his life as a French subject. Crèvecoeur was born in Caen along the coast of Normandy in 1735 and served in the French colonial army in Canada as an artillery officer during the French and Indian War. However, following Montcalm’s defeat at the battle of Quebec in 1759, Crèvecoeur resigned his French commission and moved to the British American colonies where he worked as a surveyor. His exposure to the American landscape and extensive travels from Maine to the Carolinas led him to seek naturalization as a British citizen and settle in New York in 1765. To minimize his French lineage, Crèvecoeur changed his name from “Michel-Guillaume Saint-Jean” to James Hector St. John, and he confirmed his allegiance as a British American in 1769 when he elected to marry Mehetable Tippet, the daughter of a prominent Tory Westchester landowner. Crèvecoeur subsequently purchased 250 acres of land located 23 miles west of the Hudson River in Orange County, New York and established a farm he named Pine Hill.<sup>17</sup> The period from 1769-1776 provided the pastoral setting for the

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<sup>16</sup> Plotkin, “Crèvecoeur Rediscovered,” 399; Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 204.

<sup>17</sup> Gay Wilson Allen and Roger Asselineau, *St. John De Crèvecoeur: The Life of an American Farmer* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1987), xvi-xviii; Norman S. Grabo, “Crèvecoeur’s American: Beginning

essays Crèvecoeur composed while establishing a prosperous homestead, raising three children and serving as a leading citizen in the frontier community of Orange County. More than anything else, it was the sudden interruption of this idyllic existence that shaped Crèvecoeur's critique of the patriot movement in America. By 1776, as colonial sentiments shifted from resistance to rebellion, Crèvecoeur's world began to collapse around him. Unable to remain neutral in the civil conflict that erupted, Crèvecoeur found himself the target of patriot neighbors who began to threaten his family and property, and he quickly discovered that "public opinion in this country could be as tyrannical as a despotic government in the Old World."<sup>18</sup> By 1779, after several months of harassment, and fearing the total loss of his property, Crèvecoeur left Mehetable and two of his children behind and attempted to make his way back to France to secure his patrimonial family holdings in Caen. However, while awaiting passage in New York, British soldiers accused Crèvecoeur of spying for General Washington's army and detained him in a Manhattan prison for three months. As one support for these charges, British soldiers had discovered secret compartments inside Crèvecoeur's shipping boxes concealing his papers, among which were the draft manuscripts for his *Letters* and *Sketches*.

After release from his Manhattan prison, Crèvecoeur set sail for England and fortune began to shift again in his favor. After introducing his manuscript to London publishers in 1781, the first edition of *Letters from an American Farmer* was available to the public in 1782. His volume was an instant success, particularly among the British Whigs who had sympathized with the American cause and viewed Crèvecoeur as an

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the World Anew," *William and Mary Quarterly* 48 (April 1991), 159-160; See Albert E. Stone's introduction in Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 11.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, *Life of an American Farmer*, xvi.

apologist for American exceptionalism. After a year in England, Crèvecoeur arrived in France where his reputation as an author and expert on North American affairs ironically earned him a French consulship to the new American Republic representing French commercial interests in New York—the appointment furthermore brought him into professional and personal association with George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and Benjamin Franklin. The posting also enabled him to return to New York in 1783 as a representative of Louis XVI, and only then did the irony of his relationship with the new America reveal the stark contrast of his perilous experience during the revolutionary conflict. To his dismay, Crèvecoeur discovered Indians had burned his farm at Pine Hill and that his wife Mehetable had subsequently died. His children miraculously survived the ordeal, rescued by a man named Gustavus Fellows from Boston who had traveled to Crèvecoeur's homestead in Orange County in the middle of winter to take the children into his care. Although Gustavus had never met Crèvecoeur, a group of five seamen in Boston urged Fellows to make the journey. As fate would have it, Crèvecoeur had assisted the five sailors two years before when their ship left them stranded on the French coast. This ironic twist in the Crèvecoeur narrative was utterly emblematic of “the pattern of the writer's topsy-turvy life,” which provided Crèvecoeur an ideal vantage point for assessing the upheaval and contradictions he saw in the American landscape leading up to 1776 and beyond.<sup>19</sup>

Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* offered a neoclassical vision of America, a treatise on the virtue of the American landscape reflecting all the flourish of the Augustan poets on the glory and benefits of the agrarian enterprise. The colonial

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<sup>19</sup> See Albert E. Stone's introduction in Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 12-13; Allen, *Life of an American Farmer*, xvi-xxi; Traister, “Loyalism, Espionage and Crèvecoeur,” 477-488.

farmer was to America what Cincinnatus was to Rome—the landed freeman prospering under the umbrella of virtuous government, both the product and sustainer of republican civic order. A vision of the agrarian ideal he shared in common with his revolutionary contemporaries, Crèvecoeur’s *Letters* so effectively praised the moral excellence of what it meant to be an American that British Whigs and those who had supported the patriot cause could mistakenly interpret Crèvecoeur as an advocate for American nationalism.<sup>20</sup> In his best-known essay entitled *What is an American?*, Crèvecoeur noted that Americans were generally farmers, “tillers of the earth, from Nova Scotia to West Florida,” cultivating the landscape of a new, immense continent. Each immigrant, Crèvecoeur declared, had been fundamentally transformed, leaving behind “ancient prejudices and manners” to become a new sort of man, formed by “the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds.” Free from the fear of despotism, “We have no princes, for whom we toil, starve and bleed,” Crèvecoeur proclaimed; rather, “we are the most perfect society now existing in the world,” a refuge from tyranny, a “great American asylum” where the laws are respected because “they are equitable.” In contrast to life in the old world, characterized by “involuntary idleness, servile dependence, penury, and useless labor,” Crèvecoeur’s American acted upon new principles—“he must therefore entertain new ideas and form new opinions.”<sup>21</sup> In this regard, Crèvecoeur’s vision of British America mirrored the classical ideal of the ancient republics epitomized by Athens and Rome, where, as J. G. A. Pocock described, “philosophic man in a secular universe must act and contemplate

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<sup>20</sup> Allen, *Life of an American Farmer*, xix.

<sup>21</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 67-70.

the reasons for his actions.”<sup>22</sup> Sustained by the virtue of the collective whole, the ancient republics represented the shared interests of independent, landed proprietors who were free to pursue and defend their interests and obey the laws they themselves had established. Like the ancient proprietors of Rome, Crèvecoeur’s freeholders owned the land they cultivated and framed their own laws. Furthermore, they embodied all the virtues the Roman poets had associated with a life of agrarian adversity, battling the forces of nature to carve out a free and prosperous existence on the frontier. Rewarded only by “ample subsistence,” Crèvecoeur asserted, these agrarian toils forged a new kind of individual, reviving the spirit in such a manner that each man “begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection; hitherto he had not lived, but simply vegetated; he now feels himself a man because he is treated as such.”<sup>23</sup>

Although release of the human spirit through the exercise of free labor formed the essence for his definition of what it meant to be an American, Crèvecoeur asserted such liberties and opportunities in America were only made possible by the stability and tranquility afforded by the paternal oversight of the English monarchy. Like the ancient political philosophers, Crèvecoeur understood that reliance on civic virtue as the main underpinning for a society was problematic due to the inability of individuals to resist the forces of corruption; the republic was therefore exceptionally vulnerable to radical political and social changes that could swiftly undermine the foundations of liberty on which it stood.<sup>24</sup> For this reason, Crèvecoeur asserted, the American farmer “looks toward the east,” across the Atlantic “toward that insular government from whose

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<sup>22</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, “Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall* and the World View of the Late Enlightenment,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 10 (Spring 1977), 289-290.

<sup>23</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 79-82.

<sup>24</sup> Pocock, “Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*,” 290.

wisdom all his new felicity is derived and under whose wings and protection he now lives. These reflections constitute him the good man and the good subject.”

Crèvecoeur’s American was always a British American and a willing colonial subject since the laws of the land were “ratified and confirmed by the crown.” Crèvecoeur esteemed the authority of the British government as “the great chain which links us all,” providing the only security against the corrosive effects of corruption. Whereas the rhetoric of Whig-patriots would come to disparage the linkages between the colonies and Britain as the shackles of slavery, Crèvecoeur praised these ancient connections as essential to American liberty.<sup>25</sup>

Crèvecoeur was first and foremost a British American who believed in the preeminence of the English Constitution, who carved out an agrarian life in the colonies based on the promise and virtue of British subjecthood, only to have the American landscape he cherished dissolved beneath him by the raging torrent of the Revolution. No longer permitted to identify himself as a British American, society branded him a loyalist, an outcast, and finally a fugitive, leaving no middle ground on which to seek refuge from the rising tide of political upheaval. Through his writings, Crèvecoeur became the spokesman for those Americans ostracized by the revolutionary movement, whose loyalist persuasion and commitment to America had always been one and the same. Like many who would be branded loyalists by 1776, Crèvecoeur was an advocate of change and reform, but never separation from the monarchy.<sup>26</sup> In this regard, scholars have drawn comparison between Crèvecoeur’s *Farmer* letters and John Dickinson’s *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, a work Crèvecoeur certainly knew.

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<sup>25</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 69, 83, 203.

<sup>26</sup> Jehlen, “A Monarcho-Anarchist in Revolutionary America,” 205.

Both Dickinson and Crèvecoeur shared doubts about the Revolution; unlike Crèvecoeur, however, Dickinson eventually fought in the revolutionary cause. Dickinson's essays gained instant popularity soon after their publication in colonial newspapers across America between 1767 and 1768, about a year before Crèvecoeur and Mehetable started building their new homestead at Pine Hill. Dickinson's *Farmer* letters gained further notoriety when his twelve essays were published as a single pamphlet in 1768, a comprehensive political treatise reflecting Dickinson's peaceable Quaker sensitivities and earnest desire to moderate the American political response to the Townshend Acts, the latest round in Parliament's inflammatory taxation and regulatory policies. Crèvecoeur's *Farmer* letters not only reflected Dickinson's conservative Quaker perspective with regard to the English crown, they also came with a title strikingly similar to that of Dickinson's work, suggesting Crèvecoeur viewed himself as an ally of Dickinson's "middle-ground rhetorical stance."<sup>27</sup> Crèvecoeur even set his fictional farm within the Quaker community of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, mirroring Dickinson's literary setting, despite the fact Crèvecoeur's real life farm was situated in New York. Crèvecoeur's decision to match Dickinson's pastoral setting reflected both intellectual and political similarities between the two authors. Crèvecoeur, like Dickinson, catered to a transatlantic audience and appreciated European fascination with the idyllic image of Quaker Pennsylvania as an American embodiment of Enlightenment ideals. Crèvecoeur viewed pastoral Pennsylvania as a unique landscape upon which to challenge the rationality and *weltanschauung* of the *philosophes* against

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<sup>27</sup> Todd, "Fragmentation and Representation in the Works of Crèvecoeur," 63; Traister, "Loyalism, Espionage and Crèvecoeur," 477.



the sentimentality and stark realities of the revolutionary movement.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, Dickinson opposed the idea of colonial independence, and up until 1776, Crèvecoeur could have viewed Dickinson as a fellow traveler politically, someone committed to the ideal of British subjecthood as the best model for the future progress of America. Like Dickinson, in opposition to the revolutionary rhetoric of the period, Crèvecoeur asserted throughout *Letters and Sketches* that an American had always been, and had every reason to continue to be, a subject of the crown.

Against the backdrop of the American pastoral landscape, Crèvecoeur incorporated the classical imagery of Greek mythology to address the political tensions he observed in the colonies and presage his critique of the revolutionary movement. It is with this imagery that we can begin to see how Crèvecoeur's worldview led him to apply the principles of the ancient world in opposition to ardent revolutionaries and even moderates like Dickinson. In the second of his letters entitled, *On the Situation, Feelings, and Pleasures of an American Farmer*, Crèvecoeur painted a rich portrait of the virtue, simplicity, and innocence of the daily activities on Farmer James' Pennsylvania farm. Reflecting on the felicity of tilling his field with his son at his side, James declared, "I place my little boy on a chair which screws to the beam of the plough—its motion and that of the horses please him; he is perfectly happy and begins to chat." Considering the past, James leaned over the handle in deep satisfaction, observing how "the odiferous furrow" seemed to breathe life into his son, exhilarating his spirit—"I am now doing for him, I say, what my father formerly did for me; may God enable him to live that he may perform the same operations for the same purposes when I am worn out and old! . . . can more pleasure, more dignity, be added to that

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<sup>28</sup> Rucker, "Crèvecoeur's 'Letters' and Enlightenment Doctrine," 193-194.

primary occupation?”<sup>29</sup> A palpable allusion to the legend of Odysseus, Crèvecoeur knew his vignette would communicate on multiple levels to a readership familiar with the hero of Homer’s *Odyssey*, one of the most prominent characters in the mythographic literature.<sup>30</sup> Crèvecoeur’s description of plowing behind his horses paralleled Homer’s ancient narrative in which Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, attempted to renege on the oath he made to Menelaus to join the Trojan expedition, having received an oracle that doing so would mean twenty years’ separation from his family and suffering the remainder of his days “alone, destitute, and having lost his men.”<sup>31</sup> When Menelaus’ envoys paid a visit to Odysseus’ farm in Ithaca, they found him tilling the field with his infant son, Telemachus, at his side. Attempting to feign insanity, Odysseus wore a ridiculous felt hat and had his plow hitched to a mismatched horse and ox. To expose Odysseus’ ruse, one of the envoys took the young Telemachus from his cradle and laid him on the ground in front of the path of the plow, forcing Odysseus to avoid injuring his son and reveal his true mental condition.<sup>32</sup> In associating his Pennsylvania farmer with this episode in the life of Odysseus, Crèvecoeur suggested that the political tensions confronting ancient Ithaca were not unlike those encroaching upon the harmony of the American frontier. Odysseus’ devotion to his family and his deep ambivalence for the Trojan expedition and the political pressures threatening to disrupt his agrarian paradise served as ready-made metaphors for describing corresponding sociopolitical developments Crèvecoeur experienced on the American frontier. Such classical literary

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<sup>29</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 54-55.

<sup>30</sup> The legend of Odysseus and the Trojan War is recorded in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* as well as the earlier, supplemental fragments of the Epic Cycle which included Hyginus’ *Fabulae*.

<sup>31</sup> Hyginus, *Fabulae* 95.2 in *Apollodorus’ Library and Hyginus’ Fabulae; Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*, trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 128.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

associations functioned as proverbial anecdotes in the eighteenth century and exemplified one way in which British Americans like Crèvecoeur appealed to the classics for rhetorical effect to question the rationale of the patriotic movement.<sup>33</sup>

Crèvecoeur's subtle reference to the Odysseus mythology also pointed to a wider dimension in the American Farmer's overall critique of the Revolution, a point he raised more explicitly in his *Sketches*, namely, that the rhetoric of the patriots and their appeal to civic virtue offered little chance for success since it was beyond the reach of communities of people to govern themselves apart from the authorities required to suppress man's propensity for evil. Learned readers of Homer on either side of the Atlantic would have reflected on Odysseus' troubled lineage in association with Crèvecoeur's bucolic portrait of Farmer James behind the plow with his infant son. In the mythographic literature, some sources questioned Odysseus' legitimacy as the true son of king Laertes, indicating his real father was Sisyphus, the notorious criminal, murderer and king of Corinth who had allegedly seduced Odysseus' mother.<sup>34</sup> Aside from his corruption, Sisyphus was also the ultimate classical symbol of futility; to pay for his crimes and offenses against the gods, Hades sentenced Sisyphus to an eternal punishment of hard labor rolling a boulder up a hill in a never-ending cycle of fruitless toil. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus was afforded a first hand viewing of Sisyphus' affliction during his voyage to the Kingdom of the Dead; "I saw Sisyphus," Odysseus declared, "bound to his own torture, grappling his monstrous boulder with both arms working, heaving, hands struggling, legs driving, he kept on thrusting the rock uphill

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<sup>33</sup> Grabo, "Beginning the World Anew," 168.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

toward the brink,” but without relief, “the immense weight of the thing would wheel it back and the ruthless boulder would bound and tumble down to the plain again.”<sup>35</sup>

Crèvecoeur’s inclusion of Homeric imagery in his earlier essays signaled to his readers that the apparent tranquility on the surface of the American landscape would not preclude the seeds of corruption from manifesting themselves in human affairs. A theme Crèvecoeur addressed extensively in his *Sketches*, he likely invoked the classical metaphor to suggest there was a Sisyphus resting like a dormant virus just beneath the thin, utopian veneer of the pastoral topsoil. Only the stabilizing fabric of the agrarian community could restrain the manifestation of the Hobbesian state of nature—but the virtue of the present was tenuous at best because greed and self-interest were always at the door, ready to reverse the tide of communal good will. In his essay titled *Distresses of a Frontier Man*, Crèvecoeur illustrated this erosion in the communal order by describing Farmer James’ struggle against the shifting revolutionary landscape. Caught between forsaking allegiance to “the ancient connexion” of the mother country or facing the brutality of his neighbors, James declared, “how easily do men pass from loving to hating and cursing one another! I am a lover of peace; what must I do?” In dismay, Crèvecoeur’s farmer seemingly lost faith in the efficacy of virtue altogether; “Either thou art only a chimera,” James declared, comparing virtue to the mythological fire-breathing monster, “or thou art a timid, useless being; soon affrighted, when ambition, thy great adversary, dictates, when war re-echoes the dreadful sounds and poor helpless individuals are mowed down by its cruel reapers like useless grass.”<sup>36</sup> Like Odysseus,

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<sup>35</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, 11.680, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1996), 269.

<sup>36</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 203-204; Rucker, “Crèvecoeur’s ‘Letters’ and Enlightenment Doctrine,” 205. Homer described the Chimera as a “grim monster sprung of the gods, nothing human, all

Farmer James worked the land to carve out a peaceable existence, avoiding the calls of political radicals and averting entanglements with revolutionary fomenters, a strategy that ultimately led his neighbors to brand him an enemy of the people. Writing from a vantage point informed by the excesses of the Revolution, Crèvecoeur's insight suggested that similar to the never-ending cycle of Sisyphus' boulder, human nature would forever undermine the aspirations of men to govern themselves; "Men are the same in all ages and in all countries," Crèvecoeur lamented—"the same passions lurk in our hearts at all times."<sup>37</sup> Crèvecoeur's loyalist persuasion and critique of the Revolution was a product of his realistic appraisal of the human condition; in his view, the rhetoric of the patriotic movement and its appeal to virtue was meaningless apart from the authority and controls required to address human nature's potential for corruption and violence.

Crèvecoeur described the American Revolution in the classical language of conspiracy and corruption, following the pattern of Roman orators like Cicero who denounced the Catilinarian conspirators in their failed attempt to overthrow the Roman Republic in 63 B.C. In the introduction to his essay titled *Landscapes*, the last of his sketches, Crèvecoeur asserted the "secret but true foundation" of the Revolution was the ambition, power, and greed of a few usurpers cloaked under a noble "garb of patriotism" and "constitutional reason." What belied the American conspiracy more than anything else was how British Americans could profess to be miserable and oppressed by tyranny and enslavement when they had only just recently counted

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lion in front, all snake behind, all goat between, terrible, blasting lethal fire at every breath!" Homer, *The Iliad*, 6.212-215, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1996), 201.

<sup>37</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 343; Grabo, "Beginning the World Anew," 168; Rucker, "Crèvecoeur's "Letters" and Enlightenment Doctrine," 199.

themselves among the happiest people on earth—“in the zenith of political felicity, receiving from Nature every benefit she could confer, enjoying from government every advantage” under the freest constitution known to mankind—“Behold, then, a new source of revolution,” Crèvecoeur declared. The American revolt was entirely unnatural, an astonishing, unprecedented maneuver executed by a concoction of “poisons and subtle sophisms” which had deluded the people to forsake “every ancient prejudice” without any true justification.<sup>38</sup>

Crèvecoeur’s critique against the Revolution centered on the tyrannical oppression the Whig-patriots conjured up from dark elements below. Rather than expanding the opportunity for liberty, the Revolution unnaturally transformed freedom-loving British Americans into tyrannical despots, wielding their illegitimate committees of public safety as instruments of anarchy, terror, and arbitrary power. In *Landscapes*, Crèvecoeur sought to expose the hypocrisy at work in the human terrain of the revolutionary façade, the persecution and injustice hidden beneath the “pompous, the captious, the popular, the ostensible, the brilliant part of these American affairs” to examine the “vulgar thread” in the American tapestry. Written in the form of a play, Crèvecoeur’s *Landscapes* described the events of a particular Sabbath morning in the life of Beatus, a Presbyterian deacon and chairman of the local committee of safety, and his wife, Eltha. In the opening scene, Crèvecoeur sarcastically juxtaposed the family prayer time with their son’s intriguing “Tory-hunting” tales from the night before. The son’s adventures included shooting a deaf man’s horse and “pricking the stubborn flesh” of the fallen rider at bayonet point before leading him off to jail in irons. The band of youthful Tory hunters also had great fun pulling an old man out of bed,

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<sup>38</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 424-426.

stripping him naked, tarring and feathering him “till he looked nearly like an owl” and parading him down to the local tavern for sport “till their sides merely ached.” After heartily approving these brave acts, the deacon concluded the family prayer time: “Gracious God, pour Thy blessings on Thy favourite people. Make their chosen race to increase and prosper by the influence of Thy heavenly showers.”<sup>39</sup> Set against the arbitrary violence and injustice of the night’s activities, the hypocrisy of the deacon’s prayer served Crèvecoeur’s purpose in casting doubt on the legitimacy of a revolutionary movement so corrupt and inconsistent with American colonial virtue.

The climax of Crèvecoeur’s narrative in *Landscapes* levied one of his harshest attacks on the contradictions of the Revolution, leveraging the classical motifs of anarchy and tyranny to make his case. His vignette portrayed a seemingly post-apocalyptic scenario—the orderly balance of government in disarray with a world subsequently turned upside down. While hurriedly making their way to the local church meeting, the protagonists in Crèvecoeur’s narrative, deacon Beatus and his wife Eltha stopped to interrogate a woman whom they failed to recognize as Martha Corwin, a grieving widow whose husband was recently condemned and hanged to death by the local committee of public safety for being a loyalist supporter. While raiding her home, the patriot “generals” stole Martha’s livestock and left the distraught mother with “three naked and almost famished children.” The unjust and horrific loss of Martha’s husband was devastating in another way—“the tears I have shed,” Martha declared, “have dried the milk of my breasts, and my poor baby, by suckling the dregs, fed a while on the dregs of sorrow. He is now dead, and I was going to look for somebody to bury his

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 429.

emaciated carcass.”<sup>40</sup> Beatus and Eltha, despite their active participation in the local committee, had difficulty remembering any of the details of poor Martha’s story, a commentary on the chaotic and arbitrary system of patriot justice Crèvecoeur was intent to expose. Still failing to recognize the woman, Beatus suggested she take her case to the county committees—“You must apply to them; they replace all other authorities.” Crèvecoeur, speaking through Martha’s words, declared, “Committee! That name conveys to my brains the most horrid smell . . . ‘Tis from them I have received all my distresses and misfortunes, and God in heaven is silent. He lets them hang the innocent, persecute the poor, the widows, the naked orphans.” Showing herself less sympathetic to Martha’s plight than her husband, Eltha lost patience, judging the poor woman as mad and “not worth minding.” Motioning to her husband Eltha declared, “We shall lose here much more precious time. Do let us haste”—to get to church on time, no less. Eltha’s response depicted the harsh severity Crèvecoeur perceived behind the rhetoric of the patriot agenda, an inconsistency of character he artfully expressed through Martha’s reply to Eltha’s demeaning insult: “Aye, ma’am, that’s spoken like yourself. Mingle religion with obduracy of heart, softness of speech with that unfeeling disposition which fits you so well . . . Yes, I am mad to see ingratitude and hypocrisy on horse-back, virtue and honesty low in the dirt.”<sup>41</sup> Reflecting the savagery and indecency Crèvecoeur detected in the patriot campaign, Eltha remarked, “If it was not the Sabbath, I’ll warrant I’d take you up myself and bring you still lower . . . I am quite weary. The better one is to these people [Tories], the worse they are.” “With what emphasis of hatred you pronounce that word *Tory*,” Martha replied—“They are

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<sup>40</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 486.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 487.



suffering the worst of punishments for the sake of a country which never will thank them, but they act from principles.”<sup>42</sup> Through Martha’s bewilderment, Crèvecoeur struggled to comprehend how a community once “so meek, so religious, so humble” could become such a “wild, fiery” tyrant. For Crèvecoeur, the Revolution was a manifestation of the “hypocrisy, slyness, cupidity, inhumanity, and abuse of power” wrought by a minority faction of upstart amateur politicians, clear evidence that only legitimate, established authority could ensure liberty, justice and tranquility in human affairs.<sup>43</sup>

The chaotic tyranny of the Revolution and the inconsistencies and contradictions it manifested on the American landscape also formed the backdrop for Crèvecoeur’s narrative in *The Man of Sorrows*. Short of citing references from the pages of antiquity, Crèvecoeur’s rhetorical treatment of the vulnerability of government to the eruptions of anarchy and tyranny conveyed to an eighteenth-century audience all the admonitions the classical writers had articulated on the delicate balance between the monarchical, aristocratic, and democratic elements of the republican order. Crèvecoeur’s protagonist in *The Man of Sorrows* was an anonymous farmer suddenly caught in the upheaval of revolutionary chaos. The farmer embodied Crèvecoeur’s political sense of the American frontiersman, unashamedly “attached to the king’s cause from ancient respect and by the force of custom” and having “no idea” concerning any other form of government. Neither a patriot nor a loyalist, Crèvecoeur’s farmer was in the middle ground—“his opinions had never gone beyond his house,” nor had he stood in opposition to the country. Rather, in pastoral solitude, the frontiersman “submitted to

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 488.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 427; Richards, “Crèvecoeur’s ‘Landscapes,’” 283-292.

the will of heaven” with no intention of taking part in either side of the colonial debate. However, the farmer’s idyllic world suddenly turned upside down when he was accused of having harbored British allies and Indians in his home who had participated in a recent raiding expedition against a local village. A band of patriot militiamen, filled with rage, quickly rode to the farmer’s homestead and charged him with treason. Surrounding him like a pack of wolves, as Crèvecoeur described, “Their passions were too highly inflamed; they could not hear him with patience or give him an opportunity of justifying himself; they believed him guilty. Their unanimous wish seemed to be that he should confess the crime, a wish founded probably on some remains of ancient justice.”<sup>44</sup>

Crèvecoeur’s critique concerning the competency of the patriot militiamen to act in a coherent, rational manner supported his wider commentary on the erroneous character and injustice of the Revolution. Attempting to force a confession, the militiamen suspended the innocent farmer by his thumbs and toes. Rushing from the house “with a countenance of terror” and “tears gushing in streams,” the farmer’s wife pleaded mercy for her husband. At first, the militiamen decided to let the farmer down, but then one of the officers, “more vindictive than the rest” reminded his compatriots of the murders and destruction their communities had suffered at the hand of recent raiding parties, and “the sudden recollection of these dreadful images wrought them up to a pitch of fury fiercer than before.”<sup>45</sup> As a result, the soldiers resolved to hang the farmer by the neck. The poor man, wife at his side, flung himself to the ground before one of the men, pleading his innocence and entreating them for a legitimate judicial hearing.

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<sup>44</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 346.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 347.

However, as Crèvecoeur described, “the effects of mad revenge” caused the farmer’s pleas to fall on deaf ears, and they hurriedly and haphazardly carried out the hanging, failing to cover the man’s face and tie his hands. These lapses worked in the farmer’s favor as the dreadful contortions and visage of suffering that ensued caused some of the soldiers to reconsider their actions. After letting the farmer down, to their amazement, the man regained consciousness with his distraught wife and stupefied children looking on. In the absence of due process, and with no other recourse than to continue their interrogation, the militiamen once again pressed the farmer to confess his guilt to no avail—“unwilling to acquit him, though incapable of convicting him,” they decided he should once again suffer the hangman’s noose and allotted him ten minutes to prepare himself to meet his maker. In disbelief, kneeling next to his wife, the “Man of Sorrows” began to pray for his executioners in a manner reminiscent of Christ on the cross: “I here before Thee cheerfully pardon all my persecutors and those by whose hands I am now going to be deprived of my life. I pray that the future proofs of my innocence may call them to early repentance ere they appear before Thy awful tribunal.”<sup>46</sup> Touched by these prayerful pronouncements, the militiamen once again reconsidered their actions: “You have prayed so well and so generously forgiven us that we must think at last that you are not so guilty as the majority of us had imagined.” Casting the farmer as a suffering redeemer, Crèvecoeur accentuated the moral superiority of the loyalist-farmer against the political depravity of the inept militiamen. The events of this tragic saga were emblematic of the multitude of injustices

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<sup>46</sup> Crèvecoeur’s title, “The Man of Sorrows” invoked the text of Is. 53:6 KJV in describing the suffering Messiah: “He is despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.” Thus, while alerting the reader to the miscarriage of justice about to befall the protagonist in his narrative, Crèvecoeur drove the point home by suggesting a metaphorical parallel to the mock trial that condemned Christ to death.

Crèvecoeur saw afflicting a population in the midst of civil conflict. The collective passions that emerged from the bowels of rage and vengeance fueled a tyranny of the irrational that ultimately supplanted all hope for justice and due process. For Crèvecoeur, despite the rhetoric of the political agitators, the true enemy of liberty was the propensity for evil that curiously co-existed in embryonic hibernation alongside mankind's capacity for virtue.

*The Man of Sorrows* was Crèvecoeur's nightmarish version of Virgil's *Georgics*—a twisted reflection of the classical, pastoral landscape overcome by dark forces and a spirit that was anything other than the American character Crèvecoeur had articulated earlier in his *Farmer* letters. Here we can see the loyalist persuasion expressed in mournful tones. Lamenting the virulent unraveling of the fabric of communal life in the colonies, Crèvecoeur was dumbstruck that “a people of cultivators, who knew nothing but their ploughs” could also be found harboring the seeds of vice and corruption. “Men are the same in all ages,” Crèvecoeur declared, since “the same passions lurk in our hearts at all times”—like a raging river, the torrent of revolution unleashed civil discord and demonic forces “with astonishing rapidity,” normally held at bay by the constancy and authority of the institutions of government.<sup>47</sup> As Crèvecoeur surveyed the American landscape post-1776, he marveled that “Every opinion is changed,” “every prejudice is subverted,” and “every ancient principle is annihilated.”<sup>48</sup> Transformed by the sophistry of party rhetoric, tyranny had emerged under the pretense of virtue, justifying perverse measures on behalf of “policy, justice,

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<sup>47</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 343.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

[and] self-defence.”<sup>49</sup> At one time, Crèvecoeur reminisced, “we were a regular, sober, religious people, urged neither by want or impelled by any very great distress.” In Crèvecoeur’s calculus, the ambitious, naive upstarts who lit the ideological match had cast those days aside, igniting a conflagration no one could hope to manage or contain. Such was the essence of the loyalist critique of the Whig-patriots from the outset; lacking wisdom and restraint, they rushed ahead with “too great a velocity of action, running too fast towards fruition without waiting for the accomplishing moment,” charting an “erroneous” course beyond the limits of reasonable assessment and common sense.<sup>50</sup>

Ever striving to frame his critique in the context of human experience, Crèvecoeur’s short story, *The American Belisarius*, reflected one of the Farmer’s strongest political statements and most effective arguments against the excesses of the Revolution. Inspired by the history of the Roman general Flavius Belisarius (505-565 A.D.), Crèvecoeur’s narrative harnessed the sentiment and appeal of an epic classical motif to convey his critique of the American rebellion to an eighteenth-century audience. Crèvecoeur’s protagonist, identified anonymously as “S.K.,” was a colonial farmer of Dutch and English lineage. The anonymity of the farmer and his unspecified residence in the colonies enabled Crèvecoeur to generalize the core elements of the narrative to represent the shared experiences of his fellow subjects across the American landscape; given Crèvecoeur’s biography, the essay also reflected all the passion of an autobiographical account conveyed from the depth of Crèvecoeur’s personal experience. The “broken-hearted” Crèvecoeur forged the character of S.K., the

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 344.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 343-345.

“American Belisarius,” to speak on behalf of all British Americans who confronted the ambiguity, turbulence, and demoralization of the revolutionary period. Curiously, save for the title and one brief reference near the end of the essay, Crèvecoeur felt no obligation to elaborate on the linkage between S.K. and the historic figure of Belisarius. On the one hand, no explanation was required since Crèvecoeur’s readers were already familiar with the storied chronicle of Belisarius—the tragic narrative of the virtuous hero of Byzantium who, in the absence of justice, suffered betrayal, torture, and humiliation at the hands of those he faithfully served. Like the Belisarius account, the story of S.K. portrayed the plight of an innocent man who suddenly found himself the victim of “all the physical evil that could possibly befall him, without resources and without hope.” Using the ancient motif as his template, Crèvecoeur turned to the classics to construct one of the most potent loyalist counterarguments against the legitimacy and virtue of the Revolution.<sup>51</sup>

Consistent in his use of the classical-pastoral metaphor to frame the backdrop for his American landscape, Crèvecoeur artfully opened the introduction to *Belisarius* with the farmer-narrator reflecting on the phenomenon of sociopolitical upheaval in rich, agrarian tones. Crèvecoeur warned his reader that it was one thing to observe the tumult of revolution from a safe intellectual distance, and quite another to telescope down to the level of human experience and examine the plight of individuals caught up in the turmoil of a world turned upside down. Crèvecoeur’s farmer-narrator noted the reality of this principle in the innocent act of plowing a field, which “happily” produced “a rich harvest in the succeeding season.” However, this seemingly virtuous activity was also “laborious and dirty” since “numberless worms, insects, and wise republics of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 420.

ants are destroyed by the operation,” creating “scenes of unknown disasters, of unnoticed murders and ruins.”<sup>52</sup> In similar reflective fashion, the farmer looked across the field and observed a great oak tree uprooted and knocked to the ground during a violent storm, a sight Crèvecoeur noted always left him with a feeling of sadness and regret. Such a “majestic and lofty” specimen, once providing shelter to the less noble foliage under its great canopy, now lay stricken by the forces of nature, its branches and leaves scattered with “knotty roots wrenched from the ground.” It was this “individual object” lying “lowly prostrate” that Crèvecoeur prepared his readers to examine in *Belisarius*—the specter of pastoral virtue and tranquility destroyed by the violence and turbulence of revolutionary fervor.

Throughout his semi-autobiographical narrative, Crèvecoeur challenged the readers of *Belisarius* to consider the political developments in the colonies through the experience of his American farmer and protagonist, S.K.. As Crèvecoeur explained, the events surrounding S.K.’s story depicted human nature at its worst, a time when society was “artfully brought into chaos” and rule of law was abandoned in favor of obtaining a “preferable state of existence,” crushing the pastoral vision of the colonial landscape that Crèvecoeur had earlier identified as integral to the very definition of what it meant to be an American.<sup>53</sup> That same vision shaped S.K.’s aspirations early on. According to Crèvecoeur, the farmer spent considerable time exploring the American frontier, and during one such adventure, he discovered a plot of land that captured his imagination; from that moment on, he set his ambitions and energies “to begin the world anew in the bosom of this huge wilderness.” Through his youthful vigor and ingenuity, “he

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 408.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 407-408; Todd, “Fragmentation and Representation in the Works of Crèvecoeur,” 262-263.

surmounted every obstacle” and transformed the thousand-acre parcel of wilderness into a flourishing agrarian enterprise. News of his early success and “love of independence” attracted additional settlers, “inferior people,” to the new county he established, including his two brothers-in-law. The farmer purchased additional plots of land and invited his brothers-in-law to become his neighbors, and soon, the “most plentiful crops” and “the fattest cattle” transformed S.K.’s beneficiaries into “the most conspicuous families in this corner of the world.” As Crèvecoeur wrote, “A perfect union prevailed not only from the ties of blood, but cemented by those of the strongest gratitude,” and thus, through his ingenuity, hard work and generosity, S.K. became a “princely farmer” in his self-made Garden of Eden. Serving anyone in need, S.K. generously assisted those who struggled, whether due to natural calamities or their own naiveté and carelessness. Acting as a father to “the poor of this wilderness,” S.K. offered counsel and encouragement, and although his benefactors promised to repay his kindness, he never demanded it. When approached by wealthy merchants interested in selling his grain abroad, S.K. responded by saying he had no wheat for the rich; instead, always prioritizing the needs of the community above his own, he apportioned the bounty of his harvest to serve the needs of the poor. Marveling at the character of such a man, Crèvecoeur asserted, “This, one would imagine, was an object on which the good genius of America would have constantly smiled.”<sup>54</sup>

However, much like the sudden advance of the farmer’s plow inflicting “unnoticed murders and ruins” on the tiny inhabitants of the subterranean ecosystem, the Revolution instantly visited unanticipated calamity upon S.K.’s agrarian paradise. Akin to the corruption and fall of Eden, “unfortunate times came at last” to S.K.’s

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<sup>54</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 409-412.



utopian world as patriotic fervor conjured up a toxin of greed and envy to infect the harmony of the community, abruptly shattering bonds between kinsmen and neighbors.<sup>55</sup> Instead of showing gratitude to the princely farmer for his generosity, S.K.'s brothers-in-law fed the appetites of their ambition and conspired to secure the virtuous farmer's demise. "At the dawn of this new revolution," Crèvecoeur lamented, S.K.'s adversaries "blazed forth"—inflamed by "the general impunity of the times," they despised the farmer's generosity. With every institution of justice corrupted by the Revolution, S.K.'s relatives named him an enemy of the cause and conspired with the radical committees to harass S.K.'s family and seize his property. Demanding his life, the patriot mob imprisoned the poor farmer, forced his son into exile, and drove his wife to insanity. In the end, S.K.'s persecutors relegated him to live in a portion of his own house, "like Belisarius of old," tortured by "the extensive havoc" surrounding him and the memory of a life reduced to "gloomy despair" by the rage and malice of "an ignorant, prejudiced public."<sup>56</sup>

Crèvecoeur's selection of the classical figure of Belisarius as the underlying theme for his polemic essay indicated the value Crèvecoeur perceived in the ancient motif with regard to his eighteenth-century audience. As a rhetorical device, the description of S.K. as an American reflection of the iconic Roman general commuted all the sentiments of nobility, injustice, and tragedy Crèvecoeur intended his audience to appreciate with regard to the plight of his frontier farmer. Steeped in the literary legacy of the Roman general, educated loyalists and revolutionaries alike would recognize the symbolic significance of the Belisarius narrative. Invoking the name "Belisarius" only

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 413.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 414-421.

once throughout the entire narrative, Crèvecoeur felt no obligation to explain the meaningful parallels between the heroic warrior and S.K.'s experience on the frontier because Crèvecoeur's readers knew the ancient record and could identify those linkages for themselves. In this regard, Crèvecoeur's singular reference to Belisarius served to generate a host of cultural assumptions related to classical notions about virtue, conspiracy, and tyranny that required little if any direct elaboration within the text of Crèvecoeur's essay. Understanding the infusion of the Belisarius typology in the eighteenth century is necessary to appreciate the rhetorical force of Crèvecoeur's *Belisarius* as a loyalist counterargument against the Revolution.

The Belisarius trope aptly suited Crèvecoeur's polemic purpose in asserting the virtue and sacrifice of those British Americans who remained loyal to the crown. Given the widespread popularity of the ancient motif in the literature and art of the eighteenth century, Crèvecoeur knew the narrative's strong moral sentiment would add weight and legitimacy to his critique of the Revolution. The most prominent Roman general during the Byzantine period of the sixth century, Flavius Belisarius was renowned for his courage and ingenuity as a military commander and for his character and steadfast loyalty as a servant of the emperor Justinian. Originally from Thrace, Belisarius rose to early prominence, first serving as an officer in Justinian's bodyguard and later winning appointment as commander of the eastern army. Demonstrating his abilities on the battlefield against the Persians and the Vandals, Belisarius earned Justinian's confidence, deploying to the Italian peninsula in 540 A.D. to unseat the Goths. Following a series of successful campaigns in Italy, Belisarius finally gained control of the city of Rome and captured the Gothic king at Ravenna. Ironically, his effectiveness

and military success so inspired Rome's adversaries that the Goths offered to make Belisarius their emperor in the west. Proving his loyalty to Justinian, Belisarius rejected the enticing offer and returned to Constantinople. However, back in the capital, rather than enjoying the benefits of his military victories, Belisarius' success and popularity provoked the emperor's envy and suspicion, prompting Justinian to look for ways to sideline his famed general. Within four years, in 562 A.D., military rivals conspired against Belisarius and falsely accused him of plotting to assassinate the Byzantine emperor. Although Justinian's ruling council elected to spare the general's life, the authorities seized Belisarius' wealth and property and imprisoned the convicted general within his own palace. But along with this punishment, according to a fictional narrative that gained wide acceptance during the Middle Ages, Justinian also ordered Belisarius' eyes gouged out. Within a year after receiving this horrific mutilation, Belisarius was released and cleared of any wrongdoing, but the veteran-general, stripped of his former glory, and his eyesight, lived in humiliation for only two more years until age sixty.<sup>57</sup>

Procopius of Caesarea (500-562 A.D.) was the ancient author most responsible for imparting the history and message of the life of Belisarius to the eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup> Although later commentators would do much to popularize the narrative of the Roman general, Procopius was the first to distil the narrative's thematic principles of virtue, conspiracy, and tyranny and establish the ideological template later authors would emulate. Writers like Crèvecoeur had direct access to the writings of Procopius, and Crèvecoeur's *Belisarius* exemplified the way in which eighteenth-century thinkers

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<sup>57</sup> Ian Hughes, *Belisarius: The Last Roman General* (Yardley: Westholme Publishing, 2009), 247-262.

<sup>58</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars*, Book 4, trans. H. B. Dewing (Cambridge: Loeb, Harvard University Press, 1990).

looked to the classical canon as a repository for the intellectual and moral principles they valued most. Procopius recorded Belisarius' military campaigns in his *History of the Wars* and *Anecdota*, a detailed record of the Roman hero's campaigns in North Africa and Italy as well as his troubled relationship with the emperor Justinian.<sup>59</sup> Serving as the general's executive secretary, Procopius accompanied Belisarius on many of his travels over a period of fifteen years, and his history established the legend of the iconic leader that embodied virtuous character alongside unwavering, self-sacrificing loyalty to the state.

For Crèvecoeur, Procopius' portrayal of Belisarius as a vigorous defender of the Byzantine empire against divisive faction and civil unrest perfectly symbolized the political sentiment shared by the loyalists of America who looked to Britain to restore order and legitimate authority in the colonies. One chapter in Procopius' history especially illustrated why American loyalist writers like Crèvecoeur would naturally identify with the ancient Roman hero. In 536 A.D., two years after Belisarius subdued the Vandals along the Mediterranean coast of North Africa, a subsequent revolt erupted in the same area, ironically spearheaded by an eight thousand-man contingent of the Roman Army that Belisarius had left behind in the vicinity of Carthage to stabilize the region. According to Procopius, the mutiny began when the soldiers intermarried with the Vandals of Libya and inherited titles to their newly acquired family estates. Corrupted by their foreign wives, the soldiers conspired to hold on to their familial land instead of surrendering the property to Justinian, as they were required to do.

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<sup>59</sup> Whereas the *History of the Wars* lauded Belisarius' exploits as a military commander, Procopius' *Secret History* or *Anecdota*, not discovered until centuries later, served as an exposé on Justinian's imperial court and his promiscuous empress Theodora. The *Anecdota* faulted Belisarius for his inability to discern the machinations of his unfaithful, conspiring wife.

Additionally, the Arian Christian leaders in the region, deemed heretics by Constantinople, encouraged the soldiers' seditious aspirations on theological grounds, inciting those who had embraced the Arian sect and were disenfranchised by the orthodoxy of the empire. The rebellious legionnaires attempted to seize control of Carthage, expel any loyalists, and establish Libya as an independent power.<sup>60</sup> Justinian promptly responded to the Libyan revolution by dispatching Belisarius to restore control. According to Procopius, in preparation for the invasion, Belisarius assembled his army to articulate the moral purpose of a mission that would require his legionnaires to take up arms against their fellow Romans. "The situation, fellow-soldiers," Belisarius declared, "both for the emperor and for the Romans, falls far short of our hopes and of our prayers. For we have now come to a combat in which even the winning of the victory will not be without tears for us, since we are fighting against kinsmen and men who have been reared with us."<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, Belisarius encouraged his troops in the justice of their cause; the Libyan rebels had made themselves Rome's "public enemies" the instant they decided to kill those who, out of "loyalty to their government," openly opposed the revolt. What Belisarius found most objectionable about the mutineers was their weakness of character and their yielding to self-interest, disregarding legitimate authority and their obligation to uphold the rule of law. In their rebellion, the renegades had taken up the tyrant's mantle, a failed errand from the outset; "For a throng of men," Belisarius declared, "united by no law, but brought together by motives of injustice, is utterly unable by nature to play the part of brave men" because valor "always shuns those who are unholy." American loyalists

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<sup>60</sup> Procopius, *History of the Wars*, 4.14.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.15.

like Crèvecoeur could readily identify with the anguish in Belisarius' words—a voice from antiquity contemplating the unnatural condition of civil conflict pitting brother against brother, not unlike the political divisions and violence afflicting the American landscape by 1775. Procopius' portrayal of the Roman general as the defender of the empire provided Crèvecoeur an ideal metaphor to apply to his protagonist farmer, S.K., who, “like Belisarius of old,” courageously stood on principle against his neighbors and kinsmen and all others who incited rebellion against the king. The American patriots had justified tyrannical measures to secure their liberties—but as the Roman general asserted from late antiquity, no tyranny can be justified, “Nor is it honoured through any sentiment of loyalty, for a tyranny is, in the nature of the case, hated.”<sup>62</sup>

Procopius' distillation of such classical principles as virtue, conspiracy, and tyranny in the Belisarius narrative established the foundation later commentators would use to popularize the legend of the Roman general. As an eighteenth-century political writer seeking to persuade an educated audience, Crèvecoeur had as much literary interest in the popular mythos and sentiment of the Belisarius trope as he did in the recorded history of Procopius. Through primary sources like Procopius and the modern commentaries that expanded on his themes, the classical influence on the eighteenth century was both direct and indirect, promoting and amplifying the principles first advanced by the ancient writers. In the case of the Belisarius narrative, three of the most significant secondary contributors for Crèvecoeur's purposes were Baron de Montesquieu, Jean-François Marmontel, and Edward Gibbon. These authors did much to popularize the classical motif in the literature and art of the period, preparing an instrument well suited to support Crèvecoeur's pro-loyalist polemic.

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 4.15, 347.

Baron de Montesquieu, like many of the eighteenth-century political commentators, paid great attention to the classical history of the ancient republics and was among the first Enlightenment writers to revive the history and significance of Belisarius motif. In 1734, before publishing his *Spirit of the Laws*, Montesquieu authored one of the first comprehensive treatments on the whole of Roman history titled *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*.<sup>63</sup> In his history, echoing Procopius' assessment of the Roman general, Montesquieu promoted Belisarius as an exemplar of virtue who stood the tide against the tyrannical reign of Justinian. Ever mindful of the significance of virtue in charting the rise and fall of political power, Montesquieu heralded Belisarius as the last true Roman. Montesquieu ascribed the general's heroic achievements to his faultless character, epitomized by his stalwart loyalty to the state, even when falsely accused and persecuted under the tyranny of a corrupt emperor—"The main reasons for his successes," wrote Montesquieu, "can be found in the qualities of this great man. With a general who followed all the maxims of the early Romans, an army much like the old Roman armies was formed. In servitude the great virtues are usually hidden or lost; but the tyrannical government of Justinian could not crush the greatness of this soul or the superiority of this genius."<sup>64</sup>

Writers like Montesquieu, who reinforced the moral lessons of classical literature, provided a repository of rhetorical tools that greatly assisted subsequent

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<sup>63</sup> Montesquieu's work would later serve as the inspiration for Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. See David Lowenthal's introduction in Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, trans. and intro. David Lowenthal (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1965), 1.

<sup>64</sup> Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*, 188; Douglas Kries ed., *Piety and Humanity; Essays on Religion and Early Modern Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), 247.

political commentators like Crèvecoeur in harnessing the tropes of antiquity to appeal to popular sentiment. One such beneficiary was Benjamin Franklin who developed his own original application of the Belisarius motif to persuade members of the House of Commons to repeal the Stamp Act. While in London preparing to testify before Parliament as one of several witnesses invited to make the case for repeal, Franklin commissioned a political cartoon titled *MAGNA Britannia: her Colonies REDUC'D*. To assist in his lobbying efforts, Franklin had the cartoon printed on message cards that he used in his correspondence with British officials, and he purportedly even hired a waiter to distribute the cards to House members as they entered the chamber to cast their votes. The cartoon depicted the striking image of a woman, Britannia, with her arms and legs cut off, her torso leaning helplessly against a large globe. In despair, the woman gazed upward while attempting to raise the stumps of her former appendages. Franklin applied a label to each of Britannia's severed limbs lying lifeless about her on the ground: "Virg," "Pensyl," "New York," and "New Eng." Britannia's spear and shield lay powerless as well, with her merchant ships, the symbol of her great wealth, docked in the background with brooms for mastheads showing they were for sale. The most distinguishing element in the political cartoon was the banner and Latin inscription draped across the globe and the torso of the hemorrhaging Britannia that read, "*DATE OBOLUM BELISARIO*" (give a penny to Belisarius). Franklin knew the reference to Belisarius would elicit a specific emotional and political response from his classically educated audience. In a letter dated March 1, 1766, Franklin provided a few of the cards to his sister and explained their meaning in his own words: "The Moral is, that the Colonies may be ruined, but that Britain would thereby be maimed."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> E. P. Richardson, "Stamp Act Cartoons in the Colonies," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and*



Thirty years following the publication of Montesquieu's *Considerations*, the French writer and historian Jean-François Marmontel further popularized the legend of the hero of Byzantium in his philosophical-romantic novel, *Belisarius*. Exceeding Procopius and Montesquieu in his glorification of the legendary leader, Marmontel presented Belisarius as the inspirational embodiment of virtue, significantly amplifying the import of the classical figure for artisans and literary writers on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>66</sup> First published in 1767, *Belisarius* became a best seller and excerpts from Marmontel's novel appeared in journals both in London and Edinburgh in the same year: "Whoever is conversant with the Roman history," declared *The Scots Magazine* in 1767, "can be no stranger to the character and fate of the renowned BELISARIUS, one of the greatest captains of the age he lived in."<sup>67</sup> Marmontel's work also inspired a resurgence of interest in the heroic motif among such French Enlightenment painters as François-Andre Vincent and Jacques-Louis David who both addressed the classical theme in their masterworks.<sup>68</sup> Marmontel's impassioned treatment of the classical figure featured Belisarius as the voice of political conscience, challenging the foothold

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*Biography* 96 (July 1972), 289-291.

<sup>66</sup> In his preface, Marmontel stated he looked to Procopius' *History of the Wars* to guide his interpretation of Belisarius, dismissing the *Anecdota* as a "defamatory Libel" that in his view could not have possibly been authored by "so reputable an historian." Jean-François Marmontel, *Belisarius* (London: Robinson and Roberts, 1767), vii.

<sup>67</sup> *The Scots Magazine* 29 (1767), 204. Excerpts from Marmontel's *Belisarius* were published in *The London Magazine*, or, *Gentleman's Monthly Intelligencer* 36 (1767), 187-190 and *The Scots Magazine* 29 (1767), 202-208;

<sup>68</sup> Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1988), 151. French Enlightenment paintings inspired by the Belisarius motif included François-Andre Vincent's *Belisarius* (1776), which depicted the blind Belisarius encountering one of his former soldiers, Tiberius; Jacques-Louis David's *Belisarius* (1781), the most well-known painting on the subject, which depicted a similar scene but with greater sentiment, showing the former general begging at the foot of a triumph monument with his former soldier in disbelief, throwing up his arms in reaction to recognizing the humiliation of the military hero; and Jean-François Pierre Peyron's *Belisarius Receiving Hospitality from a Peasant* (1779), which portrayed the fallen general being welcomed at the home of a peasant who had formerly served under his command, and the peasant's son plotting vengeance against Justinian.

of tyranny in the eighteenth century. With liberal poetic license, Marmontel did not shrink from including the medieval fabrication of the gouging of Belisarius' eyes as a factual part of the narrative to enhance his virtuous icon: "All that I hold dearer than my eyes or my life still remains to me," Marmontel's Belisarius declared—"the honour of my character is inviolate, and, above all, the virtues of my heart are still mine, unconquered by my enemies."<sup>69</sup> Marmontel sequenced his fallen hero, blind and destitute, through a series of metaphorical tableaux, speaking from the insight of a *philosophe* on the responsibility of rulers to uphold the rule of law, a message Marmontel directed against the injustice and intolerance he perceived in French society under Louis XV. In his dialog, Marmontel's Belisarius asserted, "There is a secret in the art of governing, too often concealed from the pride of kings, in which every well-disposed prince ought to be early instructed, and that is contained in this sober truth: there is no absolute power except that of the laws, and he who aims at despotism enslaves himself."<sup>70</sup> Marmontel's portrayal of Belisarius' character and unflagging perseverance made the legendary general a recognized symbol of virtue in the colonies, and writers like Crèvecoeur could not have helped but notice both the popularity of the motif as well as Marmontel's effective application of the classical genre to address the abuses he observed in contemporary political affairs.

Marmontel's *Belisarius* was already popular in the colonies by 1770 when Crèvecoeur was at Pine Hill composing his *Letters from an American Farmer*, with numerous references to Marmontel's novel appearing in newsprint and personal

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<sup>69</sup> In his preface, Marmontel acknowledged the blinding of Belisarius was the product of popular opinion rather than historical fact, however, "opinion has so universally obtained" that the fact and mythology could no longer be separated. Marmontel, *Belisarius*, vii, 8.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 88-89.

correspondence in the years preceding the revolutionary crisis. Pennsylvania newspapers promoted the virtuous protagonist of Marmontel's book, lauding the "heroic and humane Roman General" for his "immovable fidelity" and "disinterested patriotism."<sup>71</sup> The article further enumerated the overwhelming adversities Belisarius had to overcome, including "the court of a weak emperor" and a "junto of as corrupt and abandoned ministers, as ever enslaved and disgraced humanity." Unjustly accused by his malicious enemies, "this greatest and most excellent of all human beings," in whom "every virtue exists that is admirable or desirable," proved his mettle and surpassed all mortal limitations. Sparing no terms of aggrandizement for the Roman general, the article declared Belisarius a "sage lawgiver, brave hero, noble patriot, profound politician, exploring philosopher, sober citizen, industrious farmer, honest lawyer"—the "most humble and most perfect divine." Thomas Jefferson was among those who obtained an early 1768 edition of Marmontel's novel.<sup>72</sup> He also included the title in a recommended reading list he provided to his prospective brother-in-law, Robert Skipwith in 1771, ranking it alongside Montesquieu, Sidney, and Locke as a must-read work on political philosophy.<sup>73</sup> Skipwith, not as comfortable with the original Latin and Greek sources as Jefferson, requested that Jefferson's book selections be "suited to the capacity of a common reader who understands but little of the classicks

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<sup>71</sup> "M. Marmontel's Belisarius," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, October 15, 1770; *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, October 1770.

<sup>72</sup> Douglas L. Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson's Library and the French Connection," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 26 (Summer 1993), 675.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson to Robert Skipwith," August 3, 1771 in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008); Wilson, "Thomas Jefferson's Library," 675.

and who has not leisure for any intricate or tedious study.”<sup>74</sup> Marmontel offered the perfect solution for Skipwith and many others like him who desired familiarity with the classics but were not able to access the history of Procopius and the other primary writers. Expressing his great interest in obtaining Marmontel’s work, Skipwith wrote back to Jefferson that he might have to forgo purchasing the proper bindings for many of his new acquisitions—but “that one, Belisarius, and some others of the kind,” Skipwith asserted, “I would have if bound in gold.”<sup>75</sup> Jefferson was all too willing to encourage Skipwith’s preference for fictional works since he believed popular literature was fully capable of producing within the reader an appetite for virtue. “Every thing is useful,” Jefferson declared, “which contributes to fix us in the principles and practice of virtue. . . . every emotion of this kind is an exercise of our virtuous dispositions; and dispositions of the mind, like limbs of the body, acquire strength by exercise.”<sup>76</sup> Jefferson placed such high value on the cultivation of virtue that he shared Marmontel’s liberality in appreciating even a fabled rendition of the historical record since “we never reflect whether the story we read be truth or fiction.” Whereas Jefferson might have personally preferred reading a Latin edition of Procopius, he also understood the value of a best-selling French novel and its potential to inspire the sentiments of the greater public.

A bellwether for virtue in both the private and public sphere, Marmontel’s romanticized treatment of Belisarius provided all the eloquence and imagery necessary to fan the flames of rhetoric on both sides of the emerging political debate leading up to

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<sup>74</sup> Robert Skipwith, “Robert Skipwith to Thomas Jefferson,” July 17, 1771 in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Jefferson, “Jefferson to Skipwith.”

1776. In 1772, the *Massachusetts Spy* reprinted a patriotic letter from “CATO” to King George that first appeared in the *London Evening Post*, exhorting the king to promote justice and merit instead of favoritism and privilege in the institutions of government. Reflecting the flurry of colonial letters and broadsides that levied similar charges of corruption against the British Parliament, CATO opened his letter with a quotation from Marmontel’s *Belisarius*, declaring that “Partiality, in the distribution of favours, is the sure mark of a bad reign; and the Prince who resigns into the hands of a favourite the honour of his crown, and the welfare of his people, brings matters to this dilemma.”<sup>77</sup> Having cited Belisarius as his authority on the obligations of government, CATO audaciously warned the king that “unfortunately, you have been surrounded by a set of men who have openly avowed principles repugnant to the established laws of the land”—“the different reigns of Charles the First, and James the Second,” CATO declared, “will at the same time remind your Majesty of our method of avenging a deliberate attack on the constitutional laws of our country.”<sup>78</sup>

Building upon the contributions of Montesquieu and Marmontel, no author did more to rouse transatlantic fascination with the classical canon and prepare the backdrop for Crèvecoeur’s use of the Belisarius motif than Edward Gibbon. Emblematic of the neoclassical movement of the eighteenth century, and partially inspired by Montesquieu’s study of Rome, the first volume of Gibbon’s magisterial work, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was published in February 1776 at the height of civil and political unrest between radicals and loyalists in the colonies. An instant success, Gibbon’s work received four subsequent volume

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<sup>77</sup> *The Massachusetts Spy*, December 10, 1772, 166; Marmontel, *Belisarius*, 102.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

editions by 1781 and critical acclaim from such contemporary greats as Adam Ferguson, Horace Walpole and David Hume. By Gibbon's own account, his book was "on every table, and almost every toilette."<sup>79</sup> Crèvecoeur would have been familiar with Gibbon's work while composing his *Letters* and *Sketches* and he likely viewed the Tory historian as a political ally. Although Gibbon was considered a radical modernist with respect to philosophy and religion, drawing fire for his critique of the established church as a decivilizing and corrupting influence within the Roman Empire, Gibbon was also a noted political conservative who served nine years as a Tory in the House of Commons and remained loyal to Lord North throughout the revolutionary controversy, even publishing a state paper in 1779 criticizing the French for their assistance to the colonies.<sup>80</sup> Gibbon not only provided a comprehensive treatment of Roman history to a generation of readers fascinated with ancient republics, like Montesquieu and Marmontel before him, he also formulated an eighteenth-century understanding of the significance of that history. The fact that Gibbon deemed Belisarius one of Rome's most important icons would have reinforced Crèvecoeur's interest in leveraging the history of the Roman general as a metaphorical backdrop for his pro-loyalist essay.

The most compelling aspect of Gibbon's treatment of the Belisarius narrative, particularly for loyalist writers like Crèvecoeur, was the stark contrast Gibbon drew between the virtue of the Roman general and the corruption of his imperial master, Justinian. The Tory historian of the Roman Empire lauded the manly courage and valor he saw in Belisarius who "deserved an appellation which may not drop from the pen of

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<sup>79</sup> See David Womersley's introductory essay in Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. David Womersley (New York: Penguin, 2000), xviii-xx.

<sup>80</sup> Pocock, "Gibbon's Decline and Fall," 287.

the decent historian.”<sup>81</sup> In contrast to the military hero of Byzantium, Gibbon portrayed Justinian as a sluggish, self-interested tyrant who never led an army on the field of battle. To sustain his didactic interpretation of the Belisarius motif, like Marmontel, Gibbon favored the earlier writings of Procopius over the less flattering description of Belisarius found in Procopius’ *Anecdota*, once again illustrating how eighteenth-century writers viewed the classics as a repository of illustrations for those principles they sought to promote. Although Gibbon was aware of the *Anecdota*’s claim that Belisarius was too naive to discern the machinations of his adulterous wife and her political intrigues with the empress Theodora, Gibbon provided his own explanations at those points where Procopius’ narrative jeopardized Gibbon’s thematic objective.<sup>82</sup> One instance in which Gibbon enhanced the historical narrative to Belisarius’ advantage was when the Roman general returned to Constantinople after defeating the Vandals in 534 A.D. Shortly after securing his victory in North Africa, Belisarius learned that rival commanders had been sending secret dispatches back to Constantinople, maliciously accusing him of conspiring to commit treason by establishing himself on the Vandal throne. Although these charges played on Justinian’s insecurities and raised suspicions against the general, dauntless, Belisarius returned to the capital to face his accusers, for as Gibbon declared, it was “Innocence and courage,” stemming from his virtuous character, that ultimately “decided his choice.”<sup>83</sup> Upon the heroic leader’s arrival in Constantinople, much to Justinian’s dismay, an adoring public praised Belisarius in one of the greatest triumphal ceremonies ever witnessed in the city, “which ancient Rome,

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<sup>81</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Vol. 4, ed. J. B. Bury (London: Methuen and Co. LTD., 1909), 358.

<sup>82</sup> Averil Cameron, “Gibbon and Justinian” in *Edward Gibbon and Empire*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick and Roland Quinault (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 39-44.

<sup>83</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 313.

since the reign of Tiberius, had reserved for the *auspicious* arms of the Caesars.”<sup>84</sup> The spectacle of Belisarius leading Gelimer, the captive Vandal king in procession through the streets of the capital inspired Gibbon to add his own unique accolade to the narrative, naming Belisarius as “the third *Africanus*,” a title ranking the general among the two Scipios immortalized for their legendary victories during the Punic Wars.<sup>85</sup> For Justinian, however, as Gibbon observed, the triumphal celebration only invoked pale silence and jealous rage for the corrupt emperor. As Belisarius’ procession reached the imperial throne, the general paid homage to Justinian and Theodora, a gesture of great humility Gibbon characterized as an offering presented to “a prince who had not unsheathed his sword” and “a prostitute” who had disgraced herself and the empire on the public stage.<sup>86</sup> For Gibbon, it was unthinkable that such a noble warrior, who embodied all the virtues of the Romans, could compromise every fiber of his manly character by prostrating himself before such an ignoble emperor and queen. In order to reconcile the historical record with his moralistic interpretation, Gibbon offered an editorial reflection to redeem the general’s dignity, suggesting the heart of the iconic hero was not truly in the act, for “however trained to servitude, the genius of Belisarius must have secretly rebelled.”<sup>87</sup> Gibbon also added his editorial commentary to enhance the Belisarius motif during the final chapter of the general’s life. Four years following his last great triumph in Italy against the Goths, Belisarius’ rivals once again raised

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Gibbon showed his admiration for Belisarius in giving him the title “*Africanus*.” The only two previous holders of this title were the Roman generals Scipio the Elder and Scipio the Younger who were lauded for their victories over Carthage during the Second and Third Punic Wars (202 and 146 B.C.).

<sup>86</sup> In the *Anecdota*, Procopius recorded sordid tales of how Justinian’s queen, Theodora, customarily performed lewd acts in public performances; Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 314.

<sup>87</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 314; Charles Pazdernik, “Xenophon’s *Hellenica* in Procopius’ *Wars*: Pharnabazus and Belisarius,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 46 (2006) 175-206.



charges of treason against him, implicating Belisarius in a plot to assassinate Justinian. The false accusations, supported by forced confessions from the general's own servants, ultimately led to a guilty verdict by the emperor's ruling council. Providing his own assessment on the circumstances surrounding these proceedings, Gibbon asserted, "Posterity will not hastily believe that an hero who in the vigor of life had disdained the fairest offers of ambition and revenge should stoop to the murder of his prince."<sup>88</sup> As Gibbon lamented, the storied hero of Byzantium, "reduced by envy to beg his bread," had become the object of pity at the end of his life—"Give a penny to Belisarius the general!" Despite this "strange example of the vicissitudes of fortune," Gibbon proclaimed, "the name of Belisarius can never die." Though unmarked by the honors, monuments, and statues "so justly due his memory," Gibbon declared, the memory of the virtuous hero yet "lives to upbraid the envy of his sovereign."<sup>89</sup>

Gibbon's popularization of the legend of Belisarius, following in the tradition of Montesquieu and Marmontel, provided Crèvecoeur an irresistible narrative on which to center his appeal to classical virtue and leverage the legitimacy of historical precedent to enhance the rhetorical effect of his pro-loyalist polemic. Ever intent on framing his critique of the Revolution in the context of human experience, Crèvecoeur's *Belisarius*, one of his strongest and most effective political arguments against the excesses of the Revolution, harnessed eighteenth-century sentiment surrounding the classical motif of the Roman hero to illustrate how radical forces in the colonies had transformed the pastoral American landscape into a specter of civil violence and injustice.<sup>90</sup> One brief reference to the name of the Roman general near the end of his essay was sufficient to

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<sup>88</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 458.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 458-459.

<sup>90</sup> Plotkin, "Crèvecoeur Rediscovered," 401.

confirm S.K.'s identity as the full embodiment of all that Belisarius represented—the noble and righteous subject who, although betrayed and persecuted by jealous rivals, remained loyal to his emperor, unbroken in his commitment to civic virtue. The events surrounding S.K.'s story depicted human nature at its worst, a time when self-serving patriots artfully incited chaos and undermined the rule of law to achieve their shortsighted ambitions, crushing the pastoral vision of the colonial landscape Crèvecoeur had portrayed as integral to the very definition of what it meant to be an American.<sup>91</sup> However, despite the injustice and violence directed against himself and his family, S.K. remained undaunted in spirit, even showing mercy to his neighbors who had participated in destroying his American dream. “Like Belisarius of old,” Crèvecoeur declared, S.K. “bore his misfortunes with a manly constancy.” In humiliation, at the end of his American odyssey, S.K. returned to his homestead “to contemplate in gloomy despair the overthrow of his wife’s reason and the reunion of all the physical evil that could possibly befall him, without resources and without hope”—yet, Crèvecoeur proclaimed, echoing Gibbon’s tribute to the hero of Byzantium, “he lives; yet he bears it without murmuring.”<sup>92</sup>

Crèvecoeur embedded the classical motif of Belisarius in his narrative of S.K. to challenge what he considered to be a profoundly flawed Whig-patriot vision of liberty. Despite all the revolutionaries’ protestations against corruption and tyranny, S.K.’s fate had been determined outside the legitimate courts of justice by the rage and malice of “an ignorant, prejudiced public.”<sup>93</sup> Crèvecoeur had no personal quarrel with the national leaders of the patriotic movement, men such as Jefferson and Washington

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<sup>91</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 407-408; Todd, “Fragmentation and Representation,” 262-263.

<sup>92</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 415, 420.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 421.

whom he corresponded with as fellow gentlemen-farmers, and he was persuaded that many in the Continental Congress would have “shed tears over the ashes of this ruin” had they witnessed the effects of the Revolution as he did.<sup>94</sup> However, in Crèvecoeur’s estimation, the detachment of these leaders from the injustice and civic violence ripping apart the fabric of the American landscape more than anything else exposed the greatest weakness in the patriotic vision of liberty. For Crèvecoeur, it was futile to pin the aspirations of liberty on the human capacity for virtue since human nature was hopelessly incapable of resisting the corrosive forces of corruption. Patriotic calls to cast off the protection of legitimate monarchical oversight were dangerous and irresponsible from the outset, as evidenced by the inability of Congress to control “inferior satellites who crush, who dispel, and make such a havoc” in the distant communities across the colonies. Through the eyes of Farmer James and S.K., as well as drawing upon his own experience, Crèvecoeur lamented that “country saints,” once publicly devout and “laboriously exact in their morning prayers” could so easily exchange their religious piety for other pursuits that offered more expedient paths to “popularity, applause, and public respect.” When the underpinnings of legitimate government were removed, the local committees and their minions “assumed the iron scepter” and readily shifted from “religious hypocrites” to “political tyrants.”<sup>95</sup> In light of these extraordinary events that so dramatically challenged everything he had once believed about America, Crèvecoeur appealed to heaven in a quintessential statement of the loyalist persuasion: “Gracious God, why permit so many virtues to be blasted in their greatest refulgency? Why permit the radiance of so many heavenly attributes to be

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<sup>94</sup> Plotkin, “Crèvecoeur Rediscovered,” 402.

<sup>95</sup> Crèvecoeur, *Letters and Sketches*, 421-422.

eclipsed by men who impiously affix to their new, fictitious zeal the sacred name of liberty on purpose to blind the unwary, whilst, ignorant of Thee, they worship no deity but self-interest, and to that idol sacrilegiously sacrifice so many virtues?"<sup>96</sup>

Presenting a neoclassical vision of British America, Crèvecoeur's *Letters* and *Sketches* reflected both the idealism of the Roman poets on the virtue and liberties of the agrarian community as well as the stark realities of corruption, conspiracy and tyranny, ancient adversaries foretold by the classical writers that always threatened to unravel the fabric of freedom-loving republics. In this use of the classics, Crèvecoeur did not differ from his revolutionary contemporaries, except in his conviction that the lessons of the ancient past favored a loyalist rather than a radical interpretation of the emerging colonial crisis in the 1760s and 1770s. First and foremost a British American, like the protagonist surrogates in his essays, Crèvecoeur carved out an agrarian life on the American frontier in the decade before the Revolution based on the premise of British subjecthood; by 1776, however, the virtuous American landscape Crèvecoeur cherished had collapsed beneath him, eroded by the artful work of conspiring and ambitious demagogues masquerading as patriots, inciting rebellion against the king and all ties to legitimate authority and control. With no political middle ground on which to stand, Crèvecoeur and those who shared his political sentiments were branded loyalists and outcasts. With his world turned upside down, Crèvecoeur turned to the ancient world and the motif of Belisarius to invite a transatlantic audience to feel the weight of these momentous, seemingly incomprehensible events through the heart-felt experience of his protagonist farmer. Given the widespread popularity of the Belisarius motif in the literature and art of the eighteenth century, Crèvecoeur knew the narrative's strong

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 414-415.

moral appeal would add legitimacy and rhetorical thrust to his critique of the Revolution.

Crèvecoeur's use of the classics demonstrated how writers on the loyalist side of the revolutionary debate invoked references and images from antiquity similar to the way Whig-patriots used the Greek and Roman writers to add legitimacy to their arguments.<sup>97</sup> Seen as the repository for the eighteenth century's highest ideals with respect to civic virtue and liberty, Crèvecoeur used the classics not simply to enhance the rhetorical flourish of his polemic, but to lend legitimacy by anchoring his assertions in the bedrock of the Enlightenment's authorized canon on republican government. The "broken-hearted" Crèvecoeur, whose *Letters* and *Sketches* stood out among all other loyalist offerings for their singular emotive and moral qualities, shared a great faith in those ancient principles that formed an essential component of the transatlantic discourse. Crèvecoeur described a neoclassical vision of the frontier where the colonial farmer was to America what Cincinnatus was to Rome—the landed freeholder prospering under the security of virtuous government, both the product and sustainer of republican civic order. Crèvecoeur's loyalist persuasion was an expression of his identity as a British American and beneficiary of those ancient principles of mixed government embodied in the English Constitution. Like his fellow subjects on the American continent, he looked eastward to the constitutional monarchy, to the freest system of government in the world, and to the classical heritage from which those principles of freedom were derived to ensure the continuation of liberty on western shores. Crèvecoeur's use of the classics illustrated the way in which loyalist writers

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<sup>97</sup> Bruce P. Lenman, "Political Identities and the Languages of Liberty in the Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of British Studies* 35 (July 1996), 412-413.

drew upon the ancient literature to assert their neoclassical vision of America and counter what they viewed as the dangerous and tyrannical rhetoric of their patriot opponents.

CLASSICAL VIRTUE AND THE BRITISH SUBJECTS OF  
THE AMERICAN COLONIES

In the decade leading up to 1776, before the civil divide that pitted patriots against loyalists, British Americans shared a common lexicon of liberty derived from the ideals of the ancient literary canon, principles that ultimately supported competing political narratives concerning the emerging transatlantic crisis. Up until the eve of the Revolution, Americans as diverse in their political thinking as John Adams and Thomas Hutchinson shared a common affection for the tenets of the English constitution, the legal system they perceived to be the eighteenth century's great bastion of liberty and most accurate reflection of the classical principles of republican government. From the time of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the notion of English patriotism had become synonymous with the legacy of republican Rome, transcending the boundaries of political party affiliation on both sides of the Atlantic; Whig republicans and conservative-minded Tories alike cherished the delicate balance of the constitutional monarchy and feared the emergence of arbitrary power.<sup>1</sup> The gravitational pull of the classical world on the transatlantic political imagination was particularly potent in the American colonies. An irresistible moral component in the ancient literature challenged Americans to embody the character qualities of civic virtue that emboldened the legendary titans of liberty—Cato and Cicero, Brutus and Cassius—to stand firm against the encroachment of tyranny and prove themselves truly honorable and worthy of self-

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 25.

government. As Henry Steele Commager asserted, “The scorn of luxury and effeminacy and the acceptance of austerity”—“a preference for the rural life” as well as a devotion to law, eloquence, public service, and the character traits of honor, dignity, and virtue—“all of this was American as it was Roman.”<sup>2</sup>

The ideology of civic virtue, originating in the classical world and invigorated by the political theorists of the eighteenth century, asserted that systems of government ultimately reflected the character of the body politic and were always susceptible to the vicissitudes of human weakness. Polemicists such as John Locke and Baron de Montesquieu, who conveyed the classical philosophy of Aristotle and Polybius to the Enlightenment generation, articulated a vision of republican government reflecting a particular understanding of human nature that readily acknowledged the human propensity for self-interest and corruption. Consequently, for the British subjects of America, classical virtue was fundamental to the entire framework of government because it spoke to the motivations and integrity of those responsible for sustaining it; the status of liberty ultimately rested on the ability of the people to resist corruption and conduct themselves in a virtuous manner. As Caroline Winterer observed, “The classical past shaped the cyclical narrative arc” in the modern political context, prescribing two distinct pathways for republican governments to follow—“the path of vice” or “the road of virtue.”<sup>3</sup> This dualistic way of perceiving the political world shaped the disparate ways in which Americans, once united in their patriotic zeal for the constitutional monarchy, began to form radically different opinions concerning the

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Steele Commager, “The American Enlightenment and the Ancient World: A Study in Paradox,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 83 (1971), 10.

<sup>3</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 18.



unfolding transatlantic crisis in the decade leading up to 1776. In the mounting political tensions of the 1760s and 70s, Americans consulted the ancient writers and their modern commentators in the Enlightenment discourse of liberty to diagnose the symptoms of civic disorder; while Whig-patriots found breaches of character within the halls of Parliament, Tory-loyalists discovered corruption in the “irresponsible and self-interested” activities of radical usurpers who “threatened to undermine the authority of government” and subject the colonies to anarchy and tyranny.<sup>4</sup> Classical virtue was a core, foundational principle supporting the entire framework of eighteenth-century political thought, and those in the American colonies, patriots and loyalists alike, constantly affirmed its essential relevance. The loyalist persuasion in the American colonies thus stemmed from longstanding and deeply held convictions concerning the tenets of English liberty, ideas anchored in the models and antimodels of classical antiquity.

The English philosopher John Locke was among those Enlightenment writers who drew upon classical ideas about republican self-government to shape the way Britons on either side of the Atlantic understood their rights and liberties as subjects living under a constitutional monarchy. According to Locke, the purpose of government was to empower individuals to pursue true happiness, a concept paralleling Aristotle’s notion of *eudaimonia*, the flourishing existence.<sup>5</sup> A close associate of the first Earl of Shaftesbury, one of the founders of the Whig movement in England, Locke’s description of the relationship between liberty and natural rights affirmed a

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<sup>4</sup> Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 91.

<sup>5</sup> Darrin M. McMahon, “From the Happiness of Virtue to the Virtue of Happiness: 400 B.C.-A.D. 1780,” *Daedalus* 133 (Spring 2004), 6-7.

central tenet of English political thought not only compatible with, but essential to a right understanding of the moral priority of civic virtue.<sup>6</sup> In his 1690 essay titled *Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke explained that “the highest perfection of intellectual nature” existed in “a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness,” and the opportunity for the individual to pursue and exercise genuine happiness constituted “the necessary foundation of our liberty.”<sup>7</sup> Writing in opposition to the arbitrary power of absolute monarchy, Locke presaged what later writers such as Montesquieu concluded, namely, that freedom was a function of the supremacy of the laws of a society. The law provided the only defense against arbitrary power, granting individuals the freedom to pursue one’s interests. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke observed that “Freedom of Men under Government” was that condition where subjects had “a standing Rule to live by, common to every one of that Society, and made by the Legislative Power erected in it.” Locke’s articulation captured the essence

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<sup>6</sup> The First Earl of Shaftesbury was Anthony Ashley-Cooper, a member of the Cabal Ministry during the reign of Charles II. Owing largely to Locke’s non-historical approach and strong emphasis on natural rights and the freedom of the individual, some twentieth century historians interpreted Locke to be at odds with the notion of republican virtue in the ideology of the American founding. Emphasizing the primacy of civic virtue in the social and political changes leading up to 1776, the “republican synthesis” school disavowed the significance of Locke’s liberalism which seemingly reduced political motivations to nothing more than self-interest, a theory the republican synthesizers deemed incompatible with the more compelling moral motivations of civic virtue and sacrifice for the greater good. However, in the wake of the republican synthesis debate, historians have increasingly viewed Locke’s theory as fully consistent with, rather than opposed to republican ideology. See James T. Kloppenberg, “The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early Political Discourse,” *The Journal of American History* 74 (June 1987): 9-33; Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Rogers M. Smith, “Beyond Tocqueville, Myrdal, and Hartz: The Multiple Traditions in America,” *The American Political Science Review* 87 (September 1993): 549-566; Michael P. Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Joshua Foa Dienstag, “Serving God and Mammon: The Lockean Sympathy in Early American Political Thought,” *American Political Science Review* 90 (September 1996): 495-511 and “Between History and Nature: Social Contract Theory in Locke and the Founders,” *The Journal of Politics* 58 (November 1996): 985-1009; Alan Gibson, “Ancients, Moderns and Americans: The Republicanism-Liberalism Debate Revisited,” *History of Political Thought* 21 (Summer 2000): 261-307.

<sup>7</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 2.21, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 348.

of what the Greek and Roman political philosophers had advocated concerning the virtue of republican governments, where the individual's pursuit of *eudaimonia* was protected from "the inconstant, uncertain, unknown, Arbitrary Will of another Man."<sup>8</sup> In Locke's view, civic virtue was a by-product of this pursuit of self-fulfillment, since the fully developed mind, in the course of pursuing one's individual happiness, would naturally exercise appropriate restraints in ways that would optimize the good for both the individual and the whole of society.<sup>9</sup> Locke's definition of liberty may have stemmed from a priority of individual self-interest, but it was precisely his prioritization of individual liberties that made it possible for a community of citizens to foster a society characterized by moral and civic priorities. Locke's treatises grew increasingly important in the American colonies during the political crisis of the 1760s and 70s when British subjects believed they shared an "imagined affinity" with the classical past. As Winterer described, "what mattered to eighteenth-century moderns was not the gap of time that separated them from the ancients but the proximity of example that united them." Locke's treatises were among those that reminded Americans that republics were fragile entities that depended on the virtue of the citizenry to stand against the dangers of self-ambition and corruption.<sup>10</sup> The English philosopher was regarded alongside the ancient sources as an essential reference in the unbroken discourse on liberty; Thomas Jefferson later recounted that he relied on no single source in drafting the Declaration of Independence, but simply synthesized "the harmonizing sentiments of the day" expressed in "Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, and others." Similarly, John

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<sup>8</sup> John Locke, "The Second Treatise on Civil Government," 4.22, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 284.

<sup>9</sup> Dienstag, "Serving God and Mammon," 503.

<sup>10</sup> Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 19.

Adams combined the ancient and modern when he asserted, “Whig principles were the principles of Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, and Sidney, Harrington, and Locke.”<sup>11</sup>

In the mid-eighteenth century, a series of historical works on the republics of Greece and Rome complemented Locke’s political philosophy, further promoting the inclination of Whigs and Tories to imagine an affinity between the classical world and the political world of the transatlantic British *imperium*. Among the most significant of these histories was Edward Wortley Montagu’s 1757 *Reflections on the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Republics*, providing British Americans who lacked the requisite education in Latin or Greek an accessible entrée to the cautionary tales of the classical canon. One of many such treatises presenting a thematic overview on the susceptibility of republics to corruption and decay, Montagu, a parliamentarian, used classical history as a type of laboratory for conducting republican autopsies to better understand the symptoms of corruption, seeking to identify “the principal causes of that degeneracy of manners, which reduc’d those once brave and free people into the most abject slavery.”<sup>12</sup> As Montagu recounted, “Rome in the last period of her freedom was the scene where all the inordinate passions of mankind operated most powerfully and with the greatest latitude. There we see luxury, ambition, faction, pride, revenge, selfishness, a total disregard to the publick good” and a “universal dissoluteness of manners” that made the Romans ripe for destruction.<sup>13</sup> As Gordon Wood described, particularly for

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<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Gummere, “The Heritage of the Classics in Colonial North America. An Essay on the Greco-Roman Tradition,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 99 (April 15, 1995), 76.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), 51.

<sup>13</sup> Edward Wortley Montagu, *Reflections on the Rise and Fall of the Ancient Republics: Adapted to the Present State of Great Britain* (London: J. Rivington and Sons, 1778), 223; Cited by Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 19.

the British subjects of America, it was as if the literary legacy of Rome was reaching out to the modern world to pose the questions that had been so fundamental to the degeneracy of the ancient republics.<sup>14</sup>

Baron de Montesquieu, similar to Montagu, was among those who looked to the ancient past to illuminate the political priorities of the present age, providing both Tory-loyalists and Whig-patriots the intellectual framework necessary to advocate their respective conservative and radical agendas in the colonies. Depending on how a British American read Montesquieu in the decade leading up to 1776, one could argue the French *philosophe* was more favorable to the loyalist side of the debate, defending the preservation of the British institutions of government and the English constitution in particular, which British Americans regarded as the unrivaled bulwark of liberty in the modern world. As Janice Potter observed, it would be incorrect to assume the loyalists of the American revolutionary generation lacked the “relevant and dynamic” ideologies necessary to support their particular interpretation of the events that unfolded in the colonies.<sup>15</sup> Attune to the lessons of classical history, Montesquieu transmitted to the modern world the essence of what the Greek and Roman writers had said concerning the priority of civic virtue in republican governments. One of the first modern authors to summarize and comprehend the entire span of Roman history, Montesquieu pointed Whig-patriots and Tory-loyalists to the model of Roman patriotism in his 1734 *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline*. Rome’s “greatness” stemmed from the great moral character of its citizens and their republican leaders who were “simple, steadfast, honest, courageous, law-abiding, and

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<sup>14</sup> Wood, *Creation*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> Potter, *Liberty We Seek*, 85.

patriotic.”<sup>16</sup> This spirit of civic virtue set the republics in Rome and Sparta apart from all others, for there was “nothing so powerful,” declared Montesquieu, “as a republic in which the laws are observed not through fear, not through reason, but through passion—which was the case with Rome and Lacedaemon.”<sup>17</sup>

Montesquieu’s 1757 *Spirit of the Laws* provided further inspiration for British subjects on both sides of the Atlantic to aspire to the civic spirit of ancient Rome. Montesquieu described virtue in a republic as “love of the homeland, that is, love of equality”—“the spring that makes republican government move,” and the one who exercised this kind of virtue was the man “who acts from love of the laws of his country.”<sup>18</sup> Montesquieu characterized his *Spirit of the Laws* as an examination of men and their motivations—a scientific inquiry on the nature of government, conducted in the laboratory of antiquity “to capture its spirit” and establish general principles concerning the three elementary forms of government—despotic, monarchical, and republican.<sup>19</sup> In this regard, Montesquieu was an eighteenth-century conveyor of principles already codified in the ancient literature. The writings of Plato, Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero on the three government systems, described in the ancient world as “rule by the one, the few, and the many,” were well known to British subjects “long before Montesquieu lifted the sixth book of the *Politics* into his *Esprit de Lois*.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans and their Decline* (1734), trans. David Lowenthal (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1965), 2-3.

<sup>17</sup> Lacedaemon (Sparta); Montesquieu, *Considerations on the Causes of the Greatness of the Romans*, 33.

<sup>18</sup> Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia C. Miller and Harold S. Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xli.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, xliii. For Montesquieu, monarchical government was characterized by rule of law, whereas despotic government was rule by a single ruler. Montesquieu’s republican form of government included aristocracy as one form, and democracy as another.

<sup>20</sup> Gummere, “The Heritage of the Classics,” 99; Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 124; Plato was the first to suggest the three primary forms of government reflected the character of the citizens living in a particular society, “springing out of the moral dispositions of the members of each state.” Plato, *The*

In describing the “springs” that made each of the three government systems operate, Montesquieu, like the ancient writers before him, emphasized the importance of human character as a determining factor in the civic order. In the despotic system, a society “without law and without rule,” Montesquieu identified “fear” as the necessary human quality that empowered the tyrant to compel “everything along by his will and his caprices.”<sup>21</sup> In such a government model, authority was sustained through intimidation, extinguishing courage while beating down “even the slightest feeling of ambition,” particularly among potential rivals in the upper echelons of society.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, Montesquieu identified “honor” as the most important element in the monarchical system, a model of government comprised of nobility and established laws where “the prejudice of each person and each condition” compelled all good citizens to defer to the will of the crown and “love the state less for oneself than for itself.” Although preferable to the despotic form of government, the monarchical system elicited no other character qualities among its citizens than simple obligation and deference to authority. For Montesquieu, the “mixed” republican form of government was superior to all others because it placed a great premium on virtue to sustain its

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*Republic of Plato*, Book VIII, trans. John Llewelyn Davies (London: Macmillan and Co., 1908), 270. Plato described how the forces of decay, private interest and weakness in character inevitably worked to undermine and distort each form of government, transforming monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy into tyranny, oligarchy, and mob rule respectively. Building upon Plato’s observations, Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero contended the best way to prevent erosion was to provide a mix of the three forms in one constitutional arrangement, carefully balancing them against one another to provide checks and balances against human frailty. Polybius articulated this best when he described that “just as rust eats away iron, and woodworms or ship-worms eat away timber, and these substances even if they escape any external damage are destroyed by the processes which are generated within themselves, so each constitution possesses its own inherent and inseparable vice.” Polybius, *Histories*, Book VI, trans. Ian Scott-Kilvert in *Polybius, The Rise of the Roman Empire* (London: Penguin, 1979), 310, 341. The most preferable political system was the mixed solution combining “all the virtues and distinctive features of the best governments” to form a constitution best able to keep men “virtuous and well-disciplined and the public character of the state civilized and just.”

<sup>21</sup> Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29.

existence. Every member of the society, including the leaders, had to subject themselves to the established laws, and the strength of the whole ultimately rested on the character of free citizens acting according to their sense of moral obligation to one another. Echoing Locke's imperative concerning the rule of law, Montesquieu asserted that "political liberty is found only in moderate governments" where power is checked, for "it has been eternally observed that any man who has power is led to abuse it; he continues until he finds limits." Recognizing the irony in the relationship between liberty and constraint, Montesquieu declared, "Who would think it! Even virtue has need of limits." To prevent the infringement of arbitrary rule, Montesquieu noted, "power must check power by the arrangement of things."<sup>23</sup> The Roman Republic epitomized this system of government since relatively few laws and penalties were required to sustain the spirit of civic responsibility shared among the citizens of Rome; "often the legislator needed only to show them the good to have them follow it," Montesquieu observed—"It seemed that it was good enough to give them counsels instead of ordinances."<sup>24</sup> However, other examples from the ancient world warned of the dangers of corruption. Citing case studies from ancient Greece and Rome, Montesquieu noted that when virtue ceased to reign and ambition and avarice corrupted the citizenry, desires quickly changed their objects and the republic spiraled out of control; "that which one used to love, one loves no longer," and citizens who once experienced unparalleled freedom under the laws suddenly wanted "to be free against them."<sup>25</sup> Although Montesquieu's discourse on the separation of powers and the need for checks and balances appealed to American patriots who suspected that "a

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 22-24.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 23.



degeneration of the mixture of the English constitution” stood at the vortex of the political crisis of the 1760s and 70s, the French *philosophe*’s call for self restraint and virtuous conduct in accordance with the rule of law also gave voice to conservative-minded Tories who feared that the rise of self-interest and corruption of the citizenry posed an even greater threat to the commonwealth—anarchy and tyranny, a fate which even the greatest republics of the ancient world seemed unable to avoid.<sup>26</sup>

While Locke and Montesquieu transmitted to the modern world an intellectual framework encapsulating what the classical writers had articulated concerning the priority of civic virtue in republican governments, Joseph Addison, perhaps more than any other writer, inspired Tories and Whigs alike to take up the ancient mantle for themselves and lionize the Roman patriotic spirit. Addison’s celebrated play, *Cato*, first performed before London audiences in 1713, sensitized eighteenth-century discourse to the priority of classical virtue and exerted a deeply sentimental influence on the transatlantic political imagination.<sup>27</sup> Set in the North African outpost of Utica, Addison’s tragic play recounted the final hours of Cato the Younger, the stoic philosopher and heroic Roman statesman immortalized in Plutarch’s *Lives*. One of the great legends of Roman history, it was Cato who opposed the rising dictatorship of Julius Caesar and sacrificed his life for the honor of the republic following Caesar’s victory over Pompey at Pharsalus in 48 B.C. In a dramatic last stand, besieged by

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<sup>26</sup> John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were both proponents of Montesquieu’s argument on checks and balances. Adams was “the most visible and most persistent proponent of mixed government in America” and Jefferson, at least before the Revolution, “fervently embraced mixed government” and spent much time parsing Montesquieu’s arguments. Jonathan Sewall and Myles Cooper were two loyalist writers who emphasized the conservative elements in Montesquieu’s theory. Potter, *Liberty We Seek*, 100; Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 130-132.

<sup>27</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 100; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 33-34; Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 57-58.

Caesar's advancing army, Cato took his life with the sword rather than submit to Caesar's tyrannical rule—"Now I am my own master," Cato declared, and in his death, according to Plutarch, the people of Utica with one voice heralded Cato as "their saviour and benefactor, the only man who was free, the only one unvanquished."<sup>28</sup> Joseph Addison's lines portraying Cato's final act of patriotism as the last Roman republican added significant dramatic flare to Plutarch's account, providing rhetoricians and commentators a vivid touchstone for the language of liberty throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century:

How beautiful is death, when earn'd by virtue!  
Who would not be that youth? What pity is it  
That we can die but once to serve our country! . . .  
The mistress of the world, the seat of empire,  
The nurse of heroes, the delight of gods,  
That humbled the proud tyrants of the earth,  
And set the nations free, Rome is no more.  
Oh liberty! Oh virtue! Oh my country!<sup>29</sup>

Addison's lines memorializing Cato's declamation, the last efflorescence of liberty at the twilight of the classical republican era, captured the imagination of a transatlantic audience of British subjects who deemed themselves the rightful heirs to the Roman tradition of manly virtue. It was a theme for the ages, and Addison tailored his neoclassical production to appeal to Tory conservatives as well as Whig radicals.<sup>30</sup> Before the debut of his play in 1713, Addison carefully conferred with the English poet and Tory satirist Alexander Pope on the prologue and invited Samuel Garth, a Whig, to

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<sup>28</sup> Plutarch, *Cato the Younger* 70.1, 71.1 in Plutarch, *Lives*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1919), Perseus Digital Library.

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Addison, *Cato*, Act 4, Scene 4 in *Cato: A Tragedy and Selected Essays*, ed. Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004).

<sup>30</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 58; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 34.

compose the epilogue. Addison also provided Tory minister Lord Bolingbroke an advance copy of the script for his review, and tactfully declined the offer of Queen Anne to dedicate the play to her, a political signature that might have biased a Tory interpretation of his work.<sup>31</sup> These efforts helped secure wide political acceptance during the play's opening performances among Tories and Whigs, with both parties laying claim to the spirit of liberty Addison so eloquently exalted. The play's glorification of classical virtue led the Tory writer Samuel Johnson to wryly describe the work as "a succession of just sentiments in elegant language" with histrionic qualities exceeding the "natural affections" or "any state possible or probable in human life."<sup>32</sup> Alexander Pope, whose literary accomplishments included an English translation of Homer's *Iliad*, fully embraced Addison's accomplishment, proclaiming that the playwright's portrayal of the Roman senator managed to invoke "Roman drops from British eyes."<sup>33</sup> The Catoic ideal was no less celebrated in the House of Hanover in the decades that followed. In 1749, an article in the *London Magazine* featured the prologue to a performance of *Cato* at Leicester House given by the then eleven-year-old Prince George.<sup>34</sup> Playing the part of Cato's son, Portius, the future King of England, who would become George III, celebrated the Catoic lineage of British liberty, declaring,

Teach our young hearts with generous fire to burn,  
And feel the virtuous sentiments we learn . . .  
Were all the powers of human wit  
Combine, to dignify great Cato's name,

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<sup>31</sup> Frederic M. Litto, "Addison's Cato in the Colonies," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23 (July 1966), 434.

<sup>32</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 57.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 36.

To deck his tomb, and consecrate his fame;  
Where liberty—O name for ever dear!  
Breaths forth in ev'ry line, and bids us . . .  
bravely perish in our country's cause . . .  
—'tis the first great lesson I was taught.  
What, though a boy, it may with pride be said,  
A boy, in *England* born, in *England* bred:  
Where freedom well becomes the earliest state,  
For there the love of liberty's innate.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to animating English audiences, Addison's portrayal of Cato's last stand for liberty was no less a source of inspiration for classical virtue in the colonies.<sup>36</sup> American performances of *Cato* were staged in New York in 1732, followed by productions in Charleston, South Carolina and the College of William and Mary in 1736. Although public theater was generally discouraged in pious New England, half a dozen performances were held in Boston in 1750, and students at Harvard staged four performances of *Cato* between 1758 and 1759. In popular print, Addison's play saw no less than nine American publications throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century.<sup>37</sup> *Cato* apparently had an impact on Nathan Hale from Connecticut, who likely encountered Addison's play during his time at Yale. Three years after finishing his degree, as a young captain in the revolutionary army in 1776, Hale was captured on Long Island while conducting espionage for General Washington behind British lines. Speaking before the hangman's noose on his day of execution, the twenty-one-year-old Hale purportedly invoked a line from *Cato* when he declared, "I only regret that I have

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<sup>35</sup> "Prologue and Epilogue, Spoken by his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales's Children, on their performing the Tragedy of Cato, at Leicester House," *The London Magazine, or Gentlemen's Monthly Intelligencer* (January 1749), 37.

<sup>36</sup> Litto, "Addison's Cato in the Colonies," 431.

<sup>37</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 44-45, 83; Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 58.

but one life to lose for my country.”<sup>38</sup> The irony that Addison’s play could capture the imagination of a young George III at Leicester House and embolden an ardent revolutionary in America to surrender his life at the gallows demonstrated the pervasiveness and potency of the Catoic motif to support competing political narratives concerning classical virtue in the eighteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

The Cato motif became an irresistible symbol of classical virtue for political commentators on either side of the Atlantic who urged civic-minded subjects to safeguard their liberties against the threats of anarchy and tyranny. As Bernard Bailyn observed, a “Catoic image” grew out of the common discourse representing the merger of Addison’s play with the Whig-opposition writers of the period, promulgating the formation of an iconic edifice of “the half-mythological Roman” that served the rhetorical needs of both conservatives and radicals alike.<sup>40</sup> The greatest promotion of the Catoic image came through the writings of two English journalists and spokesmen for libertarianism, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. Concealing their identity under the pseudonym “Cato,” the two journalists published one hundred and forty-four Cato letters in the *London Journal* between 1720 and 1723, serving alongside Addison’s play as the eighteenth century’s oracle of Catoic commentary on the state of

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<sup>38</sup> An exact quote from Addison would have read: “What pity is it that we can die but once to serve our country.” Addison, *Cato*, Act 4, Scene 4; see Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 31. Hale was hanged on September 26, 1776 without ceremony in an apple orchard, perhaps in the current vicinity of Manhattan’s upper East Side. His body remained hanging for three days until a slave reportedly buried the corpse in a shallow, unmarked grave. Reports of his last words appeared six months later in the *Connecticut Gazette*, March 14, 1777: “. . . at the gallows he made a sensible and spirited speech, among other things, told them they were shedding the blood of the innocent, and that if he had ten thousand lives, he would lay them all down, if called to it, in defence of this injured, bleeding country.” See M. William Phelps, *Nathan Hale: the Life and Death of America’s First Spy* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2008), 192.

<sup>39</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 44; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 30-33.

liberty under the English Constitution.<sup>41</sup> Published in book form as early as 1720, portions of *Cato's Letters* were repeatedly referenced by pamphleteers and colonial newspapers, ranking Trenchard and Gordon's discourse among Locke's treatises as "the most authoritative statement of the nature of political liberty and above Locke as an exposition of the social sources of the threats it faced."<sup>42</sup> Affirming the republican principles of the Glorious Revolution, Trenchard and Gordon's essays became "the most popular, quotable, esteemed source of political ideas in the colonial period."<sup>43</sup> In 1756, an anonymous writer in the *Boston Gazette*, in advance of the next round of elections for the Massachusetts House, cited *Cato's Letters*, urging his fellow citizens to look for men of "generous Principles and a public Spirit"—"inviolable in their Attachment to the Constitution, liberties, and Interests in the Country."<sup>44</sup> The author attributed his concluding remarks to "the Words of Cato," demonstrating the way in which ancient and modern ideas of the classical motif merged together in the colonial mind: "These humble Creatures [candidates for public office], who now bow down before you, will soon look down upon you. Oh! Choose such as are likely to do it with most pity and tenderness. . . ."<sup>45</sup> Mirroring the legacy of their pseudonymous namesake, *Cato's Letters* heralded liberty as "the parent of virtue, pleasure, plenty, and

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<sup>41</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 35; Trenchard and Gordon's political impetus, in part, was fueled by Whig reaction to the English joint stock collapse of 1720 and the "South Sea Bubble" crisis which implicated crown ministers in corrupt practices. David M. Kirkham, "US Constitution—European Sources of American Constitutional Thought," *The United States Air Force Academy Journal of Legal Studies* 3 (1992), 14; "Cato" remained among the most popular pseudonyms used to conceal the identities of authors of pamphlets and newspaper articles throughout the eighteenth century. Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 155.

<sup>42</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 36.

<sup>43</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1953), 299.

<sup>44</sup> "Letter to the Freeholders of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay," *The Boston Gazette*, April 26, 1756; see Gordon's 1722 essay, "Second Address to the Freeholders, &c. upon the same Subject" in John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters; or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other important Subjects*, Vol. 3, No. 70, Saturday, Mar 17, 1722, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995).

<sup>45</sup> See Bailyn's discussion in Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 44.

security”—“a treasure which includes in it almost all human felicities”—and identified arbitrary power as the greatest threat to liberty. Consequently, Trenchard and Gordon lauded the English system as the best model of government yet devised by man to check the ever-present threat of tyranny. “Power is like fire,” Gordon wrote; “it warms, scorches, or destroys, according as it is watched, provoked, or increased”—and since power always tends to exceed all bounds, “in all good governments” nothing should be left to chance, “or the humours of men in authority.” “All should proceed by fixed and stated rules,” Gordon continued—“This is the [English] constitution, and this is the happiness of Englishmen.”<sup>46</sup> The *Pennsylvania Packet* reflected these sentiments in 1773, reprinting a portion of one of *Cato’s Letters* asserting that “True and impartial Liberty” offered every man the right “to pursue the natural, reasonable, and religious dictates of his own mind.”<sup>47</sup> In largely Lockean terms, the excerpt defined liberty as the means by which all creatures satisfied their desires according to their individual preference: “Liberty is to live upon one’s own terms, consistent with civil government” and “slavery is to live at the mere mercy of another.” By making the exercise of free conscience a possibility, liberty truly served as “the parent of virtue.”

In addition to popularizing ideas about Roman virtue on both sides of the Atlantic, *Cato’s Letters* illustrated how the Catonic image and the spirit of Roman patriotism had inspired the cause of British liberty from the outset of the Glorious Revolution. For Trenchard and Gordon, the republican writer Algernon Sidney was a

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<sup>46</sup> See Thomas Gordon’s essay, “Considerations on the destructive Spirit of arbitrary Power. With the Blessings of Liberty, and our own Constitution” in Trenchard, *Cato’s Letters*, Vol. 1, No. 25, Saturday, April 15, 1721.

<sup>47</sup> “The following Extracts may not be unseasonable, or unuseful by giving them a place in your Paper, you’ll oblige your Humble Servant, C.,” *The Pennsylvania Packet*, February 1, 1773. *The Packet* quoted excerpts from Gordon’s 1722 essay, “An Enquiry into the Nature and Extent of Liberty; with its Loveliness and Advantages, and the vile Effects of Slavery.” See Trenchard, *Cato’s Letters*, Vol. 2, No. 62, Saturday, January 20, 1722.

model of Catoic virtue, a champion of liberty described in *Bickerstaff's 1769 Boston Almanac* as “a Man in whom the Spirit of the ancient Republics revived,” whose *Discourses on Government* “were written in Defense of LIBERTY,” inculcating “REPUBLICAN PRINCIPLES.”<sup>48</sup> For Trenchard and Gordon, nothing was more miserable and diminishing to the human spirit than a people living under the authority of an absolute monarch, which had been the plight of the English people before 1688. In this regard, Algernon Sidney was as an eighteenth-century embodiment of Cato, a martyr who gave his life defending English liberty against the tyranny of the state. In his attack against Robert Filmer and those who advocated the divine right of kings, Sidney declared that under the absolute rule of a monarch, the people were relegated to the status of “assess and mastiff dogs”—simply working and fighting “to be oppressed and killed” at the whim of a tyrant.<sup>49</sup> Falsely implicated in the plot to assassinate Charles II in 1683, Sidney’s own writings were used in testimony against him to justify his execution by beheading, making his death the eighteenth century’s echo of Cato’s last stand at Utica and the resonating symbol of the evil of unchecked power under tyranny. On the day of his death, Sidney wrote, “I doe now willingly lay downe my life” to “uphold the common rights of mankind, the lawes of this land, and the Protestant religion, against corrupt principles, arbitrary power and Popery.”<sup>50</sup> Accounts of Sidney’s trial and execution were “part of the *American* national myth,” providing Whigs and Tories—all subjects of the crown—a distinctly British narrative of classical

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<sup>48</sup> See misc. front matter in Benjamin West, *Bickerstaff's Boston Almanac, for the year of our Lord 1769*, (Boston: Mein and Fleeming, 1768).

<sup>49</sup> Algernon Sidney, *Discourses on Government, Published from an Original Manuscript of the Author in Three Volumes*, Vol. 3 (New York: Deare and Andrews, 1805), 284.

<sup>50</sup> Algernon Sidney, “The Apology of Algernon Sydney in the Day of his Death” in Algernon Sydney, *Discourses on Government, Published from an Original Manuscript of the Author in Three Volumes*, Vol. 1 (New York: Deare and Andrews, 1805), 245.



patriotism that represented both the spirit of republicanism and the glory of the English constitution.<sup>51</sup> As the political crisis unfolded in the colonies in the 1760s and 70s, patriots read the Sidney narrative as a cautionary tale concerning the dangers of arbitrary power in the halls of Parliament, epitomized by Nathan Hale's "last stand" in the cause of liberty in 1776. Simultaneously, loyalists applied the example of Sidney to the illegitimate authority of the revolutionary committees, as illustrated by J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur who viewed the persecuting mob and the destruction of the legal apparatus in the commonwealth as the rise of anarchy and tyranny from below.

The neoclassical discourse in the pre-revolutionary years gave British Americans, Whigs and Tories alike, sufficient confidence in the English system to believe constitutional principles would prevail and provide an avenue for legislative reform, even in the wake of the political crisis that ensued with the Stamp Act controversy in 1765. As Samuel Adams conveyed to his English correspondents in the mother country in 1767, "We boast of our freedom [in America] and we have your example for it"—for even Tories acknowledged the pervasiveness of republican principles, "so often transcribed by one from another" in the discourse of "this enlightened age."<sup>52</sup> In the decade leading up to 1776, the affinity of British Americans for the English constitution was such that they could easily glorify the patriotic spirit of such government leaders as William Pitt "the Elder" and Edmund Burke whom they heralded as British exemplars of classical virtue. In January 1766, William Pitt, soon to succeed Rockingham as Prime Minister in July, advocated on behalf of the colonies

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<sup>51</sup> Annabel Patterson, cited by Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 24; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 110.

<sup>52</sup> Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 110; Pauline Maier, "Coming to Terms with Samuel Adams," *The American Historical Review* 81 (February 1976), 21.

before the House of Commons, highlighting their status as “subjects of this kingdom, equally entitled with yourselves to the natural rights of mankind and the peculiar [property] privileges of Englishmen”—“The Americans are the sons, not the bastards of England,” Pitt declared.<sup>53</sup> American resistance to the Stamp Act was reason to “rejoice,” Pitt suggested, since “Three millions of people, so dead to all the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of the rest.”<sup>54</sup> Pitt reminded his colleagues that although parliamentary power must continue to reign “sovereign and supreme” over the commons, the legislative branch must also rule so “as not to contradict the fundamental principles that are common to both.”<sup>55</sup> Pitt’s theme emphasized the strategic importance of America to Britain, declaring that if America fell, she would, like a Biblical Samson, “embrace the pillars of the state, and pull down the constitution along with her.” Appealing to the common blood between the people of America and the mother country, Pitt asked, “Is this your boasted peace—not to sheathe the sword in its scabbard, but to sheathe it in the bowels of your countrymen?”<sup>56</sup> Pitt’s words resonated across the colonial landscape, demonstrating the sentiment British Americans held not only for their identity as true sons of England, but for the spirit of classical virtue that distinguished their liberties under the English constitution as the pinnacle of political freedom in the eighteenth century. The May 1766 commencement program at the College of Philadelphia lauded Pitt as a modern Cato advocating the welfare of the colonies before

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<sup>53</sup> William Pitt, “Speech of William Pitt, the Elder, (Afterwards Lord of Chatham,) in the House of Commons, January 16, 1766, on the Right to Tax America,” *Celebrated Speeches of Chatham, Burke, and Erskine. To which is added the Argument of Mr. Mackintosh in the Case of Peltier* (Philadelphia: E.C. & J. Biddle, 1845), 11.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

the “BRITISH Senate.”<sup>57</sup> A testament to the popularity of the Romanized Pitt motif, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* published the text of the honorific verse the following month.<sup>58</sup>

Illustrious PITT, shall stand thy sacred Name,  
Rever'd to latest Times; in whom combin'd  
The sage, the Statesman and the Hero burn.  
Say, my *Lorenzo!* Does thy Bosom glow  
For public Virtue, Dignity of Soul,  
A *Cato's* Firmness and a *Tully's* Zeal,  
And every Worth that grac'd the ROMAN Sires?  
In PITT, behold them all collected shine;  
While, mid the BRITISH Senate, unappall'd,  
With all the PATRIOT slashing in his Eye  
The Cause of sinking LIBERTY he pleads.  
Lo! Thousands listen round, and inly-shook,  
Bend at the awful Thunder of his Voice,  
As bend the Forest-Oaks beneath the Storm.

American tributes to William Pitt, “The Great Commoner” demonstrated that even amid the growing tensions between the colonies and the mother country, Tory-minded conservatives and Whig-patriots continued to view themselves as the sons of British liberty—“the parent of virtue” and “the nurse of heroes.” As Eran Shalev observed, up until the mid-1770s, Americans continued to “glorify Englishmen with classical imagery and represent them as Roman heroes.”<sup>59</sup> In 1770, an article in the *Providence Gazette* announced the raising of a statue of “the Right Hon. WILLIAM PITT” in Charleston, South Carolina.<sup>60</sup> With “almost the whole of the inhabitants” in attendance, the vessels in Charleston harbor hoisted their colors in tribute as a commemorative flag flew at the top of a forty-five-foot staff next to the words “PITT

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<sup>57</sup> The piece was a dialogue between “Damon” and “Lorenzo.” Thomas Hopkinson, *An Exercise, Containing a Dialogue and Two Odes. Performed at the Public Commencement in the College of Philadelphia, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1766* (Philadelphia: W. Dunlap, 1766), 6-7.

<sup>58</sup> *Pennsylvania Gazette*, June 5, 1766; Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 116; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 117-121.

<sup>59</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 116.

<sup>60</sup> “Charles-Town (South Carolina) July 5,” *Providence Gazette*, August 4 -11, 1770.

AND LIBERTY” displayed beneath an emblematic laurel branch, a symbol of ancient Rome signifying victory as well as purity.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, Richard Henry Lee of Virginia, the brother of Arthur Lee, organized the commissioning of a grand, honorific portrait of Pitt to be hung in the Westmoreland County courthouse. The artist, Charles Willson Peale, a protégé of Benjamin West and a Maryland Son of Liberty, already known for the political banners he produced during the Stamp Act crisis, outlined his masterwork on a five-by-eight foot expanse of canvas to honor the statesman who pleaded the cause of American liberty and public virtue. Seminal to the inspiration for his painting, Peale turned to a statue sculpted by Joseph Wilton depicting Pitt clad in a Roman tunic and toga.<sup>62</sup> More than a simple image of the English statesman, Peale’s creation presented Pitt “speaking in Defense of the Claims of the American Colonies, on the Principles of the BRITISH Constitution,” synthesizing an array of symbols—both ancient and modern—to elicit every sentiment that had become central to the republican discourse over the previous decades.<sup>63</sup>

The detailed elements of Peale’s portrait of William Pitt vividly illustrated how British Americans had come to understand British liberty in the light of Roman symbols, how all subjects of the crown on both sides of the Atlantic esteemed themselves as the heirs of Roman “firmness” and the eighteenth-century carriers of

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<sup>61</sup> In addition to its common use by Roman emperors as a means of depicting triumph, in Greek mythology, Apollo defeated the dragon “Python” and afterward purified himself with laurel. Apollo’s purification was commemorated every eighth year at Delphi and some Greek and Roman uses of laurel represented a means of warding off evil and avenging spirits. See M. B. Ogle, “Laurel in Ancient Religion and Folk-Lore,” *The American Journal of Philology* 31 (1910), 287-311.

<sup>62</sup> Charles Coleman Sellers, “Virginia’s Great Allegory of William Pitt,” *The William & Mary Quarterly* 9 (January 1952), 58-59; R. T. H. Halsey, “America’s Obligation to William Pitt, Earl of Chatham,” *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, 13 (June 1918), 139; Charles Willson Peale, “William Pitt, 1768, Mezzotint Engraving,” *The Classical Spirit in American Portraiture: An Exhibition by the Department of Art, Brown University*, February 6-29, 1976 (Providence: Brown University, 1976), 28.

<sup>63</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 116-118.

classical virtue. Intent on disseminating his message to a wider audience, Peale etched a 22<sup>7/8</sup> by 14<sup>3/4</sup> inch mezzotint engraving of the portrait for print reproduction and authored a broadside describing each of the painting's allegorical components.<sup>64</sup> Peale described Pitt, not as a British aristocrat, but as a Roman senator attired in "Consular Habit," including toga, tunic and sandals symbolizing the virtue, freedom, and "merit" of the freeborn Roman citizen.<sup>65</sup> Pitt held a copy of Magna Charta in his left hand as he pointed with his right hand to the symbol of "BRITISH Liberty," a woman treading upon "the Petition of the CONGRESS at NEW YORK," indicating Pitt's challenge to the crown's initial rejection of the Stamp Act appeal in 1765. In his broadside explanation, Peale cited Montesquieu, suggesting that just as the Roman Senate had neglected the liberties of its citizens beyond Rome—"Liberty was at the center and tyranny at the extremities"—so had Parliament failed to safeguard the rights of its American subjects.<sup>66</sup> In Peale's portrait, America, represented by an Indian warrior, stood below the figure of Liberty, watching from a distance "the extraordinary Motions of the BRITISH Senate." As Peale explained, the attentive Indian figure, bow in hand and dog at his side, signified "the natural *Faithfulness and Firmness* of AMERICA," ever vigilant to safeguard its rights and privileges against intrusion.<sup>67</sup> In the portrait, Peale also positioned Pitt next to a classical statuary pedestal, an altar upon which the flame of liberty burned brightly and where the "Great Commoner" had placed his laurelled "Civic Crown." The altar itself was decorated with the busts of the two English republican heroes, Algernon Sidney and John Hampden who, "with undaunted Courage,

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<sup>64</sup> Peale, "William Pitt, 1768, Mezzotint Engraving," 28-29.

<sup>65</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 115-116.

<sup>66</sup> Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, 184-185.

<sup>67</sup> Peale, "William Pitt, 1768, Mezzotint Engraving", 28-29.

spoke, wrote, and died in Defence of the true Principles of Liberty.”<sup>68</sup> A banner placed on the pedestal between the two patriotic images proclaimed, “SANCTUS AMOR PATRIAE DAT ANIMUM”—“Holy love of the fatherland gives the spirit.”<sup>69</sup> Finally, to remind viewers of the long struggle against tyranny, Peale included a glimpse of the walls of Whitehall Palace, signifying the place from which the despotic Charles I was brought to his execution in 1649 “to the HONOUR, HAPPINESS, VIRTUE, and in one Word, to the Liberty of the BRITISH People.”<sup>70</sup> A celebratory montage of civic idealism, Peale’s 1770 portrait of William Pitt signified the degree to which the discourse on classical virtue had thoroughly permeated the transatlantic world.

Peale’s description of his portrait of William Pitt demonstrated how Americans intuitively understood liberty in the context of an ancient past—in relationship to a storehouse of models and antimodels pertaining to the rise and fall of ancient republics. The colonists had direct access to the classical canon through their education steeped in the ancient literature, and indirectly through a rich tradition of contemporary commentators and philosophers who perceived an essential connection between their own world and the republics of ancient Greece and Rome. As Richard Gummere asserted, “much ink has been wasted over the question whether the pre-Revolutionary writers confined their attention” to “the modern interpreters of government,” such as

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<sup>68</sup> Hampden and Sidney were two prominent advocates of republicanism before the Glorious Revolution in 1688: John Hampden (1595-1643) was killed in battle during the early phase of the English Civil War under the reign of Charles I—Algernon Sidney (1623-1683) opposed Charles II and was implicated in a plot against the king and executed for treason.

<sup>69</sup> Shalev’s translation in *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 117.

<sup>70</sup> Peale, “William Pitt, 1768, Mezzotint Engraving,” 28-29; Halsey, “America’s Obligation to William Pitt,” 141; Sellers, “Virginia’s Great Allegory of William Pitt,” 59.

Locke and Montesquieu, “or whether they went primarily to the classical sources. Documentary evidence proves that they were comfortably familiar with both.”<sup>71</sup>

The spirit of British liberty, composed of both ancient and modern elements, was for Edmund Burke the predominant and distinguishing feature of the American character: “This fierce spirit of liberty,” Burke declared, “is stronger in the English colonies probably than in any other people of the earth”—a liberty firmly rooted in the virtue of the English constitution.<sup>72</sup> Burke’s speeches before Parliament, available to Americans in colonial newsprint, envisioned the possibility of Tory-loyalists and Whig-patriots maintaining their shared affection for English liberty sufficient to avert the looming revolutionary crisis, and most Americans shared Burke’s sentiment up until 1776. In observing the character of the English colonies, Burke was particularly astonished by how rapidly the spirited colonists had transformed the rustic American landscape into an agrarian and commercial enterprise. “Nothing in the history of mankind is like their progress,” Burke declared—“For my part, I never cast an eye on their flourishing commerce, and their cultivated and commodious life, but they seem to me rather ancient nations grown to perfection through a long series of fortunate events. . . .”<sup>73</sup> This flourishing, Burke reminded Parliament, began the moment these freedom-loving subjects departed England’s coasts, “when this part of your character was most predominant”—these Americans “are therefore not only devoted to liberty, but to

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<sup>71</sup> Gummere, “The Heritage of the Classics,” 75.

<sup>72</sup> Edmund Burke, “On Conciliation with the Colonies,” March 22, 1775, *Burke’s Speeches and Letters on American Affairs* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1911), 91; Burke’s speech was published in *The Massachusetts Spy*, October 6, 1775 and *Rivington’s New York Gazetteer*, August 31, 1775; Stephen H. Browne, *Edmund Burke and the Discourse of Virtue* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 5-6, 27-34.

<sup>73</sup> Edmund Burke, “American Taxation,” April 19, 1774, *Burke’s Speeches and Letters on American Affairs* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1911), 24.

liberty according to English ideas, and on English principles.”<sup>74</sup> During his 1774 *Speech on Taxation*, Burke urged his fellow parliamentarians to consider the “temper and character” of the Americans before passing any new legislation that might destabilize the transatlantic relationship. In the wake of the taxation debacle, Burke attributed the “intractable” spirit in the colonies to the Americans’ strong interest in studying the principles of liberty. “In no country perhaps in the world,” Burke declared, “is the law so general a study. The profession itself is numerous and powerful; and in most provinces it takes the lead.” Such intensive study in the principles of liberty, Burke remarked, “renders men acute, inquisitive, dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in defense, full of resources;” in America, “they anticipate the evil, and judge of the pressure of the badness of the principle. They augur misgovernment at a distance; and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze.”<sup>75</sup> Burke noted that London booksellers reported a colonial demand for copies of Sir William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England* that rivaled all the rest of England combined.<sup>76</sup> Considered the most authoritative source on the British constitution in the 1770s, Blackstone’s political theory emphasized the accumulated wisdom of the institutions of government, the absolute authority of Parliament, and the constitutional means of redress, informing the colonists’ understanding of what it meant to fully exercise and maintain their rights and privileges as British subjects.<sup>77</sup> Blackstone’s conservatism placed a high premium on government control to suppress the Hobbesian state of nature and preserve liberty, judging anarchy to be “a worse state than tyranny itself,” since, as

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<sup>74</sup> Burke, “On Conciliation with the Colonies,” 91.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Potter, *Liberty We Seek*, 101-106.



Blackstone argued, “any government is better than none at all.” If American loyalists ever doubted their principled stand against the radicalism of the Revolution, they only had to refer to Blackstone to renew their confidence.<sup>78</sup> As Burke later asserted, the ties of kindred blood and shared privileges between the colonies and the mother country were as strong “as links of iron,” grounded in the authority of the English constitution which “pervades, feeds, unites, invigorates” and binds “every part of the empire” under the banner and security of liberty, “even down to the minutest member.”<sup>79</sup> Burke’s message reminded parliamentarians that the British subjects of America had always considered themselves the rightful heirs of English liberty, proud to carry the name of Britain and support the wider agenda of imperial nationalism—all Parliament had to do was modify its policies to capitalize on this reality. Tories and Whigs in the colonies generally maintained this affection for the mother country up until the eve of the revolutionary crisis—only after 1776 were the loyalists isolated and deemed traitors by their colonial neighbors who chose to forsake their allegiance to the crown.<sup>80</sup>

As British subjects confronting the rising tensions with the British ministry in the 1760s and 70s, well before any serious consideration of independence, Americans engaged in a lengthy debate on how best to preserve their English rights and liberties. Classical virtue was an essential component of that dialogue, supported not only by the original Greek and Roman literary sources, but perhaps more importantly by the political discourse of the Enlightenment generation which had popularized the political application of those sources. The philosophical treatises of Locke and Montesquieu, the

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<sup>78</sup> William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England: In Four Books*, Vol. 1, 1.1.127 (New York: W. E. Dunn, 1832), 92; cited in Potter, *Liberty We Seek*, 103.

<sup>79</sup> Burke, “On Conciliation with the Colonies,” 139; see also Max Savelle, “Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 67 (July 1962), 902.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 903.

passion of Addison's *Cato*, the rhetorical letters of Trenchard and Gordon, and the exemplars of Pitt and Burke, modern statesmen who seemed to resemble Roman senators defending the liberty of America in the House of Commons—all captured the colonial imagination and drew considerable attention to the spirit of the ancient republics. The literature of the eighteenth century provided a common language of liberty that informed both Whig-patriot and Tory-loyalist perspectives during the ensuing colonial debate of the pre-revolutionary years. However, despite this common lexicon, party agendas continued to influence the way political writers interpreted and applied the lessons of antiquity. “Country party” Whigs, always wary of royal authority, read the classics through the lens of liberalism; tyranny posed the greatest threat to republican governments and the best way to preserve liberty was to place the power in the hands of the people.<sup>81</sup> In contrast, “court party” Tories, ever fearful of the unstable masses, read the classics with a conservative sensitivity; anarchy culminating in a tyranny of the masses presented the greatest danger, and the best way to ensure liberty was to empower the monarch, the patriot-king, to maintain order and control. In short, although Whigs and Tories both drew upon the same material, they often did so in different ways—one man's patriot could easily be another man's tyrant.<sup>82</sup> In the decade before the Revolution, colonial newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides offered the British Americans a constant stream of classical dialogue on virtue, tyranny and the need to remain vigilant in the preservation of liberty. This discourse reflected a range of political sentiments, including Whig and Tory agendas and those that measured somewhere between the radical and conservative extremes.

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<sup>81</sup> Wood, *Creation*, 17-23.

<sup>82</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 26.

Reflecting a strong Whig-patriot application of classical virtue, an article from the *London Public Advertiser*, reprinted in the *Newport Mercury* and the *New Hampshire Gazette* in 1764, urged Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic to “fear for their liberties” since “books, pamphlets, and essays appear daily, recommending submission to arbitrary power” and “the absolute will of a prince.”<sup>83</sup> The pseudonymous author, “WILLIAM TEMPLE,” expressed his distaste for the monarchists who had historically biased the king against the rights and liberties of the people to increase their own power: “A King of England has no authority, but what he derives from the laws of the land,” TEMPLE declared. Specifically describing the Tory ministers as “weak, insolent, over-bearing, avaricious, lewd” and “wicked,” TEMPLE saw a conspiracy of power brewing among the corrupt ministers of government, warning that “some men have the most horrid and detestable designs of unhinging the constitution” to enslave their countrymen and subject the English people to “the boundless will of tyranny.” Combining Locke’s philosophy of the social contract with his particular reading of ancient history, TEMPLE reasoned that the people of England “chose a sovereign” the same way the Romans selected Tarquin Priscus to be their fifth ruler—for the purpose of securing the liberties and properties of the people against “every petty officer, swelling with the insolence of his post” who might be inclined to exercise his royal authority “to ransack the rooms and beds of our wives and daughters.”<sup>84</sup> Citing substantial portions of Locke’s chapter on the *Dissolution of*

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<sup>83</sup> William Temple [unknown], “From the Public Advertiser,” *The Newport Mercury*, July 30, 1764; *The New Hampshire Gazette*, August 31, 1764. The article originally appeared in *The London Public Advertiser*, May 10, 1764. “WILLIAM TEMPLE,” presumed pseudonymous author taking the name of the English statesman and writer, Sir William Temple (1628-1699) whose essays influenced Jonathan Swift among others to consider the value of classical literature in modern discourse.

<sup>84</sup> Lucius Tarquinius Priscus (Tarquin the Elder), 616-579 B.C.

*Government*, TEMPLE asserted that “If Kings or their Ministers, from a false conception of this right, should ever violate the laws, they, as Mr. Locke observes, are the Rebels,” having declared war upon those who appointed them.<sup>85</sup> “Are not [those Tory] representatives,” TEMPLE asked, “who pass unconstitutional and tyrannical laws, according to Mr. Locke, the common enemies of mankind?” In TEMPLE’s view, Roman history affirmed the rationale one might use in applying the Lockean social contract principle to remove a deficient monarch.

Whereas some writers invoked the classics and the language of liberty to advocate a liberal political agenda, others used the same tools to promote a conservative approach for safeguarding English rights and liberties. In 1769, an Englishman, “Titus Pomponius Atticus,” reflected on the shared admiration for liberty he observed between the mother country and the colonies, stating “I am no American,” but “When I read over their Remonstrances, Resolves, Addresses, and Instructions, I cannot but consider myself as reviewing the transactions of a Roman Senate, and the masterly pleadings of an Atticus, Cicero, Cato, Brutus, and a Cassius, together with the rest of the Illustrious Affectors of Roman Liberty in their time of Public Danger.”<sup>86</sup> The London article, published in Massachusetts in the same year, could not have offered the British subjects in the colonies a greater tribute when Titus stated he could fully imagine that the souls of the noble Romans from antiquity had “transmigrated into the bodies of these Americans, to leave a second immortal memorial on this planet of the inestimable worth of that Liberty, which is the source of true religion, virtue, science, commerce, and

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<sup>85</sup> Locke, “The Second Treatise on Civil Government,” 19.229-230.

<sup>86</sup> Titus Pomponius Atticus [unknown], “From the (London) Public Ledger,” *Essex Gazette* (Salem, Massachusetts), February 21, 1769, 119. Titus Pomponius Atticus (110-32 B.C.) was a close friend and correspondent of Cicero.

every social and amiable enjoyment, that tends to the perfection of our natures.”

Reflecting on the visage of Rome’s eventual decline and fall, Titus expressed his hope that the virtuous Americans, having embodied the spirit of Roman liberty, might discover a way to avert “that tragical catastrophe, that occasioned their former [ancient] exit from this world.” Taken out of context, such statements could be construed as a Whig-patriot call for American nationalism. However, such was not the discourse of British subjects in 1769, either in England or across the Atlantic on the shores of Rome incarnate. Clarifying his political sentiments, Titus described himself as one who was just as much “an Enemy to Licentiousness, as he was “a Lover of Liberty.”

Referencing the recent unrest in London sparked by the imprisonment of the Whig parliamentarian John Wilkes, Titus expressed his regret that the civil authorities had not done more to suppress the disorderly mobs “to which this Metropolis hath lately been exposed.” John Wilkes, the radical journalist and parliamentarian became a symbol for freedom on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly among the American Sons of Liberty, largely for his campaign against general warrants. When Wilkes was detained in the King’s Bench Prison for publishing an article critical of George III, an angry mob assembled with pickaxes in hand to raze the prison walls. Despite Wilkes’ attempt to quell violence from his prison window, on May 10, 1768, the mob provoked the British soldiers guarding the prison to fire on the crowd, leaving six dead and wounding fifteen in an incident that became known as the “Massacre of St George’s Fields.”<sup>87</sup> Rejecting this bloody display of radicalism, Titus conveyed his desire to see liberty preserved in a peaceful, orderly manner. In his view, there was a great difference between the shouts

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<sup>87</sup> Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 163-172.

for liberty in the licentious mob, “consisting of the scum of a large city,” and the “just, reasonable, constitutional pleadings” of those British citizens of America petitioning the crown in a “respectable” manner.

In the decade leading up to 1776, the colonial discourse on classical virtue did not always reflect clearly defined conservative or radical views, particularly since Americans, despite their Tory or Whig leanings, defined themselves first and foremost as British Americans united under the banner of the English constitution. As Gordon Wood suggested, this commitment to the rudiments of British liberty “lent a curious conservative color” to the Revolution, accommodating a range of conservative and radical perspectives that naturally stemmed from a shared, overarching reverence for the heritage of the English constitution.<sup>88</sup> At least until the eve of the Revolution, British Americans, not yet defined as loyalists or patriots, believed they were unified not in establishing a new order, but in preserving the virtue of the constitutional system they already had.

A series of articles penned in 1765 by the pseudonymous author, “The Sentinel,” illustrated how American Whigs were as concerned with matters of civic virtue as they were with the abuses of royal authority. In the *Connecticut Gazette*, The Sentinel urged the public to live virtuously and take responsibility for defending their liberties, praising those who considered “public spirit” and “love of country” a duty while chastising those “bad citizens” who carelessly pursued selfish ambition and “Guilty Greatness.”<sup>89</sup> Citing

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<sup>88</sup> Wood, *Creation*, 12-13.

<sup>89</sup> “The Sentinel No 19,” *Connecticut Gazette*, July 12, 1765, also published in *The Boston Evening Post*, *The New York Gazette*, and *The Newport Mercury* in the same month. William Livingston, William Smith, Jr., and John Morin Scott, the Whig “Triumvirate,” advocated liberty and limited government in weekly “Sentinel” columns published between February and August 1765. Joseph S. Tiedemann, *Reluctant Revolutionaries: New York City and the Road to Independence, 1763-1776* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 54.

the lines of Brutus' speech in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, with slight but significant emendations, The Sentinel exhorted his fellow subjects to adopt a spirit of Roman firmness in the cause of liberty:<sup>90</sup>

There is a Tide, in the Affairs of Men,  
Which taken at the Flood, leads on to FREEDOM! [Shakespeare  
wrote "fortune;"]  
Omitted,—all the Voyage of their Life  
Is bound in Shallows and in Slavery. [Shakespeare wrote "miseries."]  
On such a full Sea are we now a float,  
And we must take the Current when it serves,  
Or lose our Ventures.

Although the first colonial performance of *Julius Caesar* was not staged in Philadelphia until 1770, educated readers would have recognized the scene in Shakespeare's play depicting Brutus and Cassius preparing for the battle at Philippi where the two military commanders eventually fell upon their swords in Catonic fashion rather than surrender to their enemies. From the time of the Stamp Act crisis in the colonies, Whigs especially gravitated to the tropes of Brutus and Cassius for the patriotic zeal the two Roman politicians had demonstrated in assassinating the archetypal tyrant of the classical world, Julius Caesar.<sup>91</sup> In quoting Brutus' speech at Philippi, The Sentinel modified two key words to underscore his concern for the spirit of liberty in the colonies, substituting "FREEDOM!" where Shakespeare had written "fortune," and "Slavery" to replace "miseries." Consistent with his core theme, The Sentinel warned the complacent Americans about the dangers he saw hanging over their

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<sup>90</sup> Loosely quoted from Brutus' discussion with Cassius before going into battle against Octavian and Marc Antony at Philippi in 42 B.C. William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, Act 4, Scene 2, *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*, Second Edition, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 649; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 95.

<sup>91</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 26, 95-96.

heads; “thus lukewarm were many of the great Romans, even when they saw Caesar’s Sword already waving dreadfully over them.” Further developing the parallel between the colonies and ancient Rome, The Sentinel described how Cicero lamented the luxuries of Roman society that had corrupted and weakened the virtue of the citizenry of his day.<sup>92</sup> Cicero offered his strongest rebuke to those senators who had become so preoccupied with frivolous pursuits, not the least of which was the “Fish-ponds” decorating their lavish homes, that they had become sluggish with regard to the defense of liberty. The Sentinel warned that Cicero’s critique of these “lukewarm” senators might very well apply to the complacent subjects of colonial America: “They were such fools,” Cicero remarked, “to conclude that tho’ the Republic were lost, their Fish-ponds would remain secure.” In a subsequent article in the *Boston Gazette*, The Sentinel called upon all Americans to “act like men” and “oppose arbitrary rule in every shape, by every lawful method in our power.”<sup>93</sup> This patriotic appeal to Roman firmness illustrated how American Whigs, consistent with the language of British liberty, placed a high premium on classical virtue and the patriotic spirit of the people as the first line of defense against tyranny—“the most tremendous and complicated evil under the sun.”

American affinity for British liberty and the spirit of Rome, even in the wake of the Stamp Act crisis, provided the primary rationale for preserving the transatlantic relationship. Presaging the sentiment Burke expressed in Parliament concerning the mutual claims of the colonies and mother country in the heritage of the English

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<sup>92</sup> Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, Vol. 1, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (Cambridge: Loeb, Harvard University Press, 1999), 177.

<sup>93</sup> “The Sentinel No. XXI,” *The Boston Gazette*, August 12, 1765.



constitution, a 1766 article in the *Newport Mercury* featured a lyrical poem titled “Address of Liberty to Parliament” that declared:<sup>94</sup>

Freedom, the noblest blessing man can know,  
Since from this source all other blessings flow,  
For this the Romans spent their latest breath,  
This was their ruling passion, still ill in death.  
And will the American, as nobly fir'd,  
Disclaim a virtue, which Rome's sons inspired:  
Briton, American, 'tis all the same,  
To Heaven-born Liberty has each a claim.  
Their common int'rest no distinction knows,  
Each share alike or happiness, or woes.

Far from a call to revolutionary action, these poetic lines appealed to reasonable subjects on both sides of the Atlantic to preserve the benefits of liberty in the productive relationship between the mother country and the American colonies. There was no distinction between Britons and Americans because they were joint heirs in the heritage of English liberty. The Americans, for their part, represented a robust strain of this legacy of freedom, imbued with the same spirit and virtue that inspired Rome to greatness. In contrast, from a colonial perspective, Britain's passion for the spirit of liberty seemed to be growing less certain. Two years later, following the passage of the Townshend Acts in 1767, the *Boston Evening Post* excoriated the ministers of Parliament for losing sight of civic virtue in their transatlantic policies, wondering how those who represented “the most excellent form of government in the world” and “one of the best Princes that ever filled the throne” could have so easily wandered from the path of liberty. Even more remarkable was that the English nobles could go astray

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<sup>94</sup> “The Address of Liberty to Parliament,” *The Newport Mercury*, April 14, 1766, also published in *The Boston Evening Post*, August 14, 1766. Parliament repealed the Stamp Act on March 18, 1766.

given their erudition in “the causes of the rise and fall of empires” with advantages “beyond what any of the ancient Greeks or Romans could acquire.”<sup>95</sup>

Political discourse in the decade before 1776 accommodated a range of radical and conservative perspectives not only because the Americans shared a common language of liberty, but also because the British subjects in America had not yet resolved their individual and collective orientation with regard to the prospect of independence. Up until the eve of the Revolution, before Americans viewed themselves categorically as loyalists or patriots, political writers and apologists continued to engage in a lengthy process of debate and discovery to resolve where they stood on questions of British and American nationalism. In the early part of the 1760s, colonial writers and politicians such as Arthur Lee, John Dickinson, John Adams, and Thomas Hutchinson, despite their political differences, shared the same ideological terrain as loyal subjects of the crown, united in resistance to Parliament’s abusive policies and in their commitment to preserving their rights and liberties under the English constitution. By the mid 1770s however, that common ground had fractured considerably, but the dividing lines were not always distinct. Whereas Hutchinson’s royalist proclivities clearly set him apart from Adams on the question of what had to be done to secure American interests, Dickinson was neither a royalist nor a radical. On the one hand, Dickinson and Adams both agreed the colonies were facing the most imminent dangers—and yet Dickinson and Adams represented opposite poles in the Continental Congress when it came to the question of separation. Although changes in the political landscape in the decade leading up to 1776 produced a range of disparate responses

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<sup>95</sup> “To the Publishers of the Boston Evening-Post,” *The Boston Evening Post*, July 18, 1768, also published in *The Connecticut Gazette*, July 22, 1768.

concerning the question of independence, the common lexicon of classical virtue continued to color and legitimize the varied arguments in the evolving discourse on American liberty.

The polemic of Arthur Lee of Virginia, the younger brother of Richard Henry Lee, reflected the trajectory of a British American who used the language of classical virtue to sensitize the colonies to the rising dangers of tyranny while at the same time seeking to preserve the ancient connection with the English constitution. In the wake of the Stamp Act crisis, Arthur Lee became America's "most experienced essayist and pamphleteer," composing a hundred and seventy-four articles and a series of petitions and letters during his time in Williamsburg and London, which he published in colonial newspapers under at least ten pseudonyms.<sup>96</sup> In 1768, in a series of letters published in the *Virginia Gazette* under the pseudonym "The Monitor," Lee invoked the language of Addison's *Cato*, declaring "Liberty is the very idol of my soul, the parent of virtue, the nurse of heroes, the dispenser of general happiness; because slavery is the monstrous mother of every abominable vice, and every atrocious ill."<sup>97</sup> Describing liberty as "the parent of virtue," Lee distilled what the Enlightenment writers, Locke and Montesquieu in particular, had argued concerning classical virtue, namely, that virtue was contingent upon the precondition of liberty, since moral character could only be exercised by

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<sup>96</sup> A. R. Riggs, "Arthur Lee, a Radical Virginian in London, 1768-1776," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 78 (July 1970), 269. Lee's numerous pseudonyms included "Monitor," "Junius Americanus," "Raleigh," "A Bostonian," "Vespucius," "Memento," and "An Old Member of Parliament."

<sup>97</sup> Arthur Lee, "Monitor VI," *The Farmer's and Monitor's letters to the inhabitants of the British colonies* (Williamsburg: William Rind, 1769), 80. In his play, Joseph Addison had Cato use the phrase "nurse of heroes" to praise the virtue of Rome before the Senator took his life at Utica. The first ten of Lee's Monitor Letters were published by Rind's *Virginia Gazette* between February and April 1768. Lee authored thirty-one additional Monitor Letters in later years.

individuals acting freely under the light of their own reason.<sup>98</sup> Neither a radical nor a royalist, Lee warned the Americans to defend their liberties, not by taking up arms, but by steeling themselves against the moral laxity to which the Romans had succumbed—“idleness, trifling amusements, tumblers, dancers, races, and wild beasts occupied the minds of those who had been wont to think of honours, triumphs and laborious virtues.”<sup>99</sup> In his Monitor letters, Lee admonished the colonies to avoid the example of that generation of Romans who, through their complacency, ultimately invited “the most execrable monsters that ever blackened human nature”—“*Tiberius, Nero, Caligula, Commodus, Caracalla, and Domitian*”—to enslave them.<sup>100</sup> “Shall we not,” Lee asked, “hold our liberty as the immediate jewel of our souls?” Apart from advocating independence, Lee maintained his faith in the heritage of British liberty, urging Americans to study “the histories of *Greece and Rome*” and “the godlike actions of those heroes and patriots, whose lives are delivered down to us by *Plutarch*” to inspire our communities to embrace “a generous love for their country and the British constitution.”<sup>101</sup>

Arthur Lee’s extensive time in England made him one of America’s leading advisors on the Anglo-American relationship. A graduate of Eaton College and the University of Edinburgh, Lee’s growing interest in transatlantic political affairs and association with John Dickinson in opposing the Townshend Duties led him back to London to promote American interests. By 1770, Lee was an active lobbyist and

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<sup>98</sup> Daniel N. Robinson, “The Colonists as Loyal Subjects,” Lecture 1, *American Ideals: Founding a Republic of Virtue* (Chantilly: The Teaching Company audio lecture series, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Lee, “Monitor II,” *The Farmer’s and Monitor’s letters*, 66. Lee cited Thomas Blackwell, *Memoirs of the Court of Augustus* (London: A. Millar, 1763), 381.

<sup>100</sup> Lee, “Monitor II,” *The Farmer’s and Monitor’s letters*, 66. Cited in Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 65.

<sup>101</sup> Lee, “Monitor II,” *The Farmer’s and Monitor’s letters*, 66-67.

correspondent on behalf of Samuel Adams and others, working alongside Whig oppositionists in Parliament to advocate colonial conciliation. Discouraged by the ineffectiveness of the Whigs to advance reform measures in the House of Commons, and through his association with John Wilkes, Lee came to view the extraparliamentary opposition of the Wilkite society as a model for colonial resistance.<sup>102</sup> Although Lee's confidence waned after 1774 when the crown ignored the *Declaration of Rights and Grievances* presented by the First Continental Congress, Lee continued to advocate reform rather than separation, appealing to Parliament in print as late as 1775 declaring, "We have every influence of interest and affection to attach us to each other"—the same laws, religion, constitution, sentiments, and common purpose—all of which ought to compel us "to preserve the union indissoluble."<sup>103</sup> Citing the Roman historian Tacitus, Lee urged Britain to avoid military action and preserve traditional ties with the colonies since "Force and fear," as the ancient writer warned, were "insecure restraints" and were "always succeeded by inveterate hatred."<sup>104</sup>

The case of John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, more so than Arthur Lee, reflected the tensions confronting the colonists as they stood between competing conservative and radical narratives concerning the meaning of the political developments leading up to 1776. The great apparent contradiction in Dickinson's legacy as the patriot who penned the inflammatory *Farmer's Letters* and yet opposed signing the Declaration of Independence seemed to embody all the strains of the wider colonial community in

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<sup>102</sup> Riggs, "Arthur Lee," 277.

<sup>103</sup> Arthur Lee, *An Appeal to the Justice and Interests of the People of Great Britain, in the Present Disputes with America* (London: J. Almon, 1776), 32; Riggs, "Arthur Lee," 280.

<sup>104</sup> Lee's citation was from Tacitus' *Agricola* 1.32. In context, Tacitus was speaking about the tenuous loyalty of the Gauls, Germans, and Britons with respect to Rome's authority, which was only made possible through "fear and terror." Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola*, trans. Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (London: Macmillan, 1877).

coming to terms with a new definition of liberty independent of the British constitution.<sup>105</sup> Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, published in all but four of the colonies' thirty American newspapers between 1767 and 1768, advocated neither a Tory nor Whig agenda, but a middle ground perspective that combined Quaker religious sensitivities and patriotic zeal for the heritage of classical virtue. Eventually published in tract form, Dickinson's *Farmer* letters became "the most popular and persuasive" polemic of the period, urging American resistance to imperial policy while remaining true to the founding principles of British liberty.<sup>106</sup>

In combination with his commitment to the British constitution, Quakerism formed an integral component of Dickinson's conservatism. Writing in response to Parliament's newest round of legislation in 1767, the Townshend Acts, Dickinson authored his *Farmer* letters in concert with the Quaker tradition of voicing one's opinion and testifying on behalf of the greater community. Although Dickinson's Enlightenment rationalism had prevented him from joining the Quaker meeting as a "convinced member" of the Society of Friends, he was nonetheless recognized in Pennsylvania as a "fellow traveler," someone intellectually inclined toward Quaker theological tenets, customs, and principles.<sup>107</sup> Those proclivities shaped Dickinson's conservative approach to civil disobedience. During the Stamp Act crisis, concerned that compliance would only encourage Parliament to levy stronger legislation against the colonies, Dickinson urged spirited, non-violent action. The most virtuous way to respond to the objectionable laws, according to Dickinson, was to conduct everyday

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<sup>105</sup> Jane E. Calvert, *Quaker Constitutionalism and the Political Thought of John Dickinson* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 15-17, 189-220.

<sup>106</sup> Bernard Bailyn, "A Dialogue Between an American and a European Englishman by Thomas Hutchinson (1768)," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975), 348.

<sup>107</sup> Calvert, *Political Thought of John Dickinson*, 189-190.

affairs as if the regulations didn't exist, a strategy based on long-standing Quaker practice. Dickinson believed such peaceful protests carried out on a mass-scale would test the political will of Parliament to enforce the unreasonable measures. Although Dickinson's strategy was overcome by incidents of mob violence, such efforts, according to Dickinson, were not in vain since the colonists had virtuously born their "testimony" against Parliament's policies.<sup>108</sup>

Apart from advocating open rebellion, Dickinson's *Farmer* letters affirmed American dependence on the English constitutional order, reflecting his deep-seated commitment to parliamentary authority, the ancient constitution, and the timeless principles of the classical tradition that supported the ideological structure of the republican order of government. "We are parts of a whole," Dickinson declared in his second letter, "and therefore there must exist a power somewhere to preside, and preserve the connection in due order. This power is lodged in the parliament; and we are as much dependent on Great-Britain, as a perfectly free people can be on another."<sup>109</sup> Invoking the Homeric legend of Telephus, Dickinson asserted the best way to mitigate the imperial threat and reform government policy was to find refuge in the English constitution itself. According to the ancient narrative, when Telephus, the king of Mysia was wounded by Achilles' spear at the outset of the Trojan War, Telephus was able to use the rusty scrapings from the spear to heal his injury. Similarly, Britain's legal authority "may indeed lay hard restrictions upon us," Dickinson observed, "but,

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 210-211, 216.

<sup>109</sup> John Dickinson, "Letter II," *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies (1768)*, *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania (John Dickinson)*. *Letters from the Federal Farmer (Richard Henry Lee)*, ed. Forrest McDonald (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999), 17.

like the spear of Telephus, it will cure as well as wound.”<sup>110</sup> In this regard, Dickinson described political resistance as the Americans’ Roman civic duty, to make the democratic branch of government strong enough to check an excess of power in the monarchy and aristocracy; the Townshend Acts were unconstitutional, and the colonists had an obligation to openly resist them through economic sanctions. In this regard, Dickinson’s greatest concern was not the taxation policies themselves, but the virtuous character of the colonists in exercising their rights to defend their liberties against the abuses of those policies. Dickinson’s motivation for addressing the public was to “convince the people of these colonies that they are at this moment exposed to the most imminent dangers; and to persuade them immediately, vigorously, and unanimously, to exert themselves in the most firm, but most peaceable manner, for obtaining relief.”<sup>111</sup>

Consistent with both his Quaker sensitivities and high regard for classical virtue, Dickinson stipulated that popular resistance in the defense of liberty had to be exercised in a manner congruous with the spirit of freedom itself, arguing that “The cause of liberty is a cause of too much dignity, to be sullied by turbulence and tumult.”<sup>112</sup> In this regard, Dickinson’s conservatism mirrored Tory party concern for the way political federalism threatened the integrity of the British nation; similarly, Dickinson feared the ways in which radicalism threatened to bring irreparable harm to the fabric of the colonial community and the ancient connection with England.<sup>113</sup> Apart from advocating open rebellion against “our most excellent Prince,” Dickinson esteemed

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<sup>110</sup> Dickinson, “Letter XII,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 60; Account of Telephus’ spear is recorded in Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 101 in *Apollodorus’ Library and Hyginus’ Fabulae: Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*, trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 131-132; Calvert, *Political Thought of John Dickinson*, 212-213.

<sup>111</sup> Dickinson, “Letter III,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 23.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Savelle, “Nationalism and Other Loyalties,” 910.



royal authority as a great arbitrator in the cause of liberty, for “we cannot suppose,” Dickinson surmised, “that any injury was intended us by his Majesty, or the Lords.”<sup>114</sup> Instead, acknowledging that “all men are subject to the frailties of nature,” Dickinson urged the colonists to vigorously contend for their rights and liberties in an orderly manner under the framework of the English constitution. Dickinson pointed to the example of the ancient Spartans, “as brave and free a people as ever existed,” who went into battle not with the sound of blaring trumpets, “exciting heat and rage,” but with the sound of the flute, “proceeding with a deliberate valor, full of hope and good assurance, as if some divinity had sensibly assisted them.” Governments were likely to make errors in judgment that could be easily rectified, but a citizenry stirred up “under pretences of patriotism” by a Cleon of Athens or Clodius of Rome to carry out “hot, rash, disorderly proceedings” would jeopardize their reputation “as to wisdom, valor, and virtue” and place the integrity of the relationship with the mother country at risk. The prosperity of the colonies ultimately stemmed from their dependence on Great Britain—her laws, commerce, religion, and liberty: Torn from her, “we must bleed at every vein,” Dickinson declared. Thus, the Pennsylvania Farmer’s plea was for the colonists to act in such a manner “so that it will be impossible to determine whether an American’s character is most distinguishable for his loyalty to his Sovereign, his duty to his mother country, his love of freedom, or his affection for his native soil.”<sup>115</sup>

Dickinson’s read of Roman history informed his priority for carefully balancing the vigilance of the public upon the fulcrum of virtuous action, recognizing that tyranny could come in the form of a Nero, or conversely through the specter of anarchy and

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<sup>114</sup> Dickinson, “Letter VII,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 35.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25.

dissolution of the constitutional order. At the conclusion of each of his twelve *Farmer* letters, Dickinson preceded his signature block, “A Farmer,” with a Roman literary reference in Latin urging the British subjects of America to defend virtue by virtuous means. At the end of his last letter, Dickinson cited Sallust’s *Jugurtha*: “I shall certainly aim at the freedom handed down from my forbears; whether I am successful or not in doing so is in your control, my fellow countrymen.”<sup>116</sup> For Dickinson, nothing could ensure liberty more than the current constitutional relationship between Britain and America, and the colonists were obligated to show themselves capable of resenting injuries without falling into rage and defying authority in a manner beneath their character.<sup>117</sup> The loss of liberty, always associated with the decay of virtue in the classical world, was evident when ambitious upstarts began considering “their interests as distinct from those of the public.” “Such notions,” Dickinson declared, were “fatal to their country, and to themselves.”<sup>118</sup> In Dickinson’s view, the rulers were the most likely to succumb to these corrupting compulsions and in turn, lead the *demos* astray. Urging vigilance, particularly with regard to the government’s economic policies, Dickinson pointed to Tacitus’ history of ancient Rome to describe how the “cruel and rapacious Nero” had instituted measures designed to both appeal to the people’s appetites and secure the allegiance of his subjects. Nero plied the market economy to win political support, offering a twenty-five percent rebate on the purchase of slaves while inflating prices by the same amount, for which “the deluded people gave their infamous Emperor full credit for his false generosity.”<sup>119</sup> In Dickinson’s view, such

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<sup>116</sup> Dickinson, “Letter XII,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 62.

<sup>117</sup> Calvert, *Political Thought of John Dickinson*, 220.

<sup>118</sup> Dickinson, “Letter XII,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 59.

<sup>119</sup> Dickinson, “Letter VII,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 36.

government manipulation and violation of the people's natural property rights illustrated how Parliament had gone astray in its taxation policies in the 1760s. The potential for arbitrary government to subdue the colonies by robbing subjects of their property, taxing them "without our own consent," amounted to nothing more than a manipulation of the terms of the constitutional relationship and a form of subtle enslavement—a collapse in the checks and balances of government and the tell-tale sign of emerging tyranny.<sup>120</sup>

Dickinson's conservative patriotism, grounded in an appreciation for the classical principles of English liberty, made him a prominent spokesman for measured restraint during the meetings of the Continental Congress between 1774 and 1776. Dickinson was not alone in his sentiment concerning the priority of preserving the imperial relationship; other delegates, such as Pennsylvania's Joseph Galloway, called for a Plan of Union in 1774, affirming British authority over the colonies while proposing a means to ensure colonial representation in Parliament. Although the Congress dismissed Galloway's plan, in July 1775, the delegates endorsed Dickinson's Olive Branch Petition, a letter seeking conciliation with the crown. When King George rejected the petition, Dickinson's last political option was his 1775 *Instructions to the Pennsylvania Delegates in Continental Congress*, which limited Pennsylvania's vote to actions favoring reconciliation. However, shifting political currents in Pennsylvania, partly fueled by the publication of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* in January 1776, compelled Dickinson to obtain new instructions from the Pennsylvania assembly, and his fellow delegates were subsequently free to vote their conscience in Philadelphia on the question of independence. On July 1, the day before the vote on the Declaration,

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<sup>120</sup> Dickinson, "Letter VII," *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*, 38.

Dickinson and John Adams squared off in a final great debate on the question of separation. For both orators, the import of the moment had all the weight of Addison's portrayal of Cato's last stand; while Dickinson defended the cause of liberty under the English constitution, Adams asserted colonial freedom in fact no longer existed within the confines of the constitutional monarchy. Dickinson's words, delivered from his carefully prepared notes, revealed the heavy burden of personal sacrifice he felt in defending his convictions: "My conduct this Day, I expect will give the finishing Blow to my once too great, and . . . too diminish'd Popularity," Dickinson noted, "But thinking as I do on the Subject of Debate, Silence would be guilt." While some urge us to press our fortune "more boldly than Caesar himself" and "brave the Storm in a Skiff made of Paper," Dickinson lamented, "I fear the Virtue of Americans" and the eruption of their passionate resentment "may be detrimental to the Cause, they would dye to advance."<sup>121</sup> Presaging the central argument that would become the clarion call for those Americans who remained steadfast in their loyalty to the crown, Dickinson affirmed the same principle he had maintained since the days of the Stamp Act controversy, namely, that liberty was a function of the safety that could only be found within the construct of the British constitution and the authority of monarchical control. "I regard with inexpressible Detestation and Abhorrence the Notion of the Colonies becoming independent," Dickinson wrote to William Pitt in 1765—independence, he declared would produce "A Multitude of Commonwealths, Crimes and Calamities of mutual Jealousies, Hatreds, Wars and Devastations; till at last the exhausted Provinces

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<sup>121</sup> John Dickinson, "Notes and Documents: Speech of John Dickinson Opposing the Declaration of Independence, July 1, 1776," ed. J. H. Powel, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 65 (October 1941), 468-470; David McCullough, *John Adams* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 125-127.

shall sink into Slavery under the yoke of some fortunate Conqueror.”<sup>122</sup> Although Dickinson elected to be absent rather than vote against the Declaration on July 2, once independence had been decided, Dickinson enlisted in the colonial militia and accepted command as a Brigadier General in the Continental Army. The ironies in Dickinson’s odyssey demonstrated the complex ideological challenges Americans faced as they confronted sweeping political changes compelling them to revise previously held notions about liberty and civic virtue.

Although political tensions in the colonies produced an array of varied responses among the British subjects of America in the decade leading up to 1776, the common discourse of classical virtue continued to inform the political persuasions of men like Dickinson and John Adams who held countervailing positions on the eve of independence. Despite his opposition to Dickinson on the floor of the Continental Congress, Adams, given his own commitment to the balanced constitution and rule of law, understood and appreciated more than most the moral and political dimensions of Dickinson’s conservative polemic; in the 1760s, and even into the 1770s, Adams saw no inherent contradiction between his principles and the British system of government because, like Dickinson, Adams viewed the ancient constitution as the guarantor of liberty and classical virtue.<sup>123</sup> In 1760, Adams described George III’s ascendancy to the throne as the advent of a “Patriot King” and “friend of liberty,” a monarch devoted to preserving the integrity of the British constitution against corruption and decay.<sup>124</sup> For Adams, like Dickinson, the law of the land, upheld by the framework of the

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<sup>122</sup> John Dickinson, “Dickinson to Pitt, 21 December 1765,” Edmund S. Morgan, *Prologue to Revolution: Sources and Documents on the Stamp Act Crisis, 1764-1766* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959), 119.

<sup>123</sup> Annabel Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 290.

<sup>124</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 25-26.

constitutional monarchy, represented the purest expression of classical virtue, preserving liberty by checks against the arbitrary forces of both anarchy and tyranny. A graduate of Harvard who had mastered the classics in Latin and Greek and consumed the political treatises of the modern commentators, Adams perceived an essential congruity between moral fortitude and the rule of law under the banner of virtue. In 1759, the twenty-four-year-old lawyer reflected on the symbolism of Simon Gribelin's engraving depicting an account of the *Judgment of Hercules* as related by Socrates in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*.<sup>125</sup> Writing in his diary, Adams described the meaning of each element of Gribelin's portrait, depicting Hercules deciding to follow the way of virtue or vice. "The Hero resting on his Clubb," Adams wrote, gazed upon "Virtue pointing to her rugged Mountain, persuading him to ascend." Meanwhile, "Sloth, glancing at her flowery Paths of Pleasure, wantonly reclining on the Ground," displayed "the Charms both of her Eloquence and Person," attempting "to seduce him into Vice." Applying the meaning of the image to himself, Adams wrote in his journal, "Let Virtue address me—'Which, dear Youth, will you prefer? A Life of Effeminacy, Indolence, and obscurity, or a Life of Industry, Temperance, and Honor?' . . . Then return to your Study, and bend your whole soul to the Institutes of the Law and the Reports of Cases."<sup>126</sup>

A decade later, in 1770, Adams demonstrated his resolve to choose Virtue's "rugged mountain" in Herculean fashion, risking his reputation and the safety of his family in agreeing to defend the British soldiers indicted in the March 5 incident that

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<sup>125</sup> Adams' 1759 diary entry cited in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 49. In 1776, Adams advocated Gribelin's 1713 engraving of the *Judgment of Hercules* be adopted as the Great Seal for the United States.

<sup>126</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 49.

came to be known as the Boston Massacre. Although Adams' defense of the soldiers probably had the imprimatur of the Sons of Liberty who hoped to protect the good name of Boston within the British Empire, in later years, Adams reflected in his diary upon his service in the trial proceedings in classical terms. According to Adams, the decision brought him "Anxiety, and Obloquy enough"—yet, was "one of the most gallant, generous, manly and disinterested Actions of my whole life, and one of the best Pieces of Service I ever rendered my Country."<sup>127</sup> With no other lawyer in Boston prepared to take the case, Adams stood for justice against the fickle will of the people and the ringleaders of the vulgar mob, not the least of which was his second cousin, Samuel Adams. Sam Adams already had a reputation for "trembling" and "great agitation," at one point reportedly urging Bostonians to "take up arms immediately and be free, and seize all the King's officers," remarking that "The times were never better in Rome than when they had no king and were a free state."<sup>128</sup> John Adams' account of his decision to accept the unpopular duty of defending Captain Preston and his eight men, as recorded in his diary, was inspired by the Italian jurist Cesare Beccaria's 1764 treatise, *On Crimes and Punishment*. Adams selected one passage from Beccaria to introduce his opening statement to the jury: "If, by supporting the rights of mankind, and of invincible truth, I shall contribute to save from the agonies of death one unfortunate victim of tyranny, or of ignorance equally fatal, the blessing and tears of transport will be sufficient consolation to me for the contempt of all mankind."<sup>129</sup> The virtue of his

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<sup>127</sup> John Adams, "1773. March 5<sup>th</sup>. Fryday," *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, Vol. 2, 1771-1781, *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>128</sup> Quote of Richard Silvester reporting to Thomas Hutchinson, quoted in Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 127.

<sup>129</sup> Cesare, Marchese di Beccaria (1738-1794) condemned torture and capital punishment. Not all historians have accepted Adams' own rationale for his decision to defend the British soldiers. John

case would be determined not by artifice and sophistry, but by the efficacy of the British system of jurisprudence. Boldly asserting that “Facts are stubborn things,” Adams rested his case on the evidence presented with a spirit of Roman firmness; “Whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence,” Adams declared.<sup>130</sup> In his closing statement, Adams cited a passage from Sidney’s *Discourses*, reminding the jury members of their duty to hold fast to justice and the rule of law; “The law no passion can disturb. ‘Tis void of desire and fear, lust and anger. ‘Tis *mens sine affect* [impartial], written reason, retaining some measure of the divine perfection”—“‘Tis deaf, inexorable, inflexible.” Adding his own sentiment, Adams declared, “On the one hand,” the law “is inexorable to the cries and lamentations of the prisoner; on the other, it is deaf, deaf as an adder, to the clamors of the populous.”<sup>131</sup>

When the Boston court finally acquitted Captain Preston and six of his soldiers in December 1770, Adams found himself standing between Tory conservatives and Whig radicals on the principle of English constitutional law. Adams’ integrity, inspired by the classical spirit of virtue, placed him somewhere above the political expediencies of the moment, but nevertheless aligned him politically with Massachusetts

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Ferling, for example, suggested Adams defended Captain Preston and his men at the urging of Samuel Adams in exchange for political office. See Patterson, *Early Modern Liberalism*, 295; McCullough, *John Adams*, 66-68.

<sup>130</sup> “Adams’ Argument for the Defense, 3-4 December 1770,” *The Legal Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 3, *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>131</sup> According to the report of Adams’ grandson. See Charles Francis Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, Vol. 1 (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), 114; “*mens sine affect*” or “immune to affect,” derived from Aristotle’s *Politics*, 3.5—“only those who take the lead, or are capable of taking the lead in public affairs, either alone or in conjunction with others” can be truly deemed to possess virtue. Aristotle, *Politics: A Treatise on Government*, trans. William Ellis (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1895), 90; see Annabel Patterson, “Mens sine Affectu? Algernon’s Sidney’s Ideal of Law,” *Rhetoric and Law in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Victoria Kahn and Lorna Hutson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 220-221.



conservatives like attorney general Jonathan Sewall. Sewall, a long time friend who had offered Adams a royal appointment as advocate general, praised the integrity and justice of the Preston proceedings while Whig radicals like Samuel Adams and Paul Revere derided the court's decision and launched an incendiary campaign to characterize "the bloody massacre" as the tell-tale sign of British tyranny unleashed in the colonies. In response, under the pseudonym "Philanthrop" in the *Boston Evening Post*, Sewall charged Samuel Adams and his "Junto" with assaulting the judicial system, "one of the grand bulwarks of English liberty." Echoing the sentiment of John Adams' closing statement during the trial, Sewall asserted that "if by the threats or promises of those in superior power, or by the clamours of the populace, or the harangues of the Demagogues, the Judges are perverted or intimidated from freely declaring the Law," then justice becomes "a mere shadow, without substance."<sup>132</sup> In 1770, Adams arguably had more in common ideologically with his Tory friend Sewall than he did with his Whig cousin Samuel Adams. The core set of political ideals that Sewall and John Adams shared in common concerned the primacy of law and the virtue of British liberty, all sustained by the classical model of the balanced constitution. The British system, "so highly prized by Englishmen," Sewall declared, "is a happy mixture partaking of the Monarchical, the Aristocratical, and the Democratical Forms," and "so exquisitely nice and just are the proportions of this beautiful Fabric, that, under a regular administration, the subjects enjoy all the essential benefits of each of the three Forms, while they neither experience the disadvantages, nor are exposed to the dangers

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<sup>132</sup> Philanthrop [Jonathan Sewall], "To the Publishers of the Boston Evening-Post," *Boston Evening Post*, January 28, 1771. "Philanthrop"—"humanitarian" may have been Jonathan Sewall's allusion to the Greek mythological account of how Prometheus saved mankind from destruction by providing the divine gifts of fire and optimism.

of either of them.” The virtue of this delicate balance, as evidenced in trials by juries, provided the greatest possible security to the subjects of the crown—“What a safeguard is here,” Sewall declared, “against tyranny, on the one hand, & the sudden premature judgment of the multitude on the other?”<sup>133</sup> In 1770, John Adams and Sewall could agree on much concerning the essential balance of the English constitution to preserve liberty. However, by 1774, after returning from the meeting of the First Continental Congress, Adams had come to the opinion that the Tory leadership in Massachusetts, under then Governor Thomas Hutchinson, was conspiring to enslave rather than defend the colonists against the encroachment of parliamentary measures and British military presence.<sup>134</sup> As events in Boston persuaded Adams the balance of mixed government had been compromised by self-interest and corruption, he was just as prepared to jettison the failed constitution with the same Herculean zeal and intellectual commitment to classical virtue that had once compelled him to defend it.

Although Thomas Hutchinson shared John Adams’ high regard for the ancient constitution, Hutchinson remained a staunch advocate of parliamentary authority and control, using the language of classical virtue to counter those who threatened to unravel political order and stability in Massachusetts. Serving as lieutenant governor from 1758 until 1769, and governor until 1774, Hutchinson had a unique appreciation for the history and wider context of the Anglo-American relationship. A descendant of seventeenth-century colonial settlers, Hutchinson was a student of history, law, and political thought with a long resume of experience in colonial affairs reaching back to

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<sup>133</sup> Philanthrop, “To the Publishers of the Boston Evening-Post.”

<sup>134</sup> James M. Farrell, “New England’s Cicero: John Adams and the Rhetoric of Conspiracy,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 104 (1992), 55-72.

his first elected office in 1737.<sup>135</sup> For Hutchinson, in a world of imperial conflict and instability, acknowledging the authority of the British Parliament was the price one had to pay to preserve freedom, and political virtue in the colonies ultimately hinged on maintaining close ties with the constitutional monarchy.

However, Hutchinson's commitment to the British ministry did not prevent him from questioning the mother country's colonial policies. As lieutenant governor in 1764, Hutchinson echoed Edmund Burke's opposition to the Stamp Act, arguing that the crown had historically allowed the colonies to determine their own taxation legislation. Hutchinson asserted the idea of presumptive representation in Parliament was inconsistent with previous practice, and he questioned the economic rationale of the revenue measures, suggesting that the colonies, founded and supported as entities of private enterprise, could not be rightfully considered indebted to the English government. Hutchinson also questioned the efficacy of the Stamp Act, asserting that increasing taxes would jeopardize current business ventures, yielding a net reduction for imperial profits.<sup>136</sup> Confident in his reasoned approach, and consistent with his belief in the essential authority of the crown, Hutchinson attempted to mitigate the radical voices in Boston. However, Hutchinson parted ways with Dickinson's advocacy of popular resistance to parliamentary authority; as a consequence, his moderation marked him in the press as a traitor, a conspirator who was secretly collaborating with Parliament to afflict the colonies with the tax measures.<sup>137</sup> By 1774, John Adams had come to view Hutchinson as a "destroying angel," the "Arch Corrupter and Deceiver." As Bernard Bailyn described, the Tory-minded governor of Massachusetts simply became "one of

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<sup>135</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 1-15, 63. Bailyn, "A Dialogue," 343.

<sup>136</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 62-63.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

the most hated men on earth,” more despised than Lord North and George III whom many believed Hutchinson had conspired with in a clandestine plot to undermine colonial liberty.<sup>138</sup>

Hutchinson viewed the irrational behavior of Boston in the context of a classical conspiratorial plot, believing profiteers and promoters of self-interest had subjected Massachusetts to a “*dominatio plebes*,” or popular rule—that a junto of demagogues perfectly willing to destroy the balance of government had orchestrated “public mischief and confusion” to secure some “private advantage.”<sup>139</sup> For Hutchinson, the greatest evidence of this clandestine activity was the irrational behavior of the public, epitomized by the excessively violent mob that attacked his home on the evening of August 26, 1765 during demonstrations against the Stamp Act. For Hutchinson, widespread hysteria over the passage of the legislation and the associated wild assertions concerning threats to liberty, so far removed from the reality of the situation, convinced the governor that seditious-minded leaders in Boston were stirring up popular sentiment to undermine royal authority. In his view, as flawed as the legislation was, there was nothing in the Stamp Act that resembled a plot to enslave the colonies. As subjects living under the most advanced constitutional government in the eighteenth century, Americans were perhaps the freest people in the history of the world. If anything, the encroaching parliamentary influence reflected the strength of the colonial-imperial relationship, a net positive in Hutchinson’s calculation. Given the public’s lack of education and ability to discern rhetoric from reality, Hutchinson blamed the

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<sup>138</sup> “To the Inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay, 23 January 1775,” *Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 2, and “John Adams to Abigail Adams, 30 June 1774,” *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vol. 1 in *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008); Farrell, “New England’s Cicero,” 62; Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 1.

<sup>139</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 72; Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 347.

rising discontent on such radicals as Samuel Adams and John Hancock—and James Otis, in particular, whom he described as an “enraged demon”—demagogues who intentionally manipulated the mob to serve their own political and material interests.<sup>140</sup> The 1768 publication of John Dickinson’s *Farmer* letters in response to the Townshend Acts further exacerbated tensions in Boston, and Hutchinson feared that popular dissemination of Dickinson’s “epistolary sophisms” threatened to preclude any hope of quelling the rhetoric denouncing royal authority and vilifying the crown’s appointed officials in Massachusetts. In Hutchinson’s view, “an ingenious writer” was required to counter Dickinson’s seemingly plausible arguments and present a balanced perspective to “keep the mean between a slavish subjection on the one hand and absolute independence on the other.”<sup>141</sup>

In 1768, Hutchinson drafted a lengthy tract to combat the effect of Dickinson’s “oracular” polemic and encourage moderation in the colonial discourse, turning to the classical canon to defend the legitimacy of royal authority in British America. Hutchinson’s manuscript, known to historians as *A Dialogue between An American and A European Englishman*, aimed to diffuse the destructive logic of Dickinson’s call for popular resistance by instructing the colonists on the supremacy of parliamentary authority and their obligations to the constitutional monarchy.<sup>142</sup> Hutchinson never actually published his *Dialogue*, perhaps, as Bailyn suggested, to avoid further

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<sup>140</sup> Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 347; Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 35, 71-73.

<sup>141</sup> Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 346-348.

<sup>142</sup> Thomas Hutchinson in Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 343-411. Bernard Bailyn extracted the text of the draft document from Hutchinson’s papers in volume XXVIII of the Massachusetts Archives and published the piece for the first time in 1975. In its original form, the *Dialogue* was untitled. Since Hutchinson framed his argument as a conversation between “Europ—” and “Americ<sup>n</sup>,” Bailyn combined these two elements to form the title for the document in consultation with Robert Calhoun who observed that eighteenth-century Britons were rarely described as “Europeans.” Bailyn’s published title including the clarification “Englishman” reflected Calhoun’s observation.

inflaming the passion of the Boston mob and jeopardizing his ascendancy to the governorship.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, the draft document revealed how Hutchinson viewed the Tory side of the colonial debate and intended to use the classics to frame what he envisioned as the most effective rebuttal against the rising foment of radical sentiment in Boston. Structured as a Socratic conversation between an impassioned colonist and his wiser European mentor, Hutchinson used his English-European protagonist to advance a conservative critique of the colonial crisis, defending the constitutional relationship with England against the naive propositions of his American correspondent.<sup>144</sup> While *American* asserted that “We are Englishmen, and the property of Englishmen is not to be taken from them without their consent,” *European* urged his colonial counterpart to curb his hot temper, “be calm,” and consider how the English constitution not only afforded natural liberties, but also required all Englishmen “to be governed by laws in general made by ourselves or our representatives.”<sup>145</sup>

In a likely effort to answer the repeated patriotic appeals to classical references in the Boston press, Hutchinson tailored his *Dialogue* to consider the precedents of ancient history. After hearing *European* expound at length on the rudiments of Parliament’s legal authority over the colonies from the time of their inception, *American* turned to the classical world, suggesting that “the Grecians and Romans” modeled a love of liberty worthy of imitation by all Englishmen, a spirit of freedom that Parliament had neglected to emulate in its dealings with America. Describing the way Rome administered its own satellite territories, *American* contended “the Romans left their distant colonies to be governed within themselves”—they were, in fact, “as

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<sup>143</sup> Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 350-366.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>145</sup> Hutchinson in Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 369-370.

independent of the Senate as we desire to be of the Parliament,” *American* declared—  
“nay in some respects their privileges seem to have been greater than those of the  
English colonies.”<sup>146</sup> In response, *European* engaged in a lengthy review of Roman  
political history to correct *American*’s erroneous understanding, citing the ancient  
sources to show that “the supreme authority of Rome”—far from incidental—“was  
paramount to the internal authority of its colonies,” just as it was in the case of Britain  
and America.<sup>147</sup>

For Hutchinson, the authority of Parliament was essential in preserving the  
liberties afforded by the English constitution, a principle affirmed by the ancient writers  
and the modern political commentators on the nature of classical virtue. Continuing to  
make the case in his *Dialogue* for the precedent established by Rome’s relationship with  
its own colonies, Hutchinson’s *European* pointed to Livy, remarking that the Roman  
historian was among his favorites, “an author I have at hand.” In contrast to *American*’s  
 cursory knowledge of the ancient sources, *European* cited Livy’s “27<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> books”  
to illustrate how far Rome’s control actually extended, declaring that none of the  
republic’s thirty colonies “were exempt from the authority of the Senate.” Following  
the First Punic War and the costs associated with Rome’s heavy losses in naval vessels,  
Rome found itself in great economic distress and called upon its colonies to supply  
“men and money” to the central government.<sup>148</sup> This financial crisis was not dissimilar  
to the debt confronting Britain in 1763 in the aftermath of the French and Indian War.  
As *European* described, when twelve of the Roman colonies indicated their inability

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<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 384.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>148</sup> The First Punic War or Carthaginian War, 264-241 B.C., the first of a series of three wars between Rome and Carthage that extended over a period of a hundred years.

(unwillingness) to make the required contributions, “the Senate was struck with amazement” and proceeded to remind the delegations “they were not Campanians nor Tarentines,” unrelated by kindred blood, “but Romans,” and “from Romans they sprang,” sent by their fellow citizens “into colonies and into countries conquered in war for the sake of increasing the Roman race.” Bound by filial duty and “all remembrance of their ancient history,” *European* declared, these colonial progeny owed Rome “all that children owe to their parents.”<sup>149</sup> In the end, unwilling to reap the consequences of sedition, the colonies reconsidered their position, finding they were indeed “both able and willing to bear the expense.” Further demonstrating his familiarity with the ancient sources, *European* pointed to a later instance in the protracted Carthaginian conflict in which the same twelve colonies once again decided to test Rome’s authority. Refusing to comply with Rome’s requirement to provide troops and resources, the rebels “exclaimed against this severity” and petitioned to make their case before the Senate. However, as *European* explained, the Roman consuls remained inflexible and nothing came of the colonial protests; instead, the envoys dutifully returned to their districts and raised the required revenues and manpower. As *European* declared, “these passages in Livy I think plainly show that the Senate exercised as full power and authority over the colonies as over any part of the commonwealth.”<sup>150</sup> Hutchinson then framed *American’s* response in a way that aptly summarized the governor’s overarching conclusion in his *Dialogue*: “I acknowledge,” *American* confessed, these passages “show that the Roman colonists remained subject to the authority of the Roman

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<sup>149</sup> Campania and Taranto, two contested states in southern Italy that Rome subdued in the third century B.C. Campania was acquired during the Samnite Wars. Taranto was originally founded as a colony of Sparta on the Italian peninsula; Hutchinson in Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 386.

<sup>150</sup> Hutchinson in Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 388.



Senate,” and also that the Senate was “extremely cautious” to exercise its authority in a manner that was reasonable and necessary given the needs of the “extraordinary occasion.” Similarly, Hutchinson reminded his audience through *American*’s new understanding that the king, during the recent war concluding in 1763, “recommended raising men and money to the several Assemblies in the colonies” and many of them “cheerfully complied.”<sup>151</sup> Hutchinson’s *European* thus challenged *American* to refrain from opposing government legislation, since even in those cases where a measure might appear unreasonable, the highest priority must always be to preserve the authority of Parliament, ensuring the integrity and virtuous order of the constitutional system of government.

In addition to taking *American* to task for misapplying the history of Rome to serve radical patriot interests, *European* also criticized *American*’s understanding of John Locke’s view of the ancient constitution, demonstrating how Tory-minded officials like Hutchinson viewed Lockean liberalism, not as contradictory to, but thoroughly consistent with a conservative political view of classical republicanism. Hutchinson’s *European* perceived in Locke a necessary power of the state to maintain the delicate constitutional balance, warning that “if individuals or any particular parts of government may resist whensoever they shall apprehend themselves aggrieved, instead of order, peace, and a state of general security—the great ends of government—we may well expect tumults, wars, and a state of general danger.”<sup>152</sup> Conceding this point, *American* argued nonetheless that Locke’s theory placed individual rights, and pecuniary interests in particular, beyond the reach of Parliament’s authority since, as

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 389.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 393.

Locke articulated, “the supreme power cannot take from any man part of his property without his own consent.” The preservation of property, as Locke asserted, was the primary reason men consented to the terms of the social contract to begin with.

*American* further deduced that “if any one shall claim a power to lay and levy taxes upon the people by his own authority and without such consent of the people, he thereby invades the fundamental law of property and subverts the end of government.”

In reply, *European* affirmed his “reverence” for “Mr. Locke,” but reminded *American* that just as Locke emphasized the rights of the individual, he also advocated the authority of the state since “every man, by consenting with others to make one body politic under one government, puts himself under an obligation to every one of that society to submit to the determination of that majority and to be concluded by it.”<sup>153</sup>

When *European* considered these and other such passages in Locke, he suggested that *American’s* read was highly selective and his interpretation ultimately misguided; “I can never believe that in those [parts] which you refer to,” *European* asserted, that Locke supposed “any individual or any number of individuals short of the majority may refuse submission to every act of government.” “I consider that the property of these subjects,” *European* further surmised, always remains “at the disposal of the supreme authority for the good of the whole.”<sup>154</sup> Hutchinson’s point and counterpoint with respect to these issues demonstrated how conservatives could interpret even the most liberal principles from the classical discourse favoring royalist over radical political perspectives in the pre-revolutionary controversy.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Hutchinson’s quote of Locke is from *The Second Treatise of Government*. Hutchinson in Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 394.

<sup>154</sup> Hutchinson in Bailyn, “A Dialogue,” 395-396.

<sup>155</sup> Potter, *Liberty We Seek*, 87.

Viewing any challenge to Parliament's authority and legitimacy as the gateway to societal chaos and corruption, Hutchinson's application of the language of classical virtue placed an exceptionally high premium on government control. Despite his strong desire to reason with the public through a point paper such as the *Dialogue*, Hutchinson's read of the political landscape in 1768-1769 convinced him that attempting to do so could do more harm than good; opposition to the Townshend Duties and Dickinson's non-importation movement was, in his view, "more dangerous than the riots and tumults which have been so justly condemned." Although less violent, Dickinson's form of public resistance purported to be constitutional and legal, "all with an avowed design to force the legislature to repeal their acts," but with the insidious side effect of mainstreaming sedition and eroding parliamentary authority.<sup>156</sup> Always concerned that the radicals in Boston were too impetuous and short-sighted to consider the moral import and long-term fallout of their hot-tempered actions, Hutchinson's *European* warned that "every individual" must consider the consequences "if he attempts to stir up the body of a people to a revolt"—"in a moral view he may perhaps be innocent (whether his attempt succeeds or not)," but if the revolution fails, he remains part of the body politic and "must be pronounced guilty by the judiciary powers of that society."<sup>157</sup> For Hutchinson's part, the revolutionaries were playing a dangerous game, and the risks hardly justified such reckless behavior.

In the decade leading up to 1776, before British Americans described themselves in opposition to one another as patriots or loyalists, colonial writers and

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-133.

<sup>157</sup> Hutchinson in Bailyn, "A Dialogue," 406. Bailyn deemed this statement of Hutchinson to be "one of the most insightful utterances in the pre-Revolutionary literature." See Bailyn's introduction, "A Dialogue," 362.

politicians as diverse as John Adams and Thomas Hutchinson shared a common vocabulary and sentiment concerning the tradition of English liberty, a set of political philosophical propositions rooted in the ideology of classical virtue. As loyal subjects of the crown in the 1760s, Tory-minded conservatives and radical Whigs alike recognized the encroachment of parliamentary restrictions that threatened to diminish their constitutional privileges, and the classical canon provided the common sources on liberty and tyranny, the definitive models and antimodels for the discourse on civic virtue that emerged over the ensuing decade. The unfolding transatlantic crisis produced a range of disparate political responses, demonstrating the multifaceted ways in which competing political narratives could draw upon the same set of historical precedents to anchor and legitimize their respective ideological positions. Arthur Lee, neither a radical nor a royalist, urged his fellow subjects to pursue Roman firmness, apply the lessons of antiquity in the preservation of their liberty, and remain steadfast in their devotion to the principles of the British constitution. Similarly, John Dickinson pursued a middle ground in the revolutionary controversy, viewing the British government as the only safeguard against tyranny, analogous to the spear of Achilles which had both the power to wound and to heal. In Dickinson's view, Americans could only reclaim their liberties if they virtuously resisted the encroaching power of government under the banner of the English constitution, following the example of the ancient Spartans who went into battle, not with heat and rage, but with conviction and valor, accompanied by the sound of a flute rather than the blast of a trumpet. Although John Adams shared Dickinson's commitment to the primacy of the English constitution, Adams ultimately opposed Dickinson on the question of conciliation with Britain,

believing the constitutional framework had ceased to operate according to the principles of classical virtue; the same principles that led Adams to defend Captain Preston and his men, that caused him to find common ground with Jonathan Sewall, ultimately convinced Adams to lead the debate for independence in the Congress in 1776. The archetypal royalist, Thomas Hutchinson, shared Adams' conviction with regard to the rule of law, but ultimately placed higher value on the authority of government to preserve liberty against the threat of anarchy—a conviction, in his view that was entirely consistent with everything the ancient literary sources and political commentators of the Enlightenment had to say on the subject of classical republicanism.

British Americans, like their English counterparts in the mother country, were transfixed by the moral and political world of republican Rome because they viewed themselves as the modern practitioners of the ancient tradition of civic virtue. Immersed through their classical education in the original Greek and Latin sources, and spurred to action by such Enlightenment writers as Sidney, Locke, and Montesquieu whose discourses eloquently applied the ancient principles to the political world of the modern age, the British subjects of America aspired to emulate the moral courage of their Greek and Roman heroes. The dramatic force of Addison's *Cato*, along with Trenchard and Gordon's letters published under the pseudonym of the Roman statesman, inculcated the ideal of Roman self-sacrifice in the political discourse on both sides of the Atlantic, urging British Americans to scorn luxury and effeminacy and devote themselves to honor and civic virtue—to defend their liberties under the English constitution with Catonic resoluteness, knowing that the perpetuation of virtuous government ultimately rested on the quality of their individual and collective moral

character. In addition to the integrity of the individual, the notion of classical virtue also applied to the balance and operation of the government order itself. As the ancient authors forewarned, threats to mixed constitutional systems could arise with an accumulation of power at the top in the form of a tyrant like Julius Caesar, or emerge from an excess of power in the people below, manifested by chaos and anarchy. In either case, self-interest and corruption were at the root of the decline and fall of the ancient republics, and the corrosive effects of power required the people to be ever vigilant in safeguarding their liberties. Informed by the wisdom of the ancient writers, the British subjects of America endeavored to diagnose the instabilities and encroachment of power that appeared to be disrupting the constitutional balance in the decade leading up to 1776; Whig-patriots discovered corruption in the privileges and moneyed interests in Parliament, while Tory-loyalists pointed to the radical insurrectionists in the colonies who seemingly sought to pull down the edifice of the ancient constitution simply to lay claim to illegitimate power.

The principles that defined what it meant to be a British subject in America stemmed from longstanding and deeply held convictions about English liberty anchored in the classical canon, and Englishmen on both sides of the Atlantic who looked to these ancient tenets esteemed themselves the privileged beneficiaries of the English constitution, the great bulwark of liberty in the eighteenth century. Conservative Tories as well as Whig republicans, patriots all, ascribed to the Catoic model of civic virtue, an ideal that transcended the boundaries of any one political party. However, this shared affection for the constitutional monarchy began to fragment in America in the 1760s as outspoken Whig-patriots increasingly questioned the integrity and virtue of the

British system. By 1776, American radicals were prepared to sever ties with Britain while conservatives retained their faith in the ancient constitution, confident that redress under the rule of law would be sufficient to correct the excesses and abuses of parliamentary control. Although the ensuing civil divide gave rise to new political identities in the colonies, distinguishing Sons of Liberty from subjects of the crown, the language of classical virtue remained the sovereign *raison d'etre* for both parties, providing radical patriots and loyal conservatives alike the essential models and antimodels required to sustain and legitimize their opposing narratives concerning the defense of liberty in the revolutionary controversy.

A CONSPIRACY OF CATILINES: A LOYALIST PERSPECTIVE ON  
LIBERTY AND TYRANNY

As Tory-loyalists looked to the classics to add rhetorical force to their arguments against the patriotic movement in America, no other narrative from the ancient literature resonated with their understanding of the tumultuous events surrounding them like the conspiracy of Lucius Catiline, the envious usurper who plotted to destroy the Roman Republic in 63 B.C. Popularized by such writers as Thomas Gordon and Conyers Middleton, Sallust's history of Catiline's sedition formed an essential component of eighteenth-century fears about the political intrigues that constantly threatened to disrupt the delicate balance of republican governments. Although Whig-patriots referenced the Catiline trope in their writings, the ancient narrative especially appealed to British Americans on the conservative side of the political divide who pointed to the classical conspiracy in making their case to sustain colonial ties with the crown, preserve the edifice of the English constitution, and defend American liberties against internal populist threats. Marcus Tullius Cicero, the heroic Roman statesman who exposed Catiline's sedition and brought swift justice to the conspirators, inspired loyalist polemic in the press in the 1760s and 70s, prompting the Pennsylvanian Joseph Galloway and other Tory-minded conservatives to confront what they perceived to be a radical insurgency fueled by self-serving demagogues, a conspiracy of Catilines seeking to undermine the heritage of British liberty in the American colonies. Catilinarian references in the colonial discourse illustrated how the classics provided an essential



ideological framework for those who advocated and opposed the American Revolution in the decade leading up to 1776.

Colonial preoccupation with conspiracies against liberty largely stemmed from British Americans' "lifelong immersion in classical political horror stories"—an influence so prevalent that Whig and Tory political writers readily identified themselves with their ancient Roman counterparts in standing guard against the encroachment of an eighteenth-century Julius Caesar or Lucius Catiline. According to Carl Richard, "The presence of these analogies in private letters and diaries suggests they were fervent beliefs, not mere rhetorical devices."<sup>1</sup> In 1771, *The Boston Post-Boy* printed an article entitled *Reflections on History*.<sup>2</sup> The anonymous author, "L.L.," introduced his essay with a tag line from the Roman poet Horace, exhorting his fellow citizens to reflect on the lessons of the ancient past—" *Orientia tempora notis Instruit exemplis*," or, the poet "instructs the rising age through famous precedents."<sup>3</sup> Building on this theme, the author turned to the models and antimodels of the ancient world, "the actions of the great men in former ages" to show how those exemplars ought to inspire virtuous action and "strike into our hearts a greater dread of vice." L.L. pointed to the heroic defenders of freedom—Cato, Brutus, and Leonidas—who fell "in defence of the liberty of their country." Turning to history's menaces, in first rank ahead of the infamous tyrant Julius Caesar, the author named Lucius Catiline and praised Cicero for bringing Catiline's conspirators to "one common ruin." L.L.'s reflection on these classical heroes and villains in colonial Boston newsprint illustrated how British Americans were both

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<sup>1</sup> Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 119.

<sup>2</sup> L.L., "Reflections on History," *Boston Post-Boy*, November 25, 1771.

<sup>3</sup> Horace, "To Augustus," *The Epistles*, 2.1.130-131, trans. A. S. Kline, poetryintranslation.com, 2005.

familiar with the classical canon and looked to the ancient past to understand their role as modern warriors in the epic battle between liberty and tyranny. At the heart of this intrigue with the ancient past was an intense desire to understand the process of tyranny and its conspiratorial machinations.

In the eighteenth century, conspiracies about liberty formed an essential component of the colonial political mind, a predisposition to map the causal linkages between the motivations and actions of individuals and the sociopolitical changes transforming the American colonial landscape. As Gordon Wood observed, inspired by Enlightenment empiricism, this preoccupation with conspiracies reflected “an enlightened stage in Western man’s long struggle to comprehend his social reality.”<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Bernard Bailyn centered his thesis on the conspiratorial preconditioning of the founders, suggesting that American colonists, in their read of the transatlantic discourse, saw “with increasing clarity, not merely mistaken, or even evil, policies violating the principles upon which freedom rested, but what appeared to be evidence of nothing less than a deliberate assault launched surreptitiously by plotters against liberty both in England and in America.”<sup>5</sup> Although Whig opposition literature denouncing the abuses of the Court party, prevalent in English politics during the period, certainly heightened conspiratorial fears on both sides of the Atlantic, those arguments ultimately stemmed from the more fundamental moral and political lessons of the ancient world that served as a common denominator for both Country and Court party adherents. As Richard astutely observed, “It is doubtful that the Tories derived *their* obsession with

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<sup>4</sup> Gordon S. Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 39 (July 1982), 411.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 94-95.

conspiracies from Whig literature. Rather, it makes more sense to ascribe the obsession with conspiracy rampant among every British, American, and French faction to the one classical canon which united them all.”<sup>6</sup> Fully attuned to the pervasiveness of deception in human affairs, British Americans attempted to rationalize the tensions of the transatlantic world in the 1760s and 70s, applying the tenets of classical virtue and corruption and the models and antimodels of the ancient past to anticipate threats against liberty. In the classical world, as Wood observed, conspiracies were “matter-of-fact” events and relatively simple to explain since plots and intrigues were acted out in the public purview—“they were not imagined or guessed at; they happened. Catiline actually plotted to take over Rome; Brutus and Cassius really did conspire against Caesar.”<sup>7</sup> Combined with a Machiavellian appreciation for the world of *real politik*, such classical precedents preyed upon the collective imaginations of eighteenth-century radicals and conservatives who attempted to understand the complexities of a modern political world where individuals were increasingly separated from one another and the centers of government policy-making. In the decade leading up to 1776, Whig-patriots perceived evidence of a ministerial plot to enslave the British citizens of America, whereas Tory-loyalists accused colonial rabble-rousers of inciting a populist revolt to establish themselves in the seat of government power. Classical narratives describing the political ambitions of tyrannical monarchs at the top, or conspiring demagogues below, suggested how the timeless struggle between virtue and corruption would ultimately determine the trajectory of American liberty. Whig-patriots and Tory-

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<sup>6</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 120-121.

<sup>7</sup> Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style,” 410.

loyalists both competed in the arena of public discourse to promulgate their competing interpretations of the unfolding transatlantic crisis.

British Americans struggled to comprehend the subterranean economic and political forces that, within a short decade, had fragmented the communal fabric of American society, compelling colonial leaders to fall back on the classical models and antimodels that shaped their intellectual and moral foundation for interpreting the political world of the eighteenth century. Antiquity provided British Americans two basic metaphors for anticipating threats to their liberties; on the one hand, a Julius Caesar might accrue too much power and establish himself as a dictator—on the other, a Lucius Catiline might plot to overthrow the government by fomenting anarchy and establishing himself as dictator. American Whig-patriots, ever suspicious of the intrigues of the British ministry, generally looked to the Caesarian template as their interpretive model of the times, while Tory-loyalists pointed to the Catilinarian conspiracy to account for the seemingly irrational rising spirit of colonial rebellion.<sup>8</sup> In his *Farmer* letters, John Dickinson indicated his concern for both ends of the conspiratorial spectrum, demonstrating the way in which colonists had to intellectually wrestle with such questions and decide from which direction liberty was truly threatened. With respect to the actions of Parliament, Dickinson expressed his hope that “these colonies will never, to their latest existence, want understanding sufficient to discover the intentions of those who rule over them.”<sup>9</sup> On the other, he warned his fellow subjects to be on their guard “against those who may at any time endeavor to stir

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<sup>8</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 119-120.

<sup>9</sup> John Dickinson, “Letter vi,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania to the Inhabitants of the British Colonies (1768)*, *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania (John Dickinson)*; *Letters from the Federal Farmer (Richard Henry Lee)*, ed. Forrest McDonald (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999); Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style,” 421.

you up, under pretenses of patriotism, to any measures disrespectful to our Sovereign, and our mother country. Hot, rash, disorderly proceedings, injure the reputation of the people as to wisdom, valor, and virtue, without procuring them the least benefit.”<sup>10</sup> In 1769, describing what he identified as an “escalation” of distrust between the colonies and the homeland, Edmund Burke concluded, “The Americans have made a discovery, or think they have made one, that we mean to oppress them: we have made a discovery, or think we have made one, that they intend to rise in rebellion against us . . . we know not how to advance; they know not how to retreat . . . Some party must give way.”<sup>11</sup> Despite the contrast between radical and conservative perspectives, at the core of things, Whig-patriots and Tory-loyalists shared at least two things in common—a fear concerning conspiracies against liberty and a belief in the distilled wisdom of the ancient political writers to help anticipate and ward off threats to the constitutional order of republican government.<sup>12</sup>

The classical narrative of Lucius Catiline, the ancient nemesis of the Roman Republic, ranked among the most significant motifs in the political discourse of the eighteenth century, popularized by English translations of Sallust’s writings and modern commentaries that pointed to the Catilinarian conspiracy as the archetypal model of political corruption. John Adams considered Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae*, “Catiline’s War,” a must-read among the works of ancient literature, particularly for its moral historical qualities. “I wish to hear of your beginning upon Sallust who is one of the most polished and perfect of the Roman historians,” Adams wrote in a letter to his son

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<sup>10</sup> Dickinson, “Letter iii,” *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*; Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style,” 421.

<sup>11</sup> Edmund Burke in the House of Commons, quoted in Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 158-159.

<sup>12</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 120-121; Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 150-159.

John Quincy—“In Company with Sallust, Cicero, Tacitus and Livy, you will learn Wisdom and Virtue. You will see them represented, with all the Charms which Language and Imagination can exhibit, and Vice and Folly painted in all their Deformity and Horror.”<sup>13</sup> According to Sallust, Catiline plotted to assassinate his political rival Marcus Tullius Cicero, topple the Roman Senate, and establish himself as dictator in 63 B.C. Significant to the loyalist rhetoric of the eighteenth century, the Catilinarian plot stemmed not only from Catiline’s political ambitions, but also from the depravity of his deeply flawed character. Despite his noble patrician lineage, Catiline developed an early reputation for debauchery and lawlessness. According to Sallust, he was “vicious and depraved” from the days of his youth, delighting “in intestine Wars, in Slaughter and Depredation, in civil Discord and Tumults.”<sup>14</sup> Fearless on the battlefield and audacious in civic affairs, Catiline committed public murders, perhaps killing his own brother, at the bidding of Rome’s dictator, Sulla. Boundless in his ambition, “violent and flaming in all his Passions,” and constantly “rapacious of what belonged to others,” Catiline even attempted to violate one of Rome’s vestal virgins, and although Cicero himself led the prosecution to punish the profane deed, Catiline was able to secure acquittal by falling back on his family name. Insisting on his right to a Senate seat, after two failed attempts at a consulship, Catiline rejected the nobles and rallied support among the people, appealing especially to the poor and unruly masses. Justifying his populist activities before the Senate, Catiline explained that the state had

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<sup>13</sup> “From John Adams to John Quincy Adams, Amsterdam May 18, 1781,” *Adams Family Correspondence, The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Sallust, *Catiline’s Conspiracy (Bellum Catilinae), The Works of Sallust, translated into English with Political Discourses upon that Author. To which is added, a translation of Cicero’s Four Orations against Catiline*, trans. Thomas Gordon (London: R. Ware, 1774), 4.

two political bodies—the Senate, impotent with a weak head, and the *demos*, strong with no head at all—and he unabashedly vowed to provide the people the leader they needed to obtain what was rightfully his. In an effort to thwart Catiline’s bid for power, Cicero donned a suit of body armor and surrounded himself with armed guards, proclaiming the imminent dangers at hand and urging all loyal citizens to come to the aid of the republic. When Catiline lost election for the third time, he resorted to violence, devising a scheme to set Rome on fire, assassinate Cicero and the other prominent members of the Senate, and establish himself as dictator. The plan especially appealed to Catiline’s accomplices, former deputies of Sulla who were motivated to torch the city to erase any record of their indebtedness.<sup>15</sup>

Cicero’s discovery of the Catilinarian plot and forceful prosecution of the conspirators, delivered in a series of four orations before the Senate and the people of Rome, marked the greatest political triumph of Cicero’s political career. Conversely, Catiline’s legacy as the would-be assassin of one of the ancient world’s most celebrated defenders of liberty was sufficient to ensconce the name of Catiline in both the ancient and modern world as the symbol of sedition and tyranny. Cicero learned about Catiline’s plan when a disaffected mistress of one of the conspirators leaked the details in an effort to exact revenge against her lover. Cicero took immediate action, calling an emergency meeting of the Senate with Catiline in attendance. Not realizing that Cicero had become aware of the conspiracy, Catiline suddenly found himself the target of Cicero’s *First Oration*. With dramatic flare, Cicero declared the gravity of the situation

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<sup>15</sup> Kathryn Tempest, *Cicero: Politics and Persuasion in Ancient Rome* (London: Continuum, 2011), 90-100; James J. Murphy and Richard A. Katula, *A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric* (London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), 285-286.

in a phrase that would echo in the political writings of succeeding generations, “*O Tempora!, O Mores!*” (“Alas, what Times! Alas, the Degeneracy of Men!”), exposing the depth of Catiline’s degeneracy to the review of Rome’s assembled noblemen.<sup>16</sup> Succeeding in turning public sentiment against the accused usurper, Cicero forced Catiline to flee the city, but the crisis continued to unfold as Catiline began raising an army of twenty thousand men to take Rome by force. In his *Second Oration*, Cicero denounced Catiline’s supporters, the “dregs” who still remained in the city, and made the case for martial law and the arrest of the suspected revolutionaries. Having secured the full support of the Senate, Cicero proceeded in his *Third Oration* to recount the sordid details of the conspiracy, and although the people had once rallied around Catiline’s inflammatory rhetoric, according to Sallust, they now “extolled Cicero to the skies, showing as much joy and delight as if they had been rescued from slavery.”<sup>17</sup> Cicero intended to use his newfound political capital to levy the death penalty against Catiline’s accomplices, but Julius Caesar, a suspected Catilinarian sympathizer who had just been elected *Praetor* and *Pontifex Maximus*, rose in the Senate in defense of the accused, advocating life imprisonment instead.<sup>18</sup> Cicero, however, countered Caesar’s argument in his *Fourth Oration*, employing his rhetorical acumen to persuade the Senate to agree to endorse the public execution of the revolutionaries: “I imagine this city, the light of the world and the citadel of every nation,” Cicero declared, “suddenly collapsing beneath a single flame,” and when I think of Catiline with his army, “I shudder to my bones at the thought of mothers weeping, girls and boys fleeing, and

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<sup>16</sup> Literally, “O the times, O the customs.” Thomas Gordon translated Sallust’s phrase as “Alas, what Times! Alas, the Degeneracy of Men!” in 1744. *Tempest, Cicero*, 93.

<sup>17</sup> Sallust’s *Third Oration*, cited in *Tempest, Cicero*, 97.

<sup>18</sup> *Praetor* (magistrate), *pontifex maximus* (chief priest).



vestal virgins being raped. It is because of these thoughts—so despicable and deplorable—that I am taking a strict and severe stance against those who want to see such atrocities happen.”<sup>19</sup> Joined by Cato the Younger, who appealed to the severity of Roman tradition in such matters, Cicero carried the day, lauded by the Senate and the public as *Pater Patriae*, “Father of his Country”—the savior of the republic and defender of the Roman constitution. Catiline, in contrast, thoroughly ostracized by Cicero’s oratory, died in battle the following year, forever despised as the emblematic archenemy of civic virtue.<sup>20</sup>

By the eighteenth century, the Catilinarian conspiracy, as recorded by Sallust, had become a common point of reference for Tories and Whigs in the context of any discussion concerning corruption and tyranny. First translated into English in 1608, Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae* inspired both Court and Country party parliamentarians who interpreted the Sallust narrative according to their unique understanding of the fragility of republican virtue. As Rob Hardy observed, whereas Tory-monarchists emphasized the indispensable role of Cicero’s leadership and initiative in defeating the treacherous plot and bringing swift justice to the conspirators, Whig-republicans pointed to the corruption and patronage in the Roman system of government that enabled the conspiracy to germinate in the first place.<sup>21</sup> Algernon Sidney was among those who highlighted this particular Whig interpretation of the Sallust narrative. In 1698, Sidney described Lucius Catiline as the product of a government enticed by luxury, enfeebled

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<sup>19</sup> Sallust’s *Fourth Oration*, cited in Tempest, *Cicero*, 98.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 99-100.

<sup>21</sup> I’m indebted to Rob Hardy’s analysis which provided an essential theoretical framework for the discussion of the Catilinarian motif in this chapter. Rob Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times: The Catilinarian Conspiracy in Eighteenth-Century British and American Political Thought,” *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 14 (December 2007), 433.

by wantonness, burdened by indebtedness and corrupted by “ill-gotten riches.” The emergence of Catiline and his brazen revolutionaries simply revealed a preoccupation with avarice and a fatal flaw in the Roman spirit. “When men’s minds are filled with this fury,” Sidney declared, “they sacrifice the common good to the advancement of their private concerns.”<sup>22</sup>

Building on Sidney’s work, Thomas Gordon published his own commentary on the Catiline narrative in 1721. His book, *The Conspirators; or The Case of Catiline*, applied the lessons of the ancient Roman plot to the deficiencies he perceived in the English system of government. Like Sidney, Gordon pointed to the weakening fabric of Roman society, suggesting that the conspiracy was symptomatic of the vice that had infected the people, setting the conditions for such a character as Lucius Catiline to gain a foothold and threaten the security of the republic. “NEVER was a greater Fall from Virtue,” Gordon wrote, than the decline of “this *Great*, but *Infamous* People! They, who were, at first, intent on the Protection of their Country . . . degenerated, at last, into Ease and Indolence,” entertaining “mean Ambitions and meaner Avarice; and sunk into all the contrary Extremes of Vice, and Luxury, and every sort of Debauchery.”<sup>23</sup> Thus, the people were prepared to follow the likes of Lucius Catiline headlong into the cataclysm of anarchy, an opportunist who was “not a Stranger to the Luxury and Vices of the State, nor to the Sentiments of the Factious and Discontented Nobles.”<sup>24</sup> While elements of Gordon’s commentary echoed the sentiment of Sidney’s *Discourses* and

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<sup>22</sup> Algernon Sidney, *Discourses on Government, Published from an Original Manuscript of the Author in Three Volumes*, 2.15 (New York: Deare and Andrews, 1805), 136.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Gordon, *The Conspirators, or, The Case of Catiline, As collected from the best Historians, impartially examn’d; with Respect to his declared and covert Abettors; and the Artifices used to screen the Conspirators from Punishment*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (London: J. Roberts, 1721), 10; Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times,” 437.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon, *The Conspirators*, 16.

certainly appealed to Whig republican readers, *The Conspirators* also appealed to Tory-minded conservatives who perceived the indispensable role of Cicero to be the overarching theme of the Catilinarian narrative.

In his examination of the elements of the conspiratorial campaign in 63 B.C., Gordon outlined what would become the fundamental logic for those colonists who would eventually take a loyalist stand with regard to the revolutionary movement in America. Although Gordon, like Sidney, lamented Rome's moral decline, he took his analysis a step further, ultimately attributing the rise of the Catilinarian conspiracy to an excess of democracy in the Roman system.<sup>25</sup> In Gordon's view, the greatest danger to the Roman Republic was an imbalance of power, an enlargement of the commons at the expense of the authority of the aristocratic and monarchical branches to contain the forces of corruption. Gordon saw the case of Lucius Catiline as the perfect manifestation of civic disorder and imbalance inspired by moral decay. "When once the Constitution of any State is subverted," Gordon declared, "*Innovation*, like the *Hydra's* Heads, sprouts out into new Changes." Catiline epitomized the dangers of factious self-interest in a weakened constitutional order, "a towering ambitious Spirit" who appealed to the masses to satisfy his appetite for ambition. "The Passions of *Avarice* and *Preheminence* equally inflam'd him," Gordon wrote, and "His Pride could not digest the Repulses he met with in his standing for Offices." His inflated sense of self-importance and rightful privilege "made him so far envy the successful Dignity of others, that, as Porcius Latro expresses it, *the Lust of his Wickedness centred in plundering the Substance, and oppressing the Liberty, of the whole City.*"<sup>26</sup> According

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<sup>25</sup> Hardy, "A Mirror of the Times," 436-439.

<sup>26</sup> Gordon, *The Conspirators*, 16-17.

to Gordon, entrusting too much power to the “mean and improper Hands” of the plebeians simply elevated unqualified commoners, and upstarts like Catiline “above their own Dirt by *accidental Promotions*,” jeopardizing the natural order of the constitutional system. The democratic branch, always “*sordid and griping*,” consisted of those individuals who were always seeking to obtain “*other Men’s Properties*” and “*swell their own Fortunes higher*.” Such illegitimate politicians, Gordon warned, continued to achieve influence “thro’ *Envy or Indiscretion*” and simultaneously supplanted those “of more *Ability to execute, and Honour to grace, their Offices*.”<sup>27</sup>

Gordon further encouraged a Tory understanding of the Catiline motif when he published his *Works of Sallust* in 1744, a new translation of *Cicero’s Four Orations* prefaced by Gordon’s *Political Discourses* on the historical tenets of tyranny and corruption. Soon to become the definitive Ciceronian text in the American colonies, Gordon’s revision of Sallust provided a distinctly conservative interpretation of the classical narrative, providing readers, loyalists in particular, ample reason to view authority and control as the primary means by which states might hope to defend themselves against anarchy and tyranny.<sup>28</sup> The nine essays in Gordon’s *Discourses* illustrated the conservative tenets of the Catilinarian saga Gordon sought to impress upon his audience. In his first essay, Gordon highlighted Sallust’s observation that ambitious party leaders, using “plausible Pretences” always seemed to appeal to the masses “to procure Weight and Power to themselves,” using their influence to

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Jefferson included Gordon’s title in a list of recommended library acquisitions that he sent to Robert Skipwith in 1771. Thomas Jefferson, “To Robert Skipwith, with a List of Books for a Private Library, August 3, 1771,” *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson Digital Edition*, ed. Barbara B. Oberg and J. Jefferson Looney (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008); popularity of Gordon’s *Sallust* referenced in Rob Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times,” 443-446.

promulgate “Violence and inhumanity.”<sup>29</sup> “The People are so apt to be drawn into Faction,” Gordon declared, that they “blindly” and notoriously chase after the next party demagogue “to their utter Ruin.” The most noble public servants were those, like Cicero, who were willing to stand in the breach to warn the masses “against such ready and implicit Attachment to Names and Notions, however popular and plausible.” Gordon’s sixth essay was a virtual Tory manifesto, warning that free governments, by their very nature, were always susceptible to the appeals of illegitimate rabble-rousers. Reflecting on the wisdom of Lycurgus, the ancient lawgiver of Sparta, Gordon recalled the Spartan leader’s response to a fellow citizen who suggested the Lacadaemonians adopt a popular model of government. Repulsed by the notion, Lycurgus curtly replied, “Try it in your own House.” In contrast to the “tumultuous and unsettled” state of affairs in democratic Athens, Gordon lauded Lycurgus for stabilizing Sparta’s sociopolitical order by restoring government authority and control. Since the people were as likely to follow a Catiline as much as a Cicero, Gordon concluded that “every Government without Authority must be lost”—“Liberty, amongst its many Advantages, furnisheth great Men,” Gordon declared, and “amongst its other Disadvantages, it is often weakened, sometimes extinguished, by Heroes of its own forming: it produces false Patriots, as well as true.”<sup>30</sup>

Gordon was not alone in his conservative analysis of the Catiline narrative. Conyers Middleton also popularized a Ciceronian interpretation of the conspiracy in his 1741 publication of *The History of the Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, detailing the

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<sup>29</sup> Thomas Gordon, “Discourse i,” *Political Discourses, The Works of Sallust, translated into English with Political Discourses upon that Author. To which is added, a translation of Cicero’s Four Orations against Catiline*, trans. Thomas Gordon (London: R. Ware, 1774), 1.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon, “Discourse ix,” *Political Discourses*, 166.

consul's skillful handling of the plot and the impassioned *demos*. "Rome was endangered," Middleton asserted, "not by foreign wars, but by intestine evils, and the traitorous designs of profligate citizens." Cicero's "masterpiece" was "driving Catiline out of Rome, and teasing him, as it were, into a rebellion, before it was ripe," exposing the revolutionaries to "sure destruction, by their own folly . . . in which some of the greatest men in Rome were suspected to be privately engaged, particularly Crassus and Caesar."<sup>31</sup> For Gordon and Middleton, Cicero's robust defense of the republic and artful wielding of state authority epitomized the essence of Roman civic virtue.

Gordon's conservative republican interpretation of the Catilinarian motif assisted in broadening the scope and malleability of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae*, framing the iconic models and antimodels useful to both Whig-patriots and Tory-loyalists in the transatlantic discourse of the eighteenth century. Echoing Middleton's critique of the civic decay that had infested the republic, Gordon highlighted Caesar's complicity in the conspiracy, along with Catiline's treachery, as equivalent examples of those, who, throughout Roman history, had sought to glorify themselves at the expense of the state. "Caesar was popular," Gordon observed, but "he gained all his Popularity by acting the Patriot," appealing to the passions of the people to enslave the empire. "Nor was this Proceeding peculiar to Caesar," Gordon declared—"It was the constant Art and Armour of all preceding Parricides, and by it they covered and recommended themselves." Rome's history was replete with these cunning politicians who always appeared as "public Benefactors, warm Advocates for the People, zealous Patrons of Liberty," but in

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<sup>31</sup> Conyers Middleton, *The Life of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, Vol. 1 (London: W. Baynes and Son, 1823), 142, 194-196; James M. Farrell, "New England's Cicero: John Adams and the Rhetoric of Conspiracy," *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 104 (1992), 60. John Adams owned a 1755 edition of Middleton's work as well as a copy of Gordon's *Works of Sallust* that he marked extensively with his personal notes, accessible at [libertyfund.org](http://libertyfund.org).

the end, ultimately implemented “their popular Direction and Sway, deceitful Speeches, inflammatory Invectives, pleasing and pernicious Laws, with all Attempts to improve popular Phrensy, and, by the Cry of Liberty, to establish Tyranny.” Catiline and Caesar were no different, Gordon noted—“Catiline followed the same Road, and perished in it: Caesar got to the End of it, and perished afterwards.”<sup>32</sup> Gordon so much despised the insidious examples of both Caesar and Catiline that he took offense at what he deemed to be Sallust’s aggrandizement of Caesar and the relative short shrift the ancient author paid to Cicero’s role in defending the authority of the Roman constitution. Sallust’s “Prejudices to *Cicero* are apparent and unpardonable,” Gordon wrote, revealing his contempt for the consul by including only “a few civil Epithets” on his behalf, whereas he recorded Caesar’s “artful and able speech” on behalf of the conspirators, even though Caesar was actually one of them—“This dry and narrow Treatment of *Cicero* is a Notable Failing in his History, and, considering the Talents of the Historian, a Malicious Failing.”<sup>33</sup> In Gordon’s view, Cicero was the real “Hero” of the narrative, not only because he foiled Catiline’s plot, but because he successfully countered Caesar in persuading the Senate to execute the revolutionaries for their sedition, thereby restoring order and affirming the authority of the government.

Eighteenth-century discourse surrounding Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae*, in addition to the numerous other examples in the ancient canon warning about conspiracies against republican governments, conditioned British Americans to anticipate plots against liberty as a habit of political mind. In the 1760s, the revenue policies of the Grenville ministry, beginning with the Sugar Act in 1764 and followed by the Stamp Act in 1765,

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<sup>32</sup> Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, 58-59; Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times,” 444-446.

<sup>33</sup> Gordon, *The Works of Sallust*, iv-v.

activated a kind of preconditioned response among the British subjects in the colonies who tended to view themselves and the political dynamics of the transatlantic world in classical terms. Sensitive to the workings of deception and conspiratorial designs in political affairs, Whigs and Tories, all British Americans, soon found themselves engaged in an open debate on the erosion of British liberty and the rising threat of tyranny in the colonies. As Richard observed, while Whig-patriots associated tyranny and conspiracies against liberty with excessive monarchical authority and limited representation in Parliament, Tory-loyalists considered the populous to be the real threat to liberty. In concert with Gordon's conservative reading of the *Bellum Catilinae*, American Tories described themselves as "the victims of a great conspiracy of Catilines," viewing the Sons of Liberty as the demagogues of the age, inciting mob violence and rebellion simply "to bring American society under their dictatorial control."<sup>34</sup> Like Catiline, these disaffected rabble-rousers confessed loyalty to the king and patriotic zeal for English liberty while secretly plotting to overthrow the government and seize power for themselves. Such usurpers were those whose impassioned rhetoric appeared to defy the laws of rational explanation, who commonly raised objections against imperial policy with insufficient evidence to support their inflammatory indictments against the ministry. As early as 1760, Massachusetts Governor Francis Bernard suspected that a power-hungry faction had secretly conspired to disrupt the customs administration in Boston. By 1770, Bernard and Hutchinson and the other leading officials in Massachusetts were convinced that the rebellion they were witnessing was really the work of these same conspirators—a power-hungry cabal that publicly professed allegiance to the king but was secretly plotting to undermine

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<sup>34</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 121.



government authority and lead the people in open rebellion against their sovereign, like Catiline of old, to achieve their commercial and political aspirations.<sup>35</sup> Looking back over the turbulent events that reconfigured the colonial landscape in the decade leading up to 1776, the New York lawyer Peter Van Schaack reflected a similar skepticism with regard to the revolutionary movement. Although he had supported the meeting of the First Continental Congress in 1774, Van Schaack ultimately remained loyal to the crown after concluding that the “views and designs” of the Whig-patriots exhibited more zeal than force of logic, aiming at “nothing short of a dissolution of the union between Great Britain and her colonies.” Writing in 1776, Van Schaack confessed he could find no evidence for the patriot claim of conspiratorial design in the previous decade’s parliamentary measures—“Most of them seem to have sprung out of particular occasions, and are unconnected with each other,” Van Schaack surmised—they were enacted with no apparent “preconcerted plan of enslaving us,” and “I cannot therefore think the government dissolved.”<sup>36</sup>

The Catiline motif was a touchstone for colonial discourse in the correspondence of both Whig-patriots and Tory-loyalists in the decade leading up to 1776, providing the classical context for framing the debate between radicals and conservatives on the colonial response to Parliament’s administrative policies. Public outcry following the passing of the Stamp Act in 1765 prompted an anonymous writer of Whig sentiment, “A TRUE AMERICAN,” to lament the way some individuals in the

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<sup>35</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 151.

<sup>36</sup> Peter Van Schaack, “January, 1776, at Kinderhook,” in Henry C. Van Schaack, *The Life of Peter Van Schaack, LL.D., Embracing selections from his correspondence and other writings, during the American Revolution, and his exile in England* (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1842), 56-60; Wood, “Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style,” 421; Ruma Chopra, *Unnatural Rebellion: Loyalists in New York City during the Revolution* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011), 48.

colonies seemed to openly defend Parliament's actions.<sup>37</sup> Writing in the *Pennsylvania Journal* in 1765, TRUE AMERICAN resented the greed he perceived in the heart of some of his neighbors who appeared all too willing to accept the "hateful office" of dispenser of stamps for "the trivial gain of a few hundreds a year." Citing a reference from Horace for his opening tag line—"Gold makes way through Virtue's guards"<sup>38</sup>—TRUE AMERICAN suggested recent events had revealed two types of subjects in the colonies: Those who were vindicators of liberty, and those who would "give up our Country, to sacrifice the public to private interest." Pointing to two of the ancient world's most renowned figures, Leonidas and Catiline, TRUE AMERICAN constructed his argument highlighting Leonidas as an exemplar of virtue, and Catiline as the ultimate manifestation of vice and corruption. For TRUE AMERICAN, Leonidas, Sparta's king and military commander in 480 B.C., embodied the axiom, "To love one's country and seek its good, manifests a great soul." At the battle of Thermopylae, Leonidas stood in the gap against Xerxes' invading Persian horde with a few hundred soldiers and "devoted himself to die for the preservation of his country." Leonidas' courage in defending the Greek city-states, declared TRUE AMERICAN, "must ever raise the admiration of mankind as long as the world lasts." In contrast, Lucius Catiline was a "parricide," "mean and detestable," not unlike those in the colonies who had seemingly joined "the cause of oppression." Taking aim at those who supported the Stamp Act in 1765, TRUE AMERICAN applied the Catiline moniker to a rival columnist, "AMERICANUS," the Pennsylvania lawyer Joseph Galloway, who had argued on behalf of Parliament's legitimate right to tax the colonies in the *Journal* the week before; "This

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<sup>37</sup> A True American, "Mr. Bradford," *The Pennsylvania Journal*, September 19, 1765.

<sup>38</sup> Horace, *The Odes and Carmen Saeculare of Horace*, 3.16.9, trans. John Conington (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu).

impudent writer,” wrote TRUE AMERICAN, insinuates that every colonial pen is employed in “alienating the affections of a numerous people from the royal person of the best of Sovereigns.” An emerging voice of loyalist critique of the colonial patriotic movement, AMERICANUS (Galloway) embarked on a significant writing campaign in defense of Parliament’s administrative policies. In his August 29 article in the *Journal*, in addition to criticizing America’s frenzied disloyalties, AMERICANUS argued it was “reasonable that America should be taxed towards her own safety”—and if America has been “negligent of her duty, and perversely obstinate” such that “she may be lost to the mother country, and deprived of her civil as well as religious rights,” then it “becomes the indispensable duty of a British parliament to interfere and compel” to do “what is reasonable and necessary” to tax us.<sup>39</sup> Incredulous in his decidedly Whig-republican response, TRUE AMERICAN flatly rejected Galloway’s rationale; “Every body knows that the present clamour is not against his Majesty, but against the proceedings of a wrong-headed ministry”—therefore, I can see no basis for AMERICANUS’ “long-winded sentiments” which “blind the eyes of the people” and “sanctify measures the most unreasonable and unjust”—unless, of course, this Catiline has “a sordid attachment to his own interests . . . being no doubt, some placeman or hireling of a stamp-officer.”

“PASKALOS,” Dr. Joseph Warren of Massachusetts, was another pseudonymous writer who used the Catiline narrative to promote a Whig-republican view of the transatlantic debate in the 1760s. Like TRUE AMERICAN, PASKALOS (Warren) expressed his resentment for the way in which Stamp Act advocates like Galloway

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<sup>39</sup> Americanus [Joseph Galloway], “To Mr. Bradford,” *Pennsylvania Journal*, August 29, 1765; Joseph S. Tiedemann, Eugene R. Fingerhut, and Robert W. Venables, ed., *The Other Loyalists: Ordinary People, Royalism, and the Revolution in the Middle Colonies, 1763-1787* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 7.

depicted American opposition to Parliament's policies as an act of sedition against the crown. Warren was particularly concerned with the way Governor Bernard had portrayed Boston as lawless and rebellious to the authorities in England, inviting British military occupation and offering a veiled threat to the governor's Whig opponents. But the spirit of Warren's critique in 1765 was not a call for American independence—rather, like many who would later adopt a more radical view of Parliament's administrative policies, Warren was chiefly concerned with ensuring the liberties of Americans as British subjects. Many colonists, including Warren, struggled with reconciling their right to openly oppose parliamentary legislation while simultaneously affirming their loyalty to King George. Although he eventually became the Revolution's most recognizable martyr as Major General Warren, “the Leonidas of Bunker Hill,” Dr. Warren could most accurately be described in the 1760s as a “rebellious loyalist” or a Whig-leaning independent.<sup>40</sup> Asserting his non-aligned political status in June 1766, PASKALOS (Warren) declared in the *Boston Gazette*, “I am a Man of no Party and have nothing to hope or fear from you [Governor Bernard], or any of your Dependents.”<sup>41</sup>

Warren's political persuasion in the 1760s was emblematic of many of his fellow Bostonians who fundamentally viewed themselves as sons of British liberty. With no clear classical referent in Greek or Roman history, the meaning of Warren's

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<sup>40</sup> John Daly Burk's drama, *Bunker Hill, or the Death of General Warren* (1798), presented a classicized interpretation of the patriotic battle. Burk described General Warren as Leonidas bravely standing with his Spartan patriots against the onslaught of the overwhelming British forces. See Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 209; Samuel A. Forman, *Dr. Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing, 2012), 131-133.

<sup>41</sup> Paskalos [Joseph Warren], “Messieurs Edes & Gill,” *Boston Gazette*, June 2, 1766. Cited in Forman, *Dr. Joseph Warren*, 131-133.

selected pseudonym, “PASKALOS,” was unspecific, but could have easily been read in Boston circles as a Latinized moniker in tribute to the Corsican patriot, General Pascal Paoli (1725-1807), renowned on both sides of the Atlantic in the 1760s as a champion of Whig ideals.<sup>42</sup> Warren was among those who corresponded with the radical Whig John Wilkes praising “that hero Paoli” for his role in establishing Corsica as an independent republic.<sup>43</sup> A gathering of the Sons of Liberty on August 14, 1766, marking the one-year anniversary of the first public riot against the Stamp Act, illustrated how British Americans, even Whig-leaning Englishmen like Warren, stood at a political crossroads in the 1760s.<sup>44</sup> According to the *Boston Gazette*, “the most virtuous, most opulent and most sensible” citizens of Boston assembled at the “sacred Tree of Liberty” at noon and then moved to the adjacent “Hall of Liberty” to present “loyal Toasts,” beginning first, according to custom, with King George—“may his Reign be long and prosperous.” After the king, the crowd honored “PITT” and paid tribute to the blessings of British subjecthood—“May the Union between Great-Britain and the Colonies never be dissolved,” and “May the British Colonies ever be united in the Principles of Liberty.” In a final toast, identifying with their kindred spirits in the Mediterranean, the Sons toasted “Success to General Paoli and the struggling Corsicans.” Warren and his contemporaries admired the Corsican republic because they

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<sup>42</sup> Previous scholarship has not suggested a linkage between “Paskalos” and Pascal Paoli, however, there is no question concerning the notoriety of Paoli among the Boston Sons of Liberty. *The New York Journal*, June 11, 1767 heralded General Paoli as “The greatest man on earth!” for his stand in the cause of liberty; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 162, 198.

<sup>43</sup> Joseph Warren et al, “Committee of the Boston Sons of Liberty to John Wilkes,” November 4, 1769, *Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 1, *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> August 14, 1765 marked the first widely-popularized mob action of the Boston Sons of Liberty against the Stamp Act, burning an effigy of Andrew Oliver who was appointed the colony’s Distributor of Stamps. “Boston, August 18,” *Boston Gazette*, August 18, 1766; Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 54; Richard J. Hooker, “The American Revolution Seen through a Wine Glass,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 11 (January 1954), 55.

viewed themselves, not as champions of rebellion in 1766, but as sons of British liberty, inspired by republican principles to defend the virtue of the English constitution.

Rather than finding fault in the king and ministry in the 1760s, Warren viewed the Catilinarian conspiracy against liberty originating from the self-interested crown-appointed officials in the colonies, Governor Bernard in particular. Affirming his faith in the English system and loyalty to the king in the *Gazette*, PASKALOS asked, “Do you not know [Governor] that our present most gracious King, is truly the Father of his People?—that the present [Pitt] Ministry is composed of wise and just Men?”—and if the British subjects of Boston continue to be deprived of their happiness, “Do you not expect that a righteous and angry Monarch, will with Indignation, tear from you that Authority which you have so inhumanely unimproved?” PASKALOS characterized Bernard’s insidious activities in classical terms; like Catiline, the governor had conspired to undermine the commonwealth, sowing the seeds of discord to promote his own political ends. “Every Man has cause to be angry when the whole Representative Body of this loyal People is charged with little less than Rebellion against a Prince whom they almost adore; when an open attempt is made to disunite them, and to make them appear in a factious undutiful Light. . .”<sup>45</sup> PASKALOS believed the governor intended to undermine the liberties of the British subjects of Boston and accused Bernard of duplicitously supporting the detested Stamp Act legislation from the outset.<sup>46</sup> Although the Stamp Act had been repealed in March 1766, the simultaneous issuance of the Declaratory Act, a signal in the wake of the Stamp Act repeal affirming Parliament’s absolute authority in the colonies, raised suspicions in Boston and

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<sup>45</sup> Paskalos [Warren], “Messieurs Edes and Gill,” *Boston Gazette*, June 9, 1766.

<sup>46</sup> Paskalos [Warren], “Messieurs Edes and Gill,” *Boston Gazette*, June 2, 1766.

elsewhere that the real threat to liberty lay not with Parliament after all, but closer to home among such royal appointees as Bernard who had a vested interest in forwarding inflated letters on the security situation in Boston to strengthen his office against popular opposition.<sup>47</sup> “No Treatment can possibly be too hard for him,” PASKALOS wrote, “that aims at the Ruin of my Country. And I need produce but one Precedent, to justify the severest invectives against the Enemies of my Country”—the justice of “the immortal Cicero” exacted upon Catiline and the enemies of Rome.

In the first half of the decade leading up to 1776, before Americans considered the notion of independence, the Catilinarian trope was malleable enough to serve varying political agendas. Writers such as PASKALOS and TRUE AMERICAN, both Whig-leaning independents, applied the Catiline narrative to the Massachusetts governor and his association with the ministry. Similar to Catiline’s agents working inside the city of Rome in 63 B.C., Whig writers believed crown appointees were conspiring to drive a wedge between the colonies and the mother country, invite the oppression of British military occupation, silence dissent, and promote their self-serving political agendas. In contrast, loyal supporters of the administration, like AMERICANUS, strongly advocated Parliament’s revenue policies, declaring that conspiratorial forces at home posed a greater threat to American liberty than King George. By 1770, particularly in the wake of the Boston Massacre, public discourse began to shift as opinions increasingly reflected two distinct views about the nature of liberty in the colonies. Some colonists who had opposed Britain’s tax policies in the 1760s, like Joseph Warren, began to trace the pattern of unreasonable and burdensome legislation to a corrupt and capricious ministry, and more importantly, to a flawed

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<sup>47</sup> Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, 148-151.

constitutional order no longer capable of defending British Americans against “those who are now forging chains for this country.”<sup>48</sup> John Adams’ political journey from loyal subject to revolutionary leader paralleled Warren’s evolution over the decade. Whereas Adams’ unflinching confidence in the English constitution led him to risk his reputation in defending Captain Preston and his men in 1770, by 1775 Adams was printing his “Novanglus” (“New Englander”) letters in the *Boston Gazette*, describing a great transatlantic conspiracy of Massachusetts Tories operating in close coordination with British speculators and self-serving politicians in a Catiline-like plot to undermine the rights and liberties of the colonies.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to Warren and Adams, those Americans in Boston and elsewhere who maintained their loyalty to the crown and their faith in the English system to address the problems of colonial representation viewed the foment of activism and mob violence around them with increasing suspicion, concluding that the real threats in the Catilinarian conspiracy against American liberty were internal rather than external.<sup>50</sup>

The language of classical conspiracy characterized the political discourse in Boston as Whig-patriots continued to assail the governor for his perceived collusion with the ministry on revenue and security measures in the colony. Governor Bernard’s uneasy departure in 1769 did little to resolve tensions, since controversy surrounding the appointment of Governor Thomas Hutchinson ignited new suspicions of conspiratorial design. Left with the task of managing the most volatile and factious commonwealth in America, Hutchinson became a lightning rod for criticism, and in his

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<sup>48</sup> Joseph Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1772. At the request of the inhabitants of the town of Boston; to commemorate the bloody tragedy of the fifth of March, 1770* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1772).

<sup>49</sup> James Farrell argued that John Adams drew rhetorical inspiration from Cicero’s orations against Catiline in writing his Novanglus letters. James M. Farrell, “New England’s Cicero,” 55-72.

<sup>50</sup> Chopra, *Unnatural Rebellion*, 33.



efforts to defend administration policy, served as the most recognizable advocate of Tory-loyalism in the colonies. In addition to overseeing the arrival of British troops to keep the peace following the Boston Massacre, news that Hutchinson's salary would be paid by the crown instead of the colonial Assembly incited public accusation that the new governor had been conspiring with the ministry to subvert the authority of the colonial legislature.<sup>51</sup> These allegations provided Samuel Adams, writing as "CANDIDUS" in the *Boston Gazette*, ample material to rally Bostonians against "the first American Pensioner" and "independent governor of this province."<sup>52</sup> CANDIDUS asserted that "a Governor independent of the people for his support, as well as his *political Being*," is not a representative of the people, but "a MASTER" and "a TYRANT"—"If this be not a state of despotism," Adams declared, "what is?" In the next week's edition of the *Gazette*, CANDIDUS compared Hutchinson to Julius Caesar, who was a "smooth and subtle tyrant," using "beguiling arts, hypocrisy, and flattery" to lull the people "gently into slavery."<sup>53</sup> CANDIDUS saw no difference between the condition of Rome before its fall and the province of Massachusetts; in the same way that Rome's "unmanly sloth" invited the ambitious Caesar to administer "the opiate with multiplied arts and delusions," the governor of Massachusetts pretended to be the people's "greatest friend" only to obtain "that supreme power which his ambitious soul had long thirsted for."<sup>54</sup>

Whig-patriot claims that Hutchinson's administration represented the rise of classical tyranny in Massachusetts continued with the publication of the inflammatory

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<sup>51</sup> Hardy, "A Mirror of the Times," 446; Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 196-197.

<sup>52</sup> Candidus [Samuel Adams], "Messieurs Edes and Gill," *Boston Gazette*, October 7, 1771.

<sup>53</sup> Candidus [Samuel Adams], "Messieurs Edes and Gill," *Boston Gazette*, October 14, 1771.

<sup>54</sup> See Bailyn's discussion on Hutchinson and Candidus, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 197.

Centinel letters in the *Massachusetts Spy* and *Boston Gazette*—over forty essays produced in newsprint between 1771 and 1772, often dominating the front page of each edition.<sup>55</sup> Styling himself the Roman guardian at the gates, the pseudonymous author “CENTINEL” questioned Governor Hutchinson’s loyalties in May 1771, comparing the current situation in Boston to that of the delicate power balance in ancient Rome between the aristocratic patricians and the tribunes who represented the plebeian assembly.<sup>56</sup> The citizens of Rome had taken every precaution “that human wisdom could foresee” to safeguard their freedom, CENTINEL observed, however a shift in property interests quickly promulgated self-interest and compromised Rome’s constitution, much the same way the royal provision of Hutchinson’s salary now threatened to corrupt the balance of government in Boston.<sup>57</sup> “Can it be supposed a ministry would lodge their interests in the hands of a man unfriendly to them?” CENTINEL asked. “Having tried every method of depriving this people of their constitutional rights” the British ministry has now “assumed to themselves a power” to pay the governor’s salary, and thereby command him at their pleasure. Under these conditions Governor Hutchinson is nothing but “a tool” of the royal administration, CENTINEL declared. Joining CENTINEL in his attack, another pseudonymous writer, “LEONIDAS,” addressed Hutchinson directly, invoking the language of classical tyranny in the harshest terms in his article, “*To the treasonable USURPER of an absolute*

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<sup>55</sup> Three pseudonymous Whig-patriot writers worked in mutual support to oppose the Hutchinson administration between 1771 and 1772—“Centinel,” “Leonidas,” and “Mucius Scaevola.” Centinel published forty letters in the *Massachusetts Spy* and two in the *Boston Gazette*. Neil L. York, “Tag-Team Polemics: The “Centinel” and His Allies in the ‘Massachusetts Spy,’” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 107 (1995), 85-89.

<sup>56</sup> Centinel [unknown], “For the *Massachusetts Spy*. The CENTINEL. No. IV.,” *Massachusetts Spy*, May 23, 1771.

<sup>57</sup> Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times,” 447-448.

DESPOTISM *over the good People of the Massachusetts-Bay.*”<sup>58</sup> LEONIDAS asserted Hutchinson’s “dark politicks” and conspiracy with Francis Bernard to “hatch the Stamp Act” mirrored the shocking specter of devilish despotism described by Thomas Gordon, who wrote that the barbarians of the ancient world must have derived their image of the Devil “from the character, and behaviour of some of their own [tyrannical] princes.”<sup>59</sup> Addressing Hutchinson directly, LEONIDAS asked, “Can they view you in any other light than that of a traitorous usurper, a most ungrateful, subtle, cruel, and ambitious tyrant?” A third anonymous Bostonian, “MINOS” assisted CENTINEL and LEONIDAS in excoriating Hutchinson in the *Spy*, contending the governor had aspired to establish himself as an “absolute master” over the commonwealth. According to MINOS, the governor’s depravity had transformed Hutchinson into something otherworldly: “Behold a creature formed and supported not to serve, but domineer,” MINOS declared, “not to protect the people, but the banditti of villains sent over to plunder them. If this be true, what indignation can be too hot, what vengeance too severe for such a monster?”<sup>60</sup>

Ironically, in launching their incendiary attacks against the royal administration of Massachusetts, the prolific CENTINEL, along with his radical allies LEONIDAS and MINOS, soon found themselves the target of Catilinarian conspiratorial charges in the press. The inflammatory rhetoric of the radical writers, more so than their objections to policy matters, raised immediate suspicion among conservatives as to their real motivations in so recklessly inciting public outrage and defaming, even demonizing, the

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<sup>58</sup> Leonidas [unknown], “For the Massachusetts Spy: To the treasonable Usurper of an absolute Despotism over the good People of the Massachusetts-Bay,” *Massachusetts Spy*, May 2, 1771.

<sup>59</sup> John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, “Letter 73,” *Cato’s Letters; or Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and other important Subjects*, ed. Ronald Hamowy (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1995).

<sup>60</sup> Minos [unknown], “For the Massachusetts Spy,” *Massachusetts Spy*, June 6, 1771.

office of the governor. Those Americans who maintained their faith in the crown-appointed officials and the inviolate relationship with the mother country viewed the attacks of these writers as irrational, unreasonable, and nothing short of demagoguery, threatening to unravel the sociopolitical order of communities three thousand miles removed from the seat of British authority and control. A loyalist, pseudonymous author, “IMPAVIDUS” (“Fearless”), went straight to the point in the *Boston Evening Post* when he invoked Cicero’s lines from the opening salvo of Sallust’s *First Oration Against Catiline*—“*O Tempora! O Mores!*”—“Alas, what Times! Alas, the Degeneracy of Men!”<sup>61</sup> Donning the mantle of Cicero, IMPAVIDUS turned the tables on CENTINEL and his cabal, contending that political corruption in Massachusetts stemmed not from the actions of Governor Hutchinson, but from the colony’s “disappointed venal hirelings” who through their malice, sedition and discord were now asserting “the most palpable Untruths,” threatening to unravel “the bond of Government and Society.” Staunchly defending Governor Hutchinson as a gentleman of “inflexible Integrity and consummate Abilities,” IMPAVIDUS turned his attention to LEONIDAS, portraying him as an envious, “rapacious Animal,” willing to tear down the institutions of government to serve his own ends. “In the excess of his ravages,” IMPAVIDUS warned the citizens of Boston, LEONIDAS is more than willing to “sacrifice you, your children and fortune” to satiate his avarice and “aggrandize his fame.” Simply stated, LEONIDAS was an eighteenth-century reflection of Catiline—and just as the “brave and virtuous” citizens of Rome expelled the “incendiary” conspirator in their day, so must the people of Massachusetts now defend “True Liberty and cast out the “seditious libeler.” Mirroring

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<sup>61</sup> Impavidus [unknown], “Messi’rs Green and Russell,” *Boston Post-Boy*, May 6, 1771. “*O Tempora! O Mores!*” as translated by Gordon in *The Works of Sallust*, 78; Rob Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times,” 447-448.

Cicero's banishment of Catiline in Biblical overtones, the intrepid IMPAVIDUS commanded LEONIDAS, "Depart thou Ingrate from this City," and "seek the uttermost parts of the Earth for your Inheritance."

Continuing with his oration against the radical Bostonian junto, IMPAVIDUS invited his readers to consider how the sinister spirit of Catiline had manifested itself in LEONIDAS and his accomplices. In a subsequent article in the *Boston Evening Post*, IMPAVIDUS launched his argument with the opening lines from Cicero's *First Oration*—"How far wilt thou, O Catiline! abuse our patience? How long shall thy madness elude our justice? To what extremities art thou resolved to push thy unbridled insolence of guilt?"<sup>62</sup> Casting dispersions on his opponent's character and erudition, IMPAVIDUS mocked LEONIDAS' selected pseudonym, questioning his rationale in associating himself with the famed Spartan general who brazenly led his soldiers to martyrdom against the Persian army at Thermopylae in 480 B.C. IMPAVIDUS suggested the historical reference said much about LEONIDAS' true character. For IMPAVIDUS, the Spartan King epitomized "an egregious Folly and Weakness," a misguided opportunist who led his troops to the slaughter before Xerxes' overwhelming forces. Ultimately "slain with his chosen Democratical Band," IMPAVIDUS observed, Leonidas' death was not an act of heroism, but "a Sacrifice to his Arrogance & Ambition." The implication was clear. If this "modern Leonidas" was foolish enough to "erect his Standard and attempt to defend his anarchical System" against the columns of King George, then he and his fellow insurrectionists would inevitably suffer the same fate as his classical namesake, and deservedly so. Any man, asserted IMPAVIDUS, who "impiously" attacks the government and "attempts to weaken" the delicate balance of "Monarchy,

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<sup>62</sup> Impavidus [unknown], *Boston Evening Post*, May 20, 1771.

Aristocracy, and Democracy” as LEONIDAS and his cohorts have sought to do, should be punished “with greater Severity than the most implacable Enemy.” Appealing to his fellow Bostonians in Ciceronian flare, IMPAVIDUS declared, “Is there not Virtue enough in this City to disgorge its Impurity? Shall this City tamely bear the Ravings and Ebullitions of this fiery unbridled Catiline?”

Turning next to confront the CENTINEL himself, IMPAVIDUS described his purpose in exposing the impending Catilinarian threat against the colonies, opening his article with the tag line, “*Non Vultus instantis Tyranni Mente quatit Solida*,” an excerpt from the Roman poet Horace praising “the man of firm and righteous will” who stands for virtue undaunted by the clamor of the mob or the rod of the tyrant.<sup>63</sup> In 63 B.C., Catiline had sought to unleash the fury of the masses, to incite the mob to do his bidding, and this was the great evil IMPAVIDUS perceived in the CENTINEL and his seditious co-conspirators. CENTINEL, like his affiliate LEONIDAS, was “a snake in the grass” who, through his “affected style” and “oil of his discourse,” stupefied the minds of “the unwary part of mankind.” Playing to the masses, this cunning serpent, in “soft dying accents of affection” went to great lengths to alarm the public concerning Parliament’s decision to fund Governor Hutchinson’s salary, when in fact there was no scandal in the matter whatsoever—“will any man,” IMPAVIDUS reasoned, “be so hardy to deny that the coffers of our Treasury are not enriched” by such an annual payment from the crown? Additionally, Hutchinson “hath not an atom of power” more than any other governor in the colonies,” IMPAVIDUS declared, so “Where’s the Dragon?” Since

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<sup>63</sup> Impavidus [unknown], “Non Vultus Instantis Tyranni,” *Boston Evening Post*, May 27, 1771; Translated in context, “*Non Vultus instantis Tyranni Mente quatit Solida*” reads: “No rabble, clamorous for the wrong, No tyrant’s brow, whose frown may kill, Can shake the strength that makes him strong.” Horace, *The Odes and Carmen Saeculare of Horace*, 3.3.1, trans. John Conington (London: George Bell and Sons, 1882), [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu).

there was no real basis for CENTINEL's allegations IMPAVIDUS argued, "Tis clear that these vain suggestions must arise from Jealousy and an unquenchable thirst of domination." CENTINEL was by no means the "heroic" public servant he pretended to be, but simply a cunning serpent striking at every opportunity to "cast a mist over the Eyes of the People" and spread his venom, questioning the authority of the English constitution, wildly proclaiming in Lockean terms that "the Compact is dissolved"! "This is soft, plausible and declamatory puff and may please the illiterate Democratical Band of scribblers," IMPAVIDUS asserted, but in the end, with "more audaciousness than a Lucius Catiline," CENTINEL is nothing more than an assassin who, not unlike his ancient Roman counterpart, "stabs the Governor's reputation to the vitals," driven by no other motive than his "insatiable thirst of democratical power."

Demonstrating once again his ability to use the classical canon to his advantage, IMPAVIDUS confronted the third member of the Whig-patriot trio, taking MINOS to task for his baseless character assault against Governor Hutchinson, which for IMPAVIDUS signaled further evidence of the cabal's conspiratorial designs upon the colonies.<sup>64</sup> Borrowing a line from Virgil's *Aeneid* for the title of his essay, "*Ille fame rabid tria guttura pandens*" ("in rabid hunger he opened his three throats"), IMPAVIDUS invited his readers to peer into the abyss from which the ravenous MINOS and his incendiary patriotic cohorts originated. The line from the *Aeneid* invoked the terrifying image of Virgil's *Cerberus*, the fearsome three-headed hellhound of the underworld with three fierce jaws gaping wide, set to devour its prey.<sup>65</sup> For IMPAVIDUS, the imagery of the

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<sup>64</sup> Impavidus [unknown], "*Ille Same rabid tria Gutiura Pandens*," *Boston Evening Post*, June 10, 1771; Minos [unknown], "For the Massachusetts Spy," *Massachusetts Spy*, June 6, 1771.

<sup>65</sup> "*Ille fame rabid tria guttura pandens*"— "in rabid hunger, he opened his three throats." Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.417-428, trans. Theodore C. Williams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1910), [www.perseus.tufts.edu](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu).

rabid watchdog of Hades provided a fitting metaphor to portray the dangers of MINOS' "frantic stile," fomenting dissent and spewing forth his wild "invective against the Governor of this Province." The irony of IMPAVIDUS' clever literary association would have resonated with the classically astute readers of the *Massachusetts Spy*. "Minos," like the *Cerberus*, was also a prominent character in the *Aeneid*, the great judge of the underworld who determined the fate of the dead after "hearing the stories of their lives and deeds."<sup>66</sup> The patriot writer "MINOS" presumably selected the pseudonym based on his esteem for Virgil's "Wise Minos," styling himself as the gatekeeper of justice and the virtuous avenger of tyrants, like Hutchinson, at the final judgment. Demonstrating his command of the classical genre, IMPAVIDUS took exception with MINOS' self-serving metaphor and reversed the classical image on his opponent. Despite his pseudonym, MINOS' actions more accurately reflected the irrationality of the wild *Cerberus*—"a flaming enthusiast" who madly darted his "venomous arrows" at a governor who, according to IMPAVIDUS, had always served the colony with "unshaken integrity." Like Virgil's three-headed hellhound, IMPAVIDUS saw MINOS lashing out with "the brain of a lunatic, convinced of his own imbecility . . . founded upon the frothy ebullitions of a distempered mind."

By 1775, the rhetorical battle that waged between radical patriots and conservative loyalists in newsprint, exemplified by opposing applications of the Catilinarian motif by CENTINEL and IMPAVIDUS, reflected the reality of an increasingly divided political order in the colonies, convincing Tory-loyalists their suspicions had

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In Greek mythology, Heracles was tasked, as the last of his "twelve labors," to bring the *Cerberus* back from the underworld to King Eurystheus. See Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 2.5.77-80, *Apollodorus' "Library" and Hyginus' "Fabulae"*; *Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*, trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 30-31.

<sup>66</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, 6.433-435.



been correct all along. Self-serving demagogues had been secretly plotting to undermine rather than reform the Anglo-American relationship and tear down the English constitution in a manner not unlike the way Catiline and his conspirators had attempted to burn Rome to the ground in 63 B.C. Two months before the outbreak of open conflict at Lexington and Concord, a Boston loyalist writer, “AMERICANUS” (not Joseph Galloway), echoed IMPAVIDUS’ disdain for the radicals who had led Massachusetts into open rebellion by 1775.<sup>67</sup> Writing in the *Boston Post Boy*, AMERICANUS observed, “The conspiracy of Lucius Catiline, against Rome, is truly characteristic of the present unhappy times.” Recounting the influence of the radical writers over the previous years, AMERICANUS declared that cunning individuals, under a “false glare of patriotism,” have “seized every opportunity to infuse in the minds of the populace, the principles of *tyranny*.” Thomas Gordon’s *Discourses* on Sallust and the Catilinarian conspiracy had accurately foreseen the inception of the civil divide now plaguing the colonies. AMERICANUS saw the greatest threat to a free government not in the rise of dictatorial rule, but in “the encroachments of the people,” tipping the balance of government in favor of the democratic branch at the expense of the aristocracy.<sup>68</sup> Such a scenario, AMERICANUS recounted, reduced ancient Carthage to “anarchy and ruin,” and the same contagion infected Rome when the plebeians increased their influence and set the stage for power-hungry demagogues, Catiline in particular, to attempt “every stratagem to effect a fundamental alteration in government” and destroy all legitimate authority and those who “were not sanguine in [the] conspiracy.” AMERICANUS lamented that during the tumultuous year of 1774, when Hutchinson was

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<sup>67</sup> Americanus [unknown], “To the Inhabitants of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay,” *Boston Post-Boy*, February 13, 1775; Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 311.

<sup>68</sup> Hardy, “A Mirror of the Times,” 448-449.

forced to depart for England, a wave of Bostonian rabble-rousers, “filled with envy against persons of family, fortune and experience,” set out to reduce the privileged class “to their own common level,” “totally ignorant of the sublime ideas of constitutional liberty.” Misapplying concepts of equality and freedom, they failed to understand that true liberty consists not in the abolition of authority, but as Montesquieu had observed, “in the subordination to free laws.” In the end, these radicals paved the path to “the vilest tyranny, the tyranny of the populace,” reflected in the tarring, feathering, whipping, and public humiliation of innocent citizens. “Awake, awake then, my countrymen from your dreams,” cried AMERICANUS—“when anarchy replaces order, when the rivers of justice cease to flow,” can a province continue to exist?

While conservative loyalists were using the classics to counter radical rhetoric in Boston in the decade leading up to 1776, they were engaged in similar efforts elsewhere to expose and thwart what they perceived to be a great conspiracy of Catilines plotting to subvert the liberties of British Americans. In 1771, a loyalist writer in *The Providence Gazette*, styling himself “A SON OF LIBERTY,” warned his readers that democracy had the potential both to enlarge and constrain liberty, declaring “there is a mixture of evil in nature’s purest gifts, and that the best things, if misapplied, will produce the worst effects.”<sup>69</sup> Iron ore, for instance, could afford “nameless conveniences,” observed SON OF LIBERTY—but it could also be used to fashion weapons of tyranny. In the same manner, Liberty was a double-edged sword with a “retinue of evils.” Pointing to Roman history, SON OF LIBERTY reminded his readers that liberty that made Cato “a thunderer in the capitol” and empowered Cicero “to

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<sup>69</sup> A Son of Liberty [unknown], “To the Printer of the Providence Gazette,” *The Providence Gazette*, October 19-26, 1771.

retard, for a long time, the downfall of a declining empire.” However, that same force of liberty also produced the likes of Catiline “who, added to a few others, were a full counterpoise to all the public virtue current at that day.” Although his pseudonym suggested likely advocacy for the radical patriot agenda, “SON OF LIBERTY” was, like many Americans in 1771, a son of British liberty, adhering to long-held constitutional principles. The greatest threat to liberty “in a government so simply *democratical*, and so totally *elective* as ours,” SON OF LIBERTY contended, was an “infection of democracy.” History was replete with examples of excessive democracy and its tendency to destabilize a well-balanced civic order—“tyranny has uniformly raised her head out of the intestine broils and dissensions which such a confused state of things must necessarily produce.” Ancient Athens saw the defeat of the virtuous Aristides to “the secret machinations of a jealous rival,” Themistocles, who stirred up a populist movement to ostracize the noble leader, SON OF LIBERTY observed. Similarly, another Athenian statesman, Phocion, “had too much delicacy of soul, and innate greatness, to pursue popularity”—his enemies, who did not hesitate to stir up the passion of the masses, miscarried justice in his trial and execution, presenting us a portrait of “virtue distressed in such strong, indelible colours, as to stain the history of that period.” SON OF LIBERTY echoed proto-loyalist sentiment in urging caution in the colonial response to the crown, since, as demonstrated in the enormities of Catiline and the “*democratical anarchy*” of Athens, “we have no reason to think, that Party will slumber long while it is in the power of individuals to awaken her.”

Although the Catiline motif was prevalent in the conspiracy discourse of the eighteenth century, loyalist apologists like SON OF LIBERTY were sufficiently familiar

with the ancient literature to summon a variety of classical referents to add force to their arguments against the radical patriots. The Pennsylvania lawyer and assemblyman Joseph Galloway, recognized among his peers as “the Demosthenes of Pennsylvania” for his oratorical abilities, demonstrated how American loyalists viewed the classics as a repository for the models and antimodels they used to combat their political rivals in the press.<sup>70</sup> Galloway, who was an undisclosed partner-owner of William Goddard’s *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, published three consecutive essays under the pseudonym “MACHIAVEL” in August 1768.<sup>71</sup> Readers would have instantly recognized “MACHIAVEL” in relationship to the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli, who conveyed a theory of classical republicanism to the eighteenth century emphasizing the need for republics to vigorously defend themselves against the forces of corruption, particularly at the moment of their greatest instability.<sup>72</sup> Galloway’s loyalist-themed articles in the *Chronicle* alerted Americans to an emerging threat, what MACHIAVEL described as a colonial “triumvirate” of sedition, a reflection of the legendary trio of Marc Antony, Octavian (Caesar Augustus), and Marcus Lepidus who formed their

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<sup>70</sup> Galloway’s fellow assemblymen referred to him as “Demosthenes,” the famous orator and statesman of Athens. John Ferling, *Independence: The Struggle to Set America Free* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2011), 62.

<sup>71</sup> Machiavel [attributed to Joseph Galloway], “To the Printer of the Chronicle,” *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, August 15, 1768; two subsequent Machiavel articles followed in *The Chronicle*: “Mr. Goddard,” August 22, 1768, and “Mr. Goddard,” August 29, 1768. Although not necessarily the pen of Galloway, John Ferling attributed Machiavel to Galloway ideologically and rhetorically in John E. Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind: Joseph Galloway and the American Revolution* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1977), 75 (note 18), 78 (note 28). According to William Goddard, Galloway unleashed a “host of angry scribblers,” Machiavel among them, to counter the popularity of Dickinson’s *Farmer* letters that Goddard had published in *The Chronicle* in preceding months. According to Goddard, after explaining his rationale for printing Dickinson’s letters, “Mr. Galloway ridiculed my notions about liberty and the rights of mankind.” Goddard cited in Arthur M. Schlesinger, “Politics, Propaganda, and the Philadelphia Press, 1767-1770,” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 60 (October 1936), 314-317.

<sup>72</sup> J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), viii-ix.

alliance to control the Roman Empire following the assassination of Julius Caesar.<sup>73</sup> Although he avoided naming names, MACHIAVEL described “Antony” as the author of *The Considerations*, a recent pamphlet denouncing Parliament’s authority to tax the colonies; “Octavian” was the author of the *Farmer* letters, and “Lepidus” the “author” of the riots and unrest in Boston. Colonial readers would have recognized the American “triumvirs” as Daniel Dulany of Maryland, John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, and James Otis of Boston respectively.<sup>74</sup> According to MACHIAVEL, these “popular orators,” through their divisive rhetoric, succeeded in fomenting “the same Encroachments, Violences, and Tumults, amongst the People” as their Roman counterparts had done, promulgating “the Same Pride, Ambition and Vain-glory, amongst individuals.” Daniel Dulany, a seasoned lawyer and politician from Maryland, had advocated repealing the Stamp Act in 1765. Dulany’s *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies* contended the House of Commons was limited in its authority to tax the colonies since America was not actually represented there—“the notion of a virtual representation of the colonies must fail,” Dulany argued, “which in truth is a mere cobweb, spread to catch the unwary and entangle the weak.” As British subjects, it would be “inconsistent with those privileges to tax them *without their own consent*, and it hath been demonstrated that a tax imposed by Parliament is a tax *without their consent*.”<sup>75</sup> Seeing five editions in its first three months, Dulany’s pamphlet reached a

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<sup>73</sup> Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus formed what is known to history as the Second Triumvirate, the first being that of Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, who, as Machiavel noted, prepared Rome “for a total enslaving of the People.” The Second Triumvirate declared Cicero an enemy of the state and executed him in 43 B.C.

<sup>74</sup> “Lepidus” defined as Daniel Dulany in Schlesinger, “Politics, Propaganda, and the Philadelphia Press,” 317.

<sup>75</sup> Daniel Dulany, *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies* in Bernard Bailyn, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750-1776*, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), 611, 633.

wide audience on both sides of the Atlantic, and in the House of Commons, William Pitt acclaimed Dulany's work to be "a textbook of American rights."<sup>76</sup> In combination with Dickinson's popular *Farmer* letters warning Americans of "the most imminent dangers," and James Otis' explosive oratory in Boston depicting Britain as a reincarnation of the tyrannical Roman Empire, MACHIAVEL predicted a firestorm on the horizon.<sup>77</sup> Just as the "Encroachments of the Commons upon the Power of the *Patricians*" disrupted the delicate balance of government and "introduced a *Dominatio Plebis* (a tyranny of the people) in ancient Rome, so now "artful, ambitious and wicked Men" were manipulating the *demos* in the current crisis to elevate their own popularity and seize control. But just as the Roman Triumvirate ultimately collapsed due to the corruptive influence of power, MACHIAVEL declared, so too would the Boston mob inevitably "knock poor *Lepidus* on the Head, in a Fortnight's Time, *for the glory of God*," while Antony and Octavian "divide the Spoils." Taking aim at the famed author of the *Farmer* letters, Galloway concluded his analysis by providing a specific oracle concerning John Dickinson as the "Octavian" of the colonial triumvirate: After the "Battle of Actium" has been fought, MACHIAVEL predicted, having subdued his rivals, the Caesar Augustus of the American colonies will take great pleasure in his handiwork, "breathing out his Soul with this *modest Ejaculation—Alas, Philadelphia! I found thee built of Bricks, and have left thee built of Silver.*"<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> See Bailyn's introduction to Dulany, *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes*, in *Pamphlets of the American Revolution*, 599, 603.

<sup>77</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 22.

<sup>78</sup> Machiavel loosely quoted Caesar Augustus as recorded by the Roman historian Suetonius: Caesar claimed that the city of Rome had been so much improved under his reign that "he boasted, not without reason, that he 'found it of brick, but left it of marble.'" Suetonius, "The Life of Augustus" in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 2.29, trans. Alexander Thomson, ed. T. Forester (London: George Bell and Sons, 1896), 91.

As the Octavian (Caesar Augustus) of MACHIAVEL's triumvirate and the inevitable patriot conqueror who would claim the new Philadelphia as the crown jewel of his empire, Dickinson was Galloway's archetype of the Catilinarian spirit, the leading Whig proponent of encroaching tyranny under the guise of democratic liberty. Divided politically with respect to both high principle and competing personal ambitions in Philadelphia, Galloway, an ally of Benjamin Franklin and active assemblyman in Pennsylvania since 1756, had come to view Dickinson as his adversary and chief political rival by 1764. In that year, Galloway advocated replacing the colony's ineffectual proprietary ownership with the stability and security of transfer to royal control. Franklin supported Galloway's efforts in England, working to negotiate a settlement with the colony's proprietor. In contrast, Dickinson argued that royal control would infuse greater instability in Pennsylvania's troubled political affairs at a time when Parliament was preparing to pass new legislation with respect to colonial obligations to the crown. The political debate fostered personal enmity between the two gentlemen, leading to a fisticuff encounter on the floor of the Assembly and Dickinson later challenging Galloway to a duel. Although the two assemblymen would eventually find themselves attending the First Continental Congress together in 1774, Galloway and Dickinson remained at odds personally and politically over the course of the decade. Whereas Dickinson continued to endorse popular resistance against British policies, Galloway, fearing the threat of mob action and domestic violence, could only countenance an imperial model to preserve liberty and security in the American colonies.<sup>79</sup> Ironically, even though the two Quaker-minded Pennsylvanians worked toward the same ultimate objective of averting a colonial revolt against the mother

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<sup>79</sup> Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind*, 9-27.

country up until 1776, Dickinson's willingness to challenge British authority publicly was enough to compel Galloway to take up the Ciceronian mantle to denounce the radicalism he perceived in Dickinson's philosophy.

The duplicity Galloway saw in Dickinson and his cohorts concerned the Whig-patriots' willingness to incite the passion of the mob to achieve their political objectives, a reckless, shortsighted strategy that could serve as a prelude to despotism in America akin to the tyranny of imperial Rome. Using the power of the Philadelphia press, Galloway invoked the lessons of antiquity to assert his long-held belief that the primary purpose of government was to protect private property and defend the people against "injuries and domestic oppression."<sup>80</sup> In subsequent MACHIAVEL letters, Galloway targeted Dickinson and his *Farmer* letters directly, accusing his rival of self-interest and vain glory in his political activities: "And now Farmer, I must take you to task," MACHIAVEL declared—"you have betrayed a vanity, self-sufficiency, and affected importance, which King George the third (GOD bless him) never once assumed . . . I can forgive pride, ambition, love of fame, and desire of pre-eminence," MACHIAVEL stated, "but hypocrisy I cannot forgive—it is the mark either of a narrow and pitiful understanding, or of some dark and dreadful design. To act with the multitude, requires neither conduct nor courage."<sup>81</sup> In this vein, MACHIAVEL likened Dickinson to the Roman General Marcus Manlius (Consul in 392 B.C.) who, according to Livy, was executed by the tribunes, cast off from the top of the Tarpeian Rock for "aspiring to kingly authority"—specifically, for "assembling the multitude" and using "seditious expressions, his largesses, and pretended discovery of fraudulent practices"

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<sup>80</sup> Joseph Galloway, *A Letter to the People of Pennsylvania (1760)* in Bailyn, *Pamphlets of the American Revolution*, 257.

<sup>81</sup> Machiavel [attributed to Galloway], "Mr. Goddard," *The Pennsylvania Chronicle*, August 22, 1768.



to stir up popular support.<sup>82</sup> With this classical metaphor in mind, MACHIAVEL likened Dickinson to “a snake in the grass” which, “thanks to human infirmity,” like the revealing sound of the serpent’s rattle, always announced the obvious sign of impending danger. MACHIAVEL wondered how Dickinson and his Philadelphia cohorts, known collectively as the “Gentlemen of *Fort St. David*,” could refer to themselves as “*Sons of Liberty*” when they “prostituted” their pens “in the most nauseating praises, the most abject encomiums, that ever disgraced the mouth of the vilest sycophant in an eastern [Persian as opposed to Roman] court.”<sup>83</sup> MACHIAVEL especially took issue with the way the St. David’s cabal invoked lines from “*Tully’s* [Cicero’s] address to Julius Caesar” or “*Pliny’s* panegyric on Trajan” to lend weight to their specious rhetoric; such feeble and dishonest applications of the classical canon, MACHIAVEL asserted, only exposed their willingness to debase “*Roman Spirit*” while seeking to achieve their self-interested, effeminate designs.

For Joseph Galloway, the Society of Fort St. David’s represented a kind of Catilinarian cabal, a gathering place for Dickinson and his co-conspirators to plot the demise of British liberty in America, and Galloway used his *Pennsylvania Chronicle* to make the most of that imagery.<sup>84</sup> In reality, the Society consisted of a group of fourteen like-minded Philadelphia outdoorsmen who commonly assembled at “the Fort,” a summer fishing cabin located next to the falls along the Schuylkill River. Galloway, at odds with Dickinson personally and politically, was among those not invited to attend

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.; Livy, *History of Rome*, 6.20, trans. George Baker (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), 395. The Tarpeian Rock—the cliff on the Roman Capitoline Hill overlooking the Forum, used as an execution site.

<sup>83</sup> Machiavel [attributed to Galloway], “Mr. Goddard”, *The Pennsylvania Chronicle*, August 22, 1768.

<sup>84</sup> Machiavel dropped the “s” in his reference to the society. Contemporary and later sources reference the name as either “Fort St. Davids” or “Fort St. David’s.”

the meetings. The exclusivity of the Society thus provided Galloway a potent image to fuel his Ciceronian oration against Dickinson's purported clandestine activities to undermine royal authority in the colonies. By 1768, Dickinson was widely celebrated as the author of the *Farmer* letters, the Pennsylvania patriot who urged Americans to resist the Townshend Acts and "exert themselves in the most firm, but most peaceable manner, for obtaining relief."<sup>85</sup> In March, a Boston town meeting led by Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and Joseph Warren claimed the Pennsylvania Farmer as one of their own, using the press to praise the author in newspapers across the colonies: "At a Time when public Liberty is in Danger . . . The Colonies on this Continent are under the greatest Obligations to this Gentleman . . . who has so gloriously laboured for the common Good."<sup>86</sup> In turn, the society of Fort St. David's, also known as the "State in Schuylkill," held a special ceremony in April to present Dickinson "an elegant silver box" made of "heart of oak." The top of the box represented a Roman liberty cap on a spear, "resting on a cypher of the letters J. D.," bordered by a semi-circular inscription of Horace's frequently quoted expression, "*Pro Patria*," "For Fatherland."<sup>87</sup> The interior of the lid contained an image of "the Fort" accompanied by the inscription, "*The liberties of the British Colonies in America asserted with Attic eloquence and*

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<sup>85</sup> Schlesinger, "Politics, Propaganda, and the Philadelphia Press," 314.

<sup>86</sup> The same Bostonian laudatory article ran in several papers in March 1768. A. B., "Messieurs Edes and Gill; Boston, March 9, 1768," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, March 31, 1768; Charles V. Hagner, *Early History of the Falls of Schuylkill, Manayunk, Schuylkill and Lehigh Navigation Companies, Fairmount Waterworks, Etc.* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen, and Haffelfinger, 1869), 13-20.

<sup>87</sup> Horace, *Odes*, 3.2.13. In context, the Latin phrase in Horace reads, "*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*"—"What joy, for fatherland to die!" trans. John Conington; John Bayard, "Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman in London, to Another in This City," *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 12, 1768. Description of the Society of Fort St. David and Dickinson's box found in John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania, in the Olden Time; Being a Collection of Memoirs, Anecdotes, and Incidents of the City and Its Inhabitants*, Vol. 1 (Unknown binding: A. Hart, J. W. Moore, J. Penington, U. Hunt, and H. F. Anners, 1850), 431-432; see also Wharton Dickinson, "John Dickinson, LL.D, The Great Colonial Essayist," *The Magazine of American History* 10 (1883), 225-226.

*Roman spirit, by John Dickinson, Esq., barrister at law.*”<sup>88</sup> Revealing the personal vitriol he harbored toward Dickinson, MACHIAVEL lashed out against the Fort St. David’s gathering stating, “I do not envy the *Farmer* his box, or the honour of being admitted into your society.” A kind of shadow government with Dickinson at the helm, the Gentlemen of the Cumberland “beg to *be admitted as tributaries* to the *Farmer*”—and as for the Bostonians, “they respect him as a DIVINITY.” It would seem, declared MACHIAVEL, that your “empire is far advanced;” in Biblical overtones MACHIAVEL chided, “What a pity the powers you have on earth, cannot reach to heaven!”<sup>89</sup> For Galloway, the “popular men” of Fort St. David’s were “shallow politicians,” “the worst men” in the commonwealth because they have forsaken their sovereign and “acknowledge more Gods than one—in hopes, I presume, of *sharing* in the administration.” Turning to ancient Greece, MACHIAVEL likened Dickinson and his junto to the orators of Argos who “stirred up the commons against the nobles” to achieve their own ends, but in the process provoked an incendiary mob to murder sixteen hundred citizens; unable to contain the violence, even the orators fell victim to the murderous uprising that simply became known as the “Club Law” revolt (370 B.C.).<sup>90</sup> In comparison to the strictures of an authoritarian regime, MACHIAVEL asserted, “The Tyranny of the people is the most violent and bloody . . . for the evils it introduces are so severely felt, that they soon grow weary of it themselves, and throw

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<sup>88</sup> Wharton Dickinson, “John Dickinson, LL.D,” 226.

<sup>89</sup> A possible reference to Dan. 4:11 KJV. In his arrogance, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon aspired to rule a kingdom that “reached unto heaven.”

<sup>90</sup> The Argive revolt described in Diodorus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 15.57-58, trans. Charles Henry Oldfather (Cambridge: Loeb, Harvard University Press, 1954). Machiavel’s reference to the “Club Law” revolt at Argos, simply named for the way in which the 1,600 victims fell prey to the mob, appears to be based on Jonathan Swift’s 1701 essay, *A Discourse of the Contests and Dissensions Between the Nobles and the Commons in Athens and Rome; with the Consequences They Had Upon Both Those States* (London: John Nutt, 1701), 8-9.

the whole power into the hands of some popular man . . . who having headed them in all their violent measures before, repays them in their own coin.” In contrast to the wayward plebeians of Argos, MACHIAVEL noted that the more noble citizens of Athens protected themselves against the schemes of persuasive orators, jealously guarding their liberties by selectively ostracizing any talented individual who sought to ingratiate himself with the commons. Examples of exiled individuals included *Aristides*, “the most upright judge,” *Miltiades*, the hero of Marathon, *Pericles*, the orator and scholar, *Phocion*, the able politician, and *Alcibiades*, the brave general—each dismissed, regardless of their real or perceived motivations, because the people understood that “neither knowledge, learning, eloquence, courage, nor accomplishments could palliate the most distant design” any such leader might have in plotting to undermine their ancient form of government. The surest path to arbitrary power, MACHIAVEL declared, was a cabal of conspirators preying upon the masses to use “the violence of the people” to scale “the ladder of ambition.”<sup>91</sup>

Similar to the way Cicero challenged Catiline on the floor of the Senate in 63 B.C., Galloway prepared to bring the full force of his reason and rhetoric to bear against Dickinson and the radical patriots in the First Continental Congress, making the case for the virtue of British authority and defense of American liberties under the rights and privileges of the English constitution. Despite his best efforts to contain Dickinson’s influence and confront the appeal of radical rhetoric in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, Galloway found himself increasingly in the minority, aware that the Congress offered one last opportunity to check the rhetoric of democracy and demagoguery Dickinson and his cohorts represented. Appointed along with Dickinson as one of the eight

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<sup>91</sup> Machiavel [attributed to Galloway], “Mr. Goddard,” *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, August 22, 1768.

representatives from Pennsylvania in 1774, Galloway proposed a plan for imperial union to resolve the administrative tensions with the crown, calling for the establishment of an American branch of Parliament to ensure colonial representation and settle the question of British authority once and for all. Dickinson, as conciliatory as he was in working to maintain the imperial relationship, ultimately clashed with Galloway's model—whereas Galloway viewed Britain as the necessary seat of government authority, Dickinson, along with others, increasingly favored a future for the colonies founded on emerging principles of American nationalism.<sup>92</sup> The Congress debated Galloway's Plan of Union, but ultimately rejected the proposal by a slim margin, confirming Galloway's worst fears that the radicals were not interested in considering real solutions to the transatlantic crisis, but were instead scheming to subvert the authority of the crown. Despondent and unwilling to return to the second Congress in 1775, Galloway turned once again to the press to urge the public to resist the American rabble-rousers who had hijacked the political discourse and were now "pushing on with precipitation and madness, in the high road of sedition and rebellion."<sup>93</sup>

Galloway's 1775 manifesto, *A Candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great Britain and the Colonies*, echoed the rhetorical force of Cicero's *Orations Against Catiline*, revealing the sinister intent and strategy of the patriot agenda and warning the American public of the horrific consequences should the plot succeed. Arguing the merits of his Plan of Union, Galloway recounted his failed attempt to

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<sup>92</sup> Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind*, 9-27.

<sup>93</sup> Joseph Galloway, *A Candid Examination of the Mutual Claims of Great Britain and the Colonies* (1775) in Merrill Jensen, ed, *Tracts of the American Revolution, 1763-1776* (Indianapolis, Hackett Publishing, 1966), 352.

persuade the Congress to resolve the crisis, asserting the delegates' rejection of his proposal was proof enough of the radicals' true intentions. Invoking Cicero's ideal vision of government, "*Multitudo juris consensus et utilitatis communione fociata*"—"a multitude of people united together by a communion of interests, and common laws to which they all submit with one accord," Galloway reminded the colonists of their privileged status under the English constitution.<sup>94</sup> No other society in the world had afforded its subjects protection against arbitrary power "with so much wisdom and policy," Galloway asserted, an arrangement under which the colonies had always prospered without disruption until 1765. What exactly have the radicals so "lately discovered," Galloway asked, that would convince them they now "have a right to cast off their allegiance?"<sup>95</sup> The flaw was not in the British constitution, Galloway contended, but in the great pains "the American demagogues" have taken "to delude the unhappy people, whom they have doomed to be the dupes of their ambition, into a belief that no justice was to be obtained of his Majesty, and his houses of parliament."<sup>96</sup> Appealing to the better judgment of his American audience, Galloway pleaded for the colonists to consider the implications of what it would mean to follow these blind guides into rebellion and civil conflict—"What think you, O my countrymen, what think you will be your condition, when you shall see the designs of these men carried a little farther into execution?" The pitch of Galloway's polemic resonated the urgency of Cicero's warning to the people of Rome concerning the impending atrocities the Catilinarian conspirators were preparing to unleash upon the population—"Companies

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<sup>94</sup> Cicero, *The Republic*, Book 1.39. Galloway appears to derive his translation of Cicero from J. J. Burlamaqui's *Principles of Natural and Politic Law* (1748); Galloway, *A Candid Examination*, 353.

<sup>95</sup> Galloway, *A Candid Examination*, 365, 378.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

of armed, but undisciplined men, headed by men unprincipled, traveling over your estates, entering your houses—your castles—and sacred repositories of safety for all you hold dear and valuable—seizing your property, and carrying havock and devastation wherever they head.” Galloway’s vision of anarchy resembled the darker side of Crèvecoeur’s frontier narrative where illegitimate commoners, now unrestrained patriots, suddenly had the freedom to act according to their horrific appetites. Galloway warned that such men, after “ravishing your wives and daughters,” will plunge “the dagger into their tender bosoms, while you are obliged to stand the speechless, the helpless spectators. Tell me, oh! tell me—whether your hearts are so obdurate as to be prepared for such shocking scenes of confusion and death.” Galloway’s appreciation of the classical narrative arc, spanning the distance from ancient Rome to the western shores of eighteenth-century America, informed his assertion that such terrible events were likely to unfold in the colonies because they had happened in the ancient past under similar circumstances. “Believe me,” Galloway declared, “this is a real and not an exaggerated picture of that distress, into which the schemes of those men, who have assumed the characters of your guardians, and dare to stile themselves his Majesty’s most loyal subjects, will inevitably plunge you, unless you oppose them with all the fortitude which reason and virtue can inspire.”<sup>97</sup>

Through his persistence in returning to the Catilinarian motif, even in the wake of apparent defeat, Galloway demonstrated how Tory-loyalists viewed the classics not only as repository for rhetorical flourish, but as an essential platform from which to assert principled attacks against the momentum of revolutionary change in the American colonies. Given his admiration for the classical model of Marcus Tullius

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 375-376.

Cicero, there is good reason to speculate Galloway readily identified with the ancient orator and defender of the Roman Republic after the American Congress finally declared independence. Just as the Triumvirate of Antony, Octavian and Lepidus declared Cicero an enemy of the state and condemned him to death in 43 B.C., Galloway had little option but to depart the American stage in 1776, thoroughly ostracized by his long time political opponent and rival, John Dickinson, whom Galloway identified in his MACHIAVEL letters with some prescience as the “Octavian” of the colonial triumvirs. Fearful for his safety, Galloway departed Philadelphia and sought refuge at General Howe’s New Jersey encampment in December 1776, offering his services to the British army as an intelligence officer. Although deposed in the colonies, Galloway refused to remain silent on the American rebellion. In 1778, Galloway arrived in London where he opposed the anti-war faction and those in Parliament sympathetic to the American cause. Arguing against calls for a negotiated settlement and early end to the conflict, Galloway feverishly produced thirteen pamphlets over the course of five years.<sup>98</sup> One of those pamphlets, *Letters from Cicero to Catiline the Second*, appeared as seven articles in *The London Chronicle* between 1780 and 1781. No other pamphlet written during the Revolution perhaps so clearly capitalized on the Catiline motif to contest the Whig-patriot political agenda. Each of the articles drew upon ancient historical themes to castigate the prominent Whig, James Fox, who had advocated the American cause in Parliament.<sup>99</sup> Branding Fox as “Catiline the Second” was the most direct way for Galloway to demonize the

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<sup>98</sup> Ferling, *The Loyalist Mind*, 37-47.

<sup>99</sup> The first edition of the collected letters (articles) was published in London in 1781. Joseph Galloway, *Letters from Cicero to Catiline the Second, with Corrections and Explanatory Notes* (London: J. Bew, 1781).



parliamentarian whom he accused of treason for secretly corresponding with George Washington and sending financial support to the rebel army: “Of all the conspiracies which ever entered into the hearts of the wicked, that of Lucius Catiline was the most horrid,” Galloway declared—“More than 1700 years have since elapsed, and it has remained unparalleled until the period of your faction.”<sup>100</sup> Writing as Cicero, Galloway opened each of his seven letters citing an appropriate reference from the *Oration Against Catiline*. Quoting from Cicero’s *First Oration* in *Letter I*, Galloway warned Fox, “Neither the shades of night can conceal *your traitorous assemblies*; nor the walls of your house hinder the voice of *your treason* from being heard.” Building on this theme, Galloway drew upon the ancient literature to establish the metaphorical association with Fox—“*Catiline the First*, like you, was plausible, rapid, and eloquent in his harangues” and “determined to gratify his boundless ambition . . . resolved to seize into his own hands the authority of the State.” Galloway even used a play on words to suggest the parliamentarian’s natural similarities to the infamous Roman conspirator—like you, Galloway wrote, “possessed of all the arts and intrigues of a FOX,” Catiline “was hidden and secret in his designs”—by such intrigues, “you and your associates became the joint conspirators against the common weal and safety of your country, and firmly united with the seditious part of America in one COMMON REBELLION.”<sup>101</sup> What particularly incensed Galloway was the manner in which Fox and those like him had acted to undermine the British campaign in America, providing Benjamin Franklin with military intelligence, calling for the early withdrawal of forces in Parliament, and secretly prevailing upon France to enter the war, all while professing

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<sup>100</sup> Galloway, *Letters from Cicero to Catiline the Second*, 63.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 22.

loyalty to the crown—“You have done all this, under the *same disguise*, and *fair pretences*, which L. Catiline made use of in deluding the Roman people to form his band of conspirators against the Government and liberties of Rome: he and his confederates, like you and your associates,” as Cicero succinctly asserted, “assumed the characters of *Patriots*, and covered their secret and wicked design *under their clamours for Liberty*.”<sup>102</sup>

Joseph Galloway’s use of the Catilinarian motif was emblematic of the way in which Tory-loyalists looked to the classics to provide not only the rationale, but also the moral imperative that called them to defend the virtue of the English constitution against corruption and conspiratorial assault. Like the Whig-patriots in the decade leading up to 1776, Tory-conservatives imagined themselves as the eighteenth-century remnant of the Greek and Roman republican tradition, a privilege bestowed upon them as the sons of British liberty and subjects of the crown. This shared American vision of classical virtue began to fragment as tensions in the transatlantic relationship ignited a lively political debate on the reasons, not only for Parliament’s seemingly irrational and misguided revenue policies in the 1760s, but also for the equally inexplicable convulsive reaction to those policies in the colonies. British Americans’ familiarity with the classical world preconditioned them to view these rising tensions with the mother country and among themselves through the lens of ancient conspiracies—Whig-patriots saw themselves donning the mantle of Brutus against the tyrannical encroachment of the Caesarian monarchy, while Tory-loyalists imagined themselves fighting in the tradition of Cicero against a grand conspiracy of populist Catilines. Viewing themselves as the descendants of the ancient defenders of republican virtue, all

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 76.

British Americans, whether radical or conservative in their political view, were preoccupied with conspiracies against liberty because they ascribed to the tenets of the classical canon alerting them to stand ever vigilant against internal vice and corruption.

The epic battle between Cicero and Catiline dominated the eighteenth-century conspiratorial discourse and had particular significance among Tory-loyalists who identified with Cicero's intervention in 63 B.C. as a model for how state authority was essential to counter populist movements and preserve the balance of the republican order of government. The history of the infamous conspiracy was readily familiar and accessible to the transatlantic political world by the 1760s and 70s due to such modern popularizations of the Catiline trope as Thomas Gordon's *The Conspirators* (1721), Conyers Middleton's *Life of Cicero* (1741), and Gordon's *Discourses* and translation of Sallust's *Bellum Catilinae* (1744). These modern commentaries on the Catilinarian narrative helped distill and convey two important principles to the eighteenth-century political mind; first, conspiracies in a republic often emerged due to a weakness of character in the citizenry, making it possible for seditious leaders like Catiline to manipulate the public to do their bidding. Second, conspiracies were likely to succeed when an imbalance in the constitution, an expansion of the democratic branch, placed the monarchical and aristocratic branches at risk to popular revolt. Cicero was a champion of liberty not only because he revealed the plot against Rome, but because he persuaded the *demos* and Senate to carry out swift justice against the conspirators and restored Rome's constitutional balance.

Whereas patriot writers viewed conspiratorial threats stemming from a deliberate move of the crown and Parliament to control and enslave the colonies for

economic purposes, loyalists attributed the rising dissent in America to the schemes of a handful of colonial upstarts driven by their own material and political interests to instigate rebellion. When Whig-patriot writers such as PASKALOS (Joseph Warren) or the CENTINEL and his affiliates invoked the Catiline motif, they did so to attack the governor of Massachusetts and the perceived collusion between the royal appointees in the colonies and the British ministry. In contrast, Tory-loyalists such as IMPAVIDUS and MACHIAVEL (Joseph Galloway) identified the Catilinarian spirit in the patriot demagogues who were using their talents to stir up the masses for ignoble purposes; the leaders of the American rebellion were no better than the Triumvirate of ancient Rome, taking advantage of the current crisis to seize absolute power. Even John Dickinson, who epitomized the most moderate of colonial patriots, was for Joseph Galloway a Catilinarian “snake in the grass,” a deceiver who claimed to advocate the cause of liberty while using incendiary rhetoric to inflame the passion of the mob to establish his own “Augustan” empire on the American continent. In the loyalist mind, the prospect of rebellion and anarchy was not only violent and bloody, it also offered the surest path to arbitrary power and tyranny. In this way, Galloway demonstrated one reason why loyalists looked to the Catilinarian narrative to inform their particular critique of the American Revolution—given the choice between a strong, if not invasive monarchical government or the uncertainties of a popular democratic system, conservatives like Galloway would take their chances with a Julius Caesar over a Catilinarian popular uprising every time.

Colonists who advocated a conservative, loyalist point of view in the 1760s and 70s interpreted the transatlantic crisis based on high principle and historic precedent;

their aspirations and fears, like those on the other side of the political divide, were grounded in a vision of classical virtue, and they looked to the classical canon to inform and legitimize their arguments in much the same way as their patriot counterparts. More than a rhetorical point of reference, the Catilinarian conspiracy provided loyalist writers a moral counterweight against what they feared to be a radical patriot insurgency threatening to reduce the great bulwark of English liberty to ashes. The fact these ideologies were grounded in a thorough comprehension and high regard for the lessons of antiquity underscores the significance of the classics in shaping the perceptions of British Americans as they grappled with the sociopolitical changes transforming the colonial landscape in the decade leading up to 1776.

## COUNTERING AN AMERICAN INSURGENCY: THE LANGUAGE OF CLASSICAL LOYALTY

The rhetoric of the American revolutionary movement challenged the defenders of British authority in the colonies to expose their opponents' error and persuade the public to remain faithful to the ancient tenets of the English constitution. The political debate that ensued between Whig-patriots and Tory-loyalists over the meaning of American liberty in the pre-revolutionary years represented a competition between two rhetorical narratives, each one emanating from the same substrate—the ancient literary canon. Whig-patriots derived a radical mandate from that classical tradition, claiming that the principles of republicanism required them to resist royal authority to preserve their liberties; Tory-loyalists, in contrast, maintained their constant faith in the English constitution, which, in their view, had always reflected the classical tenets of republican government since its inception. Adhering to a conservative mandate, loyalists contended that liberty could only be preserved under the authority of the English crown.

Those British Americans who advocated the loyalist cause encountered two formidable obstacles. First, they had to confront their Whig opponents in the ideological arena and correct their misinterpretation and misapplication of the ancient tenets of political philosophy. This task became untenable as loyalist writers concluded that the Whig error was not accidental, but intentional and conspiratorial. Second, the loyalists had to counter not only the demagogues, but also the masses that had embraced the flamboyancy of the rabble-rousers' populist, incendiary message. This task proved

especially difficult since the most able and prominent conservative advocates—royal appointees like Thomas Hutchinson and Daniel Leonard, and Anglican clerics like Jonathan Boucher and Samuel Seabury—were naturally reticent to tailor their rhetoric to a plebeian audience. Despite the challenges they faced, these writers, no less passionate than their patriot counterparts, opposed the revolutionary movement using both classical references and a classical mindset to make their case for continued loyalty to the crown. The loyalist counter-narrative in the pre-revolutionary years reflected the fervency of British Americans fighting to maintain the moral high ground, invoking the classical themes of liberty and tyranny to expose the glaring corruption of their countrymen and persuade the prodigal subjects of America to repent of their wicked ways and find their haven of liberty once again under the bulwark of the English constitution.

Tory-conservatives, like their Whig-radical counterparts, interpreted the sociopolitical changes rapidly transforming the colonial landscape in the 1760s and 70s in classical terms, and this intellectual tendency both shaped their understanding of the crisis and informed their principled arguments against the revolutionary movement. In December 1772, a Tory-loyalist writer in the *Boston News-Letter*, “X,” pointed to the lessons of classical history to express his dismay concerning the way Whig-radicals in Boston were publishing their vitriolic attacks against the Hutchinson administration.<sup>1</sup> “FACTION is as pernicious as power overstrained,” X asserted, and political rivalry “has undone almost every free Government mentioned by antiquity.” The classical world illustrated time and again that the most dangerous threats to republican governments were internal, driven by self-serving demagogues ready to manipulate the masses to

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<sup>1</sup> X [unknown], “Mr. Draper,” *The Boston News-Letter*, December 24, 1772.

achieve their objectives. After the Roman Republic made peace with its sovereign enemies, X observed, faction forced Rome “to turn her arms upon herself, by which means she at last lost her Liberty,” and “Athens, Carthage, Sparta, all were ruined by the same means.” Furthermore, X declared, “I do not think it to be the Temper of the People in general to treat their Rulers with disrespect”—“The honest-hearted Plebeian” is not likely to defy the authorities unless manipulated to do so by the smooth-talking, “self-interested Calumniator,” the man of “wiley arts” who subtly “insinuates himself into his confidence” while “propagating direct falsehoods to answer their unhallowed purposes.” To illustrate this point, X noted a recent author in the *Boston Gazette*, “An Israelite,” whose incendiary article “rendered Governor HUTCHINSON’S character contemptible” through false accusations, describing him as “a man of uncommon art, subtilty, and disguise.”<sup>2</sup> Even more disturbing was an article in the *Massachusetts Spy* arguing that assassination had served as a means of removing undesirable governors in the past, and perhaps the present situation in Boston might benefit from a similar remedy—“Nor is this the first time that Assassination has been recommended in this patriotic Paper,” X declared. “To such Patriots as this, we owe the stationing of the King’s Ships and Troops among us to the great emolument of the Country.”<sup>3</sup> Mirroring the jealous rage that drove Cain to murder his own brother, these “pretended Patriots,” usurping “all that they decry’d in others,” were paving the path to their own destruction. Pernicious rhetoric against the government was destroying Boston, X asserted, and “Moderation ought therefore to be as strongly recommended to the People . . . as it ought to men in office.” Such was the sentiment among conservatives in Boston as they

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<sup>2</sup> An Israelite [unknown], “From the Public Ledger of Sept 8,” *Boston Gazette*, December 7, 1772.

<sup>3</sup> “For the Massachusetts Spy,” *Massachusetts Spy*, December 17, 1772.



witnessed the rising tide of revolutionary foment rapidly unravel the communal fabric of the colony. The scene of sociopolitical fragmentation immediately conjured up scenes of classical horror stories in the writer's imagination—malevolent conspiracies, mob violence, assassination attempts, and the specter of tyranny—all appeared to be surfacing in Massachusetts Bay, promoted by the relentless attacks of Whig radicals in the press. Viewing the unfolding crisis of the pre-revolutionary years through the lens of antiquity, the leading advocates of the loyalist cause looked to the models and antimodels of the ancient past to construct their rhetoric against the radicalism of the Revolution and express their most ardent beliefs concerning liberty and the threat of tyranny in the American colonies.

The dramatic themes of classical literature were particularly useful to Tory-loyalists as they sought to describe the unnatural and nefarious quality they perceived in the Whig-patriot agenda. Looking back over the history of the Revolution from his cottage outside London in 1780, Peter Oliver, the former Chief Justice of Massachusetts and Tory-loyalist, selected a vivid metaphor from the annals of classical mythology, the *Lernaian Hydra*, to describe what he observed and experienced in Massachusetts in the 1760s and 70s.<sup>4</sup> For Oliver, the insidious nine-headed Hydra of the Lerna swamp, associated with the Greek legend of Heracles (Hercules in Roman mythology), aptly reflected the pernicious spirit of sedition that originated in Boston and soon embroiled all the colonies in open rebellion against the crown. According to the mythographic literature, Heracles, the greatest of the Greek heroes, defeated the Hydra as one of

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<sup>4</sup> *Lernaian* (Greek) or *Lernaean* (Latin) Hydra—in Greek and Roman mythology, the multiple-headed serpentine creature that lived in the swamp near Lerna, an ancient city on the east coast of the Peloponnesus south of Argos.

“twelve labors” mandated by King Eurystheus.<sup>5</sup> The Hydra had “such powerful venom that she killed men just by breathing,” according to Apollodorus, and Heracles found his club ineffective in smashing the Hydra’s multiple heads, “for when one was smashed, two heads grew back.”<sup>6</sup> Only with the assistance of his nephew, Iolaos, who enabled Heracles to burn the stumps of the monster’s severed heads, was Heracles able to finally defeat the serpentine nemesis. Using this metaphor to explain the growth of the Catilinarian conflagration in the colonies, Peter Oliver’s history, *The Origin & Progress of the American Rebellion* (1781), emphasized the unnatural, diabolical, and unjustified nature of the Revolution. Oliver asserted the American revolt was “as striking a Phaenomenon, in the political World, as hath appeared for many Ages past; & perhaps a *singular* one” since colonial rebellions from the time of ancient Rome to the present had usually flared in response to “severe Oppressions.”<sup>7</sup> The case of Massachusetts was particularly astonishing, and even embarrassing, Oliver observed, because the Bay Colony “had been nursed, in its Infancy, with the most tender Care & Attention” and “indulged with every Gratification that the most froward Child could wish for.” That such a commonwealth of privileged subjects should “plunge into an unnatural Rebellion” against a patriot sovereign “whose publick Virtues had announced him to be the Father of his Country” was truly disturbing, and for Oliver, ultimately pointed to a sinister, monstrous evil lurking beneath the surface of the idyllic colonial landscape.

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<sup>5</sup> Heracles had to pay penance for murdering his sons. Eurystheus assigned Heracles twelve tasks to fulfill his penance—slaying the Lernaian Hydra was the second on the list. Because Heracles required assistance from his nephew to defeat the Hydra, Eurystheus did not ultimately grant Heracles credit for the victory.

<sup>6</sup> Hyginus, *Fabulae*, 30 and Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 2.5.77-80 in Apollodorus’ ‘Library’ and Hyginus’ ‘Fabulae’; *Two Handbooks of Greek Mythology*, trans. R. Scott Smith and Stephen M. Trzaskoma (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2007), 30-31, 109-110.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Oliver, *The Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion* (1781) in *Peter Oliver’s Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion: A Tory View*, ed. Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 3.

According to Oliver, news of the impending Stamp Act in 1765 ignited “the Passions & Designs of the Factious”—every dissenting mouth “vomited out Curses against *Great Britain*, & the Press rung its changes upon Slavery”—and “Accordingly, the *Hydra* was roused.”<sup>8</sup> Reflecting the malevolent and vicious schemes of enterprising men, the Hydra was always expanding, relentless in its reach, fueled by greed and rage, devouring whoever stood in its path. Breathing out the poison of mob action, Massachusetts governors Bernard and Hutchinson became the Hydra’s early victims. A Heracles was needed to slay the monster, but unlike Iolaos in the ancient myth, the mother country was ineffectual in coming to the aid of its loyal subjects.<sup>9</sup> Hutchinson “exerted every Nerve to save his Country,” Oliver declared, but the demagogues “were determined to ruin him, tho’ they plunged their Country & theirselves too, into absolute Destruction.”<sup>10</sup>

Oliver’s use of the Hydra motif demonstrated the way Tory-loyalists relied on the dramatic themes of classical literature to convey their impassioned sentiments concerning the destructive encroachment of radicalism in the colonies. Peter Oliver’s experience confronting the persecuting spirit of liberty in Boston provided him sufficient material to draw upon. Peter and his older brother, Andrew Oliver, the Bay Colony’s lieutenant governor, had been active in Massachusetts legal and political affairs since the 1740s, and like Thomas Hutchinson, to whom the pair had familial ties, the Oliver brothers found themselves the target of increasing Whig hostility in the 1760s. Because he held the unenviable title of Stamp Master for Massachusetts, an angry mob destroyed Andrew Oliver’s stamp office, burned an effigy, and attacked his

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<sup>8</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 51.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, ix, xv.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

private home during the Stamp Act riots in August 1765.<sup>11</sup> Both brothers were “purged” from the Massachusetts Council by the Whig-controlled House of Representatives following the Stamp Act repeal, and Peter Oliver was later impeached as Chief Justice after having served eighteen years on the superior court.<sup>12</sup> But perhaps the incident that resonated in Peter Oliver’s memory more than any other was the vitriol he received at the time of his brother’s untimely death in 1774. Still serving as Chief Justice at the time, Peter had to remain out of public view during his brother’s funeral while a raucous mob disgracefully disrupted the pitiful proceedings.<sup>13</sup> These events were sufficient to conjure up the image of the Hydra in Peter Oliver’s assessment of all that had transpired in Boston. The chief instigator, in his view, was James Otis, whose rancor stemmed from a 1760 decision that appointed Thomas Hutchinson Chief Justice ahead of his father, Mr. Otis Sr. In his wrath, Oliver wrote that James Otis exerted “the Abilities of his Head & the Malice of his Heart” to fulfill a *Stygian* oath that Otis had made to exact vengeance and set ‘*the Province in a Flame.*’”<sup>14</sup> Referring to the river Styx of the mythological underworld, Oliver invoked the classical tradition of divine oath-taking with regard to the river of Hades, suggesting that Otis’ commitment to the destruction of Massachusetts was inviolate to the extreme. Otis’ Harvard education and study of the law did little to sway his “contemptuous Pride,” Oliver observed, such that “his whole life” seemed to mirror “that Maxim which *Milton* puts in the Mouth of one

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<sup>11</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 66-68; Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1991), 58-60.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to Andrew and Peter Oliver, the House of Representatives also purged Thomas Hutchinson and Jonathan Sewall from the Council in 1766. Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 112, 265.

<sup>13</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 270.

<sup>14</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 48.

of his Devils, . . . ‘Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.’”<sup>15</sup> In this way, Oliver lamented, Otis became “The first Character” responsible for breaking down “the Barriers of Government to let in the Hydra of Rebellion.”<sup>16</sup> Oliver held Otis largely responsible for the Stamp Act riots in August 1765, during which “The Mob of Otis & his clients plundered Mr. *Hutchinsons* House of its full Contents, destroyed his Papers, unroofed his House, & sought his & his Children’s Lives”—“All this was Joy to Mr. Otis,” Oliver noted with appall.<sup>17</sup> In describing the growth of the Boston Hydra, Oliver named those whom Otis infected with the poison of his treacherous breath—virtuous subjects such as the lawyer Joseph Hawley, formerly “a great Friend to Mr. Hutchinson” until Mr. Otis turned Hawley against the administration, and “like the red Dragon of the Revelation, drew a third part of the Stars of Heaven after him.”<sup>18</sup> Continuing on a Biblical theme, Oliver highlighted the machinations of Samuel Adams, who “was ever going about seeking whom he might devour,” using his “serpentine cunning” to manipulate men like John Hancock “in the same Manner that the Devil is represented seducing *Eve*, by a constant whispering at his ear.”<sup>19</sup> Oliver compared Adams to a cuttlefish, who at an instant would “discharge his muddy Liquid, & darken the Water to such an Hue, that the other was lost to his Way;” in one moment, Adams performed as “an Angel of Light with the weak Religionist,” and in another, with the degenerate, “he would disrobe his self & appear with his cloven Foot & in his native

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 36; Oliver quoted John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Vol. 1, 1.263 (London: J. and H. Richter, 1794), 12.

<sup>16</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 35-36.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 37; Rev. 12: 3-4 KJV—“And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.”

<sup>19</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 40; 1 Pet. 5:8 KJV—“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

Blackness of Darkness.”<sup>20</sup> For Oliver, perhaps the most disturbing accomplices in Otis’ Catilinarian cabal were Boston’s congregational clergymen, whom Oliver described as “Mr. Otis’ black Regiment,” composed of Charles Chauncy, Jonathan Mayhew, and Samuel Cooper. Supportive of any measures that could undermine the influence of the Church of England in America, Chauncy and Mayhew found common cause with the Boston radicals, and Oliver denounced them for using the pulpit to promote sedition and riots. Cooper, the third member of Oliver’s “sacerdotal Triumvirate,” was particularly duplicitous and damaging to the commonwealth, able to “mix privately with the Rabble, in their nightly seditious Associations” and prevaricate before God and man with a tongue that was “Butter & Oil, but under it was the Poison of Asps.”<sup>21</sup> The “black Regiment,” in combination with the other sinister heads of Oliver’s Bostonian Hydra, reduced Massachusetts to mob rule “both in form and substance;” this rapid expansion of the *demos* simply rendered the aristocratic and monarchical branches of government incapable of maintaining order and control. “Men of Sense, who could see through the Delusion,” Oliver asserted, realized that any attempt to fight the menace would have been as ineffectual as combating “a Whirlwind or a Hurricane.”<sup>22</sup>

Similar to the way Whig-patriots viewed the policies of the British ministry as an encroachment of tyranny from across the Atlantic, Tory-loyalists interpreted the vitriol against royal authority, and Thomas Hutchinson in particular, as the inverse of the classical horror story, the usurpation of power from below. Hutchinson was

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<sup>20</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 40; 2 Cor. 11:14 KJV—“And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light.”

<sup>21</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 41-45; James B. Bell, *A War of Religion; Dissenters, Anglicans, and the American Revolution* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 168.

<sup>22</sup> Oliver, *Origin and Progress of the American Rebellion*, 65; Cited in Robert E. Brown, “Democracy in Colonial Massachusetts,” *The New England Quarterly* 25 (Sep 1952), 307.

increasingly excoriated in the press in 1771. The *Boston Gazette* and *Massachusetts Spy*, which served as the lead transmitters for extremist views in the Bay Colony, published articles by Samuel Adams and others describing Hutchinson as “a monster in government,” a Julius Caesar, a “smooth and subtle tyrant” actively scheming with the ministry to enslave the people of Boston.<sup>23</sup> As Bernard Bailyn aptly summarized, the animosity Hutchinson attracted in the press surpassed “any ordinary bounds”—the responses he excited were “morbid, pathological, paranoiac in their intensity.”<sup>24</sup> Adapting the models of antiquity to the streets of eighteenth-century Boston, the Sons of Liberty and their pseudonymous writers popularized the “classical dogmas of freedom” in a way that offended the intellectual sensitivities of Tories like Hutchinson who viewed such impassioned rhetoric as an affront to the high principles of the English constitution. In his correspondence, Hutchinson referred to Samuel Adams as “That pale, lean Cassius” who “knew how to translate the Law of Nature into a thrilling popular slogan” and warned fellow sympathizer Israel Williams, “you don’t live in the Commonwealth of Plato, but in the dregs of Romulus. Cato himself would make a poor figure in our days.”<sup>25</sup> The masthead of the *Massachusetts Spy* illustrated the style of Whig classicism that Tories viewed as combative and dangerous to the stability of the commonwealth. Including a quotation from a scene in Addison’s *Cato* where the Roman statesman glorified the execution of Sempronius’ mutineers as a worthy sacrifice to Liberty, the *Spy*’s tag line from November 1771 to April 1775 rallied

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<sup>23</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 198-199.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 179; Richard M. Gummere, “The Heritage of the Classics in Colonial North America. An Essay on the Greco-Roman Tradition,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 99 (April 15, 1995), 77; Brown, “Democracy in Colonial Massachusetts,” 312.

Bostonians to defend the cause of freedom: “Do thou Great Liberty inspire our souls,” or else, “our deaths glorious in thy Defense.”<sup>26</sup>

Governor Hutchinson attempted to quell the political storm in Massachusetts by going on the rhetorical counteroffensive in 1771, framing the language of classical liberty in terms Hutchinson viewed as wholly consistent with the stalwart principles of the ancient constitution. Together with his lieutenant governor, Andrew Oliver, Hutchinson founded a new Boston paper, *The Censor*, hoping to expose the inaccuracies and contradictions in the radical interpretation and application of the classical heritage. The selected title of the paper reflected Hutchinson’s intended purpose, a reference not to Joseph Addison’s Cato of Utica, but Cato the Elder (234-149 B.C.), the great-grandfather who held the distinguished Roman office of Censor, the regulator of the *regimen morum* (public morality).<sup>27</sup> Hutchinson styled himself as the Censor of Massachusetts, the ranking statesman whose political experience, knowledge of history, and ability to articulate reasoned arguments had suddenly become indispensable for refuting the slanderous attacks in the press and restoring the civic virtue of the commonwealth. The public had been deluded by a Catilinarian conspiracy, and Hutchinson and Oliver vigorously published twenty-five issues of the pro-loyalist paper over the course of five months.<sup>28</sup> Hutchinson’s debut edition of *The Censor*, published on November 23, 1771, showcased a radical Whig article that appeared in the *Massachusetts Spy* the week before, written by the pseudonymous inflammatory author,

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<sup>26</sup> Joseph Addison, *Cato, A Tragedy*, Act III Scene V in *Cato: A Tragedy and Selected Essays*, ed. Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004); Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 53.

<sup>27</sup> Alan E. Astin, “Regimen Morum,” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 78 (1988), 14-34; Eran Shalev, “Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms during the American Revolution and Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 23 (Summer 2003), 159.

<sup>28</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 199-200.



MUCIUS SCAEVOLA (Joseph Greenleaf).<sup>29</sup> SCAEVOLA's article took aim at Hutchinson, lambasting the governor's annual Thanksgiving proclamation for exhorting the people of Massachusetts to be grateful for their current privileges under the crown. Incensed by the governor's remark, SCAEVOLA declared, "We may consider him then as triumphing over us as SLAVES" when Mr. Hutchinson exhorts us to solemnly thank God for our current state of tyranny—"I cannot but view him as a usurper" and "a monster in government." Any act approved by the governor, SCAEVOLA asserted, is "ipso facto, null and void, and consequently, not binding on us." Greenleaf aptly matched his selected moniker "Scaevola" to his inflammatory attack. As recorded in Livy, in 508 B.C., Gaius Mucius, a Roman youth, appealed to the Senate for permission to carry out a daring mission to assassinate the Etruscan king, Porsinna who had subjected Rome to a humiliating siege.<sup>30</sup> Securing the Senate's approval, Mucius courageously infiltrated the Etruscan camp, but failed in his mission by inadvertently killing the king's secretary. Seized and brought before Porsinna to face death by fire, Mucius brazenly declared, "I am a Roman citizen . . . I can die as resolutely as I could kill. . . to endure valiantly is the Roman way." Mucius then shocked all in attendance when he plunged his right hand, unflinching, into the flame on the altar, roasting it as if devoid of sensation, warning the king that three hundred additional young men were prepared to give their lives in similar fashion for the defense of Rome. Sufficiently disturbed by the youth's self-mutilation, Porsinna released Mucius to return to Rome and decided to end the siege. From that time on, Mucius inherited the name "*Scaevola*" ("left handed"). In

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph Greenleaf was a member of the Boston Committee of Correspondence along with James Otis and Samuel Adams. Greenleaf's Mucius Scaevola article appeared in the *Massachusetts Spy*, November 14, 1771. See Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 198.

<sup>30</sup> Livy, *History of Rome*, 2.12-13, trans. George Baker (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1836), 99-100.

Thomas Hutchinson's Boston, although Whig-patriots perceived the classical virtues of Roman firmness and courage in Greenleaf's assault on the governor, for Tory-loyalists, MUCIUS SCAEVOLA and his incendiary cohort simply depicted the "madness of mankind," driven to roast themselves in the flame, but ultimately devoid of "all the social virtues"—such men, declared *The Censor*, discovered their inspiration in "personal malice and revenge" rather than noble "philanthropy and patriotism."<sup>31</sup> *The Censor* turned Greenleaf's classical allusion against him, attributing SCAEVOLA's professed patriotism to impassioned "phrenzy" and "barefaced rebellion." Such "virulent" madmen, declared *The Censor*, "take pleasure" in disrupting the machinery of government "for the vain purpose of creating a temporary importance to themselves;" SCAEVOLA, while fashioning himself the fiery patriot, walks with "the swagger of a presumptuous demagogue," stirring up "intestine commotions" and assassinating "the most sacred and unimpeachable" leaders of the commonwealth. Disturbed and bewildered by these irresponsible and ruinous attacks, *The Censor* contended, "No government perhaps has suffered such astonishing vicissitudes as our own" at the hand of enterprising "state-desperadoes" like CANDIDUS, LEONIDAS, and MUCIUS SCAEVOLA.<sup>32</sup>

In a subsequent article in *The Censor*, the pseudonymous author "FREEMAN" urged Bostonians to reject the rabble-rousers and listen instead "to the voice of the prudent and virtuous citizen."<sup>33</sup> Appealing to the classical record, FREEMAN reminded

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<sup>31</sup> "From the Massachusetts Spy, No. 37," *The Censor*, November 23, 1771; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Candidus [Samuel Adams] and Leonidas [unknown], in concert with Mucius Scaevola [Joseph Greenleaf], published attacks against Hutchinson in the *Boston Gazette* and *Massachusetts Spy* in 1771; Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 198.

<sup>33</sup> Freeman [unknown], *The Censor*, January 4, 1772; Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 200-201.

his readers that the best theories of government had already been tested and proven from the time of antiquity, culminating in the framework of the English constitution, a form of government “so near to perfection” that Tacitus imagined such a model “existing only in idea”—a mixed monarchy composed of the three fundamental branches “*King, Lords, and Commons*,” each ensuring “mutual checks upon the other.” FREEMAN contended that Whig-patriot challenges to the current British system, the authority of Parliament, and even popular notions about liberty, were all deplorably uninformed and misguided, defying the tenets of historical precedent and sound reason. “It is necessary there should be a supreme power lodged somewhere,” FREEMAN asserted, and “were we to set up for independency, as some of our writers give out,” we would have to replace the English model with another system, or worse, “submit to the *Dominatio Plebis*—the *Rule of the Multitude*.” Citing David Hume’s analysis on the fall of the Roman Republic, FREEMAN observed that innovations in government, particularly those that tipped the balance in favor of the democratic branch, historically produced disastrous results: According to Hume, “The whole government fell into anarchy” and the greatest happiness which the Romans could look for, was the despotic power of the CAESARS.” The courageous and noble sacrifices of CATO and BRUTUS in the defense of liberty, although “highly laudable,” were ultimately to no avail, except “to hasten the fatal period of the Roman government, and render its convulsions and dying agonies more violent and painful.”<sup>34</sup> In concert with Hume’s critique, FREEMAN asserted the patriot rhetoric in Boston revealed an internal contradiction in the Whig agenda—while calling for liberty and “aiming at independence themselves,” FREEMAN

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<sup>34</sup> Freeman quoted David Hume’s essay, “That Politics May be Reduced to a Science (1752),” *David Hume Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 15, 23.

noted, these rebels “cannot bear to see any man independent of them,” using the most “absurd, arbitrary, and tyrannical measures” to sway the public, including subverting “the ecclesiastical constitution of the country” and coercing the clergy to support their radical plan. Driven by passion rather than reason, these patriots were chasing a mirage, promoting an incoherent idea of liberty, one that they themselves were not prepared to fully support. Building on this theme, a subsequent edition of *The Censor* ironically reprinted a lengthy excerpt from one of Thomas Gordon’s essays from the *Independent Whig* (1720-21).<sup>35</sup> Pointing to ancient Athens, *The Censor* noted that Cicero critiqued the Athenians’ leniency in permitting open defiance and personal attacks against the government, “even upon the stage”—“to suffer such invectives against men in authority, was unpardonable,” Cicero declared.<sup>36</sup> Such scandalous vilifications threatened not only individual leaders like Pericles and Alcibiades, but the state itself and therefore required restraint.<sup>37</sup> As Gordon observed, even the licentious Athenians could no longer tolerate these libelers; exposed “to publick scorn in a wanton lampoon,” Alcibiades finally drowned one of the poets who slandered his character, a “terrible vengeance,” but not surprising, Gordon added, “from a man of his great spirit, great quality, and publick dignity.” In reviving Gordon’s essay in 1772, *The Censor* pointed the Boston radicals to the mirror of antiquity where they might observe their

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<sup>35</sup> *The Censor*, April 14, 1772 reprinted an excerpt from one of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s fifty-three essays originally published in *The Independent Whig*, a weekly journal, from 1720-1721. The *Independent Whig* essays presaged Trenchard and Gordon’s later work on *Cato’s Letters*. Thomas Gordon, “Number XXVIII. Considerations upon the mischievous Tendency of Libels; chiefly public Libels,” *The Independent Whig, Being a Collection of Papers All written, some of them published During the Late Rebellion*, Vol. 4 (London: J. Peele, 1747), libertyfund.org.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon cited Cicero’s discussion of Athens in *The Republic*. 4.10-11 in Cicero, *The Republic and the Laws*, trans. Niall Rudd (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 78-79.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon referred to Cicero’s argument on the need to defend the authority of the state in Cicero’s *De Inventione*, 2.17: “To attack the majesty of the people is to detract from the dignity, or the rank, or the power of the people, or of those men to whom the people has given power.” Cicero, *De Inventione*, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, Vol. 4, trans. C. D. Yonge (London: G. Bell and Sons, LTD., 1913).

own reflection as the modern purveyors of sedition and vandals of republican government. Thomas Hutchinson and Andrew Oliver must have hoped that using such a Whig-based argument to expose the contradictions of radical rhetoric in Boston might stem the tide of anarchy in Massachusetts. However, as the article in *The Censor* lamented, “Human passions are too powerful for the human understanding: Where disgusts are strong, reason is weak”—this failing of human nature is “the great encouragement and strength of Libellers. They perceive how easy a thing it is to make men think ill of one another.”

Despite *The Censor*'s attempts to counter the inflammatory rhetoric of the Boston press with a reasoned approach to liberty, radical writers continued to lambaste the Hutchinson administration and the governor's character. One of the most vivid examples of this vitriol proceeded from the pen of Mercy Otis Warren who published the first installment of her play, *The Adulateur*, in the *Massachusetts Spy* in March 1772.<sup>38</sup> Warren's imaginative propaganda piece portrayed Hutchinson as “*Rapatio*,” the bloodthirsty governor of the subdued province of “*Servia*,” a neoclassical version of colonial Boston. In her satirical melodrama, Hutchinson (*Rapatio*) appeared as the narcissistic “Adulateur,” a modern reflection of the emperor Nero, duplicitous and malevolent, feigning devotion to the people of Boston while secretly plotting their demise.<sup>39</sup> In perhaps one of the most damaging rhetorical assaults on the character of

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<sup>38</sup> “The Adulateur,” *Massachusetts Spy*, March 26 and April 23, 1772. The play was later published as a pamphlet in 1773. Mercy Otis Warren, sister of James Otis, wife of James Warren (no relationship to Joseph Warren); Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 201; Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 133.

<sup>39</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 133.

the Massachusetts governor, Warren vividly animated what radical voices had been uttering about Hutchinson over many months:<sup>40</sup>

I'll make the scoundrels know who sways the sceptre;  
Before I'll suffer this [anarchy], I'll throw the state  
In dire confusion nay I'll hurl it down,  
And bury all things in one common ruin.  
O'er fields of death, with hasting step I'll speed,  
And smile at length to see my country bleed:  
From my tame heart the pang of virtue fling,  
And 'mid the general flame, like Nero sing.

Mercy Warren's purpose was none other than to urge Americans to take up the mantle of Cato and defy the Massachusetts governor and his clandestine schemes. Warren galvanized this theme in her epigraph for the 1773 pamphlet version of the play, invoking Cato's lines from Addison's legendary play as her clarion call for patriotic resistance—"let us rise, my friends and strive to fill this little interval, this pause of life, (while yet our liberty and fates are doubtful) with resolution, friendship, Roman bravery, and all the virtues we can crowd into it; that Heaven may say it aught to be prolong'd."<sup>41</sup> Correspondence between Abigail Adams and Mercy Warren illustrated how Bostonians took these matters to heart. On December 5, 1773, Abigail wrote, "You Madam are so sincere a Lover of your Country . . . who have so thoroughly look'd thro the Deeds of Men, and Developed the Dark designs of a Rapatio[']s Soul"—in contemplating the coming civil war, the "mind is shocked at the Thought of shedding Humane Blood, more Especially the Blood of our Countrymen." However,

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<sup>40</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur; A Tragedy, As it is now acted in Upper Servia*, Act 1, Scene 2 (Tarrytown: William Abbatt, 1918). Cited in Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson*, 202.

<sup>41</sup> Mercy Warren, *The Adulateur*. Epigraph taken from Cato's dialogue in Joseph Addison's, *Cato*, Act 2 Scene 1 in *The British Drama: A Collection of the Most Esteemed Tragedies, Comedies, Operas, and Farces in the English Language*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Thomas Cowperthwait, 1838), 303; Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, 53.

Abigail continued, despite the sacrifice, “Such is the present Spirit that prevails” that “many, very Many of our Heroes will spread their lives in the cause, with the Speech of Cato in their mouths, ‘What a pitty is it, that we can dye but once to save our Country.’”<sup>42</sup> Reciting the lines of Joseph Addison, Abigail Adams presaged the sentiment Nathan Hale would offer at his execution three years later. Whig-radicals like Warren who deftly applied their creative imagination to appeal to the passion and imagined fears of the commons posed a serious problem for Tory-loyalists like Hutchinson. Loath to resort to plebeian, emotive tactics, Hutchinson’s reliance on reasoned arguments to sway public opinion continued to cede political space to the rhetoric of patriot radicalism in Boston.

Reflecting the radical potency of *The Adulateur*, annual Whig ceremonies commemorating the Boston Massacre invited Bostonians to visualize themselves as Catoic defenders of liberty against the dark tyrannical elements the Hutchinson administration had come to represent. Not only a solemn remembrance of the fateful incident of March 5, 1770, annual speeches paying tribute to the victims, which began on the first anniversary in 1771 and continued for over a decade, provided Whig-patriots an opportunity to rally the public to rehearse and expand the narrative of resistance to government authority. Dr. Joseph Warren (no relation to Mercy Warren), who took up the pen as “PASKALOS” against Governor Bernard in the 1760s and came to be regarded as a leading advocate of the Whig cause, was selected to give the Boston Massacre oration for the commemoration in 1772. With dramatic flare, and addressing an audience of four thousand spectators at the Old South Meeting House, Warren

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<sup>42</sup> “Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren (December 5, 1773)” in *Adams Family Correspondence*, Vols. 1-2 (1761-1778), ed. L. H. Butterfield, Wendell D. Garrett, and Marjorie E. Sprague (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), Massachusetts Historical Society Digital Edition.

declared, “The voice of your fathers blood cries to you from the ground; MY SONS, SCORN TO BE SLAVES!” Exhorting his listeners to vigorously defend their birth-right as the sons of English liberty, Warren reminded Bostonians of their classical lineage and their responsibility to preserve the spirit of American freedom: “It was *this* noble attachment to a free constitution, which raised ancient Rome from the smallest beginnings,” and “when *this* decayed, her magistrates lost their reverence for justice and the laws, and degenerated into tyrants and oppressors”—the memory of Rome stands today, Warren asserted, as “a monument of this eternal truth, that PUBLIC HAPPINESS DEPENDS ON A VIRTUOUS AND UNSHAKABLE ATTACHMENT TO A FREE CONSTITUTION.”<sup>43</sup> In his appraisal of Warren’s speech, at the approximate midpoint of the five-month run of *The Censor*, Thomas Hutchinson revealed his concern for how such impassioned rhetoric might adversely influence the public: “Though he gained no great applause for his oratorical abilities,” Hutchinson remarked, “yet the fervor, which is the most essential part of such compositions, could not fail in its effect on the minds of the great concourse of people present.”<sup>44</sup> When Boston invited Warren back to give the commemoration speech a second time in 1775, just one month before the battles at Lexington and Concord, a Tory-loyalist reported that Warren wore a “Ciceronian Toga” during the address, styling himself in “a Demosthenian posture,” for which he was notably “applauded by the mob.”<sup>45</sup> Warren’s dramatic performance, played out in front of Whigs, Tories, and British soldiers alike, embodied the histrionic quality of the

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<sup>43</sup> Joseph Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1772. At the request of the inhabitants of the town of Boston; to commemorate the bloody tragedy of the fifth of March, 1770* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1772), 6-7, 17-18; Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 122.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Frothingham, *Life and Times of Joseph Warren* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1865), 178; Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 122.

<sup>45</sup> A Spectator, “Extract of a Letter from Boston, March 9,” *Rivington’s New-York Gazetteer*, March 16, 1775; Carl J. Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 83; Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 123-124.



Whig-patriot narrative that seemingly beckoned the heroic figures of Greece and Rome to come to the aid of their American countrymen. Within three months of the delivery of his second oration, Warren would be immortalized as the Catoic martyr of Bunker Hill, lauded for his “Heroic fortitude, An honest zeal, a Scipio’s martial flame, A Cato’s firmness,” and a “Tully’s eloquence.”<sup>46</sup> The popular appeal and stirring imagery of the Whig-patriot narrative, typified by Mercy Warren’s creative satire and Joseph Warren’s public performance, amplified the effect of the vitriolic articles in the Boston press that steadily chipped away at the legitimacy of royal authority in the colonies with increasing effect in the 1770s. Hutchinson, unable to stem the rising tide of patriotic foment, finally departed Boston in May 1774, replaced by a military commander, General Thomas Gage, who declared Massachusetts to be in open rebellion by September.<sup>47</sup> As Bernard Bailyn aptly surmised, such was the response in Boston to all of Governor Hutchinson’s attempts, in *The Censor* and otherwise, “to explain the constitutional necessity for stabilizing the power of government,” and it only “grew worse, the more he tried.”<sup>48</sup> Whereas Whig-patriots appealed to the passion and imagined fears of the commons, Tory-loyalists, never viewing the masses as a potential ally of the established government, confined their counter-rhetoric to the printed page and the calculated logic of historical and philosophical reason.

Despite the challenges conservatives faced in launching an effective counter-information strategy in the colonies, some writers were more successful than Hutchinson in using the language of classical liberty to expose the weaknesses in the

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<sup>46</sup> Philatros [unknown], “And is it so?,” in “Letter from Doctor Solomon Drowne to his brother, William Drowne August 12, 1775,” *The Historical Magazine* 5 (1861), 85; Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores*, 132.

<sup>47</sup> Bailyn, *Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* 301-302.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

radical narrative. In December 1774, a Tory-loyalist writer, “MASSACHUSETTENSIS,” published the first in a series of seventeen letters that caught the attention of John Adams. Having recently returned to Boston from the First Continental Congress in November, Adams found Boston newspapers, the *Massachusetts Gazette* in particular, “teeming with political speculations, and Massachusettensis shining like the moon among the lesser stars.”<sup>49</sup> Adams assumed the pseudonymous writer was his friend and sparring partner, Jonathan Sewall—however, Adams did not learn until years later that the actual author was another close associate, Daniel Leonard, the Massachusetts lawyer who initially favored the Whig cause until events like the Boston Tea Party in December 1773 changed his mind.<sup>50</sup> Violating his sensitivity for the sanctity of the law, Leonard saw the radical agitators in Boston taking his native colony into open rebellion with the crown, leading Leonard to switch sides, support the Hutchinson administration, and use his talents to advocate on behalf of British colonial policy.<sup>51</sup> In crafting his MASSACHUSETTENSIS letters, as implied by his selected moniker, Leonard styled himself as a native of the Bay Colony whose views reflected the proud tradition of the subjects of Massachusetts. Adams immediately recognized the Tory writer’s potential to sway public sentiment against the patriot cause; MASSACHUSETTENSIS’ incisive arguments were witty, informative, and carefully written “with a Subtlety of Art and Address”—but also dangerous because the author “wonderfully calculated to keep Up the Spirits of their Party, to depress ours, to spread intimidation and to make Proselytes

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<sup>49</sup> John Adams, “Preface (January 1, 1819),” in *Novanglus and Massachusettensis; or Political Essays, published in the years 1774 and 1775, on the Principal Points of Controversy, Between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (Boston: Hews and Goss, 1819), vi.

<sup>50</sup> See Editorial Note, *Papers of John Adams*, Vol. 2, *The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008), 221-222.

<sup>51</sup> Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 6.

among those, whose Principles and Judgment give Way to their fears”—Adams estimated that “at least one third of Mankind” lay open to MASSACHUSETTENSIS’ persuasive abilities if left unchecked. With no other challengers stepping forward, Adams began publishing letters in the *Boston Gazette* under the complementary pseudonym, “NOVANGLUS” (New Englander). In the weeks before Lexington and Concord, in a series of twenty-nine essays published between January and April 1775, the debate between Leonard and Adams emerged as one of the most important exchanges in the increasingly divisive political discourse of the period. Reflecting on the significance of the rhetorical battle in newsprint, Adams, who published his last essay just two days before the engagements at Lexington and Concord, remarked that the commencement of open hostilities simply “changed the Instruments of Warfare from the Penn to the Sword.”<sup>52</sup>

In making his case against the Whig-patriot agenda in 1775, Leonard invoked the language of classical liberty and tyranny throughout his seventeen MASSACHUSETTENSIS essays, paralleling the kinds of arguments Cicero presented before the Senate in his *Oration*s against Catiline in 63 B.C.<sup>53</sup> Short of describing Boston as the scene of a Catilinarian conspiracy, Leonard followed a Ciceronian pattern in his polemic, pointing to the dangers of internal corruption, the secret plots of demagogues working to manipulate and enslave the people, and the sinister schemes of

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<sup>52</sup> James M. Farrell, “New England’s Cicero: John Adams and the Rhetoric of Conspiracy,” *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 104 (1992), 55; John Adams, “Novanglus Papers, 1774-1775,” *The Diary and Autobiography of John Adams, The Adams Papers Digital Edition*, ed. C. James Taylor (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, Rotunda, 2008).

<sup>53</sup> Whereas James Farrell examined the influence of Cicero on John Adams’ Novanglus letters, he did not consider that Cicero might have influenced Daniel Leonard in much the same manner. This point illustrates how the relationship between the classics and the loyalists has generally been neglected in the history of the American Revolution. In this regard, my discussion on the Massachusetts-*Novanglus* debate, emphasizing the potential influence of Cicero on Leonard, reflects the inverse of Farrell’s analysis.

lawless rabble-rousers attempting to unravel the fabric of constitutional government and assassinate (slander) the character of Boston's crown-appointed authorities. In his first MASSACHUSETTENSIS letter, Leonard echoed Cicero's lamentation, "Alas, what Times! Alas, the Degeneracy of Men!" in describing the deplorable situation in Boston: "We already feel the effects of anarchy," Leonard declared—"mutual confidence, affection, and tranquility, those sweeteners of human life, are succeeded by distrust, hatred, and wild uproar . . . caballing, mobbing this or the other man, because he acts, speaks, or is suspected of thinking different from the prevailing sentiment of the times . . . O height of madness!"<sup>54</sup> For Leonard, the breakdown in Boston's communal order represented an "impending danger" threatening to destroy everything the people cherished. Having observed the maturation process, Leonard could trace the genesis of Boston's corruption back to an original mustard seed of sedition that had since germinated and matured into "a great tree" (Leonard's readers might infer the Tree of Liberty), which now served as a haven for "the vilest of reptiles that crawl upon the earth" and "the foulest birds of the air."<sup>55</sup> Among these vile creatures, Leonard highlighted the committee of correspondence as "the foulest, subtlest, and most venomous serpent that ever issued from the eggs of sedition." For Leonard, the tree of tyranny, with its associated Boston Sons of Liberty and unlawful committees, represented nothing short of a twisted contradiction—unaccountable, arbitrary measures forcing "recantations and resignations" and subjecting respectable persons to "the mob executioners," all in the

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<sup>54</sup> Cicero, "First Oration," *The Works of Sallust, translated into English with Political Discourses upon that Author. To which is added, a translation of Cicero's Four Orations against Catiline*, trans. Thomas Gordon (London: R. Ware, 1774), 78; *Massachusetts [Daniel Leonard], December 12, 1774 in Novanglus and Massachusetts; or Political Essays, Published in the Years 1774 and 1775, on the Principal Points of Controversy, Between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (Boston: Hews and Goss, 1819), 143.

<sup>55</sup> *Massachusetts [Leonard], January 2, 1775, Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 159, 165-166.

name of freedom. There was no need to “travel through the states of ancient Greece and Rome” to make the point, Leonard asserted—these patriots provide us sufficient “specimens of their tyranny, in their inhuman treatment of persons guilty of no crime, except that of differing in sentiment from the whigs.”<sup>56</sup> Mirroring the way Cicero denounced Catiline before the Senate—“neither the Shades of Night can conceal thy traitorous Cabals, nor thy domestic Walls confine the Accents of thy Treason . . . all thy Proceedings are thus glaring”—Leonard exposed the sedition and injustice of the Whig junto in the broad daylight of the Boston press: Why do you suffer these people “to be cruelly treated for differing in sentiment from you? Is it consistent with that liberty you profess?”—“It is astonishing, my friends, that those who are in pursuit of liberty, should ever suffer arbitrary power, in such an hideous form and squalid hue, to get a footing among them.”<sup>57</sup> In Leonard’s view, the glaring contradiction in the Whig agenda had merely served to clarify the seditious and tyrannical aspirations of NOVANGLUS and his radical conspirators: “The terms whig and tory have been adopted according to the arbitrary use of them in this province, but they rather ought to be reversed; an American tory is a supporter of our excellent constitution, and an American whig a subverter of it.”<sup>58</sup>

Leonard’s use of the classics sought to expose what he believed to be the great deception of the Whig-patriot narrative, namely, that the radicals claimed to be advocating popular resistance to reform the system when in fact they were really planning to lead the colonies into open rebellion against the crown. In the first of his

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<sup>56</sup> *Massachusetts* [Leonard], January 30, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 185.

<sup>57</sup> Cicero, “First Oration,” *The Works of Sallust*, 80; *Massachusetts* [Leonard], January 2, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 165-166.

<sup>58</sup> *Massachusetts* [Leonard], April 3, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 226.

NOVANGLUS essays, Adams pointed to the tenets of the classical canon to legitimize patriot resistance to royal authority: “These are what are called revolution principles,” Adams declared—“They are the principles of Aristotle and Plato, of Livy and Cicero, and Sydney, Harrington and Locke”—“the principles on which the whole government over us, now stands.”<sup>59</sup> Akin to opposing the law of gravity, Adams wondered how “Massachusettensis, and all the writers of his class” could hope to prevent the people from pursuing their liberties and claiming their natural right of redress. In providing his MASSACHUSETTENSIS response to this line of reasoning, Leonard questioned Adams’ assumptions concerning popular movements and demonstrated that his own read of the classics pointed to the malfeasance rather than the virtue of Whig activities in Massachusetts. “The advocates for the opposition to parliament often remind us of the rights of the people,” repeating the adage, “*vox populi vox Dei*” (the voice of the people is the voice of God), Leonard observed, reminding us “these are *revolution* principles.”<sup>60</sup> However, “Popular demagogues always call themselves the people, and when their own measures are censured, cry out, the people, the people are abused and insulted.” Not unlike the way Cicero perceived the Catilinarian conspiracy in Rome, Leonard saw a deliberate design of the Whig-patriots in Boston in stirring up popular sentiment, not in the noble cause of liberty, but simply to elevate their own political standing. Addressing the people of Rome concerning the demagogues of his day, Cicero asked, “Do these Men hope, that in the Ruins of Rome, and in the Massacre of the Citizens, they shall find their black and inhuman Wishes accomplished,” or “find

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<sup>59</sup> Novanglus [John Adams], January 23, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusettensis*, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Massachusettensis [Leonard], April 3, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusettensis*, 225.

themselves raised to Consular, or Dictatorial, and even to Royal Sway?”<sup>61</sup> Leonard echoed this sentiment when he observed, “History is replete with instances of this kind,” and “we can trace them in remote antiquity”—whoever wants to start a rebellion worms himself “into the good graces of the people” and becomes “as great a tyrant as ever wielded the iron rod of oppression.”<sup>62</sup> In Leonard’s view, the classical canon proved the sentiment of the *demos* to be the least reliable component in the republican order since the people were often “the dupes of artifice, and the mere stilts of ambition.” In rebuttal, Adams insisted the Whigs were not promoting rebellion, but only seeking the restoration of their former rights as English subjects. Pointing to the annals of antiquity, Adams asked, “Did not the Romans gain by the resistance to Tarquin?”—and if they had not defied their ruler and restored their liberties, would “the great Roman orators, poets and historians, the great teachers of humanity and politeness, the pride of human nature, and the delight and glory of mankind, for seventeen hundred years, ever have existed?”<sup>63</sup> Leonard’s response insisted on the need for legitimate government authority to ensure order and control and repel the Hobbesian state of nature, rejecting Adams’ fine distinction between resistance and sedition: “Rebellion is the most atrocious offence, that can be perpetrated by man,” Leonard asserted, because “It dissolves the social band, annihilates the security resulting from law and government; introduces fraud, violence, rapine, murder, sacrilege, and the long train of evils, that riot, uncontroled, in a state of nature.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Cicero, “Second Oration,” *The Works of Sallust*, 107.

<sup>62</sup> Massachusetts [Leonard], December 26, 1774, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 152-153.

<sup>63</sup> Novanglus [Adams], January 23, 1775 and March 13, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 14, 102.

<sup>64</sup> Massachusetts [Leonard], February 6, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 187-188.

Leonard's argument against NOVANGLUS reflected a classical mentality, mirroring the way Cicero exposed Catiline's conspiracy before the Senate and people of Rome. Following Cicero's pattern in revealing Catiline's intent to assassinate the prominent leaders of the government, Leonard declared that the Massachusetts Whigs had conspired to defame and displace their leaders: "Novanglus has acted the part of an assassin," Leonard declared, noting how his Whig opponent had accused Hutchinson and Oliver of instigating "a conspiracy to enslave their country" while providing no evidence and "colouring" the facts to turn the people against the government leaders.<sup>65</sup> Convinced he occupied the moral high ground, Leonard even summoned John Dickinson's *Farmer* letters to testify against NOVANGLUS and his accomplices: "Good Heaven! Shall a total oblivion of former tenderness and blessings be spread over the minds of a good and wise people by the sordid arts of intriguing men, who covering their selfish projects under pretences of public good, first engage their countrymen into a frenzy of passion, and then advance their own influence and interest by gratifying the passion, which they themselves have excited?"<sup>66</sup> Leonard's argument at this point reflected the righteous overtones of a jeremiad, exhorting the Massachusetts radicals to recognize their duplicity and realize the full measure of their guilt. In this regard, Leonard's rhetoric reflected the way Cicero viewed the guilt of the Catilinarian conspirators as the most compelling sign of their culpability—"their Letters, their Signets, their Hand-writing, nay the voluntary Confession of each," Cicero asserted, were "glaring Proofs of their Treason; yet I found Demonstrations of their Guilt still

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<sup>65</sup> Massachusettensis [Leonard], March 6, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusettensis*, 204-206.

<sup>66</sup> Massachusettensis [Leonard], March 20, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusettensis*, 217; John Dickinson, "Letter v," *Empire and Nation: Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania (John Dickinson). Letters from the Federal Farmer (Richard Henry Lee)*, ed. Forrest McDonald (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1999).



more sure . . .”<sup>67</sup> History would ultimately reveal the patriots’ sedition and folly, and Leonard prophesied future generations “will execrate, with the bitterest curses, the infamous memory of those men whose ambition unnecessarily, wantonly, cruelly, first opened the sources of civil discord.”<sup>68</sup> For MASSACHUSETTENSIS, the Continental Congress represented the cumulative energies of a Catilinarian conspiracy, and “every particle of disaffection, petulance, ingratitude, and disloyalty, that for ten years past have been scattered through the continent, were united and consolidated in” that body. Invoking the stark imagery of the great rebellion of the golden calf recorded in Genesis, Leonard exclaimed, “Are these thy Gods, O Israel!”<sup>69</sup> Calling his fellow countrymen to repent from their wicked ways and embrace their inheritance as the privileged sons of English liberty, Leonard declared, “You have before you, at your election, peace or war, happiness or misery”—choose the path of happiness, “before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, before the evil days come, wherein you shall say, we have no pleasure in them.”<sup>70</sup>

While Daniel Leonard was contending with John Adams in the Boston press, the Anglican cleric, Jonathan Boucher of Maryland, invoked the language of classicism to defend the absolute authority of government against “*vox populi vox Dei*.” As a representative of the Church of England, Boucher was naturally conservative in his political outlook, and his advocacy for the founding of an Anglican episcopacy in

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<sup>67</sup> Cicero, “*Third Oration*,” *The Works of Sallust*, 120.

<sup>68</sup> Massachusetts [Leonard], March 20, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 217.

<sup>69</sup> Massachusetts [Leonard], March 27, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 224; Ex. 32:8 KJV—“They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”

<sup>70</sup> Massachusetts [Leonard], April 3, 1775, *Novanglus and Massachusetts*, 227; Jer. 13:16 KJV—“Give glory to the LORD your God, before he causes darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains”; Eccl. 12:1 KJV—“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.”

America, much to the dismay of the Congregationalists, contributed to his stalwart conservative persuasion. Politically, Boucher was the king's man, an advocate of law and order who would have preferred to stay above the fray and use his pulpit and pen to counterbalance the political discourse in the colonies as the transatlantic crisis continued to unfold. However, by 1774, the increasing radicalism of the Whig-patriots, particularly as reflected in the arbitrary and coercive activities of the various committees, offended Boucher's sensitivities concerning legitimate authority and control. Like Leonard, Boucher became an apologist for the Tory-loyalist cause as Whig-patriots appeared to be promoting rebellion rather than pursuing reform and reconciliation with the crown.<sup>71</sup> News of Lexington and Concord in April 1775 heightened political tensions in Maryland, transforming half-hearted sympathizers into outspoken patriots. Although Boucher took pride in his Whig opponents labeling him "a Government-man" for his loyalty to the institutions of Church and State, as Boucher recounted in his papers, "It was an obvious policy in the insurgents to get rid of such men, and accordingly, I was soon marked as a man not to be endured;" consequently, Boucher set sail for England in September 1775.<sup>72</sup> Looking back over the history of the 1760s and 70s, Boucher viewed the American rebellion as the most recent chapter in the age-old conflict between unbridled sedition and God-ordained authority, reaching back into the annals of classical literature to punctuate his theme. Boucher summarized his analysis of the pre-revolutionary years and included thirteen of his sermons from the

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<sup>71</sup> Anne Y. Zimmer, *Jonathan Boucher, Loyalist in Exile* (Detroit, 1978), 160; Anne Young Zimmer and Alfred H. Kelly, "Jonathan Boucher: Constitutional Conservative," *Journal of American History* 58 (March 1972), 906; Anne Y. Zimmer, "The Rhetoric of American Loyalism," *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 66 (Summer, 1982), 150.

<sup>72</sup> Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 168-169; Jonathan Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist, 1738-1789, Being the Autobiography of The Rev'd. Jonathan Boucher, Rector of Annapolis in Maryland and afterwards Vicar of Epsom, Surrey, England*, ed. by his grandson, Jonathan Bouchier (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1967), 104-105.

decade in his treatise, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution*, published two decades after taking refuge in England.<sup>73</sup> For Boucher, the Revolution was an unjustifiable fabrication, representing the interests of a few self-interested ringleaders who persuaded the public to follow them headlong into rebellion. “Indebtedness,” Boucher wrote, has always been “an essential ingredient in the character of a conspirator”—and of all the factors giving rise to the American revolt, “that which I conceive to have contributed the most to it” was the same moral weakness that, according to Sallust, ensnared “the adherents of Catiline”—“*aes alienum per omnis terras ingens erat*” (his “grievous Debts . . . pressed all Men throughout the State”).<sup>74</sup> As Cicero observed, facing the prospect of economic ruin, Catiline and his fellow conspirators opted to rebel rather than “be dammed.” Such “numerous swarms of restless men,” Boucher noted, are as common under free governments “as serpents and other fierce and noxious animals are in warm climates!” Throughout the ages, these shallow and “artful men,” Boucher declared, have succeeded in pulling down “the settled order of government,” employing deceitful pretences of patriotism and appealing to popular sentiment concerning “the liberties of the people” to work their destruction.<sup>75</sup> Boucher lamented that Britain had responded to the unrest in America “by coaxing and caressing” rather than following the “wise and resolute” example of Rome. When twelve of Rome’s thirty Colonies refused to pay their taxes, the Romans “instantly had

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<sup>73</sup> Jonathan Boucher, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution, in Thirteen Discourses, Preached in North America between the Years 1763 and 1775: With an Historical Preface* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797).

<sup>74</sup> Boucher, “Preface,” *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, xlii. “*aes alienum per omnis terras ingens erat*” (Boucher is quoting Sallust): Sallust, *Catiline’s Conspiracy (Bellum Catilinae)*, *The Works of Sallust, translated into English with Political Discourses upon that Author. To which is added, a translation of Cicero’s Four Orations against Catiline*, trans. Thomas Gordon (London: R. Ware, 1774), 13.

<sup>75</sup> Boucher, “Preface,” *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, vi-vii.

recourse to the more manly, and (I add) the more merciful, means of coercion and force.”<sup>76</sup> In Boucher’s moral universe, strong centralized authority was always a virtue; any of the risks that a robust monarchy posed to liberty were secondary to the horrors associated with sociopolitical instability and anarchy.

Boucher’s rhetorical contributions to the Tory-loyalist cause began in 1774 when he took up the pen in the public press, pointing to the ancient model of classical republicanism to counter Whig challenges to royal authority and defend the delicate balance of the English constitution. Whereas Whig-radicals often spoke of liberty in terms of resistance to government policy, Boucher’s conservatism contended that liberty could only be sustained by means of parliamentary oversight: “no political Society can subsist, unless there be an absolute Supreme Power lodg’d somewhere,” Boucher wrote, a fundamental tenet that political writers “from Aristotle down to Sidney and Lock” repeatedly affirmed.<sup>77</sup> In the opening of his *Letter to the Members of Congress* (1774), Boucher warned “the oracles” in Philadelphia that “The Harmony which subsisted, with little or no Interruption, between Great-Britain and her Colonies” is now “in Danger of being destroyed for ever.”<sup>78</sup> In Boucher’s view, the greatest threat to stability stemmed from the spread of misinformation and the tendency of the *demos* to respond to passionate appeals rather than sober judgment, talking incessantly about liberty—finding “something enchanting in the very Sound of the Word”—while popular ideas about government from such “turbid Sources” as broadsides, pamphlets and

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, lix-lx and Boucher’s note on lix.

<sup>77</sup> [Jonathan Boucher], *A Letter from a Virginian, to the Members of the Congress to be held at Philadelphia on the first of September, 1774* (Philadelphia, 1774), 11. Although technically anonymous, this pamphlet has been credited to Boucher by Zimmer, Bailyn and others. Zimmer and Kelly, “Constitutional Conservative,” 909.

<sup>78</sup> [Boucher], *A Letter from a Virginian*, 3.

newspapers prevented any hope for intelligent discourse.<sup>79</sup> Worst of all, these trends reflected the work of “Crafty designing Knaves, turbulent Demagogues, Quacks in Politics, and Impostors in Patriotism,” a conspiratorial cabal no different from the “Spirit of Jealousy” that had threatened “all free Governments” “in all Ages.” The motivations were always the same, Boucher lamented, and America was no different—“Ambition and Lust of Power above the Laws”—with demagogues using anarchy as a weapon to plunge free nations into “all the Horrors of a Civil War” and enslave the people “until the sacred Name of Liberty has become a Word of Scorn and Mockery in the Mouths of Tyrants, and their abandoned Minions and Emissaries.”<sup>80</sup> Boucher advised the delegates in Philadelphia to reject any measures that might turn the people “from their Allegiance,” inflame their passions, and incite “popular Tumults, and Insurrections,” highlighting colonial resistance to the Tea Act as one such example.<sup>81</sup> In Boucher’s view, the Tea Act was of so little consequence that the undue level of colonial rage against it pointed directly to the rabble-rousers who had manipulated the masses to achieve self-serving interests: “Shall we move Heaven, and Earth, against a trifling Duty,” Boucher exclaimed, “on a Luxury, unknown to nine Tenths of the Globe, unknown to our Ancestors!” and “Which no Authority, no Necessity compels us to use?” Boucher was incredulous that Americans would so stridently defy the Tea Act “as a dangerous, a sole Precedent of Taxation” when British subjects in America had traditionally submitted to similar requirements “without murmuring.”<sup>82</sup> The masterminds behind the frenzy were the pamphleteers and newspaper scribblers who

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

used partial excerpts from John Locke “to mislead Thousands who never read him,” defying the law as pretext for open rebellion.<sup>83</sup> Using a metaphor from classical mythology, Boucher denounced the shifting character of the Whig-patriots who were ready to hide behind the letter of the law when it benefited them while waging war “against the Spirit of it”—“Shall we Proteus like, perpetually change our Ground, assume every Moment, some new and strange Shape, to defend, to evade?”<sup>84</sup> In the *Odyssey*, Proteus, the “Old Man of the Sea” and Poseidon’s herdsman of the seals, was an oracle who evaded telling secrets about the future by changing his shape, twisting and turning “into every beast that moves across the earth.”<sup>85</sup> In associating the character of the American rebellion with the mythological image, Boucher portrayed the Whig demagogues as spineless, without principle, Catilinarian in their sinister bid to use trumped up charges against the British ministry to manipulate and empower the *demos* to undermine the stability of the constitution. “Shall we plunge at once into Anarchy, and reject all Accommodation with a Government, (by the Confession of the wisest Men in Europe, the freest and the noblest Government, on the Records of History) because there are Imperfection in it, as there are in all Things, and in all Men?”<sup>86</sup>

As an Anglican clergyman, Boucher fully appreciated the influence of the pulpit to sway public opinion, and his sermons in 1774 combined Biblical and classical themes to counter what he perceived to be an increasingly popular Whig narrative of colonial rebellion. Reflecting on his rhetorical strategy, Boucher noted that “In America, as in the Grand Rebellion in England, much execution was done by sermons,” and Boucher

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 24.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>85</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, 4.430-432, 461-477, trans. Robert Fagles (New York: Penguin, 1996), 136-137.

<sup>86</sup> [Boucher], *A Letter from a Virginian*, 25.

intended to use his ecclesiastical platform to advocate on behalf of what he estimated to be the nine out of ten Americans who had no desire to defy the crown—“a certain fact, or the truth of which I at least am thoroughly convinced.”<sup>87</sup> Of Boucher’s thirteen recorded discourses, his sermons, “On the Character of Absalom” and “On the Character of Ahitophel,” both delivered in 1774 at Queen Anne’s parish in Maryland, offered a particularly scathing critique on the rising tide of revolutionary sentiment in the colonies. Not surprising given his philosophical preference for Robert Filmer’s divine right of kings over John Locke’s social contract, Boucher searched for Biblical metaphors to illustrate the egregious nature of rebellion and the consequences of challenging God’s anointed.<sup>88</sup> Boucher also freely buttressed his homilies with examples from the classical canon, suggesting his Anglican colonial audiences had no trouble accepting a co-mingling of secular history and sacred text in the course of his exposition. In addition to the Biblical narrative, the Absalom-Achitophel (Ahitophel) motif had been popularized by John Dryden’s 1681 satirical poem, *Absalom and Achitophel*, an allegory on the political and religious battles of late seventeenth century England:<sup>89</sup>

Then, [Ahitophel] seiz’d with Fear, yet still affecting Fame,  
 Usurp’d a Patriott’s All-atoning Name.  
 So easie still it proves in Factious Times,  
 With publick Zeal to cancel private Crimes.  
 How safe is Treason, and how sacred ill,  
 Where none can sin against the People’s Will:  
 Where Crouds can wink; and no offence be known,  
 Since in another’s guilt they find their own.

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<sup>87</sup> Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 168-169; Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 113, 121.

<sup>88</sup> Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 280-281.

<sup>89</sup> John Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) (Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 6.

In the Biblical narrative, the young and ambitious Absalom, infamous for his rebellion against his father, King David, conspired with Ahitophel, David's counselor, to usurp the Judean monarchy. The gambit proved fatal for both men—Absalom was executed on the battlefield, and Ahitophel committed suicide. Boucher equated Absalom with the American public in his sermons, charging that the colonies had been led astray by disloyal and corrupt advisers like Ahitophel who were ready to sacrifice the public good merely to achieve their self-interested political objectives.<sup>90</sup> Boucher noted that Absalom's rebellion reflected a division in the classes of society, with Absalom's standard principally attracting the "lewd fellows of the baser sort." Referencing the history of Dionysius, Boucher reminded his readers that similar class divisions had formed during the numerous secessionist revolts in ancient Rome—"those who were easiest in their fortunes joined the Patricians, whilst their servants joined the Plebians." Such material motivations, Boucher wrote, had "always been, and always will be, the case in all insurrections: it certainly was the case in the American revolt."<sup>91</sup>

Boucher was particularly alarmed by the arbitrary and inflammatory nature of American resistance, in his view, one of the clearest signs that the public disturbances of 1774 reflected the work of malevolent masterminds rather than the genuine grievances of an abused colonial population. Confronting these ringleaders head on, Boucher sought to expose their patriotism as a mere facade: "If ye are the friends of America," Boucher wrote, then "Ahitophel, and Catiline, and Cromwell, were also the

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<sup>90</sup> Boucher, "The Character of Ahitophel," *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, 405.

<sup>91</sup> Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities of Dionysius of Halicarnassus*, Book 7, trans. Edward Spelman (London, 1743), 148; Boucher, "The Character of Absalom," *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, 388-389.



friends of their respective countries.”<sup>92</sup> To date, Boucher observed, “No satisfactory evidence has yet been produced to prove that the injuries we have received from our Parent State are so great as they are represented to be; much less that her intentions towards us are so unfriendly and hostile as her and our enemies wish us to believe they are.”<sup>93</sup> Like Absalom, spurred on by “the extreme intemperance of his passions,” the American junto was playing with fire, Boucher asserted, “admitting into their theories of government such principles and precedents as may afterwards prove fatal to themselves.” Illegitimate committees, conventions, and congresses have exchanged “the comfort and security of fixed law” for “the caprice and humour of multitudes and mobs,” and now every man has become “his own judge and lawgiver.”<sup>94</sup> Boucher believed the fate of the colonies had already been predicted by Absalom’s demise, for “once a multitude is tumultuously collected, there is no saying to what a pitch of mischief they may easily be led. . . . It matters not that in our individual capacities we are wise, temperate, and just: collected together in a mob, we inevitably become irrational, violent, and tyrannical.”<sup>95</sup>

Boucher’s rhetorical offensive against the Whig radicals in 1774 illustrated how the preacher’s creative use of metaphor led his hearers to make the kinds of associations he hoped might ultimately discredit the patriot agenda. When Boucher delivered his two sermons in 1774, some colonial critics accused the Anglican minister of using the character of Ahitophel as a “vehicle of private slander” to portray Benjamin Franklin as the fiendish mastermind behind the American uprising. Although Boucher denied the

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<sup>92</sup> Boucher, “The Character of Ahitophel,” *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, 432.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 407-408.

<sup>95</sup> Boucher, “The Character of Absalom,” *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, 388-389.

specific charge, in his later analysis he acknowledged there was a striking similarity between Franklin and Absalom's wicked adviser—"as exact and apt as any in Plutarch."<sup>96</sup> The natural association with Franklin on the part of Boucher's listeners revealed the genuine potency of Boucher's rhetorical style. Regardless of Boucher's original intent, once queried, the Anglican clergyman did not hesitate to make the parallel with Rome's most infamous villain, describing Franklin as "the humble and even servile imitator, not only of Ahitophel, but of Catiline and his conspirators."<sup>97</sup>

Franklin was like a weathervane, ever sensitive to the shifting currents of the wind—"he could be true to no cause," Boucher declared, "and for some time he hesitated to which party he should finally attach himself." In his appraisal, Boucher was seemingly more repulsed by "the extreme selfishness" of Franklin's politics, and the "unappeasable rancour of his heart" than Franklin's actual part in effecting the Revolution. Although Franklin was among those who "directed the storm," Boucher noted, Franklin did not invent the conspiracy—in fact, the rebellion had "for years, been formed by a junto in the Northern Colonies, who did not at first think him quite a proper man to be intrusted with so important a secret." Like Ahitophel, who so easily switched allegiance from David to Absalom, Boucher pointed to Franklin's duplicity as one of his "most striking features"—"There is good evidence", Boucher wrote, "that the idea of raising a revenue in America, by means of a stamp duty, originated with him," although "he opposed it later with all his might."<sup>98</sup> Boucher lamented the prospect that one day Franklin's many partisans would praise the patriot leader for being the one most responsible for "the loss

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<sup>96</sup> Boucher, "Appendix to the Two Sermons on Absalom and Ahitophel," *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, 436-438.

<sup>97</sup> Boucher, "Appendix to the Two Sermons," *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, 448.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 445-446.

of America”—but what disturbed Boucher even more was Franklin’s cavalier attitude about the rebellion he promoted. Like the unprincipled usurpers Catiline and Ahitophel, Franklin, in Boucher’s view, approached the weighty matter of overthrowing the legitimate government in the colonies with a “paltry sneer” and “littleness and meanness of mind.” In reflecting on the “dismemberment of the empire,” one could almost sense Boucher’s anguish in Franklin’s cold remark that “the world had now a practical demonstration of the way in which a great empire might be reduced to a small one.”<sup>99</sup>

When it became impossible for Boucher to use the pulpit to transmit his Tory-loyalist narrative, the Anglican minister turned to the press, highlighting examples from ancient Rome to influence his colonial audience to see the dangers of the building foment in the Whig-patriot agenda. By 1775, Whig-patriot extralegal committees were rapidly assuming the various roles and functions of local government, fully prepared to justify acts of terror and vigilantism to serve the mandate of the Continental Association, issued by the First Continental Congress to enforce the trade boycott with England. Committees of observation made it their business to intercept private correspondence and monitor public statements to ultimately censor and silence questionable political sentiment.<sup>100</sup> In an effort to challenge these measures and exert a moderating influence on the political landscape, Boucher published a pamphlet he entitled *Quaeres addressed to the people of Maryland*.<sup>101</sup> In a series of thirteen rhetorical questions, Boucher’s anonymous address sought to evoke alarm about the

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 447.

<sup>100</sup> Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 161.

<sup>101</sup> Boucher reproduced the text of this pamphlet in his 1789 autobiography. Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 128-130.

rising tide of radical political activities in the colonies. The first three questions pointed to Roman historical themes, suggesting the degree to which Boucher believed an argument anchored in classical context might influence his audience. His first question—“Do not the popular meetings now so common among us bear a very near resemblance to the tribunitial assemblies of the people in the earlier periods of the Roman history?”—suggested that the coercive, Boston-based liberty movement was nothing less than the work of colonial demagogues seeking to undermine the established order. Building on this theme, Boucher’s second question targeted the legitimacy and competency of the committeemen to be entrusted with such responsibilities: “Do not the resolves entered into at such popular meetings,” Boucher asked, “resemble also the *Plebiscita*, or *Ordinances*, which in after times were as valid and obligatory as the *Senatus-consulta*, or laws constitutionally enacted by the whole legislature?” Although critical of the resolves of the First Continental Congress and the pretense of the extralegal process embodied in the ad hoc committees, Boucher warned that such activities on the part of the “plebeians” of America were already paving the path to arbitrary government as they did in Rome. In bewilderment, Boucher urged his fellow Marylanders to consider under what authority or principles of common sense such committees “not known to the laws of the land or the Constitution” could presume “to debate and determine on matters of the highest moment,” “which affect the very vitals of our Constitution?” Boucher’s third question, invoking the witness of the classical commentators, simply surmised that if the previous two “quaeres be answered in the affirmative,” then are we not inviting “that *Dominatio Plebis*, so much desecrated [*sic*] by the best writers of Government?” Tyranny was the exercise of power without

authority—and the censorship of the committees and the threat of “tar and feathers” exemplified how that ancient scourge had now reached the American landscape.<sup>102</sup> In addition to his Maryland “*Quaeres*,” Boucher prepared an anonymous article for the *New York Gazette*, published before the meeting of the Second Continental Congress in May in which he likened the patriots of Boston to the ancient barbarians at the gates of Rome.<sup>103</sup> Highlighting the irony of suppression of free speech amidst patriot calls for liberty, Boucher stated, “It is some proof of the sad state of the times” that we “find it necessary to communicate our sentiments to you through the medium of a newspaper.” Boucher challenged the delegates to consider how the first meeting of the Congress had done nothing to mediate the rift with England. On the contrary, their declarations and resolves “have already drawn down upon us, or soon will, all the horrors of a Civil War, the evils of which alone infinitely surpass all our other political grievances . . .”<sup>104</sup> Boucher identified the northern delegates as the ringleaders of the seditious junto. Our “enterprising and restless” neighbors to the north are “the Goths and Vandals of America,” Boucher declared, ready to transform the landscape of the middle and southern colonies into “a wild Republic of mad Independents.”<sup>105</sup> Boucher charged the delegates to remember “to love and reverence the Constitution both in Church and State” and to be on their guard against any fascination with New England politics that might entice them to pull down the existing order “without first well knowing what we are to have in its stead.”<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Boucher reprinted the text of the letter in his autobiography, published in *Rivington's New-York Gazette* under the headline, “To the Honble The Deputies in Congress from the Southern Provinces.” Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 130-136; Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 170-171.

<sup>104</sup> Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 131.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 134.

Undeterred in his convictions, Boucher ignored patriot attempts to censor or curb his political and ecclesiastical pronouncements, an indicator of the Anglican minister's commitment to promulgating his conservative vision of classical republicanism in the colonies. "I endeavored in my sermons, and in various pieces published in the Gazettes of the country, to check the immense mischief that was impending, but I endeavored in vain," Boucher wrote.<sup>107</sup> When Whig activists pressed Boucher to preach on behalf of the population of Boston suffering the effects of the British blockade, he refused to comply, perceiving their true motive was "to raise a sum sufficient to purchase arms and ammunition" for the insurgency. In turn, Boucher became "a marked man," daily confronted by "insults, indignities, and injuries." On one occasion, a two hundred-man militia forced him to appear before members of the Maryland Provincial Committee to be questioned for his principles.<sup>108</sup> According to Boucher's own account, he never entered the pulpit of a church "without something very disagreeable happening," and for that reason, he carried a couple of loaded pistols with him at all times. The precautionary measure was especially appropriate for a church meeting held on July 20, 1775, designated by the Congress as the first intercolonial Fast Day.<sup>109</sup> A band of two hundred armed men under the command of Boucher's outspoken Whig opponent, Colonel Osborne Sprigg, attended the service at Queen Anne's parish, threatening to shoot Boucher if he attempted to preach. According to Boucher, "with my sermon in one hand and a loaded pistol in the other, like Nehemiah, I prepared to ascend the steps of the pulpit." When the militia moved to surround him, Boucher grabbed Sprigg by the collar, held a cocked pistol to his head,

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 105-108.

<sup>109</sup> Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 172-176.

and assured the crowd “that if any violence was offered to me I would instantly blow his brains out.”<sup>110</sup> By September, this incident, accompanied with the steady displacement of government authority by the extralegal committees in Maryland convinced Boucher to seek refuge in England. In an emblematic farewell letter to George Washington, whom Boucher had corresponded with since 1768 after becoming the tutor for Washington’s stepson, John Custis, Boucher voiced his dismay in having been so unfairly treated by his fellow Americans. “No Tory has yet in a single instance misused or injured a Whig merely for being a Whig,” Boucher wrote—“with respect to Whigs, however, the case has been directly the reverse.” Blaming Washington for his acquiescence in the midst of these abuses, Boucher stated, “You are no longer worthy of my friendship; a man of honour can no longer without dishonour be connected with you. With your cause I renounce you.”<sup>111</sup>

Two decades later, in his historical analysis of the competing ideologies of the pre-revolutionary years, Boucher maintained his classical interpretation of what had transpired, namely, that the colonies had been carried into rebellion by enterprising demagogues, ultimately yielding a cursed system of government prone to faction and instability. Although Boucher had renounced Washington’s friendship in 1775, Boucher dedicated his 1797 manuscript to the first president of the United States: “The unhappy dispute,” Boucher wrote, “which terminated in the disunion of our respective countries also broke off our personal connexion: but I never was more than your political enemy; and every sentiment even of political animosity has, on my part, long

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<sup>110</sup> Boucher, *Reminiscences of an American Loyalist*, 121-124.

<sup>111</sup> Jonathan Boucher, “Boucher to Washington, The Lodge, 6 August 1775,” *Letters of Jonathan Boucher to George Washington*, ed. Worthington Chauncey Ford (Brooklyn: Historical Printing Club, 1899), 47-49; Zimmer, *Loyalist in Exile*, 187-192.

ago subsided.”<sup>112</sup> Commending Washington’s resemblance to Cincinnatus in returning to the plow rather than extending his time in office, Boucher also conveyed his satisfaction that the new American government had resisted “anarchical doctrines.”<sup>113</sup> However, despite his cordial nod to Washington, Boucher was quick to highlight the defects of the new American government, drawing a parallel with the manner in which Xenophon critiqued the defects of the Athenian form of government in the fourth century. Paraphrasing Xenophon, Boucher wrote, “I cannot conscientiously commend the form of government you have chosen” since your government is probably “worse than I think it is”—and what you currently have, Xenophon stipulated, is preferable to “a much better Government” since it would be impossible to make a change now “without a civil commotion.”<sup>114</sup> In Boucher’s view, the Americans had reaped what they had sown: “They set out on principles incompatible with stability; and of course it is natural to suppose that their people, following the example of their founders, will always be prone to revolt and rebellion.” With sedition and tyranny “thickly sown in their Constitutions,” Boucher declared, “it is hardly possible they should be either easily or well governed; and by being ill governed, they are sure to become an unworthy people—and if unworthy, it is still more certain that they must and will be unhappy.”<sup>115</sup> Boucher’s critique of the American Revolution reflected what he regarded to be the core philosophical error in the patriot agenda from the outset—namely, the notion that a

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<sup>112</sup> Jonathan Boucher, “To George Washington Esquire, of Mount Vernon (Dedication),” *A View of the Causes and Consequences*.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>114</sup> Boucher’s footnote confessed he could not recall the reference for his own citation of Xenophon. However, Boucher’s paraphrase reflected Xenophon’s appraisal of Athenian government: “The form of the Athenian government, then, I do not commend; but since they have themselves given the preference to a democracy, they appear to me to preserve the democratic constitution with ability . . .”. Xenophon, *On the Government of Athens*, 3.1 in *Xenophon’s Minor Works*, trans. J. S. Watson (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1857), 242; Boucher, “Preface,” *A View of the Causes and Consequences*, lxxi-lxxii.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, lxx.



classical form of republican government could succeed apart from strong centralized authority and control.

Among the Anglican clergymen who entered the rhetorical battle against the Whig-patriot movement in the 1770s, Samuel Seabury of Westchester New York was perhaps the most adept in using the language of classical liberty to counter the radicalism of revolutionary foment. Like Boucher, Seabury advocated the virtue of royal authority as a mechanism for ensuring justice and tranquility in American society. In challenging the authority of the crown, the Whig-patriots had set the colonies on a dangerous trajectory that would end in nothing less than anarchy, oppression, and utter ruin, and Seabury took up the mantle of Cicero in an effort to expose the malfeasance of the conspirators and sway public opinion against the incendiary rhetoric of the revolutionary cabal. Seabury's pamphlets, according to Robert Calhoun, represented the "the most comprehensive and sustained polemical effort by any doctrinaire Tory to repudiate the pre-Revolutionary movement, demolish its constitutional arguments, discredit its methods of protest, and expose its coercive tactics and presumptions."<sup>116</sup> Like Jonathan Boucher, as a representative of the Church of England, Seabury's conservatism stemmed from the high regard he placed in the chain of authority that proceeded from the king and the imperial church. A colonial native of Connecticut, Seabury graduated from Yale College in 1748, studied medicine at Edinburgh University, and was ordained a cleric in the Anglican Church in 1753 at age twenty-four. His first ministry assignment was in New Jersey advocating the work of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and supporting efforts to establish an

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<sup>116</sup> Robert M. Calhoun, *The Loyalists in Revolutionary America, 1760-1781* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich, 1965), 245.

Anglican episcopate in the colonies. After arriving in Westchester in 1765, Seabury worked in partnership with three other clergymen, Miles Cooper, Charles Inglis, and Thomas Chandler to defend the Church of England and the monarchy against what Seabury described as a “mischievous Scheme,” a coordinated pamphlet and newsprint assault by the dissenting Presbyterian and Congregational committees and synods across the colonies. By 1774, the rising foment in the colonies prompted Seabury to enter the political sphere and launch his own pamphlet campaign, persuaded the radicalism of the patriot movement was leading America headlong into open rebellion, not only against royal authority, but against the ancient principles of the English constitution and the liberties it sustained.<sup>117</sup>

In countering the radicalism of the Whig-patriot agenda, Seabury couched his rhetoric in rich, agrarian tones, tailoring his classical critique of the revolutionary movement to appeal to the passion of his readers. Seabury was subtle in his approach, seeking to appeal to a popular audience while maintaining a highly-principled, sophisticated line of argument. His polemic illustrated how loyalist advocates invoked classical ideas and language in framing their arguments, even when they avoided citing direct references to antiquity in their pamphlets. Over the course of his sixteen-month writing campaign, Seabury referred his readers to only one example from Roman history, a discussion on ancient colonial relationships, and he did so under compulsion, citing the reference in reply to his literary opponent, Alexander Hamilton who initiated the discussion. Similar to the way Crèvecoeur summoned the potency of the Belisarius motif to his critique of the Revolution with only a single mention of the Roman general

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<sup>117</sup> Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 249-250; Gerald B. Hertz, “Bishop Seabury,” *The English Historical Review* 26 (January 1911), 62-67.

in his histrionic essay, Seabury aimed to reach his American audience with the passion and language of classical liberty in resonance with Americans' conspiratorial fears which had been well-conditioned by their education in the Catilinarian conspiracy of 63 B.C. More so than any other loyalist polemicist of the pre-Revolutionary years, Seabury was intent on establishing rapport with his intended audience, the American farming community. Fashioning himself as farmer in his selected pseudonym, "A. W. Farmer" (not recognized by his readers as "A Westchester Farmer" until later), Seabury reflected the loyalist equivalent of John Dickinson in his *Farmer* letters, and presaged the agrarian character of Crèvecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* as a literary vehicle for advocating the loyalist persuasion. Seabury portrayed himself as a Cincinnatus-like figure, a statesman who could also relate to the rigors and common sense lifestyle of the colonial frontier. In Ciceronian fashion, pointing to practical evidence to expose his rivals, Seabury entered the public arena to defend American liberty against the delegates in Philadelphia, exercising the wit, humor, and pragmatic sensibilities of an educated yeoman adept in figuring the impact of the Congress' proposed trade sanctions against Britain on the local economy. Seabury's classical vision of British America and his identification with the virtues of the agrarian ideal guided his rationale and strategy in making his case for the loyalist cause.

For Seabury, the bucolic landscape of eighteenth-century America perfectly resonated with the rational tenets of the classical past; whereas his Whig-patriot opponents felt compelled to overburden their arguments with grandiloquence, Latin flourish, and historical referents, Seabury approached his polemic in a pragmatic fashion, convinced that the Tory-loyalist vision of America, true to the ancient

principles of English liberty, required no such rhetorical fabrication. Although radicals and loyalists both accused one another of misapplying the lessons of the ancient past, conservatives like Seabury tended to view the Whigs' incendiary arguments as irrational, flamboyant, and uncouth, and this assessment fostered a style of rhetoric among the Tory-loyalists, and Seabury in particular, that was more reserved, classical in theme and sophistication more than detailed content. For all British Americans, as Caroline Winterer and Philip Gould observed, classical expression and the art of academic repartee marked one's membership among the conservative social elite in the eighteenth century.<sup>118</sup> The prestige of an education in the classical canon implied not only familiarity with the literature of Greece and Rome, but also distinguished an individual as having a mastery of literature "of the first order and rank." Literacy in the classics signified erudition, status, and legitimate claim to authority. Conservatives like Seabury disparaged the "loose interpretations patriots were giving to words like 'liberty' and 'rights'"—in contrast, loyalists believed their arguments, based on the tenets of the English constitution, reflected a greater mastery of the classical domain of history and political philosophy.<sup>119</sup> Seabury prided himself in the erudition and finesse that permitted him to move seamlessly between Enlightenment rationalism and homespun witticism, using the tenets of classical republicanism in combination with satire and metaphor to portray the Congress as inept and pedestrian, guided by half-cocked political frenzy. The clearest demonstration of this point came when Seabury

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<sup>118</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 10-20; Philip Gould, "Wit and Politics in Revolutionary British America: The Case of Samuel Seabury and Alexander Hamilton," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41 (Spring 2008), 386-387.

<sup>119</sup> Samuel Johnson's 1755-1774 edition of the *Dictionary of the English Language* defined "classick" as "of the first order and rank." Gould, "Wit and Politics in Revolutionary British America," 386-387.

ridiculed the Congress for the language it used in crafting the seventh Article of the Continental Association, describing how the colonies would be self-sufficient under the non-importation policy by conserving the total number of sheep they needed to support a viable woolen industry—“we will kill them [the sheep] as sparingly as may be, especially those of the most profitable kind.”<sup>120</sup> Seabury’s retort played on what he viewed to be the Article’s clumsy language and poorly conceived strategy: “We are ordered to *kill them* [the sheep] *sparingly*; a queer phrase,” Seabury remarked, “however, let it pass. If it is not *classical*, it is *congressional*; and that’s enough.” Seabury’s use of the word “classical” in this instance connoted the idea of cultural and intellectual sophistication, an element he found wanting in the Congressional delegates who hopelessly aspired to wield the complex ideas of classical philosophy while stumbling over the simple articulation of words. Carrying his sarcasm to the limit, Seabury declared, “And after having killed them *sparingly*, if we have any to *spare*, we must *spare* them to our poor neighbours. But supposing that after *killing them sparingly, and sparing* as many to my poor neighbours as they want, I should by reason of *killing them sparingly*, have still more to *spare*—what shall I do with them? Exported they must not be.”<sup>121</sup> Seabury’s harangue suggested how the Westchester Farmer at points had difficulty concealing his intellectual aversion to the hyped and inarticulate pretensions of the Congress. For Seabury, the audacious Sons of Liberty,

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<sup>120</sup> Article 7 of the Non-Importation Association (1774), cited in Gould, “Wit and Politics in Revolutionary British America,” 386.

<sup>121</sup> Samuel Seabury, *Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress, Held at Philadelphia, Sept. 5, 1774; Wherein Their Errors are Exhibited, Their Reasonings Confuted, and the fatal Tendency of their Non-Importation, Non-Exportation, and Non-Consumption Measures, are laid open to the plainest Understandings; and the Only Means pointed out for Preserving and Securing our present Happy Constitution in a Letter to the Farmers, and other Inhabitants of North America, in General, and to those of the Province of New-York in Particular. By a Farmer (November 16, 1774)*, in *Letters of a Westchester Farmer, 1774-1775*, ed. with intro. Clarence H. Vance (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 63; Gould, “Wit and Politics in Revolutionary British America,” 386.

along with their amateurish congresses and committees, were hopelessly unqualified to represent the interests of British Americans before the imperial throne, and yet their popular slogans and demonstrations increasingly resonated with the plebeians in the public square. This dilemma inspired Seabury's selection of the A. W. Farmer persona, enabling the Anglican minister to surpass the boundaries of previous loyalist polemic and present an agrarian conservative vision that was both rational and pragmatic, tuning the language of classical liberty to the vernacular of the wider colonial community.<sup>122</sup>

A prominent characteristic of Seabury's vigorous polemic against the Whig-patriots was the way in which his arguments frequently mirrored the language of Cicero's orations against Catiline, illustrating the way in which the classical genre manifested itself through his writing.<sup>123</sup> Although Seabury did not directly reference the history of 63 B.C., the specific points Seabury raised in the course of his letters suggested Seabury viewed the dangers posed by the plotting, ambitious "madmen" of Boston in a Catilinarian context—the committees ready to deploy mob executioners, the specter of anarchy, and the inevitable scheme of the illegitimate usurpers to establish their own tyranny—all of these elements corresponded with the well-rehearsed lessons of the Catilinarian plot. Aiming to expose the irrationality of the patriot argument, Seabury was quick to show that the Boston rabble-rousers were most concerned with pursuing their own financial interests, similar to the way Cicero pointed to the indebtedness of Catiline's cabal as their prime motivation for seeking the destruction of Rome. Two weeks before the incident that would come to be known as the Boston Tea Party, Seabury published what is considered to be his first critique of the Whig-patriot

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<sup>122</sup> Gould, "Wit and Politics in Revolutionary British America," 392.

<sup>123</sup> James Farrell offers a similar argument concerning the influence of Cicero on John Adams in his Novanglus letters. See Farrell, "New England's Cicero," 55-72.

movement in the December 1773 edition of Rivington's *Gazetteer*.<sup>124</sup> Under the pseudonym, "A Farmer," Seabury warned the inhabitants of New York that the "mock patriots" of Boston, in order to secure their own financial interests, were ready to pull the rest of the colonies headlong into their reckless scheme of boycotting English tea. Seabury declared that "Violence, in opposition to government, should ever be kept aloof, and held as the *dernier resort*"—however, these hotheads, Seabury warned, whose "pliant consciences will not stick at any thing that opposes their interest," will soon make us their tools of insurrection. Seabury's line of argument, in parallel to Cicero's appeal before the Roman Senate, called his countrymen to embrace their patriotic duty and resist the spirit of factionalism. Whoever promotes violence in this way, Seabury asserted, is most likely "an enemy to the cause he would appear to espouse," and given the option of consuming high quality English tea at a moderate price, or inferior Dutch tea demanded by the Boston merchants, "as a loyal subject, as a good man, and a lover of my country," should I not "prefer the English?"

In the first of his Westchester Farmer letters, Seabury took Ciceronian aim at the meeting of the First Continental Congress, combining agrarian pragmatism with rational classicism to castigate the delegates' motivations and competency. No more virtuous than a secret gathering of the Catilinarian junto, Seabury denounced the Congress as an illegitimate body that promoted colonial opposition to parliamentary authority. Meeting in Philadelphia from September 5 to October 26, 1774, the delegates outlined a plan for passive resistance against Britain, a policy governing the non-importation and non-

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<sup>124</sup> A Farmer [attributed to Samuel Seabury], "Letter I: To the Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New-York," *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, December 2, 1773. Clarence H. Vance suggests Seabury intended the letter to be the first in a series, but then changed his plan and started over again the with A. W. Farmer letters one year later. See introductory essay in Samuel Seabury, *Letters of a Westchester Farmer*, 19.

consumption of English trade goods, with the further threat of non-exportation of American products to Britain if colonial grievances were not adequately addressed. These measures, posing a serious economic threat to the Empire, further exacerbated the rift between the mother country and the colonies and were the primary reason Seabury launched his writing campaign.<sup>125</sup> Published on November 24, 1774, Seabury addressed his pamphlet, *Free Thoughts on the Continental Congress* to the farmers of New York, aiming to undermine the incendiary rhetoric of his Whig-patriot counterparts by presenting a clear-cut, pragmatic line of argument, casting himself as a simple farmer from Westchester, someone who understood and appreciated the interests of country people across the province: “I choose to address myself principally to You,” Seabury wrote, “because I am most nearly connected with you, being one of your number.” Seabury recognized these valuable members of the community as offering “the greatest benefit to the state” since the welfare of the province ultimately depended on the raw materials they painstakingly produced. Seabury leveraged this populist appeal to portray the Congress—those “High and Mighty Delegates” and “Our sovereign Lord and Masters”—as a body ultimately opposed to the interests of colonial farmers, taking us “from bad to worse.”<sup>126</sup> Seabury’s appeal to the virtue of the American farming community mirrored Cicero’s address to the people of Rome when the ancient statesman styled himself as the people’s representative—“In this War, I present myself to you, Citizens, for your leader.”<sup>127</sup> Similar to the way Seabury disparaged the delegates in Philadelphia, Cicero depicted the Catilinarian cabal as insolent, treacherous, and unrestrained while portraying himself as the people’s

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<sup>125</sup> Hertz, “Bishop Seabury,” 59.

<sup>126</sup> [Seabury], *Free Thoughts*, 43, 54, 60, 65.

<sup>127</sup> Cicero, “Second Oration,” *The Works of Sallust*, 102, 110.



champion of honor, loyalty, and wisdom—“In short,” Cicero declared, “Justice, Moderation, Magnanimity, [and] Prudence” are in a great battle with “Iniquity, with Debauchery, with Effeminacy, with Rashness; that is, every Virtue with every Vice.” In practical terms, Cicero’s notion of virtue produced “right Reason” and “Sound sense,” while Catilinarian vice spawned “Phrensy” and “Extravagance.” Similarly, the Westchester Farmer challenged his readers to consider how the Congress’ reckless policy of non-importation and non-exportation would adversely affect their livelihoods. In his view, the irrational nature of the proposal was sufficient to belie its malevolent origins. Suggesting that the Congress was either ignorant, careless, or plotting to betray the hardworking farmers in America, Seabury argued that the trade embargo was simply an ingenious scheme designed by the delegates to increase the wealth of New England merchants and speculators at the expense of the virtuous subjects of the colonies.<sup>128</sup>

While Seabury’s *Free Thoughts* communicated to the farmers of the commonwealth in pragmatic terms, A. W. Farmer also alerted his readers to the patriot conspiracy engulfing them, reflecting the prosecutorial spirit with which Cicero’s oration exposed Catiline’s plot before the Roman Senate. In 63 B.C., Cicero declared, “neither the Shades of Night can conceal thy traitorous Cabals, nor thy domestic Walls confine the Accents of thy Treason . . . Thy Devices are all clearer than the Day; and since I know them, thou hadst best avow them.”<sup>129</sup> In like manner, Seabury contended that the conspirators in Boston, while declaring themselves to be “*his Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects*,” were actually concocting an “ill-projected, ill-conducted,

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 44; Hertz, “Bishop Seabury,” 59.

<sup>129</sup> Cicero, “First Oration,” *The Works of Sallust*, 80.

abominable scheme” to undermine the British Empire—their calls for trade and consumption restrictions were guided not by patriotism, but by their self serving financial interests.<sup>130</sup> The Congressional delegates have us “at their mercy,” Seabury observed, and anyone found guilty of violating their trade policies “shall be considered as Out-laws, unworthy of the protection of civil society, and delivered over to the vengeance of a lawless, outrageous mob, to be tarred, feathered, hanged, drawn, quartered, and burnt.—O rare American Freedom!”<sup>131</sup> Seabury’s concern with civil order aptly reflected Cicero’s sentiment that the greatest threats to society were not foreign powers, but the conspiracies rising up from “the Bowels of the State”—“within our own Walls Ruin threatens us; within our Walls the Enemy assails us. It is against domestic Riot, against lawless Phrensy, against civil Violence, and Outrages, that we must arm.”<sup>132</sup> Similarly, the Westchester Farmer, like an elder statesman defending his case before an eighteenth-century Senate declared, “The bands of civil society are broken” and “not a single Magistrate has had courage or virtue enough to interpose,” even though properties have been “frequently invaded by violence” and liberties denied. We have become “the most abject slaves that ever existed” Seabury lamented. “Tell me not of Delegates, Congresses, Committees, Riots, Mobs, Insurrections, Associations,—a plague on them all.—Give me the steady, uniform, unbiased influence of the Courts of Justice.”<sup>133</sup> Demonstrating his flare for vivid imagery, Seabury painted a picture of patriot mobs invading the farmers’ homesteads, inspecting not only their tea-canisters and molasses jugs, but their “wives and daughters petty-coats” as well. Let others

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<sup>130</sup> [Seabury], *Free Thoughts*, 45, 54.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

<sup>132</sup> Cicero, “Second Oration,” *The Works of Sallust*, 102.

<sup>133</sup> [Seabury], *Free Thoughts*, 59, 66.

“bow, and cringe, and tremble, and quake—fall down and worship our sovereign Lord the Mob,” Seabury declared, “I will not”—“my house is my castle.”<sup>134</sup> Seabury’s challenge to the farmers of New York mirrored Cicero’s rhetoric in his appeal to the Roman Senate when he decried the assault on public liberty at the hand of Catiline and his accomplices—“Your Common Country, beset by diabolical Conspirators, armed with Fire and Sword, applies to You in a supplicant Posture,” Cicero declared, to defend her “Castle and Capitol,” to protect the Fire of the Vestals; that holy fire, never to be extinguished,” for the sake of “your Children and Wives” and your “domestic Hearths.”<sup>135</sup> Similar to the way Cicero perceived himself “involved in an everlasting War with reprobate Citizens,” Seabury exclaimed, “If I must be enslaved, let it be by a King at least, and not by a parcel of upstart lawless Committee-men. If I must be devoured, let me devoured by the jaws of lion, and not *gnawed* to death by rats and vermin.”<sup>136</sup>

The potency of Seabury’s first A. W. Farmer letter triggered immediate reaction in New York, one indication of the degree to which Seabury’s classical polemic, both rational and pragmatic in its appeal, registered with colonial readers in 1774. Two weeks following the publication of his *Free Thoughts*, Seabury received a reply, a pamphlet published by Rivington on December 15<sup>th</sup> entitled, *A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress*.<sup>137</sup> The anonymous author of the *Vindication* was none other

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>135</sup> Cicero, “Fourth Oration,” *The Works of Sallust*, 143-145.

<sup>136</sup> [Seabury], *Free Thoughts*, 61.

<sup>137</sup> [Alexander Hamilton], *A Full Vindication of the Measures of Congress from the Calumnies of their Enemies in answer to a Letter under the signature of a Westchester Farmer; whereby his sophistry is exposed, his cavils confuted, his artifices detected, and his wit ridiculed, in a General Address to the inhabitants of America, and a Particular Address to the Farmers of the Province of New York (Dec 15, 1774)*, *The Revolutionary Writings of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Richard B. Vernier, foreword by Joyce O. Appleby (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008), 5-39.

than Alexander Hamilton, then a seventeen-year-old student at New York's King's College making his first literary contribution to the revolutionary movement.<sup>138</sup> Rising to defend the Philadelphia delegates against Seabury's attack, Hamilton warned his audience that critics like A. W. Farmer, in casting aspersions against "this venerable assembly," are truly the ones who threaten to enslave us—they slander the Congress "only because they are foes to America."<sup>139</sup> Aiming to undermine Seabury's credibility, Hamilton addressed the colonial farming community as "a friend to America," accusing the author of *Free Thoughts* of sophistry and falsehood. Whereas "I love to speak the truth," Hamilton wrote, "I can venture to assure you the true writer of the piece signed A. W. Farmer, is not in reality a Farmer. He is some ministerial emissary, that has assumed the name to deceive you, and make you swallow the intoxicating potion he has prepared for you."<sup>140</sup> In contrast to the Farmer, Hamilton described himself as one not needing to resort to chicanery to make his argument. Objecting to the Farmer's portrayal of the Philadelphia delegates as "rogues and rebels" who had betrayed their constituents, Hamilton appealed to the farming community's sensibility—many of these gentlemen, among "the wisest and best men in America," Hamilton asserted, "have large land holdings and can be viewed as farmers themselves."<sup>141</sup> The non-importation and exportation measures might require sacrifices now, Hamilton conceded, but such inconveniences were necessary to prevent "losing every thing that is precious." Although Seabury refrained from using historical references, Hamilton freely did so, particularly when questioning the Farmer's premise that the British Empire ought to be

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<sup>138</sup> Hertz, "Bishop Seabury," 60.

<sup>139</sup> [Hamilton], *A Full Vindication*, 8.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 25-26.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

viewed as the best defense of liberty in the colonies: “ROME was the nurse of freedom,” Hamilton wrote, “celebrated for her justice and lenity; but in what manner did she govern her dependent provinces? They were made the continual scene of rapine and cruelty. From thence,” Hamilton warned, “let us learn how little confidence is due to the wisdom and equity of the most exemplary nations.”<sup>142</sup> In the pamphlet war that developed between the two rivals, this particular point on the relationship of ancient Rome to her colonies served as the only direct reference to antiquity the Westchester Farmer elected to discuss, emphasizing the strong priority Seabury placed on minimizing his direct references to the classics to sustain his plain farmer persona. However, this rhetorical limitation did not inhibit Seabury from infusing his polemic with classical themes.

Seabury’s next Farmer letter, *The Congress Canvassed*, expanded his critique of the Congress by invoking the classical construct of tyranny, demonstrating the way an eighteenth-century understanding of classical liberty continued to shape his rhetorical strategy.<sup>143</sup> Published by Rivington on December 22, too soon to provide a rebuttal to Hamilton’s letter, Seabury once again cast himself as a “plain countryman,” this time tailoring his address to the merchants of New York in a scathing indictment, denouncing the Congress as “an instrument of *injustice* and *oppression*,” a foreign power “utterly unknown in any legal sense!”<sup>144</sup> Announcing his intent to “detect and expose the false, arbitrary, and tyrannical PRINCIPLES upon which the Congress acted,”

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>143</sup> A. W. Farmer [Samuel Seabury], *The Congress Canvassed: or, an Examination into the Conduct of the Delegates, at their Grand Convention, held in Philadelphia, Sept. 1, 1774. Addressed to the Merchants of New York. By A. W. Farmer, Letters of a Westchester Farmer, 1774-1775*, ed. with intro. Clarence H. Vance, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 71-100.

<sup>144</sup> [Seabury], *The Congress Canvassed*, 91.

Seabury went beyond exposing the conspiracy of the Philadelphia delegates to warn of the arbitrary government that was sure to rise from the ashes of the anarchy they espoused.<sup>145</sup> Although the Congress had assembled ostensibly “to “bridge the divide” between Britain and the colonies, Seabury asserted that the delegates, led by the madmen from Massachusetts-Bay, had done precisely the opposite, succeeding only in “writing inflammatory addresses to the people of Great Britain” and openly defying the laws of the empire and humanity. The shape of things to come had already been determined by these artful insurrectionists who initiated a hostile takeover, using “mobs and riots” to oust the king’s appointed officials and shut down the courts of justice. In place of legitimate government, Seabury warned, the Congress has established “a court of Inquisition” to determine, “in the most arbitrary, tyrannical, and unheard-of manner,” the “liberties and properties” of your countrymen.<sup>146</sup> The Congress was an alien presence in the heart of British America, fostering an “abominable system of oppression” that would inevitably lead to the kind of tyrannical government the Congress had devised for the continent, “a grand American Republic, which shall, after a while, rise to power and grandeur, upon the ruins of our present constitution.”<sup>147</sup> Although all these assertions had their antecedents in the classical narrative on liberty and tyranny, Seabury, in a display of theological witticism, amplified his critique by drawing a parallel between the Congress and the demonic reign of Antichrist described in the book of Revelation. Addressing those poor souls who might inadvertently violate the trade boycott with Britain and commit “the unpardonable sin” of using an English pin, drinking the wrong brand of tea, or eating an Irish potato prohibited by the

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 96.

Congress, Seabury offered this consolation: Although “the utmost vengeance” of the committees awaits you, “Comfort thyself” in this—“that thou art in no worse state than a few honest people, of whom I have read, in an old neglected book, who were not allowed to *buy* or *sell*, because they had not *the mark of the beast* in their *foreheads*.”<sup>148</sup>

Seabury continued to infuse classical themes in his polemic, producing a third Farmer pamphlet, *A View of the Controversy Between Great-Britain and her Colonies*, advertised in Rivington’s *Gazetteer* on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1775.<sup>149</sup> A reply to Hamilton’s earlier assault, Seabury first reasserted his rhetorical construct as the unsophisticated farmer able to see through the smokescreen of the Congressional conspiracy. The contrast Seabury drew between himself and Hamilton invoked the classical motif of manly, Roman virtue as opposed to effeminate, barbarian corruption, facts and common sense as opposed to dissimulation and inconsistent logic. Addressing his pamphlet “To the Author of *A Full Vindication*,” Seabury vowed to expose the Vindicator’s lengthy arguments as mere “artifice, sophistry, misrepresentation and abuse.” While “these are your weapons,” Seabury announced, “I am a plain Farmer”—the “stubborn facts” speak for themselves, adequately condemning the Congress “at the bar of *impartial* reason, and *common* sense.”<sup>150</sup> In the way that Hamilton sought to undermine A. W. Farmer’s agricultural credentials, Seabury scoffed at the Vindicator for addressing the farmers of America at all—“they will scarce believe anything you have said to them, except you are no farmer.” In your “endeavor to frighten them,” Seabury asserted, you have

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<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 85-86; See Rev. 13:16-18 KJV.

<sup>149</sup> A. W. Farmer [Samuel Seabury], *A View of the Controversy Between Great-Britain and her Colonies: Including a Mode of Determining their present Disputes, Finally and Effectually; and of Preventing All Future Contentions. In a Letter To the Author of A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress, from the Calumnies of their Enemies, Letters of a Westchester Farmer, 1774-1775*, ed. with intro. Clarence H. Vance, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 103-146.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

imagined that Parliament will tax “their tables, chairs, and platters, and dishes, and knives and forks, and every thing else—and “even every kiss their daughters received from their sweet-hearts.” Displaying once again his flare for witticism, Seabury remarked, “No reflections, Sir, upon farmers daughters: they love kissing, ‘tis true, and so did your mother, or you would scarce have made your appearance among us.”<sup>151</sup> Epitomizing the classical genre of heroic, manly virtue, the Westchester Farmer vowed to use his “pen and hickory cudgel” to defend the laws, motivated by “a love of *liberty*, of *order*, of *good* government, and of *America* my native country.” As a warning to all comers, Seabury announced, “The first committee-man that comes to rob me of my Tea, or my wine, or molasses, shall feel the weight of my arm.” With regard to the Vindicator, whom Seabury portrayed as vain, impotent, and devoid of “classical elegance” in his writing, the Farmer warned, “a stroke of my cudgel would make you reel, notwithstanding the thickness of your skull.”<sup>152</sup>

Although Seabury resisted mirroring Hamilton’s style in citing specific examples from antiquity to inflate his argument, Seabury demonstrated his erudition in the classics when necessary, particularly in response to the objection Hamilton raised concerning the relationship between Rome and her colonies. In his earlier pamphlet, the Vindicator had drawn a parallel between Rome and Britain, suggesting political commentators had lauded both constitutional powers as the “nurse of freedom”—and yet, just as Rome had denied those freedoms to its dependent colonies, so now Britain was gradually disavowing America of its liberties. In Hamilton’s view, Britain’s parliamentary control over the colonies was an affront to the natural rights of mankind

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 142. The fact that Hamilton was an illegitimate son, born out of wedlock, elevates Seabury’s comment beyond simple witticism.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 106.



and provided ample justification for rebellion; there was nothing to be gained in extolling the virtue of the British Empire since there was every reason to suspect those virtues would never be realized in America. Ready to correct Hamilton's analysis on this point, Seabury explained that by definition, colonial relationships in the context of empire were always dependent and "subject to the general laws of the body." The supreme legislative power rightfully resides at the center, Seabury declared, and the classical record proved that to be the case since "All the laws of the empire were enacted at Rome." The notion that laws must have consent of the governed to make them binding was "unsupported by any authoritative record of the British constitution, ancient or modern." The patriot notion of consent was a novel position, arising from "an artful change of terms," Seabury observed, since even in the mother country, much of the population was "governed by laws to which they never consented." Even the celebrated Pennsylvania Farmer (John Dickinson), Seabury declared, affirmed that Parliament "unquestionably possesses a legal authority to regulate the trade of Great Britain, and all her colonies."<sup>153</sup> Not subjecting our assemblies to the authority of the nation would present a contradictory "*imperium in imperio*," Seabury argued, an empire within an empire, a logical contradiction and contrary to "the very nature of things." From Seabury's view, this understanding of government was not only logical, but entirely consistent with the classical, Roman model—"In every government, there must be a supreme, absolute authority lodged somewhere," and to question that authority

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<sup>153</sup> Seabury is quoting John Dickinson's *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer*, Letter II. [Seabury], *A View of the Controversy*, 118-119.

would threaten to undermine the established order that ultimately preserved the liberties of all.<sup>154</sup>

Like other loyalist writers, Seabury capitalized on the eighteenth century's great concern with conspiracies against liberty, a theme British Americans naturally associated in context with the classical horror stories of Caesar or Catiline. According to the Westchester Farmer, the Vindicator's exaggerated claims concerning the designs of the British ministry were suspect from the outset, reflecting nothing more than the wild accusations of self-serving madmen. The Whigs had "asserted over, and over, and over again" that the administration was plotting to enslave America, yet no evidence had ever been presented to substantiate that claim. The real conspiracy was not to be found in the Parliament, but in the ranks of the Congress. These "artful men," Seabury wrote, "smile at the confusion" they have created while they exert their influence "by sedition and rebellion," shaking "the British empire to its very basis, that they may have an opportunity of erecting their beloved common wealth on its ruins."<sup>155</sup> The delegates in Philadelphia, not even "chosen by a hundredth part of the people," Seabury declared, had "*talked* like madmen: They *acted* like madmen: They *raved* like madmen: They *did every thing* like madmen:—Then why not *call* them madmen?—Why not? Why!"<sup>156</sup> The Westchester Farmer urged his New York readers to reject the incendiary claims of the Philadelphia delegates and embrace a common sense approach in seeking redress within the constitutional framework—"If we grasp at too much we shall lose every thing" Seabury warned.<sup>157</sup> Greater than the threat of any foreign tyrant was the

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 110-111.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., 126.

“intolerable despotism” of these American demagogues, inspired not by patriotic zeal, but by “the selfishness of those merchants” who had interests to protect in the Dutch tea-trade; “Then began the cry of liberty,” Seabury asserted, “which hath since been so loudly echoed, and re-echoed through the continent.”<sup>158</sup> The end result, the Westchester Farmer warned, could only be “tyranny and slavery.” On this account, Seabury’s polemic mirrored Cicero’s own reflection on the Catilinarian conspiracy: “the Source of this Evil is spread beyond all Conception,” Cicero proclaimed; “I behold this Imperial City, the Light and Glory of the Earth, the Refuge of all Nations, finally swallowed up in one sudden Blaze. My Soul presents me with a View of my Country buried under her own Ruins.”<sup>159</sup> In like manner, Seabury revealed his patriotic zeal pleading on behalf of his American homeland; “My ancestors were among the first Englishmen who settled in America. I have no interest but in America. I have not a relation out of it that I know of. Yet, let me die! but I had rather be reduced to the last shilling, than that the imperial dignity of Great Britain should sink, or be controlled by any people or power on earth.”<sup>160</sup> Presaging the sentiment of Hector St John Crèvecoeur, the Westchester Farmer’s passion concerning “the blessings of property, liberty, and life” he discovered on the American frontier offered a sentimental portrait of the American landscape Seabury hoped would ring true with his New York readership. Was the Vindicator truly willing to gamble it all away at the risk of a civil war, a trumped-up campaign “founded on rebellion?”<sup>161</sup> The Congress had provided the answer in preparing to assimilate the legislatures and courts of justice “to make room for an American republic” based “on a

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 116-117, 124.

<sup>159</sup> Cicero, “*Fourth Oration*,” *The Works of Sallust*, 138.

<sup>160</sup> [Seabury], *A View of the Controversy*, 128.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 140.

true democratical plan,” a tyranny of the mob. Striking a Ciceronian tone in condemning the evil specter of the Congressional plot before him, Seabury declared, “So, now the mask is off, now the cloven foot is thrust out into open light.”<sup>162</sup>

The final exchange between Seabury and Hamilton offered a no less dramatic showdown on the classical political themes so central to their respective political positions, demonstrating the way both opponents looked to antiquity to sustain their core philosophical principles. Firmly entrenched in their ideological differences, yet sharing a common classical lexicon with respect to liberty, tyranny, and slavery, both authors appeared to interpret the developments in the colonies from opposite sides of the same coin. Rivington’s *Gazetteer* announced the publication of Seabury’s fourth letter, *An Alarm to the Legislature*, on January 19, 1775.<sup>163</sup> The Westchester Farmer’s last pamphlet signaled a mood change; with less bravado and greater sense of urgency, Seabury bypassed the rhetoric of the A. W. Farmer caricature altogether. With a degree of resignation, Seabury lamented, “nothing seems to be consulted, but how to perplex, irritate, and affront, the *British Ministry, Parliament, Nation and King*.” All moderation is disavowed, and “every scheme that tends to peace, is branded with ignominy; as being the machination of slavery!” Seabury declared—“nothing is called FREEDOM but SEDITION! Nothing LIBERTY but REBELLION!”<sup>164</sup> For Seabury, this redefinition of freedom and liberty in the colonies represented a world turned upside down. The Congress, “a *foreign power*” of factious men, had transformed the American landscape

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<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>163</sup> A. W. Farmer [Samuel Seabury], *An Alarm to the Legislature of the Province of New-York, Occasioned by the present Political Disturbances in North America: Addressed to the Honourable Representatives in General Assembly Convened*, in Samuel Seabury, *Letters of a Westchester Farmer, 1774-1775*, ed. with intro. Clarence H. Vance (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), 149-162.

<sup>164</sup> [Seabury], *An Alarm to the Legislature*, 151.

by “the most *imperious menances*,” inciting mobs and riots, controlling the courts of justice, restricting free speech, and making laws “without *check or controul*.” Taken together, these developments represented “a *system* of the most *oppressive tyranny* that can possibly be imagined;—a *tyranny*, not only over the *actions*, but over the *words*, *thoughts*, and *wills*, of the *good people of this province*,” subjecting any one advocating “*order and good government*” to the vengeance of a mob.<sup>165</sup>

Whereas Seabury saw the greatest threats to liberty originating outside the authority of legitimate government, Hamilton in 1775 perceived the government to be the greatest obstacle to the exercise of individual liberty. In Hamilton’s estimation, the perspective shared by Seabury and his loyalist accomplices was simply out of touch with the times. The *Gazetteer* announced the publication of Hamilton’s pamphlet, *The Farmer Refuted*, on February 23. Under the pseudonym “A Sincere Friend To America,” Hamilton addressed Seabury’s second and third pamphlets, *The Congress Canvassed* and *A View of the Controversy*, criticizing the Farmer for having “a total ignorance of the natural rights of mankind,” the civil liberties granted by God “common to all men.”<sup>166</sup> Recognizing A. W. Farmer’s classical framework, and repulsed by Seabury’s acceptance of the Roman model of colonial administration, Hamilton argued that Rome, “that mistress of the world,” offered no suitable template for calculating the appropriate relationship between Britain and America. On the contrary, the way Rome

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>166</sup> A Sincere Friend to America [Alexander Hamilton], *The Farmer Refuted; or, A more impartial and comprehensive View of the Dispute between Great-Britain and the Colonies, intended as a Further Vindication of the Congress: in Answer to a Letter from A. W. Farmer, intituled A View of the Controversy Between Great Britain and her Colonies: Including a Mode of Determining their present Disputes, Finally and Effectually; and of Preventing All Future Contentions. In a Letter To the Author of A Full Vindication of the Measures of the Congress, from the Calumnies of their Enemies in The Revolutionary Writings of Alexander Hamilton*, ed. Richard B. Vernier, foreward by Joyce O. Appleby (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2008), 47-135.

treated her colonies comprised “one of the greatest blemishes in her history.” Rome denied civil liberty to her dependent provinces, and we would do well, Hamilton declared, to “take warning from thence, and consider a like state of dependence as more to be dreaded than pestilence and famine.”<sup>167</sup> Hamilton’s particular application of Roman history reflected the kind of Whig logic Seabury hoped to balance against a broader rational and pragmatic perspective, representing a truer understanding of the classical heritage. The bombastic leaders of Congress, in Seabury’s view, had studied natural rights philosophy and the treatises on liberty just enough to fuel their self-serving political objectives, but ultimately lacked the historic sensibility required to appreciate the advantages of British subjecthood. Despite the brilliance of his literary efforts, Seabury’s terse and rational line of argumentation, call for restraint, and distaste for inflammatory language came up short in its appeal to colonial audiences alongside the full-blooded propaganda of the Whig-patriot writers like Hamilton.<sup>168</sup>

As one of the revolutionary period’s most effective loyalist polemicists, Seabury embodied the Ciceronian spirit, not only in his rhetoric, but in the personal adversity and scrutiny he faced as a representative for the conservative cause, an indication of the fervency with which he espoused his classical vision for liberty in the colonies. Over the course of his writing campaign, Seabury became the target of increasing patriot ridicule and harassment. Although his identity as A. W. Farmer would not be acknowledged officially until 1783, the public associated his political views with the pamphlets early on, and he became a marked man. Following the publication of his first letter, *Free Thoughts* in late 1774, a Committee of Observation and Inspection in

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<sup>167</sup> [Hamilton], *The Farmer Refuted*, 71.

<sup>168</sup> Hertz, “Bishop Seabury,” 62-67.

New Jersey declared Seabury's pamphlet "pernicious and malignant . . . replete with the most specious sophistry . . . calculated to deceive and mislead the unwary, the ignorant, and the credulous." Soon afterward, a local crowd ceremoniously tarred and feathered the document and put it up for display, "there to remain as a monument to the indignation of a free and loyal people."<sup>169</sup> Later, in November 1775, a group of forty patriot-rebels under the leadership of Isaac Sears, styling themselves as the Connecticut Light Horse, rode to Westchester to arrest Seabury for authoring the Farmer pamphlets. A portion of the mob seized Seabury at the schoolhouse where he was teaching while another group arrived at his home. After threatening his wife and daughters at bayonet point, raiding the house, and confiscating his papers, the militia detained Seabury at New Haven for four weeks. Neither confirming nor denying his connection to the pamphlets, and with no evidence to prove his authorship, Seabury was released. Further demonstrating their outrage against the Westchester Farmer pamphlets, the New York Sons of Liberty ransacked and destroyed James Rivington's printing office, reportedly carrying off some of his typeset to convert into "Whig bullets".<sup>170</sup> Thus, by the end of 1775, Seabury found it impossible to remain in Westchester. In his correspondence, he described bands of rebel soldiers visiting his home two or three times a day to inquire about "that vilest of all miscreants, A. W. Farmer." Seabury recounted one militiaman taunting that he "would give a hundred dollars" to know who the Farmer was so "that he might plunge his bayonet into his heart," and another jeering that he "would crawl

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<sup>169</sup> Incident cited in Benjamin H. Irvin, "Tar, Feathers, and the Enemies of American Liberties, 1768-1776," *The New England Quarterly* 86 (June 2003), 215.

<sup>170</sup> Lorenzo Sabine, *Biographical Sketches of the Loyalists of the American Revolution*, Vol. 2. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1864), 216.

fifty miles to see him roasted.”<sup>171</sup> With such threats increasingly mounting, and with the arrival of the British in New York in 1776, Seabury moved his family to New York City in November where he remained under British protection throughout the remainder of the war.<sup>172</sup> Seabury’s rhetorical panache in the pamphlet war with Hamilton and the negative reaction he sparked among Whig-patriots, making the conservative case for rational liberty in the face of revolutionary foment, represented one of the most strident rhetorical contributions on behalf of the loyalist persuasion in the 1770s.

Samuel Seabury’s rhetorical strategy illustrated the way Tory-loyalists invoked the classical themes of liberty and tyranny to counter what they considered to be the irrational, impassioned, and inflated arguments of their Whig-patriot opponents. Even when he did not make specific references to the classical literature, Seabury’s themes revealed a classical mindset, viewing the imperial crisis through the lens of antiquity. Among the notable loyalist advocates of the pre-revolutionary years, Seabury was unique in his ability to creatively fuse rational and pragmatic elements in his polemic, reflecting the brilliance of Cicero’s oratorical repartee while casting himself as the rugged common sense farmer from Westchester. In contrast, other defenders of the loyalist cause like Thomas Hutchinson and Daniel Leonard, though talented in their own right, preferred to communicate to their colonial audience within the confines of a conservative style that favored reasoned erudition, repose, and historical precedent over popular appeals. However, despite their inherent reticence to meet the radicals on their own soil and engage in a populist-centered counter-narrative in the decade leading up to

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<sup>171</sup> Samuel Seabury, Letter dated December 29, 1776 in E. Edwards Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of the Right Reverend Samuel Seabury; First Bishop of Connecticut, and of the Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1881), 46.

<sup>172</sup> Hertz, “Bishop Seabury,” 65-66; Moses Coit Tyler, *The Literary History of the American Revolution*, 353; see introductory essay by Vance in Samuel Seabury, *Letters of a Westchester Farmer*, 34-35.



1776, Tory-loyalists were no less passionate in making their case for continued loyalty to the crown, and they expressed the fervency of their beliefs in the way they looked to the models and antimodels of the ancient world to support their logic.

Not unlike the Whig-patriots, the Tory-loyalists wrote about the political events transforming the American landscape in the 1760s and 70s as British Americans, heirs to the heritage of the English constitution and the freest form of government known to the eighteenth century. Peter Oliver, Thomas Hutchinson, Daniel Leonard, Jonathan Boucher, and Samuel Seabury, all sons of colonial lineage, viewed themselves as privileged subjects of the crown entering the gladiatorial arena to defend their way of life against a Catilinarian mob of enterprising demagogues seeking to destroy the constitutional fabric of their Anglo-American world. Each in turn employed his rhetorical abilities, demonstrated his resolve, and endured the adversities of public ostracism and banishment—only Seabury remained in the colonies throughout the ensuing war. Although their rhetorical strategies reflected variances in style, each writer pointed to the classical canon, either directly or thematically, to make their best case against the radicalism of the revolutionary movement. Reflecting on his experience, Peter Oliver portrayed the spread of patriot radicalism in the colonies as a reincarnation of the nefarious Hydra of ancient mythology. Oliver's vivid description of the unnatural, diabolical heart of the patriot agenda and the poisonous, relentless expansion of seditious vitriol against legitimate authority exemplified the way loyalists employed the dramatic themes of the ancient world to express their most ardent fears about threats to American liberty. Although Thomas Hutchinson's rhetorical contributions reflected a decidedly reserved approach among the loyalist advocates, the

Massachusetts governor nonetheless styled himself as “The Censor” of the Bay-Colony, using the classical language of liberty to play to his academic and political strengths, seeking to educate a frenzied, deluded public on the tenets of history and political philosophy. However, Hutchinson’s concerted efforts ultimately failed to sway public sentiment or curb the inflammatory attacks in the press. The popular appeal of Mercy Warren’s satire, *The Adulateur* and Joseph Warren’s Boston Massacre orations illustrated the difficulties confronting conservatives like Hutchinson in developing a counter-narrative sufficient to challenge the Whig-patriots’ use of impassioned classical motif to influence the *demos*. More effective than Hutchinson in his argumentation, Daniel Leonard, perhaps the most articulate of the loyalist polemicists, alerted the concern and response of John Adams in the Boston press. Leonard forcefully contended that the American Tories, those who had remained faithful to the tenets of the ancient constitution, were the genuine patriots and defenders of liberty in the colonies—the radical Whigs, on the other hand, merely represented a pretense of patriotism in their Catilinarian schemes to subvert the same time-honored principles. In his MASSACHUSETTENSIS letters, Leonard demonstrated how loyalist advocates stylistically paralleled the ancient defenders of liberty to convey their fervent beliefs concerning the imminent rise of Whig tyranny in America. Among the Anglican clergymen of the pre-revolutionary years, Jonathan Boucher, like Samuel Seabury, was no less vigorous in his classical, rational appeal to the American public. Like Seabury, Boucher viewed the revolutionary movement as an irrational fabrication, trumped up by Whig rhetoric and overreaching appeals to classical history. Such arguments, in Boucher’s view, could never justify rebellion, and he combined Biblical and classical

themes to expose the Congress and the patriot committees as both demonic and Catilinarian. Seabury's appeal to classical liberty resonated with the points raised by Boucher and the other proponents of the loyalist cause, but his contribution to the political discourse included an innovative populist strategy that set his letters apart from his conservative peers—his identification with the virtues of the agrarian ideal represented one of the most stalwart attempts of the Tory-loyalist writers to balance reason with common sense in his attempt to appeal to a broad colonial audience.

The loyalist counter-narrative in the decade leading up to 1776 reflected the intensity of British Americans who believed they occupied the moral high ground in the revolutionary debate. Convinced that the Whig-patriots had lost their way intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, loyalist writers endeavored to expose the egregious failure of their countrymen and persuade the good subjects of America to return to their principled moorings under the banner of British liberty. Collectively, the Tory-loyalists believed their strongest arguments rested in the tenets that had sustained the framework of the English constitution since the Glorious Revolution of 1688, a lineage of liberty reaching back to ancient Greece and Rome. In this regard, the loyalist writers reflected the mirror image of their patriot counterparts who also viewed the transatlantic crisis through the lens of antiquity. However, when patriot writers claimed the ancient past validated their opposition to British authority, loyalists vehemently rejected those assertions based on their more accurate, rational interpretation of the ancient literature. Tory-loyalists faulted radicals not because they referred to the classics, but because they did so in error, either out of ignorance, corrupt motives, or both. A dominant theme among loyalist writers contended that an accurate appraisal of

the ancient literature showed that rebellion had, since Catiline's infamous conspiracy, been the constant bane of republican governments, the greatest threat to liberty, and the worst of all political evils. All that the ancients had to say concerning republican order and constitutional stability affirmed the loyalists' principled stand against the American Revolution.

## CONCLUSION

Quoth the Rabble make Way for great Cato's Descendants!  
Lo! those are the Men aptly call'd Independents!  
Quaint Patriots indeed! of Old Noll's Institution,  
So Free—they'd demolish the whole Constitution;  
So madly licentious, and fond of a Name,  
They'd set the whole Empire at once in a Flame:  
K—g, N—b—s, and C—mm—ns would gladly disown,  
And contemn ev'ry Law can be fram'd, but their own.

. . .

But the Heart truly warm'd in great Libery's Cause,  
Adheres to the Man who adheres to the Laws;  
Unbias'd by Faction, still firm to his Word,  
Who Honour can scan, without wearing a Sword;  
Who dares be a Friend, yet to no Man a Slave,  
INDEPENDENCY's no where, on this Side of the Grave.

DEPENDENT, *Boston News-Letter*

Surveying the radical character of the Whig-patriot movement in 1768, the loyalist writer “DEPENDENT” echoed the sentiments of fellow conservatives when he denounced the Sons of Liberty, the self-proclaimed descendants of Cato, as brazen anarchists masquerading as “Quaint Patriots.”<sup>1</sup> Often lost in our perception of the American founding, the notion of “Independency” did not elicit noble connotations in the pre-revolutionary colonial mind. The writings of Montesquieu and others had affirmed the virtue of colonial dependence on Britain; freedom was protection from arbitrary authority under the law, and the subjects of British America considered

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<sup>1</sup> Dependent [unknown], “On the Word Independent, So Frequent to be Met with Late in Our News-Papers,” *Boston News-Letter*, December 22, 1768. “Old Noll's Institution;” a reference to Oliver Cromwell, despised among the ranks of history's political tyrants. “K—g, N—b—s, and C—mm—ns;” The author refrained from directly invoking the King, Nobles, and Commons, the three ancient components of Monarchy, Aristocracy, and Democracy in Britain's revered mixed constitution.

themselves to be among the freest people living in the modern world. Speaking to the classical republican heritage of all British Americans, DEPENDENT declared the true heroes of liberty were those who defended the constitution and the rule of law against the demagoguery of the rabble, not with the sword, but by their honor as the true descendants of Cato, faithful to the ancient tenets of British liberty.

Taking stock of the classical component of loyalist ideology is essential in providing us a clearer, more comprehensive understanding of the American founding. While neglecting to see the important ways loyalists looked to antiquity to support their case against the Revolution, we have come to assume that classical republicanism naturally favored a radical response to the transatlantic crisis in the 1760s and 70s. However, a close examination of the loyalists' use of the ancient literature in their public discourse reveals evidence to the contrary. When Bernard Bailyn challenged historians to explain how "any sensible, well-informed, right-minded American with a modicum of imagination and common sense could possibly have opposed the Revolution," he articulated a bias in the scholarship that assessed the loyalist persuasion as an inexplicable aberration.<sup>2</sup> Ideologically, it was as if the loyalists had suddenly deviated from the Appian Way of classical republicanism, the intellectual tradition that traced a path from colonial Boston across the Atlantic by way of the radical Whigs, back through the Enlightenment and Renaissance writers, to the gates of the Roman Republic. However, as advocates of the loyalist cause made their case in the pre-revolutionary years, they confronted their radical countrymen with a very similar argument—the cohorts of the Sons of Liberty were advocating an entirely unnatural and reckless course of action in promoting rebellion against their sovereign, contrary to the

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), x.

filial relationship with the mother country and the classical tenets of the English constitution. As Mary Beth Norton suggested, instead of considering how any reasonable American could have been a loyalist, historians ought to be asking what *weltanschauung* prevented some Americans from “being carried away by radical rhetoric that charged the British ministry, Parliament, and the king with connivance at a plan to enslave the colonies?”<sup>3</sup> The loyalists themselves helped to answer this question in their numerous illustrations and references pointing to the classical canon, the sacred scripture of liberty in the eighteenth century. Studies of loyalist ideology have underestimated this significant strand of thought in the conservative response to the Revolution. While scholars have established linkages between Cicero and John Adams’ polemic, they have neglected to consider the possibility that Adams’ literary opponent, Daniel Leonard, might have equally reflected Ciceronian forensic strategies. These biases in the scholarship have led us to view the loyalist persuasion, in contrast to the patriot revolutionary narrative, as somehow less reflective of the moral, principled precepts of the ancient Greek and Roman writers. However, antiquity spoke to all Americans of the revolutionary generation, assisted by the political commentators of the eighteenth century, but also directly through colonial education and access to the ancient sources. American culture was steeped in the classical literature before the revolutionary debate ensued, and that influence shaped how conservatives and radicals ultimately responded to the developing transatlantic crisis. The crucible of the 1760s and 70s challenged Americans to question every assumption they held about the fabric of colonial society and articulate their most impassioned sentiments concerning the

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<sup>3</sup> Mary Beth Norton, “The Loyalist Critique of the Revolution,” *The Development of a Revolutionary Mentality: Papers presented at the first symposium, May 5 and 6, 1972* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1972), 142-143.

sociopolitical forces sweeping across the American landscape. Loyalist writers like J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur turned to the Roman legend of Belisarius to convey his view of the crisis, inviting a transatlantic audience to feel the weight of seemingly incomprehensible events through the metaphor of his classical exemplar. Crèvecoeur selected the Belisarius motif because no popular illustration was so well suited for describing the persecution Crèvecoeur endured, so potent in its moral indictment of the arbitrary authorities he encountered, and so descriptive of the anguish he felt in seeing his idyllic world suddenly turned upside down by the rampage of revolutionary and internecine conflict. Loyalists, like their patriot counterparts, used the classics not only to enhance their rhetoric, but also to articulate their convictions about the controversy confronting them, and capturing that perspective is essential to our more accurate and comprehensive understanding of the revolutionary debate.

Understanding how loyalists employed the classical writers in their defense of royal authority in America also expands our appreciation for the wider influence of antiquity in the American founding. In highlighting the importance of the “country-party” political literature of the period, historians have viewed the ancient literature as serving a supporting function in that particular current of transatlantic discourse. As historians dissected this collection of radical literature, they discovered classical references “were everywhere” among the patriot letters and pamphlets of the American founding.<sup>4</sup> This historiographical association between the revolutionaries and the ancient writers has led us to overlook the loyalists’ particular interest in the classics. However, a careful examination of loyalist letters, pamphlets, and treatises reveals a

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 26; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 109.



mirror reflection of the patriot narrative, a classical counter-narrative summoning the same models and antimodels of the ancient world to support an opposing political agenda. This should not be surprising given the pervasive cultural influence of the classics in pre-revolutionary British America. Adversaries as diverse as John Adams and Thomas Hutchinson shared a common vocabulary and sentiment rooted in the tenets of classical virtue. If, as Daniel Leonard suggested, the Tories of America were the true Whigs, more devoted intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually to the principles of classical liberty, then we would expect to find a natural affinity between the loyalist discourse and the ancient writers. In fact, the loyalists considered themselves the legitimate classicists of the period, more adept in wielding the ancient literature than their patriot countrymen who seemed prone to misinterpret important concepts and cite references out of context simply for dramatic effect. Thomas Hutchinson, Jonathan Boucher, and Samuel Seabury considered themselves intellectually superior to their opponents in this regard. Additionally, by virtue of their fidelity to the heritage of English liberty, the loyalist writers viewed themselves as the orthodox remnant in America, the faithful adherents to the fundamental tenets of classical republicanism. Their radical countrymen were the heretics of the faith, prodigal sons who quoted the ancient scriptures while chasing after tantalizing doctrines. The loyalist writers prided themselves in accurately applying the language of classical liberty to reaffirm the ancient principles of the balanced constitution while debunking the impassioned, irrational, and reckless assertions of their adversaries. Perhaps the most revealing insight concerning how the loyalists' use of the classics reflected the patriots' application was in the admiration the loyalists conveyed for the

legacy of the Roman Republic. The colonists, whether conservative or radical in their political persuasion, saw the Revolution in the context of ancient Rome.<sup>5</sup> It was just as natural for Crèvecoeur and Seabury to invoke the Roman agrarian motif in their polemic as it was for John Dickinson to do so in his *Farmer* letters. Styling themselves as the farmers from Pennsylvania and Westchester respectively, Crèvecoeur and Seabury both appealed to the classical ideal that esteemed the colonial farmer among the ranks of the Roman exemplar Cincinnatus, the symbol of the virtuous republican yeoman. Loyalist writers identified with the ideals of Roman virtue in explaining their reasons for opposing the Revolution. Crèvecoeur aligned himself with the icon of Belisarius, the loyal public servant who endured the persecution of Justinian and his generals, and Thomas Hutchinson styled himself as Cato the Elder, “the Censor,” the senior statesman shouldering the burden of public morality. Whereas patriot writers cast themselves as Cato’s descendants fighting against encroaching tyranny from above, loyalists identified with Cicero’s fight against Catiline and the rising threat of mob rule from below. Loyalists pointed to the specter of the Catilinarian conspiracy as the precise representation of what was transpiring in the colonies—demagogues manipulating the public with the irrational, incendiary logic of rebellion to reduce the English constitution to ashes and establish themselves as the Caesars of a new American empire. These themes were ubiquitous in the loyalist writings and particularly vivid in the rhetorical arguments of Joseph Galloway, Daniel Leonard, and

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<sup>5</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 3, 8. Shalev argued the Revolution was “a Roman Revolution,” but he did so only considering the vantage point of the patriots. According to Shalev, no understanding of the revolutionary impulse would be complete apart from an appreciation of this “peculiar and compelling historical consciousness.” Limiting our analysis to only a patriot view of the revolutionary debate neglects a significant body of evidence supporting Shalev’s observation.

Samuel Seabury. Understanding the way loyalist advocates depended on the ancient literature to articulate their message liberates our perception to explore how the classics served both patriot and loyalist political strategies, clarifying our understanding of how the classical canon contributed to the trajectory of the revolutionary debate.

In 1797, reflecting on the events that precipitated the American Revolution, Jonathan Boucher commented that “The Separation of Thirteen British Colonies in North America from the Parent State is, in many respects, one of the most remarkable events of modern times,” and with the exception of the French example, “without parallel in the history of the world.”<sup>6</sup> The demise of the ancient monarchies “was preceded by causes, and effected by means, which were not wholly inadequate to the event.” However, Boucher asserted, “there was no such concurrence of adequate causes to produce the defection of America.” Loyalist advocates like Boucher highlighted this theme throughout their writings; the Revolution was unprecedented because there was no reasonable justification for the revolt. Radical accusations of tyranny and conspiracies against liberty in the British ministry were unsupportable by any rational appraisal of the transatlantic relationship. For conservative-minded Americans, these effusions represented more than political wrangling in the press, especially as the American public appeared to be taking the Whig-patriot claims seriously. Convinced their countrymen had lost their virtuous moorings, loyalist advocates endeavored to expose the error and persuade the subjects of America to return to the ancient tenets of classical liberty under the banner of English constitution. Those who took up the pen to defend the virtue of royal authority in the colonies did so for moral and ideological

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<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Boucher, “Preface” in *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution, in Thirteen Discourses, Preached in North America between the Years 1763 and 1775: With an Historical Preface* (London: G. G. and J. Robinson, 1797), i.

purposes, similar to their patriot adversaries, looking to the classical canon to articulate their convictions concerning the encroaching threat of tyranny against liberty.

Understanding that loyalists and patriots both derived significant inspiration from the models and exemplars of the Greco-Roman heritage, shared a common reverence for classical liberty, and viewed their American world as a reflection of a virtuous Roman past, one can understand how Americans like Jonathan Boucher found it difficult to account for the tumultuous events of the 1760s and 70s. Understanding the ways loyalists and patriots looked to the same classical substrate to advocate competing political narratives in the decade leading up to 1776 helps us appreciate just how truly radical and “remarkable” the Revolution was.

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