

# **Cato, Roman Stoicism, and the American 'Revolution'**

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*For My Parents,  
To Whom I Owe Everything*

# Contents

Acknowledgements .....	i
Abstract.....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One -	
‘Classical Conditioning’: The Classical Tradition in Colonial America .....	23
The Usefulness of Knowledge.....	24
Grammar Schools and Colleges.....	26
General Populace.....	38
Conclusions.....	45
Chapter Two -	
Cato in the Colonies: Joseph Addison’s <i>Cato: A Tragedy</i> .....	47
Joseph Addison’s <i>Cato: A Tragedy</i> .....	49
The Universal Appeal of Virtue .....	55
The Hour of Death .....	59
The Legitimacy of Suicide.....	65
Theatre in the American Colonies.....	68
Why Did <i>Cato</i> Appeal to the Colonists? .....	75
American ‘Liberty’ Plays.....	92
The Popularity of Plutarch .....	97
Conclusions.....	104
Chapter Three -	
Old Man Liberty: Cato and the Stamp Act Crisis.....	106
Background to the Stamp Act.....	108
The Passage of the Stamp Act.....	111
Cato’s Letters.....	118
Pseudonyms and Pamphlets.....	123
Soliloquies.....	126
Liberty Funerals.....	127
Repeal of the Stamp Act .....	129

Descent into War .....	133
Conclusions.....	139
Chapter Four -	
Colonial Catos: Americans Performing Politics.....	141
Joseph Warren.....	142
Patrick Henry.....	162
Nathan Hale.....	171
George Washington: A Lifetime of Catonian Performances.....	178
Newburgh Speech .....	188
Valley Forge.....	190
Eulogies .....	195
Conclusions.....	198
Chapter Five -	
Roman Matrons: Substituting Cato for Women.....	200
Classical Education and Women.....	203
Female Worthies.....	209
The Rise of the Roman Matron .....	214
Roman Matrons in Action .....	226
Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren.....	229
Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop.....	246
Conclusions.....	249
Epilogue:	
Cato to Cincinnatus .....	251
New Epilogue to <i>Cato</i> .....	252
Cincinnatus.....	257
Washington and Cincinnatus .....	260
Conclusions.....	266
Bibliography .....	271

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## Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the influence of Cato the Younger on the American colonists during the Revolutionary period. It assesses the vast array of references to Cato that appear in the literature, which is a phenomenon not previously given an independent examination. *Chapter One* assesses the classical education that the American colonists received. It refutes the belief that the colonists' classical learning was superficial, and establishes that they were steeped in the classics through the colonial grammar school and college curricula, as well as through their own private reading. *Chapter Two* determines how the Cato narrative was disseminated amongst the colonists. It looks primarily at Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713) and establishes that the play came to resonate with the colonists as they descended into war with Britain. *Chapter Three* gives an overview of the American colonies' relationship with Britain from 1760 until the early years of the war. It shows that the colonists perceived the world through the lens of Roman history, and that as their relationship with Britain deteriorated they established and retreated into a Catonian identity. *Chapter Four* consists of four case studies of prominent colonists who adopted a Catonian identity in order to express certain political grievances and their viewpoint. The frequency and general acceptance of these Catonian episodes reveals how entrenched in the colonial mindset the Cato narrative was. *Chapter Five* looks at how women engaged with the Cato narrative through adopting as role models Roman matrons who offered similar principles and characteristics to Cato. The *Epilogue* traces the decline of Cato's popularity and the colonists' transference of favour to Cincinnatus as their new classical role model.

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## Introduction

On December 5, 1773, little more than a week before the Boston Tea Party, Abigail Adams wrote to her good friend Mercy Otis Warren regarding the latest shipment of British tea that had arrived a few days earlier. By this time the American colonies were rapidly spiralling towards war with Britain, and Boston was at the epicentre of American anti-British sentiment. The British tea, brought by the British East India Company on the *Dartmouth*, triggered another outpouring of colonial opposition to British imperialism as the colonists decried the loss of their English-born right of ‘no taxation without representation’. Exemplifying the colonial mindset, Abigail wrote to Mercy:

The Tea that bainfull weed is arrived. Great and I hope Effectual opposition has been made to the landing of it. ...The flame is kindled and like Lightning it catches from Soul to Soul. Great will be the devastation if not timely quenched or allayed by some more Lenient Measures.

Altho the mind is shocked at the Thought of shedding Humane Blood, more Especially the Blood of our Countrymen, and a civil War is of all Wars, the most dreadfull Such is the present Spirit that prevails, that if once they are made desperate Many, very Many of our Heroes will spend their lives in the cause, With the Speach of Cato in their Mouths, “What a pitty it is, that we can dye but once to save our Country”.<sup>1</sup>

Abigail foreshadowed the bloody war that was about to erupt between Britain and the American colonies, naming it as a civil war rather than seeing it as a revolutionary movement towards independence. She mourned the loss of life that would inevitably occur, drawing on the words of Cato to affirm that death under these circumstances was the preferable action. It is striking that, as she struggled to articulate her concerns about the impending war and the demands that such conflicts made on their citizenry, Abigail found herself reaching across the centuries to the figure of the Roman statesman Cato, a figure who at first glance seems far removed from the

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<sup>1</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Boston, December 5, 1773, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel. On December 16, 1773, organised by Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty, a number of Bostonians boarded the British tea ships in Boston Harbour and dumped the tea overboard in an incident that became remembered as the Boston Tea Party.

tumults of eighteenth-century politics. Yet, Abigail was not alone. At the birth of the war many found comfort, solace, and inspiration in this figure.

Marcus Porcius Cato (95-46BCE) has been remembered throughout history as being Julius Caesar's (100-44BCE) most committed and formidable enemy in the final days of the Roman Republic. Cato, the great-grandson of Cato the Censor, was the last prominent statesman in an old Roman family that had long served the Roman Republic. As a senator, Cato aligned himself with Rome's *optimates*, the traditionalists who saw themselves as the custodians of the centuries-old system of government that had enabled Rome to become the mighty empire that it was. In the last decades of the Roman Republic Cato bore witness to growing threats against the Rome of his ancestors: political corruption became increasingly rife and there was the steady concentration of military and political power into the hands of individuals, culminating in a political alliance between Caesar and two allies, who amongst themselves effectively controlled Rome. As a politician and orator Cato spent the majority of his life struggling against Caesar, whom he saw as threatening Rome's traditional system of governance. Cato fought Caesar across the benches of the Roman Senate House, as well as on the field of battle in the Civil War (49-45 BCE) where the liberty of Rome was a stake. For Cato, Rome without its traditional *libertas* meant the effective enslavement of its citizens and the corruption of virtue, one of the fundamental values necessary for republican governance. Cato devoted his life and his political skills to opposing Caesar and his allies, trying to save the Republic he loved from eventual disintegration.

It was the final confrontation between Cato and Caesar that guaranteed Cato a place in history. As Caesar was poised to claim victory in the Civil War, Cato, leading the senatorial opposition to Caesar, retreated to the province of Africa with fifteen cohorts. It was at Utica that Cato was faced with the knowledge of a total victory by Caesar. Cato adhered to his Stoic principles, preferring to take his own life than live one day under Caesar's despotic rule.<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, the Greek moralist and essayist, who wrote biographies of many noble Greeks and Romans in his first century CE work the *Parallel Lives*, gives us the fullest account of Cato's suicide at Utica. Plutarch's construction of Cato venerated the Roman more fully than any other ancient author. His account laid the foundations for the legacy of Cato that glorified his actions and

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<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Younger*, 66.

ignored his more complex and negative characteristics. Plutarch writes of Cato's last stand against Caesar:

Lucius Caesar, a kinsman of Caesar's, being appointed to go deputy to the three hundred, came to Cato, and desired he would assist him to prepare a persuasive speech for them; "And as to you yourself," said he, "it will be an honour for me to kiss the hands and fall at the knee of Caesar in your behalf. But Cato would by no means permit him to do any such thing; "For as to myself," said he, "if I would be preserved; by Caesar's favour, I should myself go to him; but I would not be beholden to a tyrant for his acts of tyranny. For it is but usurpation in him to save, as their rightful lord, the lives of men over whom he has no title to reign. But if you please, let us consider what you had best say for the three hundred." And when they had continued some time together, as Lucius was going away, Cato recommended to him his son and the rest of his friends; and taking him by the hand bade him farewell.

Then he retired to his house again, and called together his son and his friends, to whom he conversed on various subjects; among the rest he forbade his son to engage himself in the affairs of state. For to act therein as became him was now impossible; and to do otherwise, would be dishonourable.

...After supper, the wine produced a great deal of lively and agreeable discourse and a whole series of philosophical questions was discussed. At length they came to the strange dogmas of the stoics, called their Paradoxes; and to this in particular. That the good man only is free, and that all wicked men are slaves. The peripatetic, as was to be expected, opposing this, Cato fell upon him very warmly; and somewhat raising his voice, he argued the matter at great length, and urged the point with such vehemence, that it was apparent to everybody he was resolved to put an end to his life, and set himself at liberty. And so, when he had done speaking, there was a great silence and evident dejection. Cato, therefore, to divert them from any suspicion of his design, turned the conversation, and began to talk of matters of present interest and expectation, showing great concern for those that were at sea, as also for the others, who, travelling by land, were to pass through a dry and barbarous desert.

When the company was broke up, he walked with his friends, as he used to do after supper, gave the necessary orders to the officers of the watch, and going into his chamber, he embraced his son and every one of his friends with more than usual warmth, which again renewed their suspicion of his design. Then laying himself down, he took into his hand Plato's dialogue concerning the soul. Having read more than half the book he looked up, and missing his sword, which his son had taken away while he was at supper, he called his servant, and asked who had taken away his sword. The servant making no answer, he fell to reading again; and a little after, not seeming importunate, or hasty for it, but as if he would only know what had become of it, he bade it be brought. But having waited some time, when he had read through the book, and still nobody brought the sword, he called up all his servants, and in a louder tone demanded his sword. To one of them he gave such a blow in the

mouth, that he hurt his own hand; and now grew more angry, exclaiming that he was betrayed and delivered naked to the enemy by his son and his servants. Then his son, with the rest of his friends, came running into the room, and falling at his feet, began to lament and beseech him. But Cato raising himself and looking fiercely, "When," said he, "and how did I become deranged and out of my senses, that thus no one tries to persuade me reason or show me what is better, if I am supposed to be ill-advised? Must I be disarmed, and hindered from using my own reason? And you, young man, why do you not bind your father's hands behind him that, when Caesar comes, he may find me unable to defend myself? To despatch myself I want no sword; I need but hold my breath awhile, or strike my head against the wall."

When he had thus spoken, his son went weeping out of the chamber, and with him all the rest, except Demetrius and Apollonides, to whom, being left alone with him, he began to speak more calmly. "And you," he said, "do you also think to keep a man of my age alive by force, and to sit here and silently watch me? Or do you bring me some reasons to prove that it will not be base and unworthy for Cato, when he can find his safety no other way, to seek it from his enemy? If so, adduce, your arguments, and show cause why we should now unlearn what we were formally taught, in order that rejecting all the convictions in which we lived, we may now by Caesar's help grow wiser, and be yet more obliged to him for life only. Not that I have determined aught concerning myself, but I would have it in my power to perform what I shall think fit to resolve, and I shall not fail to take you as my advisers, in holding counsel, as I shall do, with the doctrines which your philosophy teaches; in the meantime, do not trouble yourselves, but go tell my son that he should not compel his father to what he cannot persuade him to." They made him no answer but went weeping out of the chamber. Then the sword being brought in by a little boy, Cato took it, drew it out, and looked at it; and when he saw the point was good, "Now," said he, "I am master of myself;" and laying down the sword, he took his book again, which, it is related, he read twice over. After this he slept so soundly that he was heard to snore by those that were without.

About midnight, he called up two of his freedmen, Cleanthes, his physician, and Butas, whom he chiefly employed in public business. Him he sent to the port, to see if all his friends had sailed; to the physician he gave his hand to be dressed, as it was swollen with the blow he had struck one of his servants. At this they all rejoiced, hoping that now he designed to live.

Butas, after a while, returned, and brought word they were all gone except Crassus, who had stayed about some business, but was just ready to depart; he said, also, that the wind was high, and the sea very rough. Cato, on hearing this, sighed, out of compassion to those who were at sea, and sent Butas again to see if any of them should happen to return for anything they wanted, and to acquaint him therewith.

Now the birds began to sing, and he again fell into a little slumber. At length Butas came back, and told him all was quiet in the port. The Cato, laying himself down, as if he would sleep out the rest of

the night, bade him shut the door after him. But as soon as Butas was gone out, he took his sword, and stabbed it into his breast; yet not being able to use his hand so well, on account of the swelling, he did not immediately die of the wound; but struggling, fell off the bed, and throwing down a mathematical table that stood by, made such a noise that the servants, hearing it, cried out. And immediately his son and all his friends came into the chamber, where, seeing him lie weltering in his blood, great part of his bowels out of his body, but himself still alive and able to look at them, they all stood in horror. The physician went to him, and would have put in his bowels, which were not pierced, and sewed up the wound; but Cato, recovering himself, and understanding the intention, thrust away the physician, plucked out his own bowels, and tearing open the wound, immediately expired.<sup>3</sup>

Cato's suicide had an immediate and profound impact on the Roman polity, making him a rallying point for oppositional politics and a symbol of martyrdom. His suicide was praised by his contemporaries Cicero and Sallust for its consistency with his philosophical beliefs.<sup>4</sup> In his now lost encomium of Cato, Cicero praised Cato as an ideal blend of Roman and Stoic virtues, and established him as the Roman model of the Stoic sage.<sup>5</sup> Cicero's work became, as Lily Ross Taylor has described it, the 'book that was the foundation of the Cato legend that went down into the empire'.<sup>6</sup> Writers in the Roman Imperial period accepted Cicero's account and continued the tradition of venerating Cato's suicide. The most elaborate form of glorification of Cato came from Plutarch, writing in the late first century CE, and his *Life of Cato the Younger* became the standard image of Cato. Plutarch made Cato a symbol of exemplary virtue, unswerving adherence to principle, and devotion to liberty. Cato was depicted as one of the few Roman politicians who had been able to transfer effectively their philosophical principles into public life.<sup>7</sup> Plutarch crafted his account of Cato in a

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<sup>3</sup> Plutarch, trans. John Dryden, 'Life of Cato the Younger', in *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, (Boston: Little and Brown, 1916), 66-71.

<sup>4</sup> Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.112. Sallust, *The Cataline Conspiracy*, 53-54. See also, Lucan, *The Civil War*, 12-13.

<sup>5</sup> Lily Ross Taylor, *Party Politics in the Age of Caesar*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), p.170. See also C. P. Jones, 'Cicero's "Cato"', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, Neue Folge, 113. Bd., H. 2/3 (1970), pp. 188-196.

<sup>6</sup> Taylor, *Party Politics*, p.170. Even Caesar's work *AntiCato*, written in opposition to Cicero's praise of Cato, simply bears testament to the legend that was beginning to form around the figure of Cato immediately after his suicide. Although the work has not survived we can glean Caesar's opinion of Cato from other sources. Caesar gave a very unflattering account of Cato in his *Civil War*, and, as Jeff Tatum has mused, we can only imagine what Cato's image and legacy would be if the notoriously vehement *Anticato* was our only extant source for Cato's career. Jeff Tatum, *The Patrician Tribune*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 199), pp.11-12.

<sup>7</sup> The other Roman politicians renowned for their adherence to principle were Seneca and a wider circle of people who constituted an 'intellectual opposition' to the Emperor Domitian in the late first century

manner that depicted Cato as achieving more in his suicide than he had been able to achieve in his whole lifetime of political involvement. Cato came down through history as the figure of an ideal man – the model of personal rectitude and public sacrifice. Cato’s career, based on a refusal to compromise his principles and an unswerving devotion to liberty, made him a figure of political purity. Cato’s character exemplified the virtuous man clinging to principle even in the face of death. However, the story of Cato is not one of optimism and victory; it offers a tale of defeat, death, and the loss of liberty. It is, therefore, surprising that Abigail Adams chose to quote Cato as the cause of inspiration to the American colonists on the brink of war.

For many years the place of Cato in American Revolutionary history has not been given the attention it demands. This is primarily due to a historiographical tradition that for many decades assigned little influence and paid little attention to the classical tradition in colonial American intellectual life. Until the mid-twentieth century, historians of the Revolutionary period often alluded to the influence of the classics on late colonial America, but failed to go into much detail about the direct impact that ancient writers had on the American colonists. Many historians noted the dominance of the classics in colonial grammar school and college curricula, but did not assess how this early exposure to the classics may have played out later in life in other arenas. In *The Growth of American Thought* (1943) Merle Curti described the classics as both ‘a practical tool and a badge of gentility’, providing the colonists with ‘lessons of patriotism and statesmanship, models of pure taste in writing, and personal solace and inspiration’.<sup>8</sup> C. Dewitt Hardy and Richard Hofstadter in *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States* (1952) noted the privileged position of the classics in eighteenth-century education, and Henry Steele Commager’s *Leadership in Eighteenth-century America and Today* (1961) credited the classics with helping Revolutionary Virginia produce George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and other great men of the era. Commager claimed that ‘intellectually, the founding fathers knew the ancient world better

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CE. Others included Tacitus, Pliny, Philostratus, Epictetus, Sulpicia, Chio of Heraclea, and the authors of the ‘letters’ between Seneca and St Paul. What they all had in common was the belief that Domitian was a tyrant, which ran contrary to Stoic ideals about governance. Brian Jones, *The Emperor Domitian*, (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.124, 125, f. 145 and 146.

<sup>8</sup> Merle Curti, *The Growth of American Thought*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p.29.

perhaps than they knew the European or even the British world, better in all likelihood, than they knew the American outside their own section'.<sup>9</sup> While all of these scholars enthusiastically mentioned the role of the classics, they provided little detail concerning its origin, nature, or impact. Other historians produced pioneering articles and essays looking more closely at the classical tradition in late colonial America, but as Carl Richard has concluded: 'these works remained isolated pieces of a larger puzzle, scattered strands capable of being woven into a larger fabric'.<sup>10</sup>

While many scholars made passing or isolated mention of the classics in colonial America, two highly influential works from the mid-twentieth century dissented from the view that antiquity had any formative influence on the American colonists. The publication of these works saw the relegation of the classics to the sidelines of American Revolutionary scholarship, and there they remained for a period of time. Clinton Rossiter first questioned the role of the classics in late colonial America in *Seedtime of the Republic* (1953). Rossiter argued that 'most [colonial] authors used the ancient Greeks for window dressing... The Americans would have believed just as vigorously in public morality had Cato and the Gracchi never lived'.<sup>11</sup> Rossiter spent scant space analysing the influence of the classics, despite accepting that they were 'most generally imported and enjoyed' and that the 'classical tradition was very much alive in the colonies'.<sup>12</sup> He acknowledged the importance of Cicero for his exposition of natural law, and Tacitus for his defence of an agrarian society, but came to the conclusion that the ancients 'confirmed for the colonists...old convictions rather than taught them anything new'.<sup>13</sup> In 1967, Bernard Bailyn followed in Rossiter's footsteps with his Pulitzer prize-winning *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*. In this highly influential work Bailyn suggested at least five major sources of inspiration to the American colonists – the classics, the Enlightenment, English common law, New England Puritanism, and the radical English Whigs. He claimed that the genesis of the Americans' ideology came from eighteenth-century radical publicists and opposition politicians

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<sup>9</sup> C. Dewitt Hardy and Richard Hofstadter, *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952). Henry Steele Commager, 'Leadership in Eighteenth-century America and Today', *Daedalus* 90 (1961), pp.652-673.

<sup>10</sup> Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.1.

<sup>11</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic: The Origin of the American Tradition of Liberty*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), pp.356-357.

<sup>12</sup> Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic*, p.126, 356.

<sup>13</sup> Rossiter, *Seedtime of the Republic*, p.357.

in England, in particular the authors of *Cato's Letters* John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. In assigning the utmost ideological influence to radical English Whigs, Bailyn concluded that although the colonists repeatedly used ideas and terms from ancient writers, their impact on the actual ideology of the Americans was minor. Bailyn wrote: 'most conspicuous in the writings of the Revolutionary period was the heritage of classical antiquity. Knowledge of classical authors was universal amongst colonists with any degree of education, and references to them and their works abound in the literature. From the grammar schools, from the colleges, from private tutors and independent reading came a general familiarity with and the habit of reference to the ancient authors and the heroic personalities and events of the ancient world. ...It was an obscure pamphleteer indeed who could not muster at least one classical analogy or one ancient precedent'.<sup>14</sup> Bailyn continued; 'this elaborate display of classical authors is deceptive. Often the learning behind it was superficial: often the citations appear to have been dragged in as "window dressing with which to ornament a page or a speech and to increase the weight of an argument"'.<sup>15</sup> He went as far as to conclude that 'the classics of the ancient world are everywhere in the literature of the Revolution, but they are everywhere illustrative, not determinative, of thought. They contributed a vivid vocabulary, but not the logic or grammar of thought, a universally respected personification but not the source of political and social beliefs. They heightened the colonists' sensitivity to ideas and attitudes otherwise derived'.<sup>16</sup>

It is difficult to understand the source of Rossiter's judgement on the role of the classics, since he dismisses them without any thorough assessment. Bailyn's decision, on the other hand, can be ascribed to two faulty assumptions. Firstly, Bailyn dismissed the colonists' classical learning as 'superficial' believing that they only accessed the classics through the medium of British Whig interpretation. There is, however, abundant evidence that many of the American colonists read and digested the classical works for themselves, gleaning new ideas directly from the

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<sup>14</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press. 1967), pp.23-24.

<sup>15</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p.24. Bailyn quoted Charles F. Mullett for the term 'window dressing' but does not note that Mullett applied it to only a few isolated instances and that Mullett generally concluded that there were many cases where the classics had exerted a real influence. See Charles Mullett, 'Classical Influences on the American Revolution', *Classical Journal*, (35 Nov. 1939), pp.92-104.

<sup>16</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p.26.

classical texts themselves without any intermediary. Secondly, by assuming that the colonists derived their ideas and understanding of the classics through Whig historians, Bailyn believed that the Whig interpretation of the classical texts was entirely their own construct. The radical Whig reading of the classics was, however, informed by the Greek and Roman authors themselves who frequently expressed concerns about growing monarchical powers and resulting infringements on their traditional liberties. Believing the colonists' classical knowledge to be 'superficial' he had no reason to examine the colonists' classical education and reading. So, while Bailyn acknowledged the influence that the Whigs had on the American patriots, he never recognised the vast intellectual debt that the Whigs owed to the ancients. As such, the thoroughness which characterised his assessment of the British Whig tradition was absent from his analysis of the role of the classics in the American colonists' intellectual lives.

Bailyn and Rossiter were part of the neo-Whig approach to American Revolutionary history that became dominant in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> This interpretation was a backlash against a Progressive view of the Revolution, which had been in vogue since the end of the nineteenth century. Progressives had placed little emphasis on human agency or the role of ideas, instead naming the causes of the Revolution to be earlier economic divisions between the colonists.<sup>18</sup> A generation of historians, who began publishing during the Cold War, rejected this view in favour of a Revolution that was preoccupied with political questions. They reasserted the colonists' emphasis on liberty and constitutional rights, naming the radical British Whig literature as the material most influential on the colonists. Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan in *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (1953), argued that the Revolution could be explained by the power of the idea of constitutional liberties. By re-examining one of the most studied pre-Revolutionary events, they demonstrated the ideological coherence of the colonists, and argued that ideas were not a means of disguising economic motives. Bailyn, in *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, mined the rich seam of pre-Revolutionary

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<sup>17</sup> The term 'neo-Whig' was coined in Jack P. Greene, 'The Flight from Determinism: a review of recent literature on the coming of the American Revolution', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 61 (1962), pp. 235-59.

<sup>18</sup> See Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1918); J. Franklin Jameson's *The American Revolution Considered as a Social Movement* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1926); and Carl L. Becker, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760-1776*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1909).

pamphlet material, arguing that the Americans were indebted to the political opposition in Walpolean Britain, who had emphasised the dangers of conspiracy and corruption. The colonists had transported these fears into the New World and, alert to potential tyranny, they viewed British behaviour through this lens of political language, and were motivated by their desire to secure their constitutional liberties. Bailyn was followed by J.G.A. Pocock, who, in *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975) likewise claimed that the Americans derived their political thought from the British Whigs. He claimed that the British Whigs were in turn influenced by the Florentines, and again dismissed the classical heritage, despite acknowledging that the example of the ancient republics exerted influence on the colonists.

These neo-Whig historians brought about a progressive and optimistic interpretation of the war. In the Whig view, history is seen as a story of progress, where the past is presented as an inevitable progression towards ever greater liberty and enlightenment, culminating in the modern forms of liberal democracy and constitutional governance, ultimately a republic. For the neo-Whigs, the underlying and unifying theme of American history was a Providential march toward liberty and democracy away from the tyranny and absolutism of the Old World. In the Revolution, 'the Americans seized as their peculiar inheritance the traditions of liberty'.<sup>19</sup> Gordon S. Wood, Bailyn's former student, concluded in *The Rising Glory of America* (1971) that 'the American Revolution seemed to present Americans with the opportunity to realise an ideal world, to put the Enlightenment into practice, to create the kind of ordered society and illustrious culture that men since the Greeks had yearned for'.<sup>20</sup> These neo-Whig historians saw the colonists as railing against the corruption and tyranny of British governance marked by the passage of the Stamp Act, and gaining momentum over the following decade as the colonists struggled to secure their constitutional liberties in a process that would ultimately lead to the establishment of a republic. The American Revolution was, therefore, a radical event, marking an important step in the progress of human civilisation. As Bailyn concluded: 'the details of this new world were not as yet clearly depicted; but faith ran high that a better world than any that had ever been known could be built'.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> George Bancroft, *History of the United States, from the Discovery of the Continent*, 10 vols. (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1889), 4:3.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Rising Glory of America*, (New York: George Braziller, 1971), p.1.

<sup>21</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, p.319.

This view of the importance of republican ideals to Revolutionary intellectual life has not gone unchallenged. One of the most dominant competing views has come from a group of scholars who sought to displace the primacy of republicanism with the liberalism of John Locke. Joyce Appleby has been a particular lifelong proponent of this interpretation, arguing in both *Capitalism and a New Social Order* (1984) and *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (1992) that American ideology in the Revolutionary era combined classical and liberal elements, with a distinct shift towards liberalism in the Constitutional period. In more recent years the debate between proponents of classical republicanism and liberalism became quite heated at times but eventually stagnated with the solution that American thought contained a plurality of opposed and competing political visions; as Isaac Kramnick concluded: ‘a profusion and confusion of political tongues’.<sup>22</sup> Richard has also pointed out that the strict dichotomy between classical republicanism and liberalism ignores the fact that the former ideology provided the latter’s intellectual foundation: ‘the Stoic theory of natural law and the optimistic view of human nature from which it derived gave birth to the modern doctrines of natural rights and social progress which undergird liberalism’.<sup>23</sup> Even Pocock himself is now inclined to acknowledge the presence of ‘alternative paradigms’ but insists that the ‘civic humanist paradigm’ remains ‘irreplaceable as a means of explaining why’ America is ‘the only political culture which recurrently laments the corruption of its virtue, the loss of its innocence and the end of its dream, and then sets about renewing them’.<sup>24</sup> The voices of Bailyn, Pocock, and Wood continue to carry great weight in this ongoing debate, and the optimistic and progressive interpretation is still seen as the standard vision of the American Revolution.

It has been within this debate about the influence of classical republicanism versus the predominance of Lockean liberalism that scholarship asserting the influence of the classical tradition on late colonial America has been developed. Initially in response to Rossiter and Bailyn’s denigration of the classical tradition, an army of classicists emerged on the scene to refute their allegations and reclaim the

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<sup>22</sup> Isaac Kramnick, ‘The Great National Discussion’: The Discourse of Politics in 1787’, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp.260-88.

<sup>23</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.5.

<sup>24</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, ‘Cambridge Paradigms and Scotch Philosophers’, in *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p.235, 239, and 242-244.

important role that the classics played in helping shape early American political thought. Richard Gummere's *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (1963) was the first pioneering work in this area. Gummere's collection of essays explored the American colonists' relationship to the classics and he assembled all the references, citations, and allusions to the classical world he could find on his chosen subjects. Howard Mumford Jones observed that Gummere did 'not attempt to assess indebtedness to the thought of the ancient world but to indicate that this indebtedness exists'.<sup>25</sup> Although Gummere's work was pioneering, as a result of his approach, instead of identifying patterns present in the colonists' choice of classical citations, he concluded that the colonists chose randomly those classical works that bolstered their case. This made Gummere's work seem disjointed at times, but also meant that he missed the over-arching themes that ran through the colonists' use of the classics. Meyer Reinhold's *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (1984) on the other hand, is one of the most influential surveys of the classical tradition in American history. Reinhold was one of the great classicists of the twentieth century; his career had a rocky start when he was forced to resign as a classics lecturer from Brooklyn College during the McCarthy era, as he was unwilling to answer questions about his political views and agenda. Reinhold went on to become the founder of the Institute for the Classical Tradition (1980) and the *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* (1994). Reinhold's chapter on the eighteenth century represented the first attempt at a thorough exploration of the colonists' relationship with the classics. He concluded that the Revolutionary and Constitutional eras were a 'golden age' of the classics in America.

Classicists working within this field, reasserting the importance of the classics in late colonial America, have accepted the historiographical framework proposed by Rossiter, Bailyn, Pocock, Wood, and others. These neo-Whig historians saw the colonists as fighting a progressive and assuredly successful battle against Britain, and concluded that classical republicanism offered the colonists a template for republican governance that would inevitably be achieved. As a result, the influence of the classics on the colonial mindset has been harnessed to this teleological view of the Revolution. The classics are seen as offering inspiration to the colonists who knew

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<sup>25</sup> Howard Mumford Jones, 'Review: The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture by Richard M. Gummere, *American Literature*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (May, 1964), pp. 222-223.

that they were fighting for liberty and independence, or whose fight for liberty could, in any case, only lead to independence. Hannah Arendt expressed this view in *On Revolution* (1963) when she mused that ‘without the classical example shining through the centuries, none of the men of the revolutions on either side of the Atlantic would have possessed the courage for what then turned out to be unprecedented action’.<sup>26</sup> She concluded that the American Revolution’s ‘ultimate end’ was public, participatory ‘freedom’ of the sort exemplified in the Greek *polis* and the constitution of a public space where freedom would appear’.<sup>27</sup> Likewise, Gordon Wood contended in *The Creation of the American Republic* (1969) that ‘for Americans the mid-eighteenth century was truly a neo-classical age’ and that their ‘compulsive interest in the ancient republics was in fact crucial to their attempt to understand the moral and social basis of politics’.<sup>28</sup> As he put it, ‘there was...for all Whigs, English and American, one historical source of republican inspiration that was everywhere explicitly acknowledged – classical antiquity, where the greatest republics in history had flourished’.<sup>29</sup>

In more recent years, those works dedicated to assessing the classical influence on late colonial America have continued to interpret the use of the classics within the neo-Whig vision of the Revolution, and still see the classics as inspiring the colonists in their assured fight for liberty and independence. In 1994 Carl Richard published *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, which was the first book-length study of the Founding Father’s classical reading. Beginning with a thorough account of the ‘classical conditioning’ of the American colonists through their education system, Richard then systematically analysed all the areas in which the classics were influential to the Founders. Richard showed that the classics provided the colonists with the basis for, amongst other things, their theories of mixed government and classical pastoralism, popular sovereignty, models and antimodels of character, and informed their ideas about human nature and social responsibility. This book constitutes the handbook for the classical influence on Revolutionary America, and this thesis is much indebted to Richard’s work. His study convincingly shows that the colonists did not simply copy

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<sup>26</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, (New York: Viking Press, 1963), p.197.

<sup>27</sup> Arendt, *On Revolution*, p.258.

<sup>28</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic 1776-1787*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969), pp.48-50.

<sup>29</sup> Wood, *Creation of the American Republic*, p.49.

what they found in the classics, but, rather, they digested, weighed, and applied the lessons of antiquity to their own circumstances. Richard, however, argued that the classics provided models and anti-models of both character and systems of government to help the colonists navigate their way out of British imperial corruption and into greater liberty through the establishment of a republican system of government. For Richard, the colonists ‘steeped in a literature [the classics] whose perpetual theme was the steady encroachment of tyranny upon liberty, they virtually became obsessed with spotting the early warning signs of impending tyranny, so that they may avoid the fate of their classical heroes’.<sup>30</sup> Richard viewed the classics as a source of inspiration to the colonists in their pursuit of republican governance. In 2007 Margaret Malamud undertook a survey of the influence of the classics from the late colonial period until modern times in *Ancient Rome and Modern America*. Malamud’s work offers the view that no matter the social, cultural, or political context, Americans have always drawn on antiquity to envisage change or express their concerns. For Malamud, the story of the making of modern America begins with the influence that the classics had on the colonists. Malamud argues that America has always seen itself as Republican Rome and feared a ‘slide from republican virtue into imperial corruption and decline’.<sup>31</sup> Like Richard, Malamud saw the Roman Republic as being an inspiration to the colonists who believed that the war with Britain would lead to the establishment of a republic equal or surpassing that of Rome. Likewise, more recently, in 2009 Eran Shalev produced another thorough and insightful evaluation of the classical tradition in Revolutionary America in *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, another work to which this thesis is heavily indebted. Shalev looked at the literature of the Revolutionary era to assess the importance of antiquity to the early political culture of America. He showed that Rome offered the colonists a classical discourse to articulate and express their attitudes towards both history and time. He argued that the classics provided a critical perspective on the management of the British Empire, and enabled the colonists to imagine themselves as continuing a historical process that originated with classical Greece and Rome. One of Shalev’s central narratives is that late colonial America used the classics to envision itself as the fulfilment of the Roman

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<sup>30</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.8.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America*, (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.3.

Republic: literally that Republican Rome was reborn on the shores of America. Shalev contended that ‘invoking the inspiring examples of ancient republics was a vital tool in the hands of American orators and writers, who provided the *exempla* of the virtuous ancients and emphasised their relevance to the American situation. The classics encouraged and roused the Americans collectively before crossing the Rubicon of independence’.<sup>32</sup>

This optimistic and progressive view of the Revolution, in which the colonists embraced the classical past because it provided a republican model for an inevitably brighter future, does not, however, square with the full range of deployment of classical exemplars. In particular there is one popular figure who promised neither victory nor a happy ending, but defeat and suicide. That figure was Cato the Younger. The recurring appearance of Cato the Younger in the literature of late colonial America is a well-documented but understudied phenomenon. References to Cato significantly increase from the Stamp Act Crisis of 1765 and begin to decline concurrent with the French entry into the war in 1778. Cato was everywhere in the literature: Cato was used as a pseudonym for political authors, Cato was used as the title of political publications, prominent American political figures invoked or were likened to Cato, and both Plutarch’s *Life of Cato* and Joseph Addison’s play *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713) were frequently discussed and quoted in correspondence, sermons, speeches, and political treaties. Works from Clinton Rossiter, Bernard Bailyn, Elizabeth Cook, and Gary Huxford have provided examples of newspapers and political pamphlets showing the repetition and popularity of Cato within the colonial print culture and politics.<sup>33</sup> Unfortunately, these historical examinations have often supplied broad generalisations about the popularity and presence of Cato within the colonial mind.

The importance of Cato to the American colonists was first identified by Douglass Adair, the American intellectual historian best remembered for his research on the authorship of disputed numbers of the *Federalist Papers*.<sup>34</sup> The story goes

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<sup>32</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p.4.

<sup>33</sup> See Elizabeth Cook, *Literary Influences in Colonial Newspapers: 1704-1750*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1912). Gary Huxford, ‘The English Libertarian Tradition in the Colonial Newspaper’, *Journalism Quarterly* 45, (1968), pp.677-687.

<sup>34</sup> See Douglass Adair, ‘The Authorship of the Disputed Federalist Papers’, in *Fame and the Founding Fathers: Essays by Douglass Adair*, edited by Trevor Colbourn, (W. W. Norton, New York, 1974), pp. 27-74.

that sometime in the 1950s ‘one hot, humid, unairconditioned summer evening in Williamsburg, Virginia...a young British exchange student found his attention totally engaged by an exciting series of suggestions for historical enquiry. ...“Take a close look at Addison’s play *Cato*”, he [Adair] urged his rapt listener. “Take a look at the importance of *Cato* for George Washington, for Nathan Hale, for Patrick Henry”<sup>35</sup> Adair’s enjoinder eventually resulted in a number of publications in the 1960s, the most important of which was Frederic M. Litto’s ‘Addison’s *Cato* in the Colonies’, which appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly* (July 1966). Litto identified some of the many references to the historical Cato in the Revolutionary period and the fact that the name Cato became the byword for martyrdom amongst Americans. He focused on the popularity of Addison’s play *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713), and conducted a quick survey of several of the people who used quotes from Addison’s play during in the Revolution, including George Washington, Patrick Henry, and Nathan Hale.

Since Litto’s article various authors have devoted some space to discussing Cato, but it has always been within the context of a wider academic agenda and the individual importance of Cato has been overlooked. For example, Julie Ellison’s *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion* (1999), despite being a contribution aimed at ‘feminist literary scholarship, gay and lesbian studies, and queer theory’ of the cultural history of public emotion, devoted a substantial amount of time to discussing the influence of Addison’s *Cato* on American society and culture.<sup>36</sup> However, Ellison’s focus on the ways that *Cato* helped to shape the place of emotion in civic life on both sides of the Atlantic meant that there was little said on the political influences of the play. Likewise, Jason Shaffer in *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theatre* (2007) gave a transatlantic account of the theatre of British North American colonies and its relationship to imperial and revolutionary politics. Shaffer looked in more depth than Litto had at the influence of Cato on the late American colonial political identity, arguing that Addison’s *Cato* and other patriotic-style plays were used as political propaganda in the colonies to encourage engagement in the war. For Shaffer, Addison’s play inspired a generation of Americans who saw themselves

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<sup>35</sup> See Trevor Colbourn, ‘Review: Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment by Garry Wills’, *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 72, No. 1 (Jun., 1985), pp. 133-134, p.133.

<sup>36</sup> Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp.7-8, 2.

fighting a winning battle against Britain, and spawned a number of patriot plays that glorified the American cause. As such, Cato has been addressed in scholarship as an accessory-figure to the main argument of a scholar's work and, therefore, the direct influence and importance Cato had on the American colonists have been overlooked. In 2012 Rob Goodman and Jimmy Soni jointly penned *Rome's Last Citizen: The Life and Legacy of Cato, Mortal Enemy of Caesar*. Launched at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C., the book is the first modern biography of Cato, chronicling his life and the impact he has had on the Western world over the last two millennia.<sup>37</sup> In the early process of writing the biography, Goodman and Soni realised what Abigail Adams knew to be fact in 1773: Cato's life and legacy held an enduring relevance which resonated with the American colonists and spoke to their relationship with Britain. Goodman and Soni included a chapter addressing the appearance of Cato in the American Revolution, making a general assessment of the ways in which Cato influenced the colonists. In this work Goodman and Soni have only begun the process of reasserting the centrality of Cato to the Revolutionary period.<sup>38</sup>

This thesis, therefore, undertakes a thorough investigation of the role and influence of Cato the Younger in late colonial America; from the period of the Stamp Act Crisis in 1765 until the French entry into the war in 1778. In assessing the literature of the late colonial period an abundance of references to Cato surface, and this phenomenon demands an independent study. Furthermore, to understand fully the colonists' relationship with Cato we must set aside the current conceptual frameworks and presuppositions that dominate American Revolutionary historiography and look at the material afresh. The consistency and repetition of the Cato narrative in the literature shows that Cato, more than any other figure from antiquity, resonated with the American colonists during this period of time. It is also clear that, rather than being simply 'illustrative' of the colonists' thought, the constant references to Cato meant something very real to both the writers and their readers: that there were real fears, real anxieties behind these references, and not merely the desire to impress the minds of the populace through rhetoric and

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<sup>37</sup> The Cato Institute is named after *Cato's Letters*, the eighteenth-century English essay series written by John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. The essays presented a vision of society free from excessive government power and promoted individual liberty, limited government, and free markets. The Institute is, therefore, based on libertarian ideals espoused by *Cato's Letters* rather than being a direct descendent of the Roman Republican figure of Cato and his legacy.

<sup>38</sup> Rob Goodman and Jimmy Soni, *Rome's Last Citizen: The Life and Legacy of Cato, Mortal Enemy of Caesar*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2012), p.5.

propaganda. The literature indicates that the American colonists identified with Cato and the position in which he found himself at the fall of the Roman Republic: like Cato, they found themselves at a junction between republican liberty and imperial tyranny. The narrative of Cato provided the colonists with a cautionary tale of the encroachment of liberty by tyranny and reminded them that liberty was as precarious as it was precious. But Cato did not offer the colonists a revolutionary precedent of liberty triumphant against tyranny; Cato sought freedom not in this world, but the next, and secured his liberty through committing suicide. Cato's character offered a means for the Americans to explore ideas on how to retain their virtue when surrounded by the corruption and tyranny they found in the British Empire. The colonists concluded that a Cato-like suicide could be the only virtuous conclusion to their conflict, as they did not see themselves on a triumphant road to independence, but rather, as Abigail Adams anticipated, mired in a bloody civil war.

In order to understand the formative influence that the classics had on the American colonists we must first assess the manner in which the colonists accessed the classics. What is most notable in the debates concerning the influence of the classics on late colonial America is that many historians have drawn conclusions without a lengthy assessment of the colonists' classical education and reading. It is only through acknowledging the dominance of the classics in the colonists' education, and the manner in which they were entirely submerged into the world of antiquity, that we can fully understand and appreciate the sincerity of the colonists' later deployment of classical imagery. Chapter One will therefore assess the ways in which the colonists acquired a classical education and determine how thorough their classical propensities were. The classical training of the late American colonial generation has been the subject of exceptionally able recent scholarship, and this chapter will draw extensively on the works of Reinhold (1975 and 1984), Gummere (1963), and Richard (1994). The eighteenth-century education system was the institution most responsible for the classical conditioning of the American colonists, and the dominance of the classics in both the curricula of grammar schools and college will be discussed. The reading habits and literature of the period reveal that many colonists who did not attend college continued their relationship with the classics, making it necessary to assess the general permeation of the classics in society. It is not, however, enough to understand how the colonists learned Greek and Latin and studied classical texts; rather, we must also consider the values and

worldview that the classics imparted on the colonists. The classics provided a common vocabulary and uniquely classicised worldview that shaped and coloured the colonists' outlook during the war with Britain.

Chapter Two looks specifically at how the colonists accessed and interpreted the Cato narrative. The story of Cato the Younger came down to the Americans primarily through Plutarch's *Life of Cato* and Joseph Addison's polemic *Cato: A Tragedy*, both of which were of unprecedented popularity in the colonies. The main task of this chapter is to show how the Cato narrative went from being a piece that promulgated the value of virtue in the early eighteenth century to a political tool of rebellion used by the colonists as they descended into war with Britain. The colonists used their classically informed worldview, which warned them of the encroachment of tyranny on liberty, to interpret the Cato narrative in a manner not previously done. As the colonies began to feel their liberties being impinged upon by British imperialism, they saw in the story of Cato a mirror of their situation. Like Cato, they saw themselves in a world sliding towards corruption and imperial tyranny and sought to secure their liberty. Cato and his plight came to resonate personally with the colonists, and they saw in him the best solution to their deteriorating relationship with Britain. Addison's play, in particular, also contributed a specific Catonian rhetoric that became a common lexicon amongst the colonists, helping to inform their understanding of such terms as 'liberty' and 'tyranny'. Only through understanding these terms within the rhetoric and framework of the Cato narrative can we properly understand the colonists' approach to their circumstances.

Chapter Three, drawing on Eran Shalev's work (2009), then gives an overview of the American colonies' relationship with Britain from the early 1760s until the early years of the war. Throughout this period the classics informed the colonists' worldview and coloured the way in which they viewed their relationship with Britain. In the early 1760s the colonies saw themselves as part of an empire that surpassed Rome's achievement in expanse, power, virtue, and democratic governance. As the colonies descended into crisis, an intellectual revolution took place whereby the Americans perceived Britain as evolving from the Rome of the glorious Republican period to that of the emperors, characterised by despotic regimes and a loss of liberty. This chapter shows that at the beginning of the ideological crisis, the colonies turned to various examples from antiquity of slavery and tyranny in order to nuance their concerns, but over time, as they codified their thoughts and approach, the

colonists drew increasingly consistently on the Cato narrative to express their understanding and approach to the situation. Of all the examples from antiquity it was the Cato narrative that most resonated with the colonists and best expressed their concerns and mindset. The narrative of Cato dictated how they approached their deteriorating relationship with Britain and the more it declined the further the colonists retreated into their Catonian identity. The material shows an increasing reliance on Cato to express their position in relation to Britain, indicating that at the beginning of the war the colonists had little faith in their success. By tracing the intellectual revolution that occurred in the American colonies in 1760s and 1770s, this chapter provides the necessary background to understand the classicised identity that the colonists adopted and shows how the colonists arrived at Cato being that character.

Chapter Four focuses on neoclassical self-fashioning, whereby colonists actively engaged with the classical world by embodying and depicting a character from antiquity in order to nuance certain political grievances and viewpoints. From the passage of the Stamp Act onwards it became not an uncommon occurrence for male colonists to don either a literal or metaphorical toga in the political arena. Quite frequently in these neoclassical performances, the colonists actively sought to emulate Cato. The orators quoted sections of Addison's *Cato* so as to leave no doubt as to whom they were imitating, and sometimes even dressed the part to transport completely their audience back to Republican Rome. The frequency and general acceptance of these Catonian episodes reveal how entrenched in the colonial mindset the Cato narrative was. These episodes not only highlight the relevance and potency of Catonian images and rhetoric to late-colonial America, but reveal certain facets of the colonial mindset during this period. In emulating Cato, the colonists reinforced the resonance of the Cato narrative with the colonial situation, and rallied the colonial cause around a figure that offered failure and death in the fight against tyranny.

In Chapter Five we see that similar neoclassical performances were played out by colonial women, although in a different manner and arena. This chapter draws on the works of Caroline Winterer (2002 and 2007), who has traced the influence of the classics on American women in the late colonial and early national periods. In *The Mirror of Antiquity* (2007) Winterer successfully demonstrates how the image of the Roman matron enabled American women to participate in 'the elite male fiction that

the classical past was a shared, historical origin point for the new nation'.<sup>39</sup> However, this chapter takes Winterer's conclusions further by arguing that the Roman heroines that were most frequently recommended to female colonists were models of classical female suicide. Just as the male colonists sought to emulate Cato, colonial women engaged with narratives of classical suicide and contemplated republican demands through these Stoic exemplars. In the literature aimed at women, the pennames adopted by female colonists, and their political pseudonyms, the Roman matrons constantly chosen were those who committed suicide rather than live under tyranny, or made great sacrifices for the betterment of the republic. The fact that the women's choice of classical heroines mirrored that of the Cato narrative suggests a society-wide identification with the fall of the Roman Republic and the belief that liberty was only to be found through death.

This study finishes with an Epilogue that brings the era of Cato to a close. Coinciding with the French entry into the war, another figure rapidly replaced Cato as the embodiment of American ideals. If Cato was the perfect republican role model during the years of uncertainty, another Roman Republican named Cincinnatus represented different concerns amongst the colonists. Cincinnatus spoke to the American anxieties of how to transition from wartime to peace, while avoiding the establishment of a despotic regime or dangerous political factions. It was no coincidence that, as an American victory in the war became a possibility due to the entrance of the French on the colonial side, the colonists sought to rebrand their neoclassical self-image with a hero that offered a more optimistic future than Cato did. As such, the popularity of Cato went into decline, bearing witness to his importance to and resonance with the colonists in the dark hours of the war.

By focusing on the use of Cato in the literature, a different side of the generation that fought the last British Civil War is revealed.<sup>40</sup> It is only through attributing to the classics the influence that they commanded amongst the late colonial generation and studying them in isolation from the current historiographical framework that this picture emerges. It appears that the colonists perceived the world in which they lived as dark and sinister, rather than focusing on the lightness of liberty, which the neo-Whig historians have advocated. The colonists'

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<sup>39</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.41.

<sup>40</sup> See David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) for discussions about the American Revolution as the last British Civil War.

identification with Cato shows that they engaged with a very different model of classical republicanism than current historiography dictates and that they did not engage with the classical past to envision a glorious future. Bailyn has written about a 'contagion of liberty' amongst the colonists, but their use of Cato shows that they were not seeking to secure liberty in this life. A study of Cato reveals that, when the colonists declared 'give me liberty or give me death', this was not an act of bravado. Rather they perceived death as a very real and very desirable alternative. Rather than conducting a triumphant struggle for liberty, the 'Revolutionaries' used Roman Stoicism, through the medium of Cato, to contemplate the corruption of the British Empire and their response to it. The Americans come to look less like 'Revolutionaries' and, instead, can be seen as making a desperate last stand for republican liberty in opposition to corruption and tyrannical rule imposed by the British Empire. The colonists did not know at the outset of the war that they were fighting what would later be termed a 'revolution', but, rather, saw themselves as re-enacting Cato's last stand against tyranny.

## Chapter One

### ‘Classical Conditioning’:

### The Classical Tradition in Colonial America

Despite the distance of America from the great centres of humanistic learning, in settling North America the Europeans of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had conveyed across the Atlantic a tradition of venerating the glories of the classical world. The American colonies inherited this reverence for the classical tradition and the classics flourished in the New World. This preoccupation with antiquity in the colonies laid the foundations for a culture of classicism that came to an apex in the eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century knowledge of the classics was universal amongst the American colonists, and throughout the vast amount of literature from the Stamp Act Crisis well into the early national period references to antiquity abound.<sup>41</sup> Since the classics consistently appear in the late colonial literature, it is vital to begin any discussion of late colonial intellectual life with an assessment and understanding of how steeped in classical knowledge the colonists were.

The early American educational system was the institution most responsible for what Carl Richard has termed the ‘classical conditioning’ of the American colonists.<sup>42</sup> It was in the grammar schools of early America that the colonists were originally exposed to and became steeped in the classics and, for many, this began a life-long relationship with the ancients. Those colonists who went on to attend college continued their education in a system that gave great preference to the classics. Knowledge of the classics was not only limited to an elite educated sector of society. The reading habits and literature of the eighteenth century reveals that many of those colonists’ whose education ended with grammar school continued to self-educate themselves in the classics. The colonists’ classical education was evidently so

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<sup>41</sup> See Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp.196-231 for a refutation of the belief, originated by Meyer Reinhold, that there was a decrease in the influence of the classics in the early national period.

<sup>42</sup> Richard, *The Founders and the Classics*, p.12.

successful that most came to venerate the classics both as a source of delight and as a resource of precedent and wisdom. Only by assessing the immersive nature of the colonists' classical education can we fully understand and appreciate the genuine sentiments that lay behind the classical imagery and illusions that they later deployed. There was nothing superficial about the colonists' classical knowledge; they read and digested the stories of antiquity and applied these lessons to their own lives. As the colonies descended into war with Britain, it was the classics they turned to as a vehicle to contemplate the implications of British tyranny and to voice their opposition. The classics, originally touted as a source of enjoyment and knowledge, became an increasingly important political tool, and it was in the political sphere that the colonial classical education manifested.

### The Usefulness of Knowledge

Intellectual pursuits of the eighteenth century were shaped by the concept of 'useful knowledge'. The exaltation of utility in learning had several origins: it came from the ideals of civic humanism that were inherent in the Renaissance, and from the Puritan and Quaker insistence on the utilitarian value of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> By the eighteenth century, due to the emphasis on science and the social function of knowledge as developed in the seventeenth century through the work of Francis Bacon, John Locke, and the Royal Society, the emphasis on 'useful knowledge' had reached a crescendo.<sup>44</sup> In 1783 the Reverend David M'Clure noted that 'a growing taste for useful knowledge is an important characteristic of the people of this new world'.<sup>45</sup> The reading of eighteenth-century Americans was, therefore, consciously practical and purposeful. A popular maxim of the time was Horace's dictum: '*omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci*'.<sup>46</sup>

A variety of American institutions fully undertook the challenge to cultivate useful knowledge. It was initially promoted in the colonial grammar schools and colleges. As early as 1712 statutes of South Carolina provided for instruction 'in useful and necessary learning' in free public schools in the parishes of the province', and,

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<sup>43</sup> Meyer Reinhold, *The Classick Pages: Classical Reading of Eighteenth-Century American*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University, 1975), p.11.

<sup>44</sup> Reinhold, *The Classik Pages*, p.11.

<sup>45</sup> Reinhold, *The Classik Pages*, p.11, f.59.

<sup>46</sup> Translation: 'he is the most successful who combines the useful with the pleasurable'. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 343. John Adams wrote to his son's tutor urging him to encourage John Quincy Adams to pursue learning, but to mix study with pleasure.

similarly, the Constitutions of Pennsylvania and North Carolina, both ratified in 1776, included an identical provision that read: ‘all useful learning shall be duly encouraged and promoted in one or most universities.’<sup>47</sup> Learned societies, literary clubs, and scientific assemblies proliferated throughout the eighteenth century. Benjamin Franklin was particularly vocal about the propagation of useful knowledge and in 1743 he proposed founding a society ‘to be called *The American Philosophical Society*’, which would study practical professions, such as agriculture, medicine, mining and quarrying, as well as ‘all philosophical experiments that let Light into the Nature of Things’.<sup>48</sup> The society’s proclaimed mission encapsulates eighteenth-century American attitudes towards knowledge:

Knowledge is of little use, when confined to mere speculation: But when speculative truths are reduced to practice, when theories, grounded upon experiments, are applied to the common purposes of life; and when, by these, agriculture is improved, trade enlarged, the arts of living made more easy and comfortable, and, of course, the increase and happiness of mankind promoted; knowledge then becomes really useful.<sup>49</sup>

Franklin was similarly vocal about the importance of educating youth in useful knowledge. In his 1746 *Proposals Relating to the Education of the Youth in Pennsylvania* he recommended that ‘it would be well if they could be taught *every Thing* that is useful, and *every Thing* that is ornamental. But Art is long, and their Time is short. It is therefore proposed that they learn those things that are likely to be *most Useful* and *most Ornamental*’.<sup>50</sup> He regarded as being most useful the ability to ‘write a fair hand’, to study drawing, arithmetic, accounts, geometry, astronomy, English, agriculture, and ancient history.<sup>51</sup>

For most, the classics were seen as having a utilitarian function. Since the Renaissance, Europeans had placed the study of classical texts and ancient languages at the heart of their curricula, believing that the example of antiquity was the main path to creating ethical human beings and upright citizens. Early in the eighteenth century an Englishman wrote: ‘no study is so useful to mankind as History,

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<sup>47</sup> John Brown Dillion, *Oddities of Colonial Legislation in America: As Applied to the Public Lands, Primitive Education, Religion, Morals, Indians, Etc., With Authentic Records of the Origin and the Growth of Pioneer Settlements, Embracing also a Condensed History of the States and Territories*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), pp.114-115.

<sup>48</sup> The society was founded and held some meetings, but lay dormant from 1745 to 1767.

<sup>49</sup> Reinhold, *The Classick Pages*, p.12, f.65.

<sup>50</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Benjamin Franklin on Education*, ed. John Hardin Best, (New York: Teachers College Columbia University Press, 1962), pp.133-134.

<sup>51</sup> Franklin, *On Education*, pp.133-134.

where...men may see the virtues and vices of great persons in former ages, and be taught to pursue the one, and avoid the other'.<sup>52</sup> Classical education was not a narrow concept but was seen as the process of realising the full potential in human nature through studying works that touched on ideas of selfhood, morality, and intellect. Throughout the seventeenth century, Oxford and Cambridge absorbed this new emphasis on classical humanism and those graduates who migrated to the New World brought this new thinking with them. In fact, between 1607 and 1685 of the 640 clergymen known in Virginia 125 had been educated at either Oxford or Cambridge.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the Puritan migration had, by 1647, brought to New England over 130 men educated at one of these two British universities.<sup>54</sup> It was this decisive sector of the early colonial population that succeeded in establishing the model of the British educational system in America, and, as such, Latin and Greek languages and classical literature constituted the core curricula of the new colonial grammar schools and colleges. William Smith, the first provost of the University of Pennsylvania, expressed the view that a classical education provided the necessities for a young man: '[History is]...a Lesson of *Ethics* and *Politics* – an useful Rule of Conduct and Manners thro' Life... also the History of *Greece* and *Rome*, which may be justly called the History of *Heroism*, *Virtue*, and *Patriotism*...It is History that, by presenting those bright Patterns to the eyes of Youth, awakes Emulation and calls them forth steady to fill the Offices of State'.<sup>55</sup> Thus, as one of the colonists wrote: 'In crossing the Atlantic we have only changed our climate, not our minds, our natures and dispositions remain unaltered.'<sup>56</sup>

### Grammar Schools and Colleges

Since the classics were seen as being highly 'useful', the colonial education system was rich in classical education in order to maximise their benefit to the populace. The early settlements of Virginia and Maryland, overwhelmingly rural prior to the

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<sup>52</sup> Wharton in *True Briton*, Sept. 9, 1723, cited in R.N. Stromberg, 'History in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Historical Ideas*, 12 (1951), pp. 295–304, p.302.

<sup>53</sup> J. Gardner Bartlett, 'University Alumni Founders of New England', *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, 25 (1925): Transactions 1922 – 1924, pp.14-18.

<sup>54</sup> P.W. Hiden, 'Education and the Classics in the Life of Colonial Virginia', *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 49 (1941), pp.20-28, p.25.

<sup>55</sup> William Smith, *A General Idea for the College of Mirania*, (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1753), p.27, 30, 79.

<sup>56</sup> George Mason, quoted in Jeff Broadwater, *George Mason, Forgotten Founder*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), p.40.

Revolution, had very few schools, meaning that only the elite were privately educated.<sup>57</sup> In the northern colonies, particularly New England, the Puritan tradition of valuing education meant that grammar schools flourished.<sup>58</sup> In Massachusetts the Bay Colony leaders wanted to immediately open new schools in order to supply the colony with educated ministers and public servants. The state, therefore, passed a law in 1647 requiring that every town of fifty or more families had to have a grammar school and in the same year there were recorded to be nine grammar schools in New England alone.<sup>59</sup> In the mid-Atlantic region, private and sectarian schools filled the same niche as the New England common schools. In 1775 Samuel Adams wrote to James Warren expressing similar sentiments about the importance of education. He praised the foresight of the early American colonists for insisting on the establishment of schools: ‘Our Ancestors in the most early Times laid an excellent Foundation for the security of Liberty by setting up in a few years after their Arrival a publick Seminary of Learning; and by their Laws they oblig’d every Town consisting of a certain Number of Families to keep and maintain a Grammar School’.<sup>60</sup> Across all the colonies, education typically began for both boys and girls at the age of eight under the direction of either a public grammar schoolmaster or a private tutor, where they learnt to read, write, and cipher. In learning Latin students spent the first day translating a passage aloud, the second day writing out their translation, and the third day converting their own English translation back into Latin but in a different

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<sup>57</sup> See Edgar Wallace Knight, *Public education in the South*, (Charleston: Nabu Press, 2012).

<sup>58</sup> See James Axtell, *The school upon a hill: Education and society in colonial New England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974).

<sup>59</sup> Lawrence Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience 1607-1783*, (New York: Harpercollins College Division, 1972), p.180. There were some poor frontier towns that failed to comply. Also see Sheldon Cohen, *A History of Colonial Education: 1607-1776*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), p.83 for discussion about the Massachusetts law.

<sup>60</sup> Adams continued: I shall be very sorry, if it be true as I have been inform’d, that some of our Towns have dismiss’d their Schoolmasters, alledging that the extraordinary Expence of defending the Country renders them unable to support them. I hope this Inattention to the Principles of our Forefathers does not prevail. If there should be any Danger of it, would not the leading Gentlemen do eminent Service to the Publick, by impressing upon the Minds of the People, the Necessity & Importance of encouraging that System of Education, which in my opinion is so well calculated to diffuse among the Individuals of the Community the Principles of Morality, so essentially necessary to the Preservation of publick Liberty’. Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, November 4, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel. As early as 1658 the people of New Amsterdam petitioned Peter Stuyvesant, the last Dutch director of the colony, for permission to instruct their children ‘in the most useful languages, the chief of which is the Latin tongue’. Daniel Pratt, *Annals of Public Education in the State of New York, from 1626-1746*, (New York: Albany, 1872), p.22.

tense.<sup>61</sup> Pupils typically learnt grammatical rules from Ezekiel Cheever's *Short Introduction to the Latin Tongue* and then translated the Latin dialogues in Marthurius Corderius' *Colloquies*, which contained both Latin and English columns.<sup>62</sup> In later years pupils translated Cicero's *Epistles* or *Orations* and Virgil's *Aeneid*. For Greek, students memorised the grammatical rules in William Cambden's *Instituto Graecae Grammatices Compendiaria* and then set about translating the New Testament, Isocrates or Xenophon, and Homer into both English and Latin.<sup>63</sup>

Grammar school curriculum was virtually mandated by the admission requirements of America's colleges, and these remained solidly classical until the mid-nineteenth century. Robert Middlekauf has commented that 'since grammar masters knew that colonial colleges required young scholars to display their knowledge of Latin and Greek, they exercised their charges in the classics – and little else'.<sup>64</sup> The college classical curricula was particularly important as there was a close connection, looking at the record of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and the attendees of the Constitution Conventions, between those who received a college education and political activities of the late colonial period. At the start of the war with Britain, America had three thousand college graduates of a population of 2.5 million and these men, steeped in a classical college education, formed an absolute majority in the arenas that helped shape the colonial mindset.<sup>65</sup> As Harvard was the first and only college in America until the end of the seventeenth century (founded in 1636) it set the precedent for entrance requirements. Their entrance laws

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<sup>61</sup> Robert Middlekauf, *Ancients and Axioms: Secondary Education in Eighteenth-Century New England*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), p.83.

<sup>62</sup> Richard Gummere, *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Comparative Culture*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.58.

<sup>63</sup> Middlekauff, *Ancients and Axioms*, pp.80-90. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.58.

<sup>64</sup> Middlekauff, *Ancients and Axioms*, pp.76-77. It was not until after the Revolution that Americans began to study English grammar, and even then it was considered by some educators as being unworthy of formal academic attention.

<sup>65</sup> This tradition continued: of the fifty-five men who attended the Constitutional Convention, thirty-one were college graduates. Twenty-seven men with college backgrounds out of fifty-six at the Continental Congress supported the Declaration (eight were from Harvard), and twenty-three of thirty-nine committed themselves to the Constitution (with nine being Princeton graduates). James, McLachlan, 'The American College in the Nineteenth Century: Toward a Reappraisal', *Teachers College Record*, 80 (1978), pp.287-306, p.293. These statistics complicate the democratic egalitarian ideology of early America. During the early republican period sixty-three percent of the higher civil service appointees of President John Adams had attended college, as had fifty-two percent of those appointed by President Thomas Jefferson. Both men believed strongly that a college education was indispensable for government officers and both preferred a college curriculum steeped in classicism, Sydney H. Aronson, *Status and kinship in the Higher Civil Service: Standards of selection in the administration of John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964), p.124-125. These figures include people who attended but may not have actually graduated.

mandated that ‘when any Scholler is able to read and understand Tully, Virgil or any such ordinary Classicall Authors, and can readily make and speake or write true Latin prose and hath skill in making verse, and is Competently grounded in the Greeke Language so as to be able to Construe and Grammatically to resolve ordinary Greeke, as in the Greeke Testament, Isocrates, and the minor poets, or such like, having withall meet Testimony of his towardlinesse, hee shall be capable of admission into the Colledge’.<sup>66</sup> By 1746 three new colleges had been established - William and Mary (1692), Yale College (1701), and the College of New Jersey (now Princeton 1746) – and this number had increased to nine in 1776 and twenty-five in 1800.<sup>67</sup> Although these colleges were geographically and religiously diverse they were remarkably uniform in their classically based admissions requirements and classical curriculum. The Yale Laws of 1745 demanded that ‘none may Expect to be admitted into this College unless upon Examination of the Praesident and Tutors, They shall be found able Extempore to Read, Construe and Parse Tully, Virgil, and the Greek Testament: and to write True Latin Prose and to understand the Rules of Prosoia, and common Arithmetic, and shall bring Sufficient Testimony of his Blameless and inoffensive life’.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, in 1760 when John Jay, who went on to become the first Chief Justice of the United States, entered King’s College (Columbia) he was obliged to give a ‘rational account of the Greek and Latin grammars, read three orations of Cicero and three books of Virgil’s *Aeneid*, and translate the first ten chapters of John into Latin’.<sup>69</sup> Even as late as 1816, when Horace Mann, a Massachusetts politician and education reformist, applied for entrance to Brown University, he was required to be able ‘to read accurately, construe, and parse Tully and the Greek Testament and Virgil...to write true Latin in prose, and [to know] the rules of Prosody’.<sup>70</sup>

The curriculum that students pursued in college over the following four years continued this focus on the classics and this barely changed throughout the

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<sup>66</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.56. When John Adams entered Harvard over a century later in the 1750s the requirements had barely changed. The requirements demanded that he be able ‘extempore to read, construe, and parse Tully, Virgil, or such like common classical authors, and to write Latin in prose, and to be skilled in making Latin verse, or at least in the rules of the Prosodia, and to read, construe, and parse ordinary Greek, as in the New Testament, Isocrates, or such like, and decline the paradigms of Greek nouns and verbs’. Gilbert Chinard, *Honest John Adams*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1933), pp.11-12.

<sup>67</sup> See John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 2011), pp.1-41.

<sup>68</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.19.

<sup>69</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.56.

<sup>70</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.19.

eighteenth century.<sup>71</sup> The first completely recorded college curriculum, including detailed course outlines and textbooks, comes from Harvard in 1723. Freshmen spent the year reviewing ‘the classic authors learned at school’, sophomores studied Greek and Hebrew, and third years were exercised in disputations on ethics, metaphysics, geography, and philosophy.<sup>72</sup> The Princeton program was even more heavily steeped in the classics. The college President, John Witherspoon, announced in 1770 that the curriculum would be: ‘first year: Latin, Greek, classical antiquities, and rhetoric; second year: one ancient language, geography, philosophy, mathematics; third year: language, mathematics, natural and moral philosophy’.<sup>73</sup> The final year was slightly more flexible with the program consisting of ‘the higher classics, mathematics, natural and moral philosophy, history, literary criticism, and French if desired’.<sup>74</sup> Even half a century later the South Carolina College followed a similar program: freshmen read the Greek Testament, Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Cicero’s orations, and Xenophon’s *Cryopaedia*; sophomores read Homer’s *Illiad*; juniors read Longinus’s *On the Sublime* and Cicero’s *De Oratore*; and seniors read works by Demosthenes.<sup>75</sup> In all early American universities the classics occupied a proportionally large amount of students’ time and, equally as important, those teaching classical languages formed a proportionally large number of the total teaching faculty. Few Americans complained that the college experience was essentially an immersion in classicism. Robert Middlekauf has explained: ‘men in colonial New England rarely questioned the value of this curriculum...Whether or not they knew Latin and Greek, most New Englanders respected the intellectual excellence the classics upheld...Even the poorest country person could testify that a college degree raised a man’s status, and all recognised that the path to the professions lay through a liberal education’.<sup>76</sup>

Pedagogical techniques employed to teach the classics were, at times, brutal, and it is a testament to the classics that many of the colonists came to love the literature of antiquity, despite the negative association. Edward Gibbon recalled later in life: ‘By the common methods of discipline, at the expense of many tears and some

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<sup>71</sup> The only change was the addition of basic arithmetic to the entrance requirements.

<sup>72</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.63.

<sup>73</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.64.

<sup>74</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.64.

<sup>75</sup> Wayne K. Durrill, ‘The Power of Ancient Words: Classical Teaching and Social Change at South Carolina College, 1804-1860’, *The Journal of Southern History*, 65 (1999), pp.469-498, p.472.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Middlekauff, ‘A Persistent Tradition: The Classical Curriculum in Eighteenth-Century New England’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 18 (1961), pp.54-67, p.65.

blood, I purchased the knowledge of the Latin syntax'.<sup>77</sup> In 1730 British schoolmaster John Clarke reviewed some of the criticism of teachers and teaching methods – many schoolmasters' superficial knowledge of the classics and classical languages, the profound youth of the teachers, and the widespread prohibitions against the use of English translations, which resulted in pupils continually harassing each other and the schoolmasters for the correct answer – but his more serious criticism was the corporal punishment associated with teaching.<sup>78</sup> He wrote 'I am clearly of Opinion that such a Man deserves to be whipt for his Folly [more] than any Boy he teaches'.<sup>79</sup> Clarke's book was widely read but had little influence on pedagogical techniques, and many stories survive of students' experiences with learning the classics. Josiah Quincy, who managed to overcome brutalisation by his schoolmaster for his failure to master Latin grammar, testifies that what often began as terror eventually became a passion: 'but when I began upon Nepos, Caesar, and Virgil, my repugnance to my classics ceased, and the Preceptor gradually relaxed in the severity of his discipline, and, I have no doubt, congratulated himself on its success as seen in the improvement he was compelled to acknowledge'.<sup>80</sup> Thomas Jefferson was, likewise, able to overcome bad teaching. When Jefferson commenced his studies at the College of William and Mary in 1760 it had a reputation for chaos and incompetence: the chair of moral philosophy, the Reverend Goronwy Owen, had been forced to resign for leading his pupils into brawls with the townsmen of Williamsburg; the classical instruction was criticised as being little better than that given at a typical grammar school; and many key positions had been left vacant for years leaving the university in academic disarray.<sup>81</sup> Despite the college's setbacks Jefferson enjoyed and excelled at his classical studies. Schoolmates recalled that he studied fifteen hours a day and carried his Greek grammar book with him wherever he went. John Page marvelled that 'I was too sociable, and fond of the conversation of my friends, to study as Mr. Jefferson did, who could tear himself away from his dearest friends and fly off to his

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<sup>77</sup> Henry Hart Milman, *The Life of Edward Gibbon*, (Paris: Baudry's, 1840), p.25.

<sup>78</sup> Clarke could have added to his list of criticisms that masters were sometimes overloaded with pupils and extracurricular activities (such as chapel duty and building maintenance) that even the assistance of teaching aides (called 'ushers') was insufficient to enable them to teach effectively. Jean Straub, 'Teaching in the Friends' Latin School of Philadelphia in the Eighteenth Century', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 91 (1976), pp.434-456, p.438, 448-449.

<sup>79</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, 14.

<sup>80</sup> Josiah Quincy, quoted in Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts*, (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1867), p.25.

<sup>81</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.22.

studies'.<sup>82</sup> Jefferson came to love the classics and famously wrote: 'To read Latin and Greek authors in their original, is a sublime luxury. I thank on my knees him who directed my early education for having put into my possession this rich source of delight, and I would not exchange it for anything which I could then have enjoyed, and have not acquired'.<sup>83</sup>

Outside of the classroom the students' extracurricular activities and literary societies reinforced the classical education that they received. Both impromptu debates and regularly scheduled debates in Latin were constant features in students' lives, and Latin was the language used on all official occasions. Student literary societies flourished in colonial colleges: at Yale there was the Linonian Society and the Brothers in Unity; the Speaking Club was founded at Harvard in the 1770s; and Princeton had the Cliosophic Society founded in 1765 by Aaron Burr, and four years later James Madison established the American Whig Society.<sup>84</sup> Initiates were given the name of a historical figure and a surviving list of initiates into the Cliosophic Society from 1700 to 1777 reveals that almost half of their pseudonyms (thirty-one of sixty-eight) were classical: the wartime cavalry hero Henry Lee was dubbed Hannibal, John Davenport, son of the famous minister, took the name Cicero, and Aaron Burr was named Cyrus, after either the founder of the Persian empire or the fourth century general who employed Xenophon.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, after 1799 the American Whig Society's seal featured Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, guiding a youth up a mountain to the Temple of Virtue. The societies often expanded on the

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<sup>82</sup> Silvio Bendini, *Thomas Jefferson: Statesman of Science*, (South Yarra: Macmillan, 1990), p.24-25, 29, 33. Jefferson did not believe that formal education in history was particularly necessary. He once wrote to a young man about how to study history, saying: 'it would be a waste of time to attend a professor of [History]. It is so to be acquired from books, and if you pursue it by yourself you can accommodate it to your other reading so as to fill up those chasms of time not otherwise appropriated...Particularly after dinner [the mind] should be applied to lighter occupations. History is of this kind...The histories of Greece and Rome are worthy a good degree of attention. They should be read in the original authors'. Reinhold, *The Classick Pages*, p.17.

<sup>83</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p. 71, f. 6.

<sup>84</sup> David Bederman, *The Classical Foundations of the American Constitution: Prevailing Wisdom*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.8-9.

<sup>85</sup> James McLachlan, 'Classical Names, American Identities: Some Notes on College Students and the Classical Tradition in the 1770s', in *Classical Tradition in Early America: Essays*, ed. John Eadie, (Ann Arbor: Centre for Coordination of Ancient and Modern Studies, 1976), pp.81-95, pp.87-91. These societies still exist and are America's oldest college political, literary, and debating societies. As the colonies descended into war it was common for colonists to again take classical pseudonyms. Thomas Paine signed himself as 'Atlanticus', which implied the universality of his appeal. Samuel Adams used numerous names in pretence of concealing his identity: Vindex, Valerius Poplicola, Determinatus, Sincerus, Candidus, and he even assailed Governor Bernard as 'Verres, Tyrant of Sicily'. Alexander Hamilton changed his pseudonym to suit the occasion; accordingly he was 'Manlius' when addressing himself to the nation's first misunderstanding with France, 'Phocion' in support of the Jay Treaty, and 'Pacificus' in support of neutrality. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.13.

college classical curriculum by reading unassigned works, usually in translation, from the college libraries or from their own private collections.<sup>86</sup> These societies were a large part of the college experience throughout the eighteenth century, fulfilling the students' social needs, providing educational opportunities outside of the classroom, and all the time reinforcing the students' sense of affinity with the classics.

The colonists' education in the classics did not always cease with their time at university and many of them kept a commonplace book after the completion of their college studies. Into these books they copied literary passages, quotes, poems, maxims, or anything that personally appealed to them. John Adams transferred sizable excerpts from Sallust's *Catiline's War* into his Harvard commonplace book and maintained a great respect for the first century BCE Roman historian: in 1812, when some New Englanders opposed Republican war measures, Adams quoted Sallust saying that 'small communities grow great through harmony; great ones fall to pieces through discord'.<sup>87</sup> Alexander Hamilton similarly kept a commonplace book after university. Hamilton's university education was cut short due to the outbreak of the war, which saw him join the Continental Army in January 1776. He converted his military pay book into a commonplace book and in 1777 copied a section of Demosthenes, including the line: 'as a general marches at the head of his troops, so ought wise politicians, if I dare to use the expression, to march at the head of affairs; insomuch that they ought not to wait the event, to know what measures to take; but the measures which they have taken ought to produce the event'.<sup>88</sup> He also copied large extracts of Plutarch's *Lives* of Theseus, Romulus, Lycurgus, and Numa Pompilius, all of whom were founders of republics. Hamilton's son John later testified that Plutarch and Alexander Pope were his father's favourite authors.<sup>89</sup> Thomas Jefferson kept two commonplace books. His literary commonplace book was filled with excerpts from his favourite poets, dramatists, and prose writers. Forty percent of the material compiled between 1758 and 1773 was copied from classical works, and, almost invariably, the British authors he quoted dealt with classical subjects, such as Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and *Troilus and Cressida*, Sheffield Duke of Buckingham's *Julius Caesar* and *Death of Marcus Brutus*, and Ben Jonson's *Catiline's Conspiracy*. Jefferson's legal and political commonplace book contained

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<sup>86</sup> Bederman, *Classical Foundations*, pp.8-9.

<sup>87</sup> John Adams, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.25.

<sup>88</sup> James Madison, 'A Brief System of Logick', quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.26.

<sup>89</sup> Alexander Hamilton, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.26.

no direct Greek or Latin material, but he often quoted British and French writers who referenced the classics and added his own quotations of Roman authors as marginal notes.<sup>90</sup>

It is important to note here that the classical tradition in America was limited in certain ways. There was an overwhelming preference for Roman history over Greek in late colonial America. This was primarily due to the traditional emphasis upon Rome that had existed since the Renaissance. The Americans were also wary of the Greek experience: the Greeks were seen as having had a turbulent civic life and endemic fratricidal interstate wars, as well as their leagues and federal states being politically unstable.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, Americans had an imagined affinity with ancient Rome and found many features of the Republic congenial: the Senate as guarantor of stability and liberty; the ideal of the virtuous Ciceronian orator; and agriculture as a safeguard to civic virtue.<sup>92</sup> As such, educated Americans turned to didactic histories of Rome that reinforced the applicability of Republican Rome to modern America. It was not until the first decades of the nineteenth century that Americans became overtly interested in Greek history.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, the classics were understood to be simply Greek and Latin sources, and although early American interest in the classics was an intellectual continuation of the Renaissance, it did not share the broader interests of contemporary European thinkers. Except among a handful of theologians, interest in Biblical philology, including the study of Hebrew and other ancient near Eastern languages, was rare. There was an accepted notion of what constituted the classical canon of works and there was little effort to either expand or refine this selection or critically assess these texts, either through cross-

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<sup>90</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Jefferson's Literary Commonplace Book*, ed. Douglas Wilson, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.7, 24-55, 106-110, 113, 115-116, 198-199. Thomas Jefferson, *The Commonplace Book of Thomas Jefferson: A Repository of His Ideas on Government*, ed. Gilbert Chinard (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1926).

<sup>91</sup> Reinhold, *The Classick Pages*, p.205. Eric Nelson has, however, looked at the influence of the Greek tradition on the American Founding. Nelson names the Greek tradition as being a 'distinctive insistence on the necessity of using the coercive power of government to maintain an egalitarian distribution of property'. Therefore, as with a number of examples from antiquity, the classics offered both models and antimodels for the colonists to embrace and be warned by. See Eric Nelson, 'The Greek Tradition and the American Founding', in *The Greek Tradition in Republican Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.195-233.

<sup>92</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American intellectual Life, 1780-1910*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2002), p.19.

<sup>93</sup> This was probably due to the publication in 1793 of the highly popular *The Grecian History* by Temple Stanyan. It was important enough to be translated into French by Diderot, and many American libraries possessed a copy. Jefferson even copied portions of the work into his political commonplace book. Reinhold, *The Classick Pages*, p.205.

reading, archaeology, or inscription inquiry, all of which were just emerging as methods of classicism in Europe by the end of the eighteenth century. Frequently they conflated and collapsed together the histories of the Hellenic and Roman worlds, ignoring basic historiographical conventions and divisions of space and time. Caroline Winterer has recently called this ‘acute temporal flabbiness’, whereby the Americans thought of ‘the classics’ as a monolithic historical period.<sup>94</sup> As such, the colonists generally took the classical texts at face value, which made them far less complicated and, therefore, far more applicable and influential.

The main purpose of college education in the colonial era was to train young men for ministry. The classics were studied as a means of teaching religious truth and inculcating morality.<sup>95</sup> Just under half of the alumni of Harvard throughout the seventeenth century became clergymen, and even in 1750 around forty percent went into ministry.<sup>96</sup> The founders of Harvard declared their aim to be the advancement of learning in general and to train a ministerial class: ‘after God had carried us safe to New England...One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance *Learning* and perpetuate it to Posterity; dreading to leave an illiterate Ministry to the Churches, when our present Ministers shall lie in the Dust’.<sup>97</sup> Most ministers were able to reconcile happily the ethics found in the ‘heathen’ classical works with the morality of Christianity. They determined that the great Greek and Roman philosophers had groped near enough to Christian truth that their message could be profitably adopted by modern Protestants. In 1655 Harvard President Charles Chauncey defended the use of classical sources as opposed to strictly scriptural education saying ‘certain principles of truth written even in corrupt nature, which heathen authors have delivered unto us, that do not cross the holy writ’.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.26.

<sup>95</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, pp.37-38. Kenneth Murdock, *Literature and Theology in Colonial New England*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), p.96.

<sup>96</sup> Cremin, *American Education*, p.216.

<sup>97</sup> Benjamin Peirce, *A history of Harvard University: from its foundation, in the year 1636, to the period of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Brown, Shattuck, and Company, 1833), Appendix p.3.

<sup>98</sup> Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, pp.14-15. There were, however, those who did not embrace heathen wisdom as universal. Cotton Mather vigorously warned people ‘let not the Circaean Cup intoxicate you. But especially preserve the Chastity of your Soul from the Dangers you may incur, by a Conversation with the Muses that are no better than Harlots’. Alan Shucard, *American poetry: the Puritans through Walt Whitman*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), p.32. In the late seventeenth century the Massachusetts merchant Robert Calef deplored ‘the pernicious works of pagan learning’ in Virgil, Ovid, and Homer. ‘If I err, I may be shewed it from Scripture or sound reasoning, and not by quotations out of Virgil’. Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, p.15.

By the mid-eighteenth century the classics had stopped being used solely for religious education and were being used increasingly as a political tool. This evolution of the use of the classics was most evident in the topics chosen by students for the bachelor's graduation thesis and the master's *quaestio*.<sup>99</sup> Initially these were tests on technical reasoning, in Latin, on a given subject dealing with logic, rhetoric, philosophy, physics, or mathematics, focusing primarily on theological matters given the ministerial function of college education. Early topics were metaphysical and speculative: '*universalia non sunt extra intellectum*', or the standard '*quicquid est in intellectu prius fuit in sensu*'.<sup>100</sup> Records of early debates at William and Mary College show extensive use of ancient history: 'Was Brutus justified in having his son executed?' and 'Is an agrarian law consistent with the principles of a wise republic?'<sup>101</sup> By the eighteenth century, theses and *quaestiones* took on a political dimension. In 1699 Dudley Woodbridge assessed the old Roman question '*an salus populi sit suprema lex*' and answered in the affirmative.<sup>102</sup> Andrew Eliot's *quaestio* claimed in 1740 that 'Absolute and arbitrary monarchy is contrary to reason'.<sup>103</sup> Matthew Cushing declared a few years later that 'Civil laws which are against nature are not binding on the conscience'.<sup>104</sup> In 1743 a speaker answered 'no' to the question 'Is the Royal power absolutely by divine right?'<sup>105</sup> Samuel Adams delivered in flawless Latin in the same year his master's thesis entitled 'Whether it be lawful to resist the Supreme Magistrate, if the Commonwealth Cannot Be Otherwise Preserved'.<sup>106</sup> After the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 students used their theses and *quaestiones* to apply the political principles of Aristotle, Cicero, and Polybius to the debates concerning the rights of the colonists. A Brown graduate in 1769 opposed taxation without representation and another student proclaimed that a defensive war was justified. A few years later in 1773 another graduate from the same institution asked

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<sup>99</sup> *Quaestiones* were a feature of graduate studies at Oxford, and the very name implies a type of discourse derived from Roman rhetorical forms of Cicero and Quintilian. David Bederman, *Classical Canon: Rhetoric, Classicism, and Treaty Interpretation*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), p.11-12. Stephen Botein, 'Cicero as Role Model for Early American Lawyers: A Case Study in Classical "Influence"', *The Classical Journal*, 73 (1978), pp.313-321, p.318.

<sup>100</sup> Translations: 'universal things are not beyond comprehension' and 'whatever is in the intelligence was previously in the senses'. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind* p.70.

<sup>101</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, pp.70-71.

<sup>102</sup> Translation: 'The welfare of the people is the supreme law'.

<sup>103</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.71.

<sup>104</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.71.

<sup>105</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.71.

<sup>106</sup> Adams answered a resounding 'yes' to this question. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.69. Paul Lewis, *The Grand Incendiary: A Biography of Samuel Adams*, (New York: Dial Press, 1973), p.10.

the question 'Have not the American colonists the same rights as the inhabitant of Great Britain?'<sup>107</sup>

The shift in the use of the classics was in part a result of a change in the career trajectories of college graduates. By the mid-eighteenth century, colleges had ceased to be simply training centres for the clergy but instead served as, what James McLachlan has termed, 'pre-professional schools' for the emerging professions.<sup>108</sup> For example, seventy-five percent of twenty-one graduating classes from Princeton went on to become not only ministers, but lawyers and doctors as well.<sup>109</sup> It was especially amongst the classically educated lawyers that the political uses of classicism became most evident, and it was from this sector of society that the great literary and ideological ferment that erupted in America in the second half of the eighteenth century arose disproportionately. Caroline Winterer has written that 'their contributions to an increasingly secular political, oratorical, and literary culture after 1750 challenged the clergy's dominance in American intellectual life and allowed classical erudition to be deployed for political as well as religious ends...They hitched literature to politics, words to action, [and] knowledge to liberty'.<sup>110</sup> The classics provided a common political vocabulary for the colonists, and the concept of 'useful knowledge' meant that they had an overt sense of the utility of classical studies. Examples of the instrumental and argumentative uses of ancient history are seen frequently in the tracts and pamphlets of the period. Their writings often talk about the pragmatic utilitarianism of ancient knowledge and the sense of historical perspective that one gained from studying the classics. Edward Burns has concluded that 'it may be doubted that any group of statesmen anywhere in the world was more conscious of the lessons of antiquity and more determined to profit from them' than the American colonists.<sup>111</sup> The colonists' frequent use of classical allusions served to increase their sense of legitimacy by linking their political lives with a cultural ancestry reaching back into antiquity.

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<sup>107</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.71.

<sup>108</sup> McLachlan, 'Classical Names, American Identities', p.85.

<sup>109</sup> McLachlan, 'Classical Names, American Identities', p.85.

<sup>110</sup> Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, p.17.

<sup>111</sup> Edward McNall Burns, 'The Philosophy of History of the Founding Fathers', *Historian*, 16 (1954), pp.142-168, p.142.

### General Populace

The fact that those American colonists who lacked a university education were equally at ease with the classical imagery and allusions used during the 1760s and 1770s shows just how all-encompassing the classical tradition was in early American society. Benjamin Franklin was self-taught in Latin, and although he complained at times about the overuse and misuse of ancient history at the Constitutional Convention, he was happy to use classical allusions on occasion.<sup>112</sup> George Wythe, a signer of the Declaration of Independence and a member of the Second Continental Congress, never attended college but due to his mother, who quite unusually for a woman, had become fluent in Latin and Greek, learnt the classical languages. She instilled in him such love and knowledge of the classics that he was revered by his law students, including James Monroe, John Marshall, Henry Clay, and Thomas Jefferson, who referred to Wythe as ‘the best Latin and Greek scholar in the State’ of Virginia.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, John Marshall’s entire formal education consisted of only six weeks at the College of William and Mary but he, nevertheless, read Horace and Livy, fashioned his five-volume biography of Washington after Cicero, and told his grandsons that Cicero’s *De Officiis* was ‘among the most valuable treatises in the Latin language, a salutary discourse on the duties and qualities proper to a republican gentleman’.<sup>114</sup> John Rutledge, another signer of the Declaration of Independence, refused to learn Greek and Latin, much to his mother’s dismay, but became enamoured at the age of twelve with Joseph Addison’s *Cato* and saw the play numerous times during his lifetime.<sup>115</sup> George Washington was yet another patriot who never learned Greek or Latin, due to his father’s death when Washington was eleven, which prevented his planned college education in Europe. Nevertheless, Washington’s mentor and surrogate father, William Fairfax, was able to press upon him the importance of having a familiarity with the ancient world.<sup>116</sup>

Classicism permeated multiple layers of society and many Americans cultivated classical learning, even if they were not fortunate enough to have had a grammar school or college education. The permeation of the classics during the

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<sup>112</sup> Franklin had also written a variant of a Socratic dialogue in his earlier life as a writer. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.174.

<sup>113</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.36.

<sup>114</sup> Paul MacKendrick, ‘This Rich Source of Delight: The Classics and the Founding Fathers’, *Classical Journal*, 72 (1976-77), pp.97-106, p.103.

<sup>115</sup> Richard Barry, *Mr Rutledge of South Carolina*, (New York: Duell, Sloan, 1942), pp.10-13.

<sup>116</sup> William Fairfax, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.37.

second half of the eighteenth century went beyond the college educated and traditional elites due to the increased accessibility and popularity of the classics that rising prosperity, commercialism, and aspiration towards gentility enabled.<sup>117</sup> It was also supported by a steep rise in the importation of books and multiplication of bookstores, as well as a growing number of colonial printers publishing local newspapers and imprints, making literature cheaper and more widely available.<sup>118</sup> We must, therefore, take seriously Thomas Jefferson's remark that 'American farmers are the only farmers who can read Homer'.<sup>119</sup> Although the study of history and classical languages are currently considered to be high-culture endeavours, this was not the case in eighteenth-century America. An apparently effortless command of classical style and allusion was considered to be the hallmark of a gentleman, and, as such, many men sought to obtain a familiarity with the classics regardless of their financial ability to obtain a formal education.<sup>120</sup> Antiquity revealed itself on unexpected occasions in the professional lives of the colonists, with the story in Livy of Tarquin cutting off the tallest poppyheads, in particular, being often cited.<sup>121</sup> Richard Gummere has summarised: 'illustrations from antiquity can be found in all circles, high and low, from a farmer who notes the weather, or a shopkeeper who wishes to impress his clientele, to the scholar-politician in search of precedents for the founding of a nation. The man in the street who knew some second-hand Roman

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<sup>117</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p.11.

<sup>118</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.12.

<sup>119</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.9.

<sup>120</sup> One of the most popular books in boys' education was the *Colloquies* of Erasmus, which was a collection of 'prompte, quicke, wittie, and sentencious' classical phrases. Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Founding of Harvard College*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1935), 1:179.

<sup>121</sup> The poppy story is told in Herodotus, *Histories*, 5.92, Aristotle, *Politics*, 1284a, and Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.54. The story tells the ploy used by Tarquinius and his youngest son Sextus to conquer the town of Gabii, which had resisted Rome rule. Sextus went to Gabii, where he falsely claimed that his father had turned against him, in order to gain the confidence of the town's leadership. He then sent an envoy to Rome to find out what he should do next. Tarquinius did not trust the envoy, and sent a silent message of Sextus. He walked in his garden using his stick to cut down the tallest poppies. The envoy reported what he had seen, and Sextus deciphered the hidden meaning in the message, killing the leaders of the town and conquering the city. In 1634 Samuel Matthews, a council member, protested to Harvey of Virginia against the 'calling away of citizens from private labours to any service of the Governor's upon any colour whatsoever'. In response Harvey 'turned his back and with his truncheon lashed off the heads of certain high weeds'. The story of Tarquin was again invoked by Captain Phips in New England in 1768 when it was suggested that Americans be tried in English courts: 'will they not think that those who support the rights of the people are, like Tarquin's poppies, to be cut off for over-topping the rest?'. John Adams also applied the story to the 'liquidations' of the French Revolution in his work *Discourses on Davila*. Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, pp.8-9.

history caught the atmosphere of the times; and every corner of ancient culture was known'.<sup>122</sup>

The fact that colonial Americans were avid readers has been demonstrated beyond question.<sup>123</sup> There were many extensive private and public libraries in early America, all of which contained classical works. Most notable were the college libraries: Harvard (ca. 3,000 volumes in 1732-35) and Yale, as well as several large public libraries: the Library Company of Philadelphia (375 titles in 1741), and the Redwood Library Company at Newport and Rhode Island (opened in 1750 with 866 volumes).<sup>124</sup> There was also a notable number of private libraries, such as those of John Harvard, Cotton Mather, Benjamin Franklin, the Virginians John Carter II, Robert ('King') Carter, Ralph Wormeley II, Richard Lee II, and James Logan of Philadelphia (described by Edwin Wolf as 'the greatest single intellectual monument of colonial America which has survived'), James Bowdoin of Massachusetts (ca. 1200 volumes), and Thomas Jefferson's great libraries, which are now in the Library of Congress and at Monticello. Classical works represented on average approximately 10-12 percent in each of these collections.<sup>125</sup> Apart from Greek and Latin texts and dictionaries, more often than not, these libraries contained translations of classical authors and works on ancient history.<sup>126</sup> Americans in the eighteenth century generally accessed antiquity through translations and modern histories as most did not have the benefit of a college classical education, and of those who did receive a college education, despite their long training in Latin and Greek, few read the classical languages with ease.<sup>127</sup> Benjamin Franklin even proposed in 1749 that ancient history should be taught using translations of Greek and Roman writers.<sup>128</sup> The use of translations was not, however, peculiarly American, but was in line with the British tradition. The English had decided that it was 'an act of patriotism' to

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<sup>122</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.18.

<sup>123</sup> Reinhold, *The Classick Pages*, p.7. See also Julie Hedgepeth Williams, *The Significance of the Printed Word in Early America: Colonists' Thoughts on the Role of the Press*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1999). For the Puritan tradition of reading see Matthew Brown, *The Pilgrim and the Bee: Reading Rituals and Book Culture in Early New England*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

<sup>124</sup> Reinhold, *Classick Pages*, p.7.

<sup>125</sup> Reinhold, *Classick Pages*, p.7.

<sup>126</sup> Reinhold, *Classick Pages*, p.8. As early as 1838 10 percent of the classical works in John Harvard's library were translations of classical authors.

<sup>127</sup> Timothy Pickering wrote to his son John, studying at Harvard, in 1795: 'Like me a greater part of the collegians, imprudently neglecting to read Latin daily, or at least weekly, after they leave college...forget the language'. Mary Pickering, *The Life of Timothy Pickering*, (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 1887), pp.83-84.

<sup>128</sup> Franklin, *On Education*, pp.133-134.

provide translations of the classics in order to bring the benefits of the Renaissance and classical learning to the broader public who knew no Latin or Greek.<sup>129</sup>

The reading habits of early Americans show an evolving focus of interest. Primary interest was initially in theological and devotional works, but then, starting in the 1730s, there was a move towards more secular publications. Reading interests turned to utilitarian subjects in many fields, and in the humanities the concentration was on history and moral writings. Cicero was admired by some for his oratorical style, idealised by many as a paragon of oratory that opposed tyranny, and valued by all as a moralist. John Adams judged in 1787 that ‘as all the ages of the world have not produced a greater statesman and philosopher united than Cicero, his authority should have great weight’.<sup>130</sup> The *Parallel Lives and Morals* of Plutarch were also immensely popular throughout the eighteenth century, and copies of his works were to be found everywhere in early American libraries. His works were particularly appealing because of his memorable portrayal of virtues, high moral standards, vivid narrative, with his aim being to use ‘history as a mirror and endeavouring in a manner to fashion and adorn my life in conformity with the virtues therein depicted’.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, the *Disticha Catonis*, a collection of moral aphorisms by an unknown author that had first attracted the name ‘Cato’ in the 3/4<sup>th</sup> century CE, was a remarkably popular work throughout the eighteenth century. Although of pagan origin, the work was acceptable to Christians both because of its generalised, secular maxims, and because subsequent commentaries had effectively Christianised the collection. In 1735 Benjamin Franklin’s press published a new version of the *Disticha* by James Logan and there were three subsequent editions between 1776 and 1789.<sup>132</sup>

Stoic writers were also immensely popular in America. While there were many Stoic doctrines early Americans found incomplete or disagreed with in entirety, they were attracted to the many excellent moral rules of conduct in Stoic works: their advocacy of virtue, simple living, reason, natural law, opposition to tyrants, concepts

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<sup>129</sup> Carey Conley, *The First English Translators of the Classics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927). For general information about translations of Latin and Greek works during the Renaissance see Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman influences on western literature*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1949), pp.103-126.

<sup>130</sup> John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856). 10 volumes. Vol. 4. Chapter: Preface. Accessed from: <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2102/159779> on 2013-10-15.

<sup>131</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Aemilius*, 1.

<sup>132</sup> Reinhold, *Classick Pages*, p.33.

of 'freedom', and brotherhood of men. One of the most popular books of the eighteenth century was Sir Rodger L'Estrange's *Seneca's Morals*. His work was first published in 1678 and went through an impressive number of editions. It was not a translation of the works of L. Annaeus Seneca (4BCE – 65CE), but, rather, was a collection of the Roman philosopher's thoughts taken from *De Beneficiis*, *De Ira*, *De Clementia*, and the *Epistulae Morales*. Epictetus (55-135CE) was another particularly popular Stoic philosopher and there were more than a few English translations of his works printed in America. In fact, the second work ever printed in America was *Epictetus, his Morals, Done from the original Greek, and the Words taken from Arrian*, printed by Samuel Keimer in 1729. However, all previous translations of Epictetus were eclipsed when Elizabeth Carter published in London in 1758 her translation *All the Works of Epictetus, which are Now Extant*.<sup>133</sup>

Diaries and commonplace books also reveal an interest by the general populace in classical antiquity. John Saffin, a Boston merchant, was not privileged to a college education, but he attempted to compensate by keeping a commonplace book. His volumes reveal a non-academic interest in classical languages and antiquity: he wrote some imitative verse, copied stories from Plutarch, quoted various ancient authors, and referred to his book collector neighbour Samuel Lee as a Cicero.<sup>134</sup> He even produced a grammatical words play, that was possibly original or altered from some textbook: 'Nature *declines* men through all the cases, *viz.* Nominative by Pride, Genitive by Luxury, Dative by Bribery, Accusative by Deception, Vocative by Adulation, Ablative by Extortion'.<sup>135</sup> Similarly, John Smith, a West Jersey councillor, was a cultivated amateur of the classics. Although his early schooling is unknown, we do know that his library contained English and French translations of Plato, Cicero, Tacitus, Seneca, and Epictetus, as well as some more modern histories such as William Whiston's *Josephus* and Basil Kennett's *The Antiquities of Rome*.<sup>136</sup> Smith went on to write a series of essays for the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, under the name of 'Atticus', which were filled with classical illusions.

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<sup>133</sup> Samuel Johnson, the British author and a friend of Carter's, once proclaimed that 'my old friend, Mrs Carter, could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus' and later remarked about a famous Greek scholar that 'he understood Greek better than any one he had ever known, except Elizabeth Carter'. See Reinhold, *Classick Pages*, p.77.

<sup>134</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.10.

<sup>135</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.10.

<sup>136</sup> Most likely he attended a colonial grammar school and had private tutoring, but there were no advanced educational institutions established in his area at this time. A number of years later the College of Philadelphia was founded in 1749.

The readership of the almanac tells us a great deal about the literacy levels, interests, and intellectual trends of the general populace.<sup>137</sup> Richard Gummere has described the almanac as ‘perhaps the most popular vehicle of communication’.<sup>138</sup> Almanacs were circulated extensively amongst farmers and tradesmen during the colonial period, and this indicates that there was generally a high level of intelligence.<sup>139</sup> The first almanacs appeared in New England and they were a composition of articles about astrology, astronomy, and cosmology, all of which went hand-in-hand with ancient mythology and history. The editors often drew on Ovid, Cato the Elder, Virgil, Cicero, Seneca, and particularly on the *Astronomica* of Manilius, whose pictorial representations of the zodiac signs as various parts of the body were very common in colonial almanacs. Even the weather forecasts used classical imagery: the Virginian almanac has for January ‘Saturn and Venus do joyn here/ With Mars, to meet heaven’s charioteer’; in March ‘the Ram that bore fair Hellaen once away/ Hath made dark night equal to light some day’; and April brought some Ovidian advice to sailors ‘smooth-faced Thetis bides you hoist your sails’.<sup>140</sup> Over time the almanacs became an instrument of patriotic propaganda and many linked the classics to contemporary political debates. The almanacs of the Ames family, which ran 1735-1775, illustrate this evolution: Ames II was concerned about the Land Bank problems and, using John Dryden’s translation, quoted Horace for a pessimistic view on the slackening of Puritan standards. His son used classical imagery to preach the virtue of agriculture, publishing in the 1755 almanac that ‘T’was toil that taught the Romans how to conquer: from the Plough they led their legions on to war’.<sup>141</sup> In 1767 Nathaniel Ames III likewise presented a plea for agriculture as the secret of colonial happiness and quoted Virgil’s famous apostrophe to the Italian farmer ‘Oh! Ye husbandmen, how happy would ye be, did ye know your own advantages’.<sup>142</sup> However, by 1772 the almanac advertised John Dickinson’s ‘Attic eloquence and Roman spirit’ and commended *The Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> There are no reliable statistics on American literacy before the first Census was carried out in 1790.

<sup>138</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.5.

<sup>139</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.5.

<sup>140</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.8.

<sup>141</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.8.

<sup>142</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.7.

<sup>143</sup> Gummere, *American Colonial Mind*, p.7.

Colonial newspapers utilised the classics in their published material, but as the colonies headed towards war with Britain they drew on the classics to express their political concerns. In 1720 there were only nine master printers in the colonies, but by 1760 forty-two flourished, and more newspapers were founded in the 1790s than had been established in the entire preceding century.<sup>144</sup> Prior to 1720 newspapers rarely discussed political matters, but starting in Boston in the 1720s, and followed by other seaports, a political print discourse developed and the papers drew on the classics for expression.<sup>145</sup> There were implicit classical motifs used in these newspapers, such as the title of Noah Webster's newspaper, *American Minerva* (1793-97), and there were more explicit references to antiquity: John Rutledge tells us that when the 1765 Stamp Tax came in Mr Timothy of the *South Carolina Gazette* 'was so breathless he ran out of English, and imported a front type in the Greek alphabet and used it liberally, with thoughtful translations, so that anyone could know what had happened to the tyrants of Syracuse and Sparta'.<sup>146</sup> Rutledge also records that 'Mr Gadsden was also breathless about it [the Stamp Tax], in Latin and Hebrew, as well as English.'<sup>147</sup> The general readership was evidently versed well enough in the classics and ancient history that such references were not out of place to them, even if they had to read it in translation.

Oratory was another way in which the classics were linked to politics. Classical models informed American oratorical standards throughout the eighteenth century. Above all other classical orators, colonial Americans idealised Cicero as a model of eloquence and style as well as the ideal citizen whose incorruptible morals protected the Roman Republic from tyranny. Before the mid-eighteenth century, generally only ministers and magistrates had the authority to speak in public, but with the proliferation of print, increasing literacy rates, and an independent and vocal populace, oratory became a major characteristic of American civic life.<sup>148</sup> As such, persuasive oratory began to proliferate throughout America, not just in overt political speeches and church sermons, but in more sociable and intimate venues, such as in

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<sup>144</sup> Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990), p.32, 125.

<sup>145</sup> Warner, *Letters of the Republic*, p.36.

<sup>146</sup> Barry, *Mr Rutledge of South Carolina*, p.97.

<sup>147</sup> Barry, *Mr Rutledge of South Carolina*, p.97. Gadsden later resigned from the Charleston Library Society because the organisation rejected his suggestion of spending 70 percent of its annual budget on buying Latin and Greek classics.

<sup>148</sup> Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), pp.2-3.

the coffeehouses, clubs, private societies, and salons. Even in these more private arenas the prevalence of classical inspiration is seen: Charles Wallace, laureate of the Homony Club of Annapolis, instilled amongst the club members classical values, writing in 1773: 'Luxury, begone I say,/Homony shall rule tonight;/Gluttons, Epicures away,/Homony puts all to flight'.<sup>149</sup>

### Conclusions

In his highly acclaimed work *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* Bernard Bailyn charged the American colonists' elaborate display of classical learning as being 'superficial' and 'deceptive'.<sup>150</sup> Bailyn's comments underestimate the profound relationship that the American colonists had with the classics. The educational system of early America steeped the American colonists in classical knowledge, and, for many, started a life-long love of antiquity. In grammar schools and colleges the colonists were drilled in the classics, reading and digesting a vast array of texts in Greek, Latin, and English translation. The world of antiquity became very real to the colonists, and they knew the people and the history intimately. The results of this classical training did not stay in the classroom: students went on to become politically active citizens in the lead up to the war with Britain. As a result, the classics took on a political function that was less about private intellectual pursuit than about a public affirmation of a set of common values, beliefs, and concerns. Classicism provided the common political vocabulary and worldview for both participants of the political deliberations and the general populace who followed the political developments in the almanacs, newspapers, and pamphlets of the era. As Meyer Reinhold observed, classical reading throughout the eighteenth century 'served effectively as an agent of individual and social progress, directed as it was toward the inculcation of virtue and moral duties, the development of taste, and toward social utility, particularly, in the political sphere, for the promotion of freedom'.<sup>151</sup> It is only by understanding the educational background and personal relationship that the colonists had with the classics that we can understand their

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<sup>149</sup> Charles Wallace, 'Homony Club Ode', Homony Club, Loose Papers, Gilmore Collection, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, quoted in David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), p.188. For more examples see Shields, *Civil Tongues*, pp.175-208.

<sup>150</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), p.24.

<sup>151</sup> Reinhold, *Classick Pages*, p.11.

mindset in entering into the war, and correctly identify the vast deployment of classical imagery that became central to their identity in the lead-up to the war. The colonists' extensive education in the classics meant that when they invoked classical names or historical examples they knew exactly what those references entailed and the sentiments that they carried.

## Chapter Two

### Cato in the Colonies:

#### Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy*

The story of Cato the Younger came down to the American colonists primarily through three sources: Plutarch's *Life of Cato*, John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon's series of republican essays entitled *Cato's Letters* (1720-1723), and, finally, through Joseph Addison's play *Cato: A Tragedy* (1713). In the early eighteenth century Cotton Mather described Plutarch as 'incomparable', testifying to his popularity that would continue throughout the century.<sup>152</sup> Plutarch venerated the narrative of Cato and emphasised his private and public virtue, qualities that were central to eighteenth-century society. Of the three sources it was, however, Addison's tragedy that was the most influential in disseminating the Cato narrative amongst the American colonists. Nearly every scholar writing about Cato has observed how the play was universally popular on both sides of the Atlantic in the eighteenth century. After the play premiered in London it is hard to underestimate its popularity and success in Britain. Admiration of the play was due to the fact that it reflected ideals and promulgated values that were important to eighteenth-century audiences. The play spoke to society's veneration of virtue, an interest that extended to a fascination with the idea of a virtuous death. The play also engaged with philosophical debates about the legitimacy of suicide, which was a topic of great interest in this period. It is important to see Addison's work within the broader intellectual context of the eighteenth century as it informs us of America's intellectual inheritance. By understanding the ideas circulating in the eighteenth century, a clearer picture of the colonial mindset can be established, and their adoption of Cato as a role model better understood.

The play was exceptionally well received in England, but it was the most popular play in early America – it was not until Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*

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<sup>152</sup> Cotton Mather, quoted in Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United State*, (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1984), p.251.

that America had a longer-running play.<sup>153</sup> *Cato* began in the colonies as an educational piece, presenting and promulgating the virtue of *pietas*. It served educated Americans and also those American colonists who had no knowledge of classical languages or culture and were familiar only with Christian preaching. However, following the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, interest in Addison's *Cato* amongst the American colonists shifted from that of a 'pre-Revolutionary classic to instrument of rebellion'.<sup>154</sup> Some of the most eloquent and memorable words of the Revolution spoken by American patriots were actually borrowed from Addison's *Cato*. As the American colonies descended into war against Britain, the play, depicting Cato's virtuous stance for liberty against the tyranny of Caesar came to resonate with the American colonists in a political manner not previously experienced. Already steeped in classical education, Addison's *Cato* contributed to the colonists' understanding of concepts such as 'liberty' and 'tyranny' and provided a perceived background to their relationship with Britain. Drawing on the play's depictions and rhetorical discussions of these concepts, the colonists developed a uniquely Catonian political rhetoric that entwined the principles of Roman Stoicism inherent in Addison's tragedy with modern political concepts. The play effectively provided a political vocabulary that allowed the colonists to successfully communicate their ideas and concerns, and, given the widespread availability of *Cato* in performance or written form, this was a political discourse that the general populace was able to interact with. Addison's highly quotable verse became commonplace in the colonists' private and public lexicon when discussing their deteriorating relationship with Britain. This rhetoric was based on the fact that the colonists identified with Cato and the position he found himself in at the fall of the Roman Republic. Like Cato, they found themselves at a junction between republican liberty and imperial tyranny. Cato's character offered a means for the Americans to explore ideas on how to retain their virtue when surrounded by the corruption and tyranny they found in the British Empire. Cato gave the colonists an example of unwavering devotion to liberty and a strong belief in the attainment of liberty through the self-sacrificing actions of patriots opposing arbitrary power. For the

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<sup>153</sup> Rob Goodman and Jimmy Soni, *Rome's Last Citizen: The Life and Legacy of Cato, Mortal Enemy of Caesar*, (New York: St Martin's Press, 2012), p.300.

<sup>154</sup> Frederick Litto, 'Addison's *Cato* in the Colonies', *William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Jul., 1966), pp.431-449, p.442.

colonists, who actively looked back to antiquity for models, there became, in the words of Gordon Wood, ‘no ancient hero like him’.<sup>155</sup>

### Joseph Addison’s *Cato: A Tragedy*

Joseph Addison’s tragedy about Marcus Porcius Cato the Younger, who died protesting the dictatorship of Julius Caesar, earned the author critical acclaim and became one of the most successful plays of the eighteenth century. Evidence suggests that Addison wrote the first four acts of *Cato* in 1687 during his first year as a student at Oxford.<sup>156</sup> During his career at Oxford (1687-1699), Addison excelled in his classical studies, becoming a Fellow of Magdalen College in 1693 and having his translation of Virgil’s *Georgics* published the following year. With an education involving intensive reading of the Greek and Latin classics, Addison frequently came across Cato as the image of a fearless and devoted patriot, an image that became increasingly the ideal of Addison’s life and the measure of his conduct.<sup>157</sup> With this introduction to the Roman hero, Addison embarked on writing a tragedy constructed around an original portrayal of Cato. When a first draft was complete he showed it to John Dryden, with whom he had become friendly after writing a poem entitled ‘To Mr. Dryden’ in 1693, and he received encouraging remarks about the script but was advised against the play ever being staged.<sup>158</sup> In 1699, Dryden, Lord Somers, and

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<sup>155</sup> Gordon Wood, *The Idea of America*, (New York: Penguin, 2011), p.50.

<sup>156</sup> Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy and Selected Essays*, ed. by Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004), p.xii.

<sup>157</sup> Peter Smithers, *The Life of Joseph Addison*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), p.27. When Addison first encountered the figure of Cato the Younger, likely to have been during his early education at the English boarding school Charterhouse, he would have found that the Roman writers were almost unanimous in their admiration of Cato on account of his Stoic resolve and virtue. Plutarch’s *Life of Cato* depicts him as an active and vigilant magistrate, quaestor, consul, and senator. See Plutarch, *Life of Cato*. In Lucan’s epic, *The Civil War*, Cato is presented as being a fearless and tough general, sharing in the hardships of his soldiers. See Lucan, *The Civil War*, 9.18, 50, 189, 601-604. In *De Finibus* Cicero makes Cato a spokesperson for the virtue of Stoic philosophy and in his *Pro Sestio* declares that Cato manifested ‘man’s wisdom, and integrity, and magnanimity, and virtue; which is tranquil during a terrible tempest, and shines amid the darkness, and, though driven from its proper position, still remains, and clings to his country, and shines at all times by its own unassisted light, and is never tarnished by the dirt or disgrace of others’. See Cicero, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum* Book 3 and Book 4, and Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 60. It was Seneca’s description of Cato, however, that Addison eventually chose to use as the epigraph to the play: ‘Behold a sight worthy of God himself, intent upon his own works, to witness. Here is God’s equal in worth, a brave man calm amid misfortunes. I see not, say, that Jupiter has on earth anything more beautiful, if he wished to inspire the soul, than the sight of Cato, his allies already beaten time and again, nonetheless erect amid the ruins of the state’. Seneca, *De Providentia*, 1.2.9.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Smithers has suggested that it is likely that the narrow scope and academic quality of Addison’s work during his time at Oxford coupled with underdeveloped views of the world made his work insufficient. Smithers, *Life of Joseph Addison*, pp.26-27.

Charles Montagu, 1st Earl of Halifax, took an interest in Addison's work and obtained for him a pension of £300 to enable him to travel to Europe with a view to diplomatic employment.<sup>159</sup> It was during this time abroad, specifically while in Italy between 1700 and 1703, that Addison re-wrote his original acts of *Cato*: Colley Cibber, the Drury Lane actor who later took the role of Syphax, reported that in 1703 he 'had the pleasure of reading the first four acts privately with Steele'.<sup>160</sup> Cibber added that Richard Steele, Addison's future co-editor of *The Spectator*, mentioned that the play had been the amusement of Addison's leisure hours in Italy and was never intended for the stage.<sup>161</sup> Steele observed that 'whatever spirit Mr. Addison had shown in his writing it, he doubted that he would never have courage enough to let his Cato stand the censure of an English audience'.<sup>162</sup> Having read the play, Alexander Pope, John Dryden, and Arthur Maynaring were all also of the opinion that it was not theatrical enough for presentation and that Addison would gain sufficient fame by printing it, an opinion with which Addison seemed to agree.<sup>163</sup> Pope did, however, thoroughly enjoy the play, writing in a letter to John Caryl:

It drew tears from me in several parts of the fourth and fifth acts, where the beauty of virtue appears so charming that I believe (if it comes upon the theatre) we shall enjoy that which Plato thought the greatest pleasure an exalted soul could be capable of, a view of virtue itself great in person, colour, and action.<sup>164</sup>

In 1712 or 1713 Addison once again gained sufficient interest in the piece. In the meantime, Addison had been a contributor to *The Tatler*, a literary and society journal, and later collaborated with Richard Steele to produce *The Spectator*, a daily paper that promoted philosophy and morality. Long before he ended *The Spectator* in 1712, Addison had been looking for a change in literary occupation and *Cato* lay ready at hand. The success in 1712 of the tragedies *The Siege of Damascus* by John Hughes, and Ambrose Philips' *The Distrest Mother* probably further encouraged him to look once again at his own play. With the help of his friends, Addison put the last finishing touches on the play and it was first performed at Queen Anne's Theatre in

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<sup>159</sup> Smithers, *Life of Joseph Addison*, pp.29-34.

<sup>160</sup> Colley Cibber, *An Apology for the Life of Mr. Colley Cibber: Comedian*, (London: Hunt and Clarke, 1826), p.261.

<sup>161</sup> Cibber, *An Apology*, p.262.

<sup>162</sup> Cibber, *An Apology*, p.262.

<sup>163</sup> Smithers, *Life of Joseph Addison*, p.251. Pope, however, later maintained that he had predicted the success of *Cato* after reading it with tears in his eyes.

<sup>164</sup> Alexander Pope to John Caryl, February 1712/13 (?), quoted in M. M. Kelsall, 'The Meaning of Addison's *Cato*', *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 66, (May, 1966), pp.149-162.

London on April 14, 1713. Addison was reportedly supported in a side box by friends, with one, George Berkeley, reporting that although Addison was a ‘very sober man’ he partook freely that night in the burgundy and champagne that was on hand.<sup>165</sup> He was allegedly too nervous to appear front of house but a succession of messengers to and from the box reported upon the state of the audience.<sup>166</sup> But with the house having been filled by Richard Steele with a friendly audience, or at least one which would do as Addison had enjoined upon theatre goers in *The Tatler* – ‘every one should on these Occasions show his Attention, Understanding, and Virtue’ – the play received thunderous applause and was a mighty success from opening night.<sup>167</sup>

Drawing on his classical education and the contemporary popularity of classical figures as models of personal conduct and virtue, Addison based the play on the events of the last days of Marcus Porcius Cato. In focusing on Cato’s time in Utica, Addison chose the most critical period of Roman history when the Republic transformed into a dictatorship. Cato and his army, deemed to be the last hope for the Roman Republic, having led the forces of the senate in futile resistance against Caesar’s attempt to become dictator, are trapped in Utica by Caesar’s superior forces. As Caesar hastens to conclude his victory in the Civil War a number of key military and political figures converge on Utica: Caesar’s forces are gathering nearby; Juba, who has promised troops to Cato; Syphax, the Numidian general who undermines Juba’s command and eventually leads the Numidian forces over to Caesar, and Sempronius, a traitorous Roman senator who collaborates with Syphax. The war tests the patriotism and ambition of all the characters and their internal struggles represent the turmoil of the state. At Utica Cato faces all the problems of a cornered commander: the troops waver on the brink of mutiny, his allies threaten to decamp, and Cato himself does not know whether to commit to battle, surrender, search for new allies, or achieve final independence from Caesar by committing suicide. Amidst all these problems Cato remains in control of himself and the surrounding events; Cato’s plight is not his own fault – superior forces and the will of the gods have overwhelmed him – but in a final gesture to exert his independence, and his devotion to the liberty and virtue of the Roman Republic, he commits suicide.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Smithers, *Life of Joseph Addison*, p.254.

<sup>166</sup> Smithers, *Life of Joseph Addison*, p.254.

<sup>167</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Tatler*, 122.

<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that discussing *Cato* in summary simply emphasizes its weaknesses and does the play few favours. Despite its production in 1713, and overwhelming success, it is possible that Addison

Alongside the study of public virtue and high politics, Addison set a couple of subplots, which revolve around two love triangles. Here Addison indulged in some literary liberties and created an extra son for Cato, named Portius, and renames Porcia, Cato's real daughter, Marcia. It is unclear why Addison deemed these changes to be necessary, but nonetheless, it is important to realise that these characters were completely fictionalised and had no basis in the ancient sources. Cato's two sons, Marcus and Portius, are in love with the same girl Lucia: Marcus does not know that his rival is his brother, but Portius does know and feels guilty. Lucia knows which brother she prefers, but is reluctant to reveal her choice for fear of upsetting the other. Cato's daughter, Marcia, is loved by two people: Sempronius, a Roman senator, who is so devoted to her that he is willing to turn traitor if Caesar will allow Marcia to be his reward, and the Numidian Prince Juba, whom both Cato and Marcia discourage from courting her while the army is trapped in Utica and their political fate undecided. Sempronius, desperate for Marcia, plans a mutiny of Roman troops to overthrow Cato and kidnap the girl. The rebellion brings the lovers' predicaments to a head: Sempronius, disguised as Juba, is killed and Marcia weeps over his body, thinking it is Juba, who, in fact, sees this and assumes that Marcia loved Sempronius all along. Meanwhile, Marcus sends Portius to court Lucia on his behalf, but when Portius is unable to report Lucia's favour to his suit, Marcus throws himself into battle against the Numidian rebels. Marcus dies, leaving Portius and Lucia free to acknowledge their love for each other, and, likewise, the misunderstanding between Juba and Marcia is quickly resolved allowing their love to blossom. Cato's burden is lightened with the heroic death of his son Marcus and the marriage of his remaining children to people he deems to be virtuous and worthy of marrying into the devout family.<sup>169</sup>

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himself had probably comes to think it was inappropriate for performance. Everything about the play – its theme, literary tradition, conformity with Addison's views on tragedy, and its style, suggest that *Cato* was a work better read than acted. Robert Otten, *Joseph Addison*, (Boston: Twayne Publishers, c1982), p.143. This assessment of the play was voiced by an eighteenth century reviewer, who wrote that 'we must absolutely deny its theatrical excellence; it is certainly a moral, colloquial poem of great merit, but a tragedy full of defects; it should be immortal in the closet, but cannot justly claim possession of the stage'. Francis Gentleman, *The Dramatic Censor, or Critical Companion*, (London: J Bell, 1770), 1:459.

<sup>169</sup> According to Alexander Pope, the love scenes, condemned universally by later critics, that accompanied these complicated subplots were an afterthought intended as a concession to the public. In fact, the condemnation was so resounding of the love plots as irrelevant to the main purpose that *Cato* was later published without the love scenes. Joseph Reeves, *Cato...without the love scenes*, (London, 1764).

It is difficult to exaggerate the popularity of Addison's play. The fame of *Cato* was immediately multiplied many-fold by the mighty success of the first night and the play met with success nearly unprecedented in the history of English theatre.<sup>170</sup> Samuel Johnson, a biographer of Addison writing in the eighteenth century, says that *Cato* was 'acted for a longer time than, I believe, the public had allowed to any drama before.'<sup>171</sup> *Cato* ran a month, which was an extraordinary length in the early eighteenth century, and might have lasted longer had not 'one of the performers become incapable of acting the principle part'.<sup>172</sup> During the play's run John Gay wrote 'Cato affords universal discourse, and is received with universal applause'.<sup>173</sup> A week later Alexander Pope wrote that 'the town was so fond of it, that the orange wenches and fruit women in the Park offer the books at the side of coaches, and the Prologue and Epilogue are cried about the streets by common hawkers'.<sup>174</sup> Mary Wortley Montagu reviewed the text and proclaimed: 'The Figure that Great Man makes in History is so noble and at the same time so Simple, I hardly beleivd [sic] it possible to shew him on our stage. He appears here in all his Beauty; his sentiments are great, and express'd without affectation; his Language is Sublime without Fustian, and smooth without misbecoming softnesse. I hear a Roman with all the Plain Greatness of Ancient Rome'.<sup>175</sup>

The play was equally influential upon the reading public. As early as May 14, 1713 the Duchess of Marlborough, usually a stern despiser of poetry, found *Cato* to provide a useful quotation in a letter to a cousin, writing: 'on this Occasion I must borrow a Speech out of Cato: "May some chosen Curse, some hidden thunder from

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<sup>170</sup> Lincoln Faller, *The Popularity of Addison's Cato and Lillo's The London Merchant, 1700-1776*, (London: Garland Publishing, 1988), p.5.

<sup>171</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, 2 vols., (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 1:412.

<sup>172</sup> Thomas Tickell gives this as the only reason for the play being stopped. Joseph Addison, *The miscellaneous works, in verse and prose, of the late Right Honourable Joseph Addison*, ed. Thomas Tickell, (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1765), p.xxv. George Berkeley explains: 'Mr Addison's play has taken wonderfully, they have acted it now almost a month, and would I believe act it a month longer were it not that Mrs Oldfield cannot hold out any longer, having had for several nights past, as I am informed, a midwife behind the scenes, which is surely very unbecoming the character of Cato's daughter'. Letter to Sir John Percival, 7 May 1713, *The Correspondence of George Berkeley and Sir John Percival*, ed. Benjamin Rand, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914).

<sup>173</sup> John Gay to Alexander Pope, April 23, 1713, quoted in John Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes of the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Nichols, Son, and Bentley, 1812), Vol. vi, Part 1, p. 84.

<sup>174</sup> Alexander Pope to John Caryll, April 30, 1713, *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 1:174-15.

<sup>175</sup> Mary Wortley Montagu, *Essays and Poems and "Simplicity", A Comedy*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p.64. Two generations later, Horace Walpole expressed the political necessities of learning passages of the play by heart and he frequently used them. Horace Walpole, *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. S. Lewis, 47 vols, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937-1983), 4:23.

the shores of Heaven, red with uncommon Wrath, blast the Men that use their greatness to their Country's ruin".<sup>176</sup> Likewise, Adam Smith remarked that Cato's soliloquy was so well known that it inspired as many parodies as Hamlet's famous soliloquy.<sup>177</sup> The fame of *Cato* increased unabated in the following years: in the six years following its debut at the Queen Anne Theatre it is recorded as having many major performances and, undoubtedly, there were many more provincial and minor ones. It continued to be popular in England throughout the remainder of the century and, for example, there are six performances on record at the great playhouse in the season of 1738-9. In 1723 Thomas Tickell, Addison's literary executor, did not greatly exaggerate when he claimed that '*Cato* was acted in most of the languages of Christendom'.<sup>178</sup> It was, in fact, the first English play to be translated into French and Italian (an edition as early as 1715), and was translated into Latin by the Jesuits of St Omer.<sup>179</sup> Other imprints included Glasgow, Dublin, Belfast, Edinburgh, The Hague, Göttingen, Paris, and Rome; and there were at least nine American editions before 1800 and another eight in the nineteenth century.<sup>180</sup> The philosopher Voltaire even said that Addison was 'the first Englishman to create a reasonable play written from end to end with elegance... His *Cato of Utica* is a masterpiece in diction and beauty of verse'.<sup>181</sup> Addison's tragedy gave rise to other plays of the same genre. In 1730 James Thomson's first tragedy, *Sophonisba*, was produced at Drury Lane, and it proclaimed in the epilogue 'Ladies, ...behold your Cato./ ...tho' no Stoic she, nor read in Plato'.<sup>182</sup> Like *Cato*, the primary motive of the title character was 'a patriotism so strong that

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<sup>176</sup> Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, in Winston Churchill, *Marlborough: His Life and Times*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), vol 2. p.980. Joseph Addison, *Cato*, 1.i.23-26.

<sup>177</sup> Adam Smith, 'Lecture 8 - Lectures On Rhetoric and Belles Lettres', ed. J. C. Bryce, vol. IV, *The Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), p.115.

<sup>178</sup> Addison, *Miscellaneous works*, ed. Tickell, p.9, f.1.

<sup>179</sup> Johnson, *English Poets*, 2:103. The College de St. Omer in French Flanders was an educational institution run by English Jesuits, who taught wealthy Catholic boys from England and America. Their pupils included Charles Carroll of Carrollton. Litto, 'Addison's *Cato*', p.435, f.14.

<sup>180</sup> An accurate estimate of America editions is impossible. For example, in 1743 Benjamin Franklin printed 48 copies of *Cato* for William Parks of Williamsburg, Virginia. However, there is no record of these copies other than in Franklin's private records. Private publications like these were common. George S. Eddy, *Account Books Kept by Benjamin Franklin*, 2 vols., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 2:98.

<sup>181</sup> Voltaire, *Philosophical Letters – On Tragedy*, quoted in Forrest McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum: The Intellectual Origins of the Constitution*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p.195.

<sup>182</sup> James Thomson, *Sophonisba: A Tragedy*, 9. Sophonisba was a Carthaginian noblewoman who poisoned herself rather than be humiliated in a Roman triumph after the Roman conquest of Carthage.

no appeal to any lesser passion can compromise what is a perfect love for country'.<sup>183</sup> *Cato* raised Addison, within his own lifetime, to the highest fame and, for a long time, was considered to be 'unquestioningly the noblest production of Addison's genius'.<sup>184</sup>

### *The Universal Appeal of Virtue*

The success of *Cato* is generally attributed to the political context into which the play premiered, and ease with which the play could serve both sides of politics. During this time in British politics, the Whigs and Tories dominated the parliamentary groupings, where the Whigs generally supported constitutional monarchy, while the Tories desired the traditionally stronger role for the monarchy.<sup>185</sup> The play was first performed when political tensions were running high: the War of Spanish Succession (1701–1714) dominated both foreign and domestic affairs, with the Whigs supporting the war but the Tories disliking the enormous expense it entailed. As such, the Whigs identified Addison's *Cato* with Marlborough, while the Tories branded Marlborough as the dictator Caesar. Dr Johnson reported that whenever the word 'liberty' was mentioned in the first performance of the production the Whigs applauded to satirise the Tories and the Tories 'echoed every clap to shew that the satire was unfelt'.<sup>186</sup> At opening night, Henry Bolingbroke, the Tory party leader, gave to Barton Booth, the actor who played *Cato*, fifty guineas for defending the cause of liberty so well against a '*perpetuall dictator*', an insult aimed at the General for life, the Duke of Marlborough.<sup>187</sup> From there the political controversy of the play spread to the press where it was debated whether the Whigs or the Tories were the true villains.

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<sup>183</sup> Faller, *Popularity of Addison's Cato*, p.20.

<sup>184</sup> Sadly, with the passage of time public estimation of the play declined until it has become of interest only to students, while the prestige of the *Spectator* has grown steadily. Most historians believe the play is a museum piece and criticise it for having too much declaration, moralising, and 'silly love intrigue'. Many find the hero an unattractive tragic figure: 'an intolerable prig' or that he has too little to do. Otten, *Joseph Addison*, p.141. Bonamy Dobree, *Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p.173. A.W. Ward, *Dramatic Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 3: 441.

<sup>185</sup> The Whigs went on to form the Liberal Party and the Tories the Conservative Party. During the Revolutionary War, the Whigs generally supported the American patriots and the need for the recognition of self-government. The Whig position was that Englishmen in the colonies should have the same rights as Englishmen at home and thus took offence at the taxes and other abuses of these rights for the colonists. The Tories on the other hand were generally loyal to the English throne and against the American patriot movement.

<sup>186</sup> Johnson, *English Poets*, 2:100.

<sup>187</sup> Pope, *Correspondence*, ed. Sherburn, 1:175.

Addison was reportedly mortified by the use of his play in the hands of partisans. Thomas Tickell recalled that when Addison was originally writing the play his friends had been unable to persuade him to change the play's artistic motivation to a political one, even at a time when they thought the doctrine of liberty very reasonable.<sup>188</sup> Addison had aimed to remove any political contestation from the play.

Doctor Johnson wrote:

Addison was, I believe, sufficiently disposed to bar all avenues against all danger. When Pope brought him the prologue, which is properly accommodated to the play, there were these words, Britons, arise, be worth like this approved; meaning nothing more than, Britons, erect and exalt yourselves to the approbation of public virtue. Addison was frightened lest he should be thought a promoter of insurrection, and the line was liquidated to Britons, attend.<sup>189</sup>

Addison had ensured the political neutrality of his play by dividing the Prologue and Epilogue equally between Alexander Pope, a Tory sympathiser, and Samuel Garth, a Whig. Addison had also intended to dedicate the play to an unidentified person, probably Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough, but, with the political interpretation of the play, such a dedication was no longer possible. Then when the Queen intimated that she would not be adverse to the play being dedicated to her, Addison avoided embarrassment – the two women had quarrelled beyond reconciliation, and a dedication to the Queen would confirm a Tory interpretation as well as mortally offend the Duchess – by completely omitting any dedication.<sup>190</sup> There is no doubt that Addison did not mean the play and its hero to be harnessed and utilised by either political party of the day: Addison portrayed Cato as a patriot, not as a party man. Addison probably felt, as he had expressed in a previous work, that: 'An Author is very much disappointed to find the best Parts of his Productions received with Indifference, and to see the Audience discovering Beauties which he never intended'.<sup>191</sup>

While Addison did not intend for the play to be used in political debate by either of the British parties, *Cato* was political in that it reflected and promoted key values of the era. Addison intended *Cato* to be an instruction on what constituted exceptional personal and civic virtue. Addison's didactic intent was identified by

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<sup>188</sup> Addison, *Miscellaneous Works*, ed. Tickell, p.9.

<sup>189</sup> Johnson, *English Poets*, 2:100. See also f.100.

<sup>190</sup> John Loftis, *The Politics of Drama in Augustan England*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), p.59-60. Smithers, *Joseph Addison*, pp.265-266.

<sup>191</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Freeholder*, 34.

Pope, who wrote in the play's Prologue: 'He bids your breasts with ancient ardor rise/And calls forth *Roman* drops from *British* eyes./Virtue confest in human shape he draws,/What *Plato* thought, and God-like *Cato* was'.<sup>192</sup> Addison had earlier confirmed in the periodical *The Spectator* that tragedy was a means of educating the populace. *The Spectator* generally omitted discussion of politics, and focused instead on the subjects of literature, morality, and familiar life. James Playsted Wood has remarked that Addison and Steele 'meant to entertain, but their serious purpose, as the essays show and Steele affirmed, was "to expose the false art of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affectations, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse, and our behavior"'.<sup>193</sup> In *The Spectator* 39 Addison promotes tragedy as a substitute for opera arguing that, while they are both enjoyable, tragedy is more instructive: 'As a perfect tragedy is the noblest production of human nature, so it is capable of giving the mind one of the most delightful and most improving entertainments'.<sup>194</sup> Through the depiction of virtuous endurance, tragedies, as Addison wrote, 'cherish and cultivate that humanity which is the ornament of our nature. They soften insolence, soothe reflection, and subdue the mind to the dispositions of Providence'.<sup>195</sup> Addison held a particularly high opinion of the didactic abilities of the classics, declaring 'it is impossible to read a passage in Plato or Tully and a thousand other ancient moralists without being a greater and better man for it'.<sup>196</sup> The joining together of the classics and tragedy in the form of *Cato* was, therefore, the ideal opportunity for educational instruction on the values of virtue.

By focusing the play on the failing resistance to Caesar, Addison was able to show Cato's virtuous struggle with the emerging political structure and his decision to remove himself from the demise of the Republic. Frederic Litto described Addison's *Cato* as 'almost uncomfortably admirable'.<sup>197</sup> Cato is the central image of the play: stern yet calm amongst the tumult of the Civil War, whose virtue 'glows as a beacon to other men'.<sup>198</sup> Cato's unwavering virtue is expressed by a recurring motif of

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<sup>192</sup> Addison, *Cato*, Prologue 15-18.

<sup>193</sup> James Playsted Wood, *Magazines in the United States, their Social and Economic Influence*, (New York, Ronald Press, 1949), p.6.

<sup>194</sup> Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, 39. See also 40, 42, and 44 for discussions on tragedy.

<sup>195</sup> Addison, quoted in Otten, *Joseph Addison*, p.145.

<sup>196</sup> Joseph Addison, quoted in Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.176.

<sup>197</sup> Litto, 'Cato in the Colonies', p.431.

<sup>198</sup> Otten, *Joseph Addison*, p.146.

imagery about storms, wind, and water.<sup>199</sup> While a storm was a traditional device used by Whig writers to express a political stand, Robert Otten, Addison's biographer, has suggested instead that the storm was 'a traditional way of illustrating the virtue of the Stoic philosopher in general and of Cato in particular'.<sup>200</sup> Otten quotes Cicero who denounces those that would tarnish the famous name of Cato: 'ignorant as they were what strength there is in character, in integrity, in greatness of soul, and in that virtue which remains unshaken by violent storms; which shines in darkness; which though dislodged still abides and remains unmoved from its true home; is radiant always by its own light and is never sullied by the baseness of others'.<sup>201</sup> Throughout the play, those who are like Cato stand serenely amid the storm, while those unlike Cato discover that the storm is within as well as external.<sup>202</sup> Cato's virtue is such that his admirers and enemies alike acknowledge his steadfastness. Cato's son Portius wonders in the play: 'How does the luster of our father's actions,/Through the dark cloud of ills that cover him,/Break out, and burn with more triumphant brightness!/His suffering's shine, and spread a glory round him'.<sup>203</sup> Likewise, even Sempronius, despite being dedicated to Cato's downfall, says of the Roman: 'Thou hast seen Mount *Atlas*:/While storms and tempests thunder on is brows,/And oceans break their billows at its feet,/It stands unmoved, and glories in its height./Such us that haughty man'.<sup>204</sup>

In the character of Cato, eighteenth-century Britons were able to find their ideal model of public and private virtue, which accounts for one of the reasons why the tragedy was such a phenomenal success. M.M. Kelsall has suggested that the real success of the play rested on 'its power to stir audience and readers with a sense of the 'godlike height' to which 'the *Roman* virtues lift up mortal man'.<sup>205</sup> Following the Revolution of 1688, ideals that had been circulating since Elizabethan times became more generally and widely accepted. It was believed that both political and civic virtue were crucial to the foundations of good government and the stability of the state. Both religious and political teachings reinforced the idea that virtuous citizens

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<sup>199</sup> For example, see Addison, *Cato*, I.i.1-2; I.i.29-32; See Otten, *Joseph Addison*, p.146-150.

<sup>200</sup> Otten, *Joseph Addison*, p.145.

<sup>201</sup> Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 60.

<sup>202</sup> For further discussion on the imagery of the storm in the play see Otten, *Joseph Addison*, p.146-153.

<sup>203</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.27-30.

<sup>204</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.vi.11-14.

<sup>205</sup> Kelsall, "Meaning of *Cato*", p.159-60.

had to be willing and able to put aside their own personal desires to advance the public good.<sup>206</sup> Gordon Wood has described eighteenth-century ‘public virtue’ as the ‘willingness of the individual to sacrifice his private interest for the good of the community’.<sup>207</sup> Likewise, Anthony Pagden observed that ‘for most classical republicans, liberty could only be achieved by each man’s willingness to renounce his purely private concerns for the greater good of the community’.<sup>208</sup> Civic humanism was thus a blend of moral virtue and patriotism, with neither element making uncompromising demands of the other.<sup>209</sup> It was in the character of Cato that eighteenth-century Britons saw an ideal model of political and civic virtue. Peter Smithers, Addison’s biographer, notes that the play was able ‘to evoke the genius of contemporary England’, further explaining that: ‘the middle-class element in the British character, dominant at the Commonwealth period, and subdued but never destroyed during the Restoration, was again stirring and was now ripe for the appeal to virtue, if not by precept, then at least in the example of a noble Roman.’<sup>210</sup> Through Addison’s depiction, the name Cato became synonymous with the values important to eighteenth-century England: private and public virtue, and self-sacrifice for the good of the country. Thus, while the tragedy did not play into partisan politics, it was, however, political in terms of promoting virtue, a value central to the ideals of government in the era. Even in 1759, forty-six years after the play’s premiere, Thomas Wilkes expressed this sentiment: ‘no part of it can be stigmatized with the names of party or faction; its intention is to excite a contempt of ease and danger, nay even of death itself in the cause of our country; it means to inspire the spirit and magnanimity, to render discord and division detestable’.<sup>211</sup>

### *The Hour of Death*

The British were also in part enamoured with Addison’s tragedy because during this period an uncommon interest in the hour of death had developed. Although the original sentiment can be traced back to both Plato and Confucius, during the French

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<sup>206</sup> Shelley Burt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.150.

<sup>207</sup> Wood, *Idea of America*, p.68.

<sup>208</sup> Anthony Pagden, ‘Introduction’, *The Language of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.10.

<sup>209</sup> Harvey C. Mansfield, *Machiavelli’s Virtue*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p.197.

<sup>210</sup> Smithers, *Life of Addison*, p.270.

<sup>211</sup> Thomas Wilkes, *A General View of the Stage*, (London: J. Coote, 1759), pp.31-33.

Renaissance Montaigne, one of the most influential writers of the era, reintroduced the importance of the hour of death.<sup>212</sup> Montaigne had declared that ‘all the other actions of our life must be tried and tested by this last act. It is the master day, the day that is judge of all the others. “It is the day”, says one of the ancients [Seneca] “that must judge all my past years...” In truth you would rob a man of much if you weighted him without the honour and greatness of his end’.<sup>213</sup> Addison and Steele, in *The Spectator*, both expressed similar opinions to that of Montaigne, with Addison believing ‘there is nothing in History which is so improving to the Reader as those Accounts which we meet with the Deaths of eminent Persons, and of their Behaviour in that dreadful season’, and Steele similarly writing that nothing makes a greater impression upon us than ‘Reflections upon the exits of great and excellent men’.<sup>214</sup>

The deathbed scene flourished in literature, with, in addition to Addison’s *Cato*, there being two very popular novels which contained lengthy deathbed scenes: Samuel Richardson’s *Clarissa* (1747/8) and Rousseau’s *La Nouvelle Heloise* (1791). In *Clarissa*, the titled heroine is raped by a prospective suitor turned villain. The distress of her violated virtue causes her such mental duress that she eventually dies, in the full consciousness of her virtue and trusting in a better life after death. *Clarissa* was the most popular English novel on the Continent, being translated into

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<sup>212</sup> See Plato’s *Phaedo*. Confucius: ‘when a bird is about to die, his song is sad; when a man is about to die, his words are true’. Confucius, trans. Simon Leys, *The Analects of Confucius*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), p.35.

<sup>213</sup> Montaigne, trans. Frame, *Complete Works*, p.5 and 461. Believing that philosophers were more capable than most people at facing death, Montaigne particularly admired the calm way Socrates had faced his own death: ‘There is nothing, in my opinion more illustrious in the life of Socrates than having had thirty whole days to ruminate his death sentence, having digested it all that time with a very certain expectation, without emotion, without alteration, and with a tenor of actions and words rather lowered and relaxed than strained and exalted by the weight of such a reflection.’ Montaigne, *Complete Works*, p.461. In his later essays Montaigne changed his mind downplaying the hour of death and believing it a mistake to think about death. ‘In my opinion it is living happily, not...dying happily, that constitutes human felicity’. As such, he came to admire Socrates for enjoying his life and not constantly thinking of his death: ‘nor is there anything more remarkable in Socrates than the fact that in his old age he finds time to take lessons in dancing and playing instruments, and considers it well spent’. Montaigne, *Complete Works*, p.851-852. While Christians agreed with Montaigne that the hour of death was important, they disagreed with his reasons for its importance. Pascal criticized Montaigne on this basis, writing: ‘Montaigne’s faults are grievous... He induces indifference to salvation, without fear and without repentance... One cannot excuse his wholly heathen sentiments concerning death... Now throughout this book he thinks only of a soft and easy death’. Blaise Pascal, trans. H.F. Stewart, *Pensees*, (New York: Modern Library, 1947), p.365. In the late Middle Ages many tracts were published on *Ars Moriendi* and in the early Renaissance Erasmus wrote his renowned work *De Preparatione ad Mortem*. In this work, Erasmus expounded the belief that for Christians, preparation for death meant repentance - resigning oneself to the will of God with a mixture of both hope and fear, since everyone was a sinner. There was little or no room for originality in death as one’s last words were supposed to be the same as Christ’s: ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’.

<sup>214</sup> Addison, *Spectator*, 3:28-29; 2:25.

German, French, Russian, Italian, and Portuguese.<sup>215</sup> Influenced by Richardson's work, Rousseau's *La Nouvelle Heloise* likewise told the story of a tragic-heroine: Julie falls in love with her tutor, Saint-Pierre, and eventually the two consummate their love. Guilt ridden, she then tells her father who beats her causing a miscarriage. Julie is then forced to marry another man, whom she does not love, but he allows Julie to employ Saint-Pierre as her tutor, knowing that being virtuous people the two will not commit adultery. Julie does not and eventually dies of old age declaring that she only ever loved Saint-Pierre. According to Robert Darnton, there were at least seventy editions in print before 1800, 'probably more than for any other novel in the previous history of publishing.'<sup>216</sup>

The deathbed scene also flourished in art, with the Parisian artist Jean-Francois-Pierre Peyron painting the death of Socrates and, likewise, Jacques-Louis David painting *The Death of Seneca* (1773), *The Funeral of Patroclus* (1778), *Andromache Mourning Hector* (1783), and *The Death of Socrates* (1787).<sup>217</sup> Over the Atlantic a local gunsmith and inventor in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, told a young Benjamin West that the best way to launch his career as a painter was to paint the death of Socrates.<sup>218</sup> West followed his advice and went on to become a successful painter in London with works of other deathbed scenes such as *The Death of General Wolfe* (1770) and a watercolour entitled *Cato Giving His Daughter in Marriage at His Death* (1797).<sup>219</sup> Stephen Miller has suggested that deathbed scenes gained popularity in this era because people were 'having doubts about the truth of the basic tenants of Christianity...and they wanted to be reassured that even if they were deists they would die serenely if they had led a virtuous life'.<sup>220</sup>

Given this interest in a virtuous death, it is not surprising that Cato, in particular, became popular in eighteenth-century literature. In his 1757 work *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the*

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<sup>215</sup> Stephen Miller, *Three Deaths and Enlightenment Thought*, (London: Rosemount Publishing, 2001), p.25.

<sup>216</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History*, (New York: Viking, 1984), p.242.

<sup>217</sup> Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth Century Paris*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p.200.

<sup>218</sup> Miller, *Three Deaths*, p.25.

<sup>219</sup> Helmut von Erffa and Allen Staley, *The Paintings of Benjamin West*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p.9. For information about deathbed scenes of ordinary people see Miller, *Three Deaths*, p.25.

<sup>220</sup> Miller, *Three Deaths*, p.25. For the popularity of Deism in eighteenth century England see Miller, *Three Deaths*, pp.26-33.

*Beautiful*, Edmund Burke wrote that while both Cato and Scipio are ‘virtuous characters...we are more deeply affected by the violent death of the one [Cato], and the ruin of the great cause he adhered to, than with the deserved triumphs and uninterrupted prosperity of the other [Scipio]’.<sup>221</sup> Adam Smith made a similar observation in his *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) where, after introducing the subject of heroic death by saying ‘we wonder with surprise and astonishment at that strength of mind which is capable of so noble and generous an effort’, he continues:

Cato, surrounded on all sides by his enemies, unable to resist them, disdaining to submit to them, and reduced, by the proud maxims of that age, to the necessity of destroying himself; yet never shrinking from his misfortunes, never supplicating with the lamentable voice of wretchedness...but on the contrary, arming himself with manly fortitude, and the moment before he executes his fatal resolution, giving with his usual tranquillity, all necessary orders for the safety of his friend; appears to Seneca, that great preacher of insensibility, a spectacle which even the gods might behold with pleasure and admiration.<sup>222</sup>

Adams later wrote ‘Whenever we meet, in common life, with any examples of such heroic magnanimity, we are always extremely affected’.<sup>223</sup>

Despite Cato’s death being admired as virtuous, eighteenth-century audiences could not overlook the fact that Cato had committed suicide. There was generally an ambivalent attitude towards suicide in the eighteenth century as it was a condemned action loathed for more than merely the narrow religious reasons. Addison himself, as a fairly conservative religious Whig, was even ambivalent in dealing with the suicide aspect of Cato’s life.<sup>224</sup> Addison’s literary collaborator Steele, twelve years before Addison was to glorify Cato’s last actions, wrote that he found the Roman’s

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<sup>221</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, ed. James T. Boulton, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), p.73.

<sup>222</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D.D. Raphael and A.L. Macfie, vol. I of the *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982), 1:97.

<sup>223</sup> Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1:97. Many writers also held that Socrates’ death was as affective as Cato’s. Adam Smith wrote that ‘the friends of Socrates all wept when he drank the last potion, while he himself expressed the gayest and most cheerful tranquility’. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 1:97. Both Addison and Diderot had planned to write tragedies about the death of Socrates; Diderot even wore an intaglio ring bearing the image of Socrates and believed himself to be a latter-day Socrates. In France a 1762 production of *The Death of Socrates* was cancelled by authorities, believing that it was a veiled attack on the regime. Miller, *Three Deaths*, p.24.

<sup>224</sup> For Addison’s ambivalence towards Cato’s character, see Ian Donaldson, ‘Cato in Tears: Stoical Guises of the Man of Feeling’ in *Studies in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. R. F. Brissenden, vol. 2 (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), pp. 377-95, 382-86, 389-91, and 395.

death to be ‘an Action below the precepts of his Philosophy, and the Constancy of his Life’.<sup>225</sup> Steele further wrote in *The Christian Hero*:

For the Heathen Virtue prescribes Death before Stripes or Imprisonment; but whatever Pompous Look, Elegant Pens may have given to the Illustrious Distress’d...If we look to the bottom of things, we shall easily observe, that taste of an Impertinent Being...but it ever was, and ever will be, Pride or Cowardise that makes Life insupportable.<sup>226</sup>

Steele saw nothing dispassionate or honourable about Cato’s suicide, but condemned it as an act of self-gratification. He further criticised Cato for the dishonourable manner in which he conducted himself prior to committing suicide: striking two slaves who were concerned for his welfare and forcing ‘out of the Room his lamenting Friends, with Noise, and Taunt, and Tumult’.<sup>227</sup> When the play premiered it is possible that Addison was spared criticism in *The Guardian* as a result of his friendship with Steele, who was then the editor. John Dennis and Francis Gentleman, however, had no qualms in criticising the play’s depiction of suicide. Dennis described Cato as ‘a Lover of Liberty and of his Country deserting both by his death’ and Gentleman censured the whole play on the grounds that ‘self-destruction is placed in so fair a point of view’.<sup>228</sup> Dennis’ description of the rendering of Cato’s death scene does, however, suggest that Addison was able to circumvent the issue of suicide and instead place the emphasis on Cato’s virtue in coping with death and his commitment to the Republic.<sup>229</sup> Dennis clearly saw the admiration in Cato’s actions but warned against emulation, writing: ‘The address he makes to his afflicted children and mourning friends, is very consonant to his character: Benevolence, paternal tenderness and invincible resolution, attend his last moments, and he falls into eternity an object of admiration, though a very dangerous and censurable subject of imitation for any man, in any station’.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>225</sup> Richard Steele, *The Christian Hero*, ed. Rae Blanchard, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), p.9.

<sup>226</sup> Steele, *Christian Hero*, pp.68-69.

<sup>227</sup> Steele, *Christian Hero*, pp.20-21. Similar criticisms of Cato came from John Henley, who wrote *Cato Condemned, or The Case and History of Self Murder* (1730). Henley attacked Epicureans and Stoics and their belief that ‘life is only a dull narrow Circle of the same Actions...[who] seem to forget that the life of Man is a Progress in understanding and Goodness’. Henley invoked the sixth commandment, branding suicide as an act of cowardice, although he excuses a small minority of ‘Lunaticks’.

<sup>228</sup> John Dennis, ‘Remarks Upon *Cato*’, in Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy*, (London: J. Tonson, 1713), p.13. Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor*, 1:453.

<sup>229</sup> Catherine Edwards also argues this in ‘Modelling Roman Suicide? The Afterlife of Cato’, *Economy and Society* 34 (2005): pp.200-222.

<sup>230</sup> Gentleman, *Dramatic Censor*, 1:453.

Such an interpretation of Cato's actions was possible due to Addison's rendering of the scene. Addison depicted Cato's suicide as a noble and virtuous action by omitting from the portrayal the notorious display of bad temper, in which, just before stabbing himself, he had raged at his son and friends for trying to keep his sword from him.<sup>231</sup> Addison further coated the suicide in natural religion by exploiting the fact that Plutarch notes that Cato read Plato's book, the *Phaedo*, on the immortality of the soul prior to his death. In a scene, which even the critical reviewer Francis Gentleman placed 'before anything' save 'Hamlet's celebrated soliloquy', Cato reflects upon immortality, eternity, and death.<sup>232</sup> To ensure eighteenth-century respectability, Addison wrote the line 'If there's a powe'r above us/(And that there is all Nature cries aloud/Through all her works) he must delight in virtue:/And that which he delights in must be happy'.<sup>233</sup> Dr George Sewell, the English physician and poet, suggested that the speech portrays 'a seeming Distrust in his Conduct'.<sup>234</sup> Cato seems to experience this higher power in his final moments as he says 'a beam of light breaks in/On my departing soul - Alas, I fear/I've been too hasty!.../ If I have done amiss, impute it not-/The best may err, but you are good, and--Oh!'<sup>235</sup> In this, Addison is able to attribute to Cato a reasoned belief in God and an afterlife, and also a final moment of revelation. Addison is able to dull the issue of Cato's suicide and make the actions seem heroic, virtuous, and acceptable to eighteenth-century audiences. Indeed, the commendations of *Cato* that came following its debut came on account of its depiction of personal character and public conduct. Digby Cotes wrote: 'Now first on Albion's theatre we see,/A perfect image of what a man should be;/The glorious character is now exprest,/Of virtue dwelling in a human breast'.<sup>236</sup> When the Addisonian classic hit American shores, the colonists grappled with the same issue of Cato's suicide. After several performances in Charleston, South Carolina in 1735, one young Carolinian wrote an epilogue for the play, which was

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<sup>231</sup> Cato's bad temper before his suicide would have been well known to eighteenth-century audiences through their reading of Plutarch's *Lives*. It was also described in Lewis Theobalds' *Life of Marcus Portius Cato, Cato Examin'd* (1713), and Richard Steele's *The Christian Hero* (1701).

<sup>232</sup> Faller, *Popularity of Addison's Cato*, p.69.

<sup>233</sup> Addison, *Cato*, V.i.15-18. In this statement, Cato illustrates the eighteenth-century conviction that 'there is a principle implanted in our nature, which will exert itself when we are approaching to a state of dissolution, and impress our minds with a full confidence in the existence of God, who will reward or punish us according to our deserts or demerits'. *The Newgate Calendar or Malefactor's Bloody Register*, ed. Sandra Lee Kerman, (New York: Capricorn, 1962), p.96.

<sup>234</sup> Faller, *Popularity of Addison's Cato*, p.70.

<sup>235</sup> Addison, *Cato*, V.iv.100-105.

<sup>236</sup> Digby Cotes, quoted in Kelsall, "Meaning of Addison's *Cato*", p.160.

later reprinted in the *South Carolina Gazette* with the explanation that it was ‘wrote by a young Man, then about 17 years of age, for his own Amusement’. Four lines show his pondering of Cato’s suicide: ‘What Cato dared to do/Was brave, nay generous, in a Heathen’s view/.../Our better Light forbids the impious Crime/And bids us wait high Heaven’s appointed time’.<sup>237</sup>

### *The Legitimacy of Suicide*

Cato’s suicide was also acceptable to its audience because the eighteenth century saw a revision of the traditional attitudes about the ethics and legitimacy of self-murder. In the wake of the Glorious Revolution, there had developed an opposition amongst the elite to papists and Protestant enthusiasts. For the following century and a half propagandists attacked the religious establishments reinvoking horrified memories of civil war and revolution. The enduring fear and hatred of religious institutions encouraged scepticism, and, along with the scientific revolution and birth of scientism, people began to question traditional ideas about supernatural intervention in the natural world. Under these circumstances, the belief that Satan was the author behind suicide could no longer be sustained: if it was irrational to believe that one could converse with God or his angels, then it was equally irrational to think that Satan would converse with us.<sup>238</sup> This opened the door to the questioning of traditional morality and with it the legitimacy of suicide.

In debating the legitimacy of suicide, eighteenth-century authors almost invariably referred to Cato and his suicide at Utica. At the beginning of the eighteenth century there were two radically opposing traditions regarding Cato: the tradition which held Cato as a master of his passions and honourable in his death, and the Cato who was mastered by his passions and cowardly in his act of suicide.<sup>239</sup> But as the eighteenth century progressed the tradition of seeing Cato as a man in control of his passions, and virtuous in his death became the mainstream interpretation of the Cato narrative. In 1709 Jonathan Swift, the Irish essayist and

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<sup>237</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, September 5, 1743, quoted in Eola Willis, *The Charleston Stage in the XVIII century: With Social Settings of the Time*, (Columbia: State Company, 1924), p.30.

<sup>238</sup> For the belief that Satan was behind suicide see John Sym, *Life’s Preservative against Self-Killing*, (1637).

<sup>239</sup> For those supporting Cato’s suicide see Montesquieu, *Lettres Persanes*, (1721) (although he later contradicted himself in *Considerations sur les causes de la grande Romaines et de leur decadence* (1734); and later David Hume, *On Suicide*, (1783). For those against Cato’s actions see Richard Steele, *The Christian Hero*, (1701); and John Henley, *Cato Condemned, or The Case and History of Self Murder* (1730).

satirist, wrote in *The Tatler* that he dreamt he was transported to the Elysium Fields, where he witnesses a gathering of famous ancients, of whom Cato was present and declared by Lucan to possess 'more Merit than their whole Assembly'.<sup>240</sup> Swift continued to hold great admiration for Cato and in his posthumously published work *A Journal to Stella*, consisting of sixty-five letters to his friend, Esther Johnson, whom he called Stella and may have secretly married, suggested Cato as a model for Stella to follow on matters of honour:

In points of honour to be try'd  
All Passions must be laid aside:  
Ask no advice, but think alone;  
Suppose the question not your own.  
How shall I act, is not the case;  
But how would *Brutus* in my place?  
In such a case would *Cato* bleed?  
And how would *Socrates* proceed?

Praise for Cato also came from Lewis Theobald, who, immediately after the premier of Addison's *Cato*, published a short prose version of *The Life and Character of Marcus Portius Cato Uticensis* praising the heroicness of Cato's suicide.<sup>241</sup> The greatest historian of the century, Edward Gibbon, also wrote in support of Cato. He regarded Caesar as guilty of damaging the free commonwealth, while seeing Cato as having unjustly suffered. Gibbon was generally positive about Cato, and in the *Essay on the Study of Literature* (1761) he praised the virtue of Cato's time compared to the later Tiberian era.<sup>242</sup>

The invoking of Cato in suicides became common as the eighteenth century wore on.<sup>243</sup> The Grub Street scribbler Eustace Budgell, who had assisted Addison in

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<sup>240</sup> Jonathan Swift, *The Tatler*, 81.

<sup>241</sup> Lewis Theobald, *The Life and Character of Marcus Portius Cato Uticensis*, (London: Bernard Lintott, 1713).

<sup>242</sup> In *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* Gibbon gives a mixed evaluation of Cato. In discussing the character of Boethius, Gibbon asserted: 'we may learn from the example of Cato, that a character of pure and inflexible virtue is the most apt to be misled by prejudice, to be heated by enthusiasm, and to confound private enmities with public justice. The disciple of Plato might exaggerate the infirmities of nature, and the imperfections of society'. Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. Henry Hart Milman, Sir William Smith, (London: John Murray, 1862), 5:30. However, Gibbon also praised Roman attitudes to suicide, and criticised the Christian approach to the matter, writing: 'the precepts of the Gospel or the church have at length imposed a pious servitude on the minds of Christians, and condemned them to expect, without a murmur, the last stroke of disease or the executioner'. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, 5:327.

<sup>243</sup> This was not confined solely to English society. In October 1793, Claude Dalloz, a French aide-de-camp, shot himself in Geneva. He had been a revolutionary, who had become disillusioned with the Jacobin Dictatorship and the Reign of Terror. Dalloz's note read: 'I have chosen the third and am going to join Cato. I have seen the disgrace of France being tyrannized by the most vile scoundrels... I die calm and content that I have not knowingly offended anyone... I have never hated anyone except

producing *The Spectator*, drowned himself in 1737, leaving behind a final verse which read: 'What Cato did and Addison approved/Cannot be wrong'.<sup>244</sup> Charles Moore complained in 1790 that this henceforth famous line 'has been caught up by many a suicide since the days of Budgell, to justify his own murder'.<sup>245</sup> Alexander Pope wrote a general reference ennobling Roman suicides in his 'Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady':

Is it, in heav'n a crime to love too well?  
To bear too tender, or too firm a heart,  
To act a Lover's or a *Roman's* part?  
Is there no bright reversion in the sky,  
For those who greatly think, or bravely die?<sup>246</sup>

The anonymously penned *The Fair Suicide*, which was likely inspired by Pope's poem, was a dramatic monologue idealising the death of a young lady deceived by her lover. In it the speaker's decision to take her own life is justified by Cato's own death:

Long, long he strove to prop the sinking State  
And as 'gainst *Cesar*, so strove 'gainst Fate:  
'Til with the vain, the glorious Labour tired,  
He stabb'd himself Immortal – and expir'd!  
Was this a Coward's Act? Did this appear  
A base inglorious, weak, abject Fear?  
No – t'was a gen'rous godlike great Disdain,  
A Sense superior to Vulgar Strain.<sup>247</sup>

As a result of eighteenth-century society's obsession with virtue, not just in one's life but in death as well, and society's changing attitudes towards suicide, Cato became a figure of prominence and reverence. Cato, through Addison's rendering, embodied these ideals and became the indisputable example of virtue and honourable suicide. Boreau Deslander captured the essence of the British code of honour regarding

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the brigands who are tearing France apart'. Like Cato, Dalloz could not tolerate living in the corrupt and devastated France of Robespierre and other Jacobins, but sought freedom from tyranny through suicide. See Jeffrey Watt, *Choosing Death: Suicide and Calvinism in early modern Geneva*, (Kirkville: Truman State University Press, 2001), p.201. Likewise, in Prussia, Frederick the Great, on the eve of the battle of Rossbach, concluded that in the case of defeat one should be no less magnanimous than Cato and other Romans: '...you, heroes of freedom that I revere,/O shades of Cato! O shades of Brutus!/Your example shows me light/Among the errors and abuses;/It's your funeral torch/Who taught me the way'.

<sup>244</sup> Charles Moore, quoted in Michael MacDonald, *Sleepless souls: suicide in early modern England*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.181.

<sup>245</sup> Moore, quoted in MacDonald, *Sleepless Souls*, p.181.

<sup>246</sup> Alexander Pope, *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed J. Butt, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 262, II. 6-10.

<sup>247</sup> *The Fair Suicide*, (London, 1733), 9.

suicide when he remarked that ‘there may be certain Instances wherein Suicide might be not only pardonable but glorious’ provided that it was ‘untinctur’d with either Brutality or Despair’.<sup>248</sup> In other words, to be considered an honourable death, suicide had to be an act of cool resolution, decided upon out of reason rather than impulse: Cato was naturally the supreme model of a virtuous death. In fact, many eighteenth-century philosophers became united in their admiration for a number of antiquities ‘heroic suicides’, mainly Brutus, Lucretia, and Cato. English society came to admire them for their heroism and revered their suicides as noble with far fewer reservations than earlier writers had displayed.<sup>249</sup> By the mid-eighteenth century neoclassical attitudes had become so prevalent that, as Michael Macdonald has written, ‘Cato was a kind of household god among the fashionable elite’.<sup>250</sup> Cato ultimately encapsulated ideals that were important to the eighteenth century, and this was the intellectual inheritance that the American colonists later drew on. However, to the British, Cato represented the actualisation of true virtue, but in the hands of the American colonists the radical side of Cato’s acts were utilised.

### Theatre in the American Colonies

The American colonies in the early eighteenth century were generally opposed to theatrical performances on account of various religious sects which condemned the pastime. Due to the branding of theatre as immoral during the Commonwealth (1642-1660) and its association with the Stuart court, many of the American colonists had arrived in the New World with hostile feelings towards theatrical productions.<sup>251</sup> Even those colonists who arrived later remembered the licentiousness of the Restoration theatre (1660-1700) and continued their antipathy towards the activity. The Puritans, believing theatre to be immoral, a waste of time and money, and irreligious, had banned theatrical performances when they settled

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<sup>248</sup> Boureau Deslandes, *Dying Merrily, or Historical and Critical Reflexions on the Conduct of Great Men Who, in Their Last Moments, Mock’d Death and Died Facetiously*, trans. T.W. (London: M Cooper, 1745).

<sup>249</sup> In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the publication of Goethe’s *Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774) made sentimental suicides, especially death for love, the new fashion.

<sup>250</sup> Michael Macdonald, ‘The Medicalization of Suicide in England: Laymen, Physicians, and Cultural Change, 1500-1870’, in *Framing Disease: Studies in Cultural History*, eds. Charles Rosenberg and Janet Golden, (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997): pp.85-103, p.93.

<sup>251</sup> Tice L. Miller, *Entertaining the Nation: American Drama in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), p.1.

the Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies.<sup>252</sup> In *Democracy in America* Alexis de Tocqueville maintained that ‘the Puritan founders of American republics were not only hostile to all pleasures but professed a special abhorrence for the stage. They thought it an abominable amusement, and so long as their principles prevailed without question, the drama was wholly unknown among them’.<sup>253</sup> The Quakers and Presbyterians had also passed laws banning theatre for moral and economic reasons when they founded Philadelphia. In New York the Dutch thought theatre to be similarly frivolous and it languished in the early eighteenth century, caught between local political factions.<sup>254</sup> Although the northern colonies were hostile towards theatre, there is evidence that they read plays: John Smith (1722-1771) from Philadelphia, a colony opposed to theatre, has been described by Fredrick B. Tolles as a ‘literary Quaker’ and was well acquainted with *The Conscious Lovers*, *The Funeral*, and *The Lying Lover* by Richard Steele, *The Distressed Mother* by Ambrose Phillips, and *Andromaque* by Racine.<sup>255</sup> He also knew Addison’s *Cato* well enough to quote it in a letter in 1748 regarding his recent marriage: ‘When Love’s well tim’d, ‘tis not a fault to Love,/The strong, the brave, the virtuous, and the wise,/Sink in the soft captivity together’.<sup>256</sup> It was in the Southern colonies where the comparatively liberal-minded Catholics and Anglicans provided a more supportive environment for theatrical productions, especially after the ban on public theatricals was lifted with the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660.<sup>257</sup> The leisure and wealth which slave labour and plantation life provided colonists in the South also meant that there was a higher demand for amusement.

While plays enjoyed popularity with Southern audiences, the religious fervour excited by the Great Awakening, which was continued by preachers such as John Wesley and George Whitefield, meant that in the early colonial period professional companies did not flourish and productions and actors remained amateur. Amateur companies assembled for a single production, or, on occasion, for two or three plays, but never for an entire season, and they were generally local to the city and did not

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<sup>252</sup> Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, p.1.

<sup>253</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, trans. George Lawrence, *Democracy in America*, ed. J.P. Meyer, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1988), p.492.

<sup>254</sup> Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, p.1.

<sup>255</sup> Frederick B. Tolles, ‘A Literary Quaker: John Smith of Burlington and Philadelphia’, *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXV (1941), p.329.

<sup>256</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III, i, 15-17.

<sup>257</sup> Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, p.1.

tour.<sup>258</sup> Most frequently it was students who assembled for amateur productions. Harvard hosted early student productions, including Benjamin Colman's *Gustavus Vasa* in 1690, William Whitehead's *The Roman Father* in 1758, and Addison's *Cato* in 1759, and again in 1765 during the Stamp Act Crisis when a Harvard college produced the play cast entirely with faculty members.<sup>259</sup> Student productions also flourished in other colonies: the students at William and Mary College, Virginia, presented in 1702 *A Pastoral Colloquy* and in 1736 the same college mounted a production of *Cato*.<sup>260</sup> In Charleston two amateur performances took place in 1774: pupils of James Thomson, late tutor of the New Jersey College, performed *Cato*, and six weeks later pupils of Oliver Dale presented the same play.<sup>261</sup> Amateur performances were also produced by the assembly of gentlemen in theatre-free communities. These performances were quite regular and offered a variety of productions.<sup>262</sup>

Theatre began to burgeon in the American colonies primarily because the wealthier classes wanted to import British cultural institutions in order to bring refinement and civility to their new communities. For many in the educated and wealthy classes, the theatre represented a symbol of culture and signified a progressive community.<sup>263</sup> Because of their desire to emulate the cultural scene

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<sup>258</sup> Odai Johnson and William Burling, *The Colonial American Stage 1665 – 1774: A Documentary Calendar*, (London: Rosemount Publishing, 2001), p.24. Amateur productions were tolerated more than professional performances, as there was a profound social stigma attached to acting for profit. In 1759 when David Douglass arrived in Philadelphia with his company, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania passed a law forbidding the plays, with the severe penalty of £500 for violation. The postponement in 1769 of an amateur production of *The Orphan* advertised in the New York Gazette and Weekly Post-Boy shows the stigma of playing for profit: 'the "young gentlemen" were informed by some of their friends, that there were a parcel of counterfeited tickets then selling about the town...they immediately on this information, resolved to postpone the performance till some other opportunity, their intention being only amusement, ...they saw it below their rank and characters to perform for the sake of a little paltry gain'. Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.25. To preserve their character, amateur actors remained anonymous in playbills. A 1760 production of *Romeo and Juliet* by the Douglass Company at the New Theatre in Annapolis noted that Romeo was played by 'a young gentleman for his own diversion'. Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.25.

<sup>259</sup> Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.26.

<sup>260</sup> Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.26.

<sup>261</sup> Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.461.

<sup>262</sup> A representative example of this activity was the company assembled under the direction of Dr Henry Potter, who, along with other members of the Williamsburg community, painters and apothecaries, produced a short season during the General Court in August 1736. They were clearly successful in their endeavors, as the *American Weekly Mercury* wrote that 'they have already got about one hundred and fifty pounds subscription, to encourage their entertaining the country with the like diversions at future public meetings of our general court and assembly'. *American Weekly Mercury*, 19-26 August 1736, quoted in Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.27.

<sup>263</sup> Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, p.3.

found in London, the American colonists demanded British comedies, tragedies, and drama which were sensible, decent, and morally instructive, and they had very little interest in local productions. American audiences wanted their values reflected in their art and literature, and, as such, plays that promoted virtue and morality were willingly embraced. Dramas that arrived in the colonies were edited to remove references to 'sex, cuckoldry, or objectionable words'.<sup>264</sup> Within a year of the first London production in 1731 of George Lillo's sentimental drama *The London Merchant; or The History of George Barnwell*, the play was re-published in *The New England Weekly Journal*, and the editor recommended it to readers on the grounds that it promoted virtue and piety.<sup>265</sup> Both amateur and professional productions willingly altered plays to fit the temper of the times. Poetic justice was equally important to eighteenth-century audiences: evil must be punished and good rewarded. A prologue written by Dr Samuel Johnson in 1747 for the beginning of David Garrick's management of Drury Lane, reflects this sentiment: 'The stage but echoes back the public's voice./The Drama's Laws, the Drama's Patrons give,/For we that live to please must please to live'.<sup>266</sup>

It was probably the demand for morally instructive plays in the colonies that prompted a company run by Thomas Heady, whose status as a professional or amateur company remains unknown, to perform the first recorded production of Addison's *Cato* along with George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer* in New York in 1732.<sup>267</sup> Addison's works were already well known throughout the American colonies

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<sup>264</sup> Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, p.4.

<sup>265</sup> Herbert L. Carson, 'The Play That Would Not Die: George Lillo's *The London Merchant*', *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, XLIX (1963), pp.287-294.

<sup>266</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Prologue Spoken by Mr. Garrick at the Opening of the Theatre-Royal, 1747*, quoted in Miller, *Entertaining the Nation*, p.4. Miller believes a slight alteration for the colonies would be apt: 'The Drama's Laws, the Drama's London Patrons give'.

<sup>267</sup> The production of the play had political overtones: the company had ties to an ongoing conflict between Governor William Cosby and his opponents, led by Lewis Morris and Rip Van Dam. The performance took place in a building belonging to city council president and former governor, Rip Van Dam, and Heady was Van Dam's wigmaker. Jason Schaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theatre*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp.72-73. It is interesting to note that Addison's *Cato* was frequently coupled with George Farquhar's *The Recruiting Officer*. Schaffer has suggested that this was because, like *Cato*, it was incredibly successful from its premiere in 1706 and did not thenceforth miss a London season until 1776. More importantly, *The Recruiting Officer* was also written during the War of the Spanish Succession. Schaffer says that therefore 'in its background loom the victory of Marlborough (with whom many Whigs would identify Addison's *Cato*)... at Blenheim in 1703 and the 1704 Act for Raising Recruits, which provided for the impressment into the British armed forces of convicts and those without visible means of support'. Schaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.73. It is also interesting to note that *The Recruiting Officer* was the first play ever performed in Australia, being performed in the Colony of New South Wales in 1789 by a group of convicts.

and his reputation as a Whig and moralist undoubtedly helped with the early popularity of his theatrical work. Addison had been disgusted at the licentiousness and theatricalities of modern drama, and had looked back with admiration to the standards of the ancients, who had believed that morality was recommended from the stage.<sup>268</sup> Tragedy, Addison had argued, should ‘soften Insolence, sooth Affliction, and subdue the Mind to the Dispensations of Providence’.<sup>269</sup> In discussing his conception of tragedy, Addison had referred to the lines from Seneca, which would become the motto for *Cato*: ‘A virtuous Man struggling with Misfortunes is a Spectacle as Gods might look upon with Pleasure’.<sup>270</sup>

Following the colonial premiere of *Cato* in 1732, a few years later in 1735 a strolling band of actors performed the Addisonian classic at the New Theatre in Charleston, South Carolina on November 11 and 18 and December fourteen years later.<sup>271</sup> The following year, *Cato* was performed by students at the College of William and Mary, with the *Virginia Gazette* announcing: ‘this evening will be performed at the Theatre, by the young gentlemen of the College [of William and Mary], The Tragedy of “Cato”’.<sup>272</sup> When the Murray-Kean Company opened its season with *Cato* in 1749, the social stigma against acting had still not subsided. On the day that the season premiered, John Smith of Burlington and Philadelphia conversed with ‘one of the Company who were going to hear the Tragedy of Cato Acted’, which, he says, ‘occasioned some Conversation in which I expressed my sorrow that any thing of the kind be Encouraged etc’.<sup>273</sup> The production coincided with the annual meeting of the House of Burgesses, and was probably chosen by the college’s president, the Scottish clergyman James Blair, who had a reputation for political ambition.<sup>274</sup> The production of *Cato* endorsed by the colonial government indicates that theatrical displays which would teach both public virtue and their audience to bear their patriotic responsibilities as free-born Englishmen were supported by government officials. Following a successful season in Philadelphia in 1749, the next year the Murray-Kean Company went to New York where the *Post-Boy* advertised on

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<sup>268</sup> Addison, *The Spectator*, 42 and 44.

<sup>269</sup> Addison, *The Spectator*, 39.

<sup>270</sup> Addison, *Cato*, Motto.

<sup>271</sup> Willis, *Charleston Stage*, p.33.

<sup>272</sup> *Virginia Gazette*, 3-10 September 1736, quoted in Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.119.

<sup>273</sup> Tolles, ‘A Literary Quaker’, p.329.

<sup>274</sup> Schaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.73.

Monday, September 17, 1750 ‘Promising for Thursday next [the 20<sup>th</sup>], Cato. Wrote by Mr. Addison’.<sup>275</sup> On September 24, the *Post-Boy* ran a review of the play, saying:

Thursday Evening last, the Tragedy of CATO was played at the Theatre in this City, before a very numerous Audience, the greater part of whom were of Opinion that it was pretty well performed. As it was the fullest Assembly that has appeared in that House, it may serve to prove, that the Taste of this Place is not so much vitiated, or lost to a Sense of Liberty, but that they can prefer a Representation of Virtue, to those of a loose character.<sup>276</sup>

The Murray-Kean Company repeated the play on October 15 and January 28 of that season. With the arrival of the Hallam Company in the colonies for the 1752-1753 season, the American audiences demanded a production of the play and on November 6, 1754, they staged *Cato* in Charleston’s New Theatre.<sup>277</sup> The Hallams had originally omitted the production from their season likely because by the early 1750s *Cato*’s successful time in the London theatres was drawing to a close, but just as it was waning in England the popularity of *Cato* in the American colonies reached new heights.<sup>278</sup> They repeated the production in New York on January 7, 1762, and in Charleston on April 16, 1766.

Just as in Britain, Addison’s tragedy was not just a popular choice for performance, but the play was also widely read. On the lists of public and private libraries, in personal inventories, and in the advertisements of colonial book dealers Addison’s *The Spectator*, *The Guardian*, *Evidences*, and *Works* are frequently found.<sup>279</sup> Frederick Litto has speculated that ‘nearly every edition of Addison’s *Works* undoubtedly contained the play *Cato*’.<sup>280</sup> In fact, George Dudley Seymour concluded that ‘people with any pretensions to polite learning had to know Addison, whose

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<sup>275</sup> Tolles, ‘A Literary Quaker’, p.329.

<sup>276</sup> *New York Gazette and Weekly Post-Boy*, 24 September, 1750, quoted in Johnson and Burling, *Colonial American Stage*, p.137.

<sup>277</sup> Willis, *Charleston Stage*, p.41.

<sup>278</sup> Lewis Hallam Jr. (1740-1808) said he heard as a boy the actors’ attitude towards the colonies and he remembered being told that ‘the English colonies of North America, yet in the cradle of suckling childhood, were supposed to be uncivilized in all social relations’. Lewis Hallam, quoted in Barnard Hewitt, *Theatre U.S.A., 1668-1957*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1959), p.5.

<sup>279</sup> Heather Barry reports that from the immediate pre-Revolutionary period Addison’s *Works* appeared in 37% of libraries catalogued. Heather Barry, *A Dress Rehearsal for Revolution: John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s Works in Eighteenth-Century British America*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 2007), p.28. For eighteenth-century American libraries, public and private, which included copies of Addison’s *Works* (which undoubtedly included *Cato*), see Litto, ‘*Cato* in the Colonies’, p.437, f.20.

<sup>280</sup> Litto, ‘*Cato* in the Colonies’, p.437, f.20.

writings were then fashionable'.<sup>281</sup> Likewise, in his study of colonial Virginian elite, Louis B. Wright noted that scarcely a gentleman's library in Virginia was without Addison, and this 'august apostle of the decorous and the correct was almost as well known among the socially elect of the other colonies'.<sup>282</sup> In August 1743 it is recorded that Benjamin Franklin printed forty-eight copies of the play at the request of William Parks, the printer of the *Virginia Gazette*, the first paper in Virginia. Parks was also a bookseller and printer of books in his own right, and it is most likely by way of Parks that the Washington and Fairfax families came to be acquainted with *Cato*. Litto has speculated that Franklin's private printing of *Cato* for Parks is evidence that 'such private printings [of *Cato*] were probably frequent'.<sup>283</sup> In 1758 a young George Washington wrote to his best friend's wife, Sally Fairfax: 'I think my time more agreeable [sic] spent believe me, in playing a part in *Cato*, with the Company you mention, and myself doubly happy in being the Juba to such a Marcia, as you must make'.<sup>284</sup> Washington was referring to the practice amongst literate early Americans of participating in an evening's entertainment in which each member of 'the Company' took a role in the reading of some play. Clearly, Addison's *Cato* was a favourite amongst the Washington and Fairfax families. Before the mid-1760s there were at least two recorded public printings of the play. British presses generally held a monopoly on sales in the colonies during the eighteenth century and American printers concentrated solely on works by American authors. As such, any printing of a British work by American printers indicates exceptional interest on the part of the American readers. Following a public printing of the play in 1767, American printers issued *Cato* at least seven additional times before 1801.<sup>285</sup> It was no coincidence that there was an increased demand for both publications and productions of the Addisonian classic, coinciding with the colonial descent into war with Britain.

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<sup>281</sup> George Dudley Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, (New Haven, Privately Published, 1941), p.377.

<sup>282</sup> Louis B. Wright, *The First Gentlemen of Virginia: Intellectual Qualities of the Early Colonial Ruling Class* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1940), p.283.

<sup>283</sup> Litto, 'Cato in the Colonies', p.435.

<sup>284</sup> George Washington to Mrs. George William Fairfax, September 25, 1758, in *The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick. 39 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 2:293.

<sup>285</sup> John C. Shield, *The American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), p.177.

### Why Did *Cato* Appeal to the Colonists?

Eighteenth-century Americans believed that the purpose of history was the prevention of tyranny, whether it was tyranny of popery or of government. The American colonists believed that education, particularly the study of history, would enable people to know the indicators of tyranny and be empowered to prevent a state's decline into despotism. As early as 1758, John Adams criticised studying ancient history for the purpose of gleaning their 'dress, entertainments, and Diversions', but believed that history should be studied as political history to learn from ancients.<sup>286</sup> Later, Adams defended a classical education against the assaults of Benjamin Rush by arguing that the classics instilled a healthy hatred of tyranny in young minds.<sup>287</sup> Thomas Jefferson agreed with Adams' assumption that the purpose of history was the prevention of tyranny. In his 1779 Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, Jefferson wrote regarding tyranny that 'the most effectual means of preventing this would be to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts which history exhibiteth, that possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompted to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes'.<sup>288</sup> When planning the curriculum for the University of Virginia nearly half a century later, Jefferson again reiterated this belief in the political purpose of history by having 'history, being interwoven with Politics and Law' as a subheading under 'government', as well as requiring students to read the 'usual suite' of ancient historians.<sup>289</sup> Other colonists also agreed with the didactic nature of ancient history: John Taylor lamented that 'Caesar profited by the failure of Marius in the art of enslaving his country' and speculated: 'Will no nation ever profit by the failure of another in the art of

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<sup>286</sup> John Adam to Unidentified Correspondent, 1758, John Adams diary, June 1753 - April 1754, September 1758 - January 1759. 28 pages. Original manuscript from the Royall Tyler Collection, Gift of Helen Tyler Brown, Vermont Historical Society, Montpelier.

<sup>287</sup> John Adams to Benjamin Rush, October 13, 1810, quoted in *The Spur of Fame: Dialogues of John Adams and Benjamin Rush*, eds. Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz, (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1966), pp.170-171.

<sup>288</sup> A Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge, 1779, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 2:526-528.

<sup>289</sup> See *The Complete Jefferson: Containing His Major Writings, Published and Unpublished except his Letters*, ed. Saul K. Padover, (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1943), p.100. For the 'usual suite' reference see Thomas Jefferson to Unidentified Correspondent, October 25, 1825, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, eds. Albert Ellery Blergh and Andrew A. Lipscomb, (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), 16:124.

preserving its liberty?’<sup>290</sup> John Dickinson also echoed this sentiment in quoting the Latin epigram ‘happy the people who grow wise by the misfortunes of others’.<sup>291</sup>

The colonists’ classical education and continued reading of the classics in adulthood left them obsessed with conspiracies against liberty. The classics were steeped in stories with the perpetual theme of the steady encroachment of tyranny on liberty and, in order to avoid the fate of their classical heroes, the colonists became obsessed with stemming tyranny before it became endemic. Young Thomas Jefferson copied into his commonplace book the warning of Tacitus: ‘The more corrupt the commonwealth the more numerous its laws’.<sup>292</sup> Likewise, in 1767 in response to the Stamp Act Crisis John Adams declared regarding the ‘spirit of liberty’: ‘*Obsta Principiis* [resist the beginnings (of tyranny)] is her motto and maxim, knowing her enemies are secret and cunning, making the earliest advances slowly, silently, and softly’.<sup>293</sup> He followed this with a section from Tacitus on the insidiousness of despotism. Carl Richard has argued that the Roman historians’ vivid and denouncing accounts of imperial corruption, particularly that of Tacitus, which was a favourite amongst the colonists, had been instilled in their young minds and that it ‘accounts for much of their exaggeration of the brutality of the well-intentioned but inept George III’.<sup>294</sup> While George III was hardly a Nero, to whom they often compared the monarch, in the minds of the colonists, the moderate British taxes were evidence of growing corruption and tyranny that could only result in an assault upon their liberty that would end in slavery.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> John Taylor, *An Enquiry into the Principles and Practices of the Government of the United States*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p.68.

<sup>291</sup> John Dickinson, quoted in Richard Gummere, ‘John Dickinson, Classical Penman of the Revolution’, *Classical Journal*, 52 (November 1956), pp.81-88, at p.82.

<sup>292</sup> *The Commonplace Book of Thomas Jefferson: A Repertory of His Ideas on Government*, ed. Gilbert Chinard, (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1926), p.27.

<sup>293</sup> John Adams to Governor Bradford, February 9, 1767, quoted in Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.119.

<sup>294</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.85. In pre-revolutionary America there was a standard edition of Tacitus, which was Thomas Gordon’s translation. Following the final publication of *Cato’s Letters* Gordon spent the remainder of his literary career translating Tacitus, which he preceded with extensive political commentaries or discourses on his translations. His translations and commentaries on Tacitus were published in their first editions between 1728 and 1731. According to David Jacobson, ‘Tacitus was especially popular and widely praised’. David L. Jacobson, *The English Libertarian Heritage*, (San Francisco: Fox & Wilkes, 1965), xxx. See also David L. Jacobson, ‘Thomas Gordon’s Works of Tacitus in Pre Revolutionary America’, *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 69 (1965), pp.58-64.

<sup>295</sup> For a discussion on the ‘Nerofication’ of George III by the American colonists see Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), pp.66-71.

Within this framework, Addison's *Cato* spoke volumes to the American colonists and in a manner that it had not previously resonated with British audiences. Addison's *Cato*, which originated in the colonies as a piece promulgating the value of *pietas*, was didactic: teaching the colonists the dangers of encroaching tyranny and empowering them to preserve liberty. Focusing on the last days of the Roman Republic, the play tells the story of Cato and his Republican followers in Utica where they have created a community of Roman exiles and surrounded themselves with the ways of virtue best exemplified by their leader. As the last bastion of liberty, the main plot of the play concerns the impending attack upon Utica by Julius Caesar, which, when successful, resulted in the establishment of a dictatorship in Rome and the effective end of the Roman Republic. Cato consistently extols the necessity of virtue and laments the impending loss of liberty, finally deciding that he cannot outlive the Republic and commits suicide preferring death to living without liberty. It is easy to see why the play appealed to the American colonists - *Cato* depicted a colonial outpost of liberty surrounded by hostile forces, with Cato's army being perceived as the last hope for freedom. The Americans identified with the premise and setting of the play: Britain was cast as Caesar and his supporters, while the colonists identified with Cato and his struggle to preserve the last station of liberty. Cato himself is ultimately victorious in preserving his virtue and securing liberty for himself, and did so in a manner that was revered by his peers. However, Cato found his liberty not in revolutionary action, but by withdrawing not just from the political scene but life in general, as he preferred this to living under a tyrannical regime. In the years of increasing political tension before the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and the American colonies, the play's depiction of Cato's last stand for liberty against the usurpation of Caesar offered the American colonists perceived parallels with their own situation with Britain and thus it easily entered their political dialogue.

In identifying with the premise of the play, *Cato* helped inform the colonists' conceptualisation of ideals, such as liberty. Addison's tragedy offered a broad treatment of the struggle between the political abstracts 'liberty' and 'tyranny', which dominated political discourse in the eighteenth century. Addison had earlier discussed 'liberty' in the first issue of *The Freeholder*, a party paper, where he had drawn a comparison between an English freeholder and a citizen of the Roman

Republic.<sup>296</sup> For Addison, liberty was something to be actively defended, not something to be achieved. Whether the enemy of liberty was a Caesar, a Stuart King, or the Duke of Marlborough, liberty was to be defended by keeping potential threats to freedom at bay. Cato, therefore, is an anti-revolutionary: his goal is not to reinstate liberty but, rather, defend it. Addison's preoccupation with liberty is, however, a little flat in the play because, due to the lack of character development, political action, or culminating events, he never substantiates what the term actually means. Had the term held any substance then it would not have been so easy for both Whigs and Tories to clamour in applauding references to liberty during the opening night production. Both parties were able to claim that they embodied Cato's virtue and devotion to liberty simply because the concept of liberty was so nebulous. The closest we get to a definition of liberty is in the third act when the treachery of Syphax has been discovered. Cato declares: 'Meanwhile we'll [Cato and those loyal to him] sacrifice to liberty', for in doing so they counter Caesar's impiety and 'piously transmit it [liberty] to your children'.<sup>297</sup> Addison establishes that Cato and his supporters, who are the remnants of the Roman Republic, represent liberty and ensure its continuation. Liberty is, therefore, Cato and the Roman Republic, which allow its citizens to express their virtue and live with honour and morality, and the whole play acts as a glorification of Cato and, therefore, liberty.

Apart from this abstract definition of liberty which Addison gives the audience, the concept is more frequently expressed as a 'memorable, inexhaustible collection of aphorisms' voiced by or about Cato, who represents and embodies both liberty and virtue.<sup>298</sup> These phrases invoking liberty consistently emphasise the need for the populace to actively defend liberty and often propose defending it with one's life, or risk the inevitable consequences of slavery and tyranny. In the second act, prompted by Cato to 'pronounce your thoughts', Sempronius has a short speech in support of open war against Caesar. Sempronius declares to Cato's supporters, who are described as representing the remnants of the Roman Republic: 'My voice is still for war./Gods! Can a Roman senate long debate/Which of the two to choose, slavery

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<sup>296</sup> This comparison was a commonplace. The identification of the tripartite division of the British commonwealth, kings, nobles, and commons, with the tripartite division of republican Rome, Consuls, Senators, and commons, is made in *The Freeholder* 16, *Leviathan* 2.26, *The Examiner* vol. 3, no. 46, and is discussed by Swift in *Contests and Dissensions* (1701).

<sup>297</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.v.75-81.

<sup>298</sup> Goodman and Soni, *Rome's Last Citizen*, p.301.

or death!’<sup>299</sup> For Sempronius, it is obvious that the decision to fight Caesar will end in death, but the alternative is slavery; liberty is death and slavery is the destruction of the Roman Republic. He concludes his speech: ‘...we/Sit here, deliberating in cold debates,/If we should sacrifice our lives to honour,/Or wear them out in servitude and chains’, again emphasising the dichotomy between slavery and liberty, life and death.<sup>300</sup> Although it is Sempronius, who later betrays Cato, who delivers these lines, the rhetoric mirrors Cato’s own expression, thus negating, to an extent, the traitorous overtones and allowing the phrase to be part of the American patriot lexicon. In the same scene, Cato soon after states that it is his belief that ‘A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty,/Is worth a whole eternity in bondage’.<sup>301</sup> Cato’s judgment holds that dying for liberty, even if it is only experienced for a fleeting moment, is far preferable to living a lifetime under tyranny and slavery. In the third act, Cato makes another pronouncement on liberty, declaring: ‘Do thou, great liberty, inspire our souls,/And make our lives in thy possession happy,/Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence’.<sup>302</sup> Again, Cato emphasises the need to actively defend liberty and believes that if liberty is not present then dying in defense of the ideal is a virtuous, glorious, and far preferable alternative to living in a situation without liberty. Aphorisms, such as these, became particularly important to the American colonists in expressing their opposition to Britain and their devotion to liberty. These Addisonian abstract musings on liberty appeared frequently in the colonial wartime literature, and both the words and the sentiments about liberty they carried formed the basis of Catonian rhetoric that became popular in the era. This rhetoric was composed primarily of aphorisms about liberty; the play was easily reduced to a series of highly quotable phrases about the importance of liberty and one’s devotion to it. It glorified virtuous death in the face of tyranny, and venerated Cato’s choice to withdraw entirely and drastically from the world. In framing their concept of liberty around the example of Cato, the colonists linked their pursuit of freedom to the life-or-death heroics of Cato. They established their resistance to Britain not as a revolution, but as a hopeless last stand against tyranny.

While Cato stood for liberty, Caesar on the other hand was synonymous with tyranny. Cato’s patriotic devotion was matched by Caesar’s unswerving ambition.

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<sup>299</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.i.24-26. ‘Rome still survives in this assembled senate’. Addison, *Cato*, II.i.1.

<sup>300</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.i.36-39.

<sup>301</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.i.100-101.

<sup>302</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.v.82-84.

Although Caesar does not make an appearance in Addison's *Cato*, the values and ideals that he represented are evident in both his opposition to Cato and in the character of the traitor Syphax.<sup>303</sup> In the opening scene Portius establishes the god-like nature of Cato in opposition to Caesar. He proudly observes of Caesar:

Believe me, Marcus, 'tis an impious greatness,  
And mix'd with too much horror to be envied:  
How does the lustre of our father's actions,  
Through the dark cloud of ills that cover him,  
Break out, and burn with more triumphant brightness?  
His sufferings shine, and spread a glory round him<sup>304</sup>

By calling Caesar 'impious' compared to Cato, who is the epitome of virtue, Caesar is seen as an 'infidel' while Cato as more godly.<sup>305</sup> Cato's celestial aura is again implied by describing him as having a 'lustre' and 'triumphant brightness' that defeats the 'dark cloud'. The 'light' of Cato is a recurring theme throughout the play, while he is compared to the sacred flame of Vesta – 'Sempronius, wouldst thou talk of love/To Marcia, whilst her father's life's in danger?/Thou might'st as well court the pale trembling vestal,/When she beholds the holy flame expiring'.<sup>306</sup> The light represents liberty, and when Cato commits suicide, the flame is extinguished. Syphax, as a traitor who joins Caesar's forces, also represents the characteristics of the Roman tyrant. In trying to subvert the virtuous Juba's devotion to Cato, Syphax criticises Roman values saying of Juba: 'If yet I can subdue those stubborn principles/Of faith, of honour, and I know not what,/That have corrupted his Numidian temper,/And struck th' infection into all his soul'.<sup>307</sup> Syphax criticizes Juba's virtue and honour as alien and unnecessary characteristics, clearly preferring Numidian qualities that do not include virtue. Syphax, like Caesar, is established as an enemy of Roman virtue and, therefore, of the Republic, and, as such, a potential tyrant bent on extinguishing liberty and virtue. Since Caesar welcomes Syphax to join his forces, these characteristics are implied of Caesar also. Syphax is also sexually depraved: at one point he tries to convince Juba to kidnap and rape Marcia. He says: 'Give but the

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<sup>303</sup> Little is known of the staging of the character of Syphax; if they used an African actor to play the part or if an American or British actor was painted black. In the original 1713 staging of the play Syphax was played by Colley Cibber, who was an English actor, playwright, and Poet Laureate. Whether he used dark make-up to portray the character or not, we do not know.

<sup>304</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.27-32.

<sup>305</sup> John C. Shield, *The American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), p.181.

<sup>306</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.ii.27-30.

<sup>307</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iii.25-28.

word, we'll snatch this damsel up,/And bear her off'.<sup>308</sup> The other traitor, Sempronius, also attempts to rape Marcia later in the play.<sup>309</sup>

During the war with Britain, Caesar was seen by the colonists' as their greatest villain; a dictator and tyrant, responsible for the corruption and destruction of the Roman Republic. Although Addison gave a sketch of Caesar's character through the medium of Syphax and Sempronius, the patriots got their views of Caesar primarily from reading Caesar's works directly, Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*, which portrayed him as ambitious and successful, and from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, which, altering Plutarch's account in several ways, portrayed Caesar as dangerously ambitious and desirous of power regardless of any damage to the Republic.<sup>310</sup> John Adams drew a comparison of Caesar to Massachusetts' new royal governor Thomas Hutchinson, stating: 'Caesar, by destroying the Roman Republic, made himself a perpetual Dictator; Hutchinson, by countenancing and supporting a System of Corruption and tyranny, has made himself Governor'.<sup>311</sup> Four years later when Thomas Gage led a British army to occupy Boston, Abigail Adams compared him unfavourably with Caesar.<sup>312</sup> Christopher Gadsen and Josiah Quincy summed up the patriot sentiment when both claimed that Great Britain was to America what Caesar was to Rome: 'a corrupting influence'.<sup>313</sup>

In the 1760s and 1770s, the term 'Caesar' also extended to encompass the Roman emperors. The colonists believed that the Roman Republic had been corrupted in the first century BC, resulting in the rise of the *principate*. Jefferson had praised those who, in opposing imperial rule, chose suicide over the 'better remedy' of 'a poignard in the breast of the tyrant'.<sup>314</sup> The colonists often admired Tacitus

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<sup>308</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.v.40-41.

<sup>309</sup> 'African animal energy' stands in juxtaposition to the ideals of civic virtue and republican liberty which emanates from Cato. For more on the character and meaning of Syphax see Julie Ellison, *Cato's Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999), pp.53-56. For Sempronius' plan to rape Marcia see Addison, *Cato*, IV.ii.5-7.

<sup>310</sup> Although Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* was not often performed in the American colonies – six performances are recorded between 1770 and 1802 – it was likely read frequently, as volumes of Shakespeare's works were commonly found in colonists' private and public libraries. John Ripley, *Julius Caesar on Stage in England and America: 1599 – 1973*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p.100

<sup>311</sup> John Adam's Diary, June 13, 1771, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 1.

<sup>312</sup> Dorothy M. Robathan, 'John Adams and the Classics', *New England Quarterly*, 19 (1946), pp. 91-98, p.94.

<sup>313</sup> Christopher Gadsen and Josiah Quincy, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.91-92.

<sup>314</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Dr. Samuel Brown, July 14, 1813, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Correspondence*, (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1859), 6:165.

because his *Annals* vilified the emperors and praised the Republic. Reading Tacitus as a young man in 1754, John Adams had been filled with horror at the violence of the Roman emperors.<sup>315</sup> Tacitus was also responsible for educating many of the young American colonists on the virtues of liberty; in 1774 Josiah Quincy left his son the works of Tacitus, Francis Bacon, Algernon Sidney, and John Locke, works which he considered to be ‘masterly’, ‘elegant’, ‘instructive’, and most apt to instill ‘the spirit of liberty’.<sup>316</sup> Thomas Jefferson particularly admired the moralistic Tacitus, writing in 1808 of the Roman: ‘Tacitus I consider the first writer of the world without a single exception. His book is a compound of history and morality of which we have no other example’.<sup>317</sup> The colonists frequently compared the British Parliament and the Tories with the Roman emperors and their minions. In his *Letters from a Pennsylvania Farmer* John Dickinson wrote: ‘Indeed we ought firmly to believe, what is an undoubted truth, confirmed by the unhappy experience of many states heretofore free, that unless the most watchful attention be exerted, a new servitude may be slipped on us, under the sanction of usual and respectable terms. Thus, the Caesars ruined the Roman liberty, under the titles of tribunical and dictatorial authorities, old and venerable dignities, known in the most flourishing times of freedom’.<sup>318</sup> In 1765 Samuel Adams wrote that ‘the Stamp Act was like the sword that Nero wished for to have decollated the Roman People at a stroke’.<sup>319</sup> Likewise, John Adams compared the Tories’ slander of William Pitt the Elder with Nero’s murder of the Stoic philosopher Seneca, writing: ‘Nero murdered Seneca that he might pull up virtue by the roots, and the same maxim governs the scribblers and speechifiers on the side of the minister’.<sup>320</sup>

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<sup>315</sup> Peter Shaw, *The Character of John Adams*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1976), p.220.

<sup>316</sup> Josiah Quincy, *Memoir of the life of Josiah Quincy, jun., of Massachusetts*, ed. Josiah Quincy, (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard & Company, 1825), pp.350, 407.

<sup>317</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Anne Cary Bankhead, December 8, 1808, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, eds. Albert Ellery Blergh and Andrew A. Lipscomb, (Washington: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Association, 1903), 18:255.

<sup>318</sup> John Dickinson, ‘A Speech on a Change of Government of the Colony of Pennsylvania’, May 25, 1764, *The Political Writings of John Dickinson, 1764-1774*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), p.24.

<sup>319</sup> The Town of Boston to Dennys De Berdt, October 22, 1766, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.88. Adams seems to have confused Nero with Caligula, who wished, according to Suetonius, that the Roman people had a single neck so that he could behead it with one stroke. See Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, IV.30.2.

<sup>320</sup> Letters of Novanglus, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams*, 10 volumes, (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856). Vol. 4., No. V.

Julius Caesar was not always vilified amongst the American colonists, and it was only as hostilities between Britain and the colonies escalated and reverence towards Cato increased that Caesar's reputation declined. Caesar had a large and positive impact on George Washington. After reading Caesar's *Commentaries* as a child Washington first developed dreams of military glory, and in 1756, during the French and Indian War, William Fairfax encouraged Washington by writing: 'I am sensible such a medley of undisciplined militia must create you various troubles, but, having Caesar's Commentaries, and perhaps Quintus Curtius, you have therein read of greater fatigues, murmuring, mutinies, and defections, than will probably come to your share; though if any of those casualties should interrupt your quiet, I doubt not you would bear them with a magnanimity those heroes remarkably did'.<sup>321</sup> As late as 1759 Washington ordered busts of military geniuses, which included both Caesar and Alexander.<sup>322</sup> However, by the time hostilities commenced between Britain and the colonies, Washington had clearly abandoned such models for more socially accepted figures, such as Cato. James Thomas Flexner noted that 'when an admirer sent him six huge engravings of Alexander's victory, Washington was no longer interested in that Greek general. He deposited the sumptuous masterpieces of the mezzotinter's art in a portfolio (where they still languish today)'.<sup>323</sup> It is likely that Alexander fell out of favour in the lead up to the war because, like Caesar, Alexander's achievements were considered to be false greatness and his conquests therefore condemned. In 1743 Henry Fielding wrote of Alexander: 'When I consider whole nations extirpated only to being tears into the eyes of a GREAT MAN, that he hath no more nations to extirpate, then indeed I am almost inclined to wish that nature had spared us this her MASTERPIECE, and that no GREAT MAN had ever been born into the world'.<sup>324</sup> In 1821 Jefferson was similarly critical of Alexander: 'there are three epochs in history signalized by the total extinction of national morality. The first was of the successors of Alexander, not omitting himself. The next, the successors of the first Caesar: The

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<sup>321</sup> William Fairfax to George Washington, May 13, 1756, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1994), p.94.

<sup>322</sup> For Washington's ordering of the busts see George Washington to Robert Cary, September 20, 1759, *The Writings of George Washington*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-1940), 2:333-334.

<sup>323</sup> For reference to Washington's childhood reading of Caesar and his later lack of interest in Alexander see James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965-1969), 1:31.

<sup>324</sup> Henry Fielding quoted in Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste*, (London: Continuum, 2007), p.81.

third, our own day'.<sup>325</sup> In naming the period of Alexander and Caesar, Jefferson linked the American cause to examples from antiquity of countries whose liberty had expired. If Jefferson saw the 'total extinction of national morality' to be indicative of a slide into tyranny, then he had not held high hopes for a triumphal outcome in America's war with Britain.

An audience soundly educated in the classics would have expected Addison's depictions of liberty and tyranny to have been united with an exposition of virtue. There is more substance in the play regarding the theme of 'virtue' than the topic of 'liberty'. The entire play consists of little more than an exposition of Cato and Roman virtue; even the minor characters and love sub-plot act as a chorus praising the hero's goodness and morality when he is off stage as much as when he is on stage. In fact, the first act of the play closes without Cato having made an appearance, yet the audience feels that they already have a well-established picture of his character and have been compelled to hold him in the highest regard on account of his virtue. When the audience finally meets Cato, he exudes virtue. A speech delivered to the remainder of the Roman Senate, which is replete with filial piety to the cause of the Roman Republic, shows Cato as the personification of virtue. Caesar has sent an emissary, Decius, to force Cato to yield to Caesar's newly acquired authority as dictator. Decius scorns Cato's insistence that his 'life is grafted on the fate of Rome', demanding 'What is a Roman, that is Caesar's foe?' to which Cato responds 'Greater than Caesar; he's a friend to virtue'.<sup>326</sup> Virtue is presented as the opposite of Caesar; therefore, one who is virtuous champions the cause of the Roman Republic and embodies the public spirit of immutably defending liberty from the creeping impingement of tyranny. Cato, in embodying all these actions, is presented from the beginning of the play as the epitome of virtue.

For Addison, in keeping with the civic humanism of the eighteenth century, the key element of a virtuous man was his desire and ability to subordinate his own needs and welfare in preference to defending liberty from the encroachment of tyranny. In the first act, the Numidian Syphax tries to subvert Juba's loyalty to Cato by questioning the superior virtue of the Romans. Juba is able to respond with a sound endorsement of Cato's Roman virtue, highlighting the self-sacrificing nature of the ideal:

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<sup>325</sup> Thomas Jefferson quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.88.

<sup>326</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.ii.8, 43-44.

To strike thee dumb: turn up thy eyes to Cato!  
 There may'st thou see to what a godlike height  
 The Roman virtues lift up mortal man,  
 While good, and just, and anxious for his friends,  
 He's still severely bent against himself;  
 Renouncing sleep, and rest, and food, and ease,  
 He strives with thirst and hunger, toil and heat;  
 And when his fortune sets before him all  
 The poms and pleasures that his soul can wish,  
 His rigid virtue will accept of none.<sup>327</sup>

M.M. Kelsall has described this passage as the ‘Roman version of “get thee behind me, Satan”’, referring to the temptation of Jesus.<sup>328</sup> While Cato could have indulged in these corporeal needs, such as sleep, rest, and food, his virtue entails that he refuse such luxuries while the Republic and liberty are in danger. In the first minute of the play, the audience is informed that the cause of Cato is that of ‘of honour, virtue, liberty, and *Rome*’.<sup>329</sup> It is quickly established that there is a symbiotic relationship between liberty, virtue, Rome, and Cato, and that these ideals and entities are intrinsically entwined. At the beginning of the play Portius, Addison’s fictional elder son for Cato, tells Marcus, his brother, that this particular dawn heralds a most important day, one ‘big with the fate/of Cato and of Rome’.<sup>330</sup> Portius is expressing that there is a fundamental relationship between Cato and Rome, that the existence of one is linked to the life of the other. Cato later reinforces this reading by stating that ‘My life is grafted on the fate of Rome:/Would he [Caesar] save Cato? Bid him spare his country./Tell your Dictator this: and tell him, Cato/Disdains a life, which he has power to offer’.<sup>331</sup> Cato is expressing extreme subordination to the good of liberty: he is unable to live if the Republic falls and the play concludes with his decision that he would rather commit suicide than see the fall of Rome, the irony being that the death of Cato signifies the conclusion of the Republic.

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<sup>327</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.50-59. Juba then goes on to describe a ‘Roman soul’ for Sempronius and says, focusing on the highest virtues in order: ‘To civilize the rude unpolished world/And lay it under the restraint of laws/To make Man mild, and sociable to Man;/To cultivate the wild licentious Savage/with wisdom, discipline, and liberal arts/Th’ embellishments of life: virtues like these,/Make human nature shine, reform the soul/And break our fierce barbarians into men’. John Shields has pointed out that the first five lines are a paraphrase of lines 851-53 of Book IV of the *Aeneid*. In both the Virgilian passage and in Addison’s version the speech is a strong endorsement of Rome’s values and a passionate commitment to one’s country. The scene also invokes the components of *pietas*. For more on the Virgilian nature of this paragraph see Shield, *The American Aeneas*, p.182.

<sup>328</sup> Kelsall, “Meaning of Addison’s *Cato*”, p.157. Luke 4:5-8 and Matthew 16:23.

<sup>329</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.34.

<sup>330</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.4-6.

<sup>331</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.ii.8-11.

The relationships between the young lovers Juba and Marcia, and Lucia and Portius, also serve to illustrate that virtue demands self-sacrifice. Addison does not present these blooming relationships as trivial and all of the characters seem keenly aware that their personal passions and attachments threaten to distract them from the real crisis: the crumbling Republic. Cato's son Portius is spurned in love by Lucia, who declares: 'I see thy sister's tears, thy father's anguish, and thy brother's death, in the pursuit of our ill-fated loves'.<sup>332</sup> Lucia is dedicated to the collective good of the people around her and, as a result, denies her own happiness and refuses to indulge her desires. As a consequence, Portius ultimately loves her more for her virtuous stoicism. Portius and Lucia are united in love at the conclusion of the play when Lucia is able to reveal her love for Portius upon hearing of the death of Marcus, who also loved Lucia. Likewise, Juba loves Marcia, Cato's daughter, but Marcia remains aloof wishing to put the needs of her father and the Republic before her own desires. Juba's love for Marcia is based on her emulation of Cato's virtue, and when challenged by Syphax, he retorts that 'beauty soon grows familiar to the lover...[But] Cato's soul shines out in every thing she acts or speaks'.<sup>333</sup> In the following scene Marcia proves Juba's assertion to be true. She comments on Juba's enthusiasm for Cato's cause: 'My prayers and wishes always shall attend/ The friends of Rome, the glorious cause of virtue/And men approved of by the gods and Cato'.<sup>334</sup> Marcia's filial duty to her father and piety towards the gods is evident: she equates the pursuit of virtue with Rome itself in the appositive. However, when it appears that Juba is killed, but it is actually Sempronius disguised as Juba, Marcia regrets that he 'never knew how much I loved him' and ultimately confesses 'Marcia's whole soul was full of love and Juba'.<sup>335</sup> After, it is realised that Juba was not killed and at the closing scene of the play Cato recognises the relationship between Juba and Marcia. Both women embody the qualities of virtuous womanhood, which particularly came to prominence in the mid-eighteenth century, by subordinating their personal desires and happiness to the welfare of others. Their actions cemented self-sacrifice into the virtuous ethos, and was adopted by American colonial women in the wartime period as they assumed the image of the Roman matron to deal with the self-sacrificing demands of the war.

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<sup>332</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.ii.28-30.

<sup>333</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.152-159.

<sup>334</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.v.16-18.

<sup>335</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iii.51.

The character of Juba also has the role of enabling Addison to demonstrate the universality of the human potential for virtue despite ethnicity and cultural background. Juba, the Numidian Prince and the 'noble savage' character of the play, is a devoted follower of Cato. When his fellow Numidians betray Cato and the Republican cause, Juba presents himself to Cato ashamed, but is reassured by Cato that 'thou hast a Roman soul'.<sup>336</sup> To Cato, Juba's actions and character determine his virtue rather than his nationality or origin. Cato initially rebukes the relationship between Juba and his daughter Marcia, declaring a North African Prince could not marry a Roman aristocratic daughter as long as the Republic stood. On his deathbed, Cato proclaims 'Whoe're is brave and virtuous is a Roman' indicating the universality of virtue and declaring Juba to be an equal to any Roman and, therefore, able to marry Marcia.<sup>337</sup> Juba also represents the contagion of virtue; merely by being in the presence of Cato, Juba desires to be more like the great statesman. Portius says of Juba's passionate emulation of Cato: 'Behold young Juba, the Numidian Prince!/With how much care he forms himself to glory,/And breaks the fierceness of his native temper/To copy out our father's bright example'.<sup>338</sup> The portrayal of Juba as the minority character able to endear himself to the bastion of Roman values, was particularly important in the eighteenth-century context where Juba was either played or portrayed as a black man, showing that a man as virtuous as Cato was able to see an African as equal to a Roman.

In contrast to the love triangles embroiling these characters, Addison depicts the virtuous Cato as able to embody the Stoic principle of remaining dispassionate in all situations. Cato epitomises this Stoic detachment from emotions through both his handling of the Numidian rebellion and the death of his son Marcus. Following the insurrection of his allies, Cato orders Sempronius to execute the leaders, but commands him 'strain not the laws to make their tortures grievous'.<sup>339</sup> Cato is able to respond to the betrayal and subsequent undermining of his campaign with cool emotional detachment free from avarice and aggravation, enabling him to deploy justice fairly. Cato schools Juba in the importance of this facet of virtue: 'valour soars above what the world calls misfortune and affliction'.<sup>340</sup> Portius, like his father, is

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<sup>336</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.49.

<sup>337</sup> Addison, *Cato*, V.iv.98.

<sup>338</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.76-79.

<sup>339</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.v.66.

<sup>340</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.iv.53-54.

also able to maintain a dispassionate view of the political situation ‘in the calm lights of mild philosophy’ and has a stoic acceptance of the ‘dark and intricate ways of heaven’.<sup>341</sup> On the other hand, Cato’s other son, Marcus, is rebuffed by Lucia for his overtures at courtship because ‘Marcus is over-warm’ in his fervent amour, indicating a man not in control of his passions.<sup>342</sup> The proof of Cato’s ability to detach from emotions and subordinate his own desires is evident when he is confronted with the dead body of his son Marcus. This depiction is also reminiscent of Brutus the Elder, who condemned his two sons to death for their involvement in a plot to overthrow the Roman Republic by reinstating the king. According to Livy, Brutus became revered for the Stoicism he showed while watching the execution of his sons, realising that their death and his sacrifice were beneficial to the Republic.<sup>343</sup> In this scene Cato proves himself to be the Stoic *sapiens* of theory: superior to Fortune and reconciled to Providence. In his oration, Cato marries the two themes ‘virtue’ and ‘Rome’ and the audience are invited to admire this instance of the ‘godlike height’ to which the ‘*Roman* virtues lift up mortal man’.<sup>344</sup> The initial association between virtue and divinity is made through the motto of the tragedy, taken from Seneca, which states: ‘a virtuous Man struggling with Misfortunes is a Spectacle as Gods might look upon with Pleasure’.<sup>345</sup> When Cato’s son Marcus is killed in battle, he is presented with the body and declares: ‘How beautiful is death, when earn’d by virtue!/Who would not be that youth? What pity it is/That we can die but once to serve our country!’<sup>346</sup> For Cato, the body of Marcus does not represent the death of his son, but the death of the body politic at Rome. He reminds the audience: ‘Tis Rome requires our Tears./...Rome is no more./O Liberty! O Virtue! O my Country!’<sup>347</sup> Cato establishes that dying for Rome is not an occasion of grief but an occasion of rejoicing and a decision to be emulated. With Marcus representing the

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<sup>341</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.16, I.i.50.

<sup>342</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.vi.51.

<sup>343</sup> Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 2.3-4.

<sup>344</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.53.

<sup>345</sup> Seneca had taken Cato’s suicide at Utica as the penultimate example of the way in which a man, when faced with the worst adversity, may remain free, virtuous, and rational of both his fate and his passions. Seneca wrote in *De Providentia* that: ‘if it might be imagin’d that the *Almighty* should take off his Thought from the Care of his Whole Work, what more Glorious Spectacle could he reflect upon, than a Valiant Man Struggling with Adverse Fortune: Or *Cato*’s standing Upright, and Unmov’d, under the Shock of Public Ruin?’ Seneca, *De Providentia*, 1.2.9.

<sup>346</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.92-94.

<sup>347</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.103-108.

expiration of Rome, Cato determines that in order to fulfill his devotion to virtue and liberty he too must die.

Cato's character exemplifies that the virtuous man clings to truth in the face of death. Cato's immutable opposition to Caesar exemplifies this unyielding commitment to justice. Even when Caesar offers Cato a pardon, he remains rigid in his adherence to his personal philosophy and dedication to the Republic. Prior to committing suicide, Lucius, leaving Cato to rest, remarks that 'a kind refreshing sleep is fallen upon him'.<sup>348</sup> The image of Cato sleeping peacefully before his death calls to mind Socrates' contented repose the night before imbibing hemlock, and represents the ultimate picture of passionless detachment from the body. However, it is clear from a comparison with Plutarch's *Life of Cato* that Addison rewrote Cato's death in order to demonstrate the rationality and honour to be found in suicide. In Plutarch's account Cato is on edge and volatile: he discourses vehemently, arguing Stoic paradoxes, and is violent towards a slave. Cato's attempt to kill himself is initially unsuccessful; he ineffectively stabs himself, and, upon regaining consciousness and realising a physician wishes to stitch up the wound, he 'thrust away the physician, plucked out his own bowels, and tearing open the wound, immediately expired'.<sup>349</sup> In Addison's account, Cato is the embodiment of reason and calmness. Addison has him reading Plato's *Phaedo*, which Addison calls simply by its later subtitle *On the Immortality of the Soul*, and preparing himself for death. Thus, Cato departs life guided by reason and following the Stoic principle that virtue in itself will make men happy. Throughout the entire play, even during his death scene, Cato never appears as a figure of flesh and blood but remains until the last the Stoic *sapiens* and spokesman of Roman virtue. Over Cato's body Lucius gives the eulogy 'now is *Rome* fallen indeed'.<sup>350</sup>

Despite sections of Addison's *Cato* being antiquated, the characters and underlying themes spoke directly to the American colonists. Cato and the sentiments he embodied fulfilled the needs of the American colonists: he offered an example of Stoic resistance to tyranny and a virtuous death. In Cato's unwavering and indomitable cries for liberty, many Americans saw their own defiance of King George III. The colonists drew on Addison's play and took Cato as an emblem of

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<sup>348</sup> Addison, *Cato*, V.iv.31.

<sup>349</sup> Plutarch, *Cato Minor*, 70.4-6.

<sup>350</sup> Addison, *Cato*, V.iv.84.

dispassionate determination and devotion to liberty in their own fight against Britain. Addison's play established Cato as a symbol of dogmatic resistance to tyrannic power and a strong belief in the attainment of liberty through the self-sacrificing actions of patriots. Framing their resistance to Britain around the image of Cato meant the colonists' approach to the conflict with Britain was, in fact, a fatalistic resignation of continued British tyranny. In emulating Cato they sought to remove themselves drastically from the scene through dying virtuously for liberty. In a popular eighteenth-century school text, the *Flowers of Ancient History*, John Adams of Philadelphia expressed this reading of the Cato narrative:

Whether the manner in which this great republican put a period to his life, was justifiable or not, has ever since been a matter of much dispute. It must be owned, that he did not on this occasion, act conformably to his own system of philosophy; and if we try him by the laws of Christianity, he will appear still more culpable. ...We ought, however, to allow Cato some favourable circumstance...the age in which he lived...the barbarity of those times... Shall Cato become the sport and mock of those people to whom he once gave laws? Shall he live to see his country, once the seat of sweet liberty and freedom, become the home of tyranny and oppression?<sup>351</sup>

Adams reveals that the American colonists identified with Cato's inability to reconcile his personal understanding of virtue and liberty with the corruption and tyranny that Caesar and his supporters offered. Adams was also willing to overlook Cato's actions despite their clear flouting of Christian laws. The fact that Cato's suicide, clearly condemned by the laws of Christianity, was considered permissible under the circumstances shows how prized liberty was for the colonists. Adams praises Cato for his actions and empathises with his inability to watch the destruction and enslavement of his country, and condones Cato's decision to remove himself from the situation. For Adams, death is clearly preferable and more honourable than living under tyranny. Adams goes on in his textbook also to praise both Brutus and Cassius for committing suicide upon the success of Antony in the Battle of Philippi, marking the end of the resistance to Caesar and his supporters: 'such was the end of Brutus and Cassius, who, as some relate, died with the same weapons with which they had stabbed Caesar'.<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>351</sup> John Adams, *The Flowers of Ancient History*, (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson and Co., 1795), p.190, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 28149.

<sup>352</sup> Adams, *Flowers of Ancient History*, p.201.

Other American texts expressed similar admiration for Cato and his devotion to liberty that ended in suicide. In 1771, William Bates published *The Harmony of the Divine Attributes* praising both Cato and Brutus as ‘Philosophers of the manly Sect’.<sup>353</sup> Bates declared ‘Virtue never appeared with brighter Luster among the Heathens than when joined with a *stoical* Resolution. And they were not imperfect Proficients, but Masters in Philosophy’.<sup>354</sup> By praising both Cato’s virtue and Stoic resolve, Bates was approving not only of Cato’s dedication to the cause of liberty but also his resolve to adhere to the principle into death. In 1785 an essay published in Philadelphia by Scottish Professor Thomas Reid declared: ‘When we contemplate the character of Cato, his greatness of soul, his superiority to pleasure, to toil; and to danger, his ardent zeal for the liberty of his country; when we see him standing unmoved in misfortunes, the last pillar of the liberty of Rome, and falling nobly in his country’s ruin, who would not wish to be CATO rather than CAESAR in all his triumph?’<sup>355</sup> Reid, emphasising Cato’s dispassionate and self-sacrificing nature, condoned Cato’s suicidal actions declaring it better to die nobly for liberty than live under tyranny. In 1795, John Stewart published *The Revelation of Nature, with The Prophecy of Reason*, which included a commendation of Cato: ‘We admire and applaud insulated and contingent acts of heroism, in Cato, and other heroes of antiquity, who, by suicide, defied the torments of a tyrant; and yet we dare not establish the principle, or fix this criterion for calculative reason, to elevate man from the low scale of instinct, to the progressive scale of human perfectability’.<sup>356</sup> Reflecting the debate of the era regarding the legitimacy of suicide, Stewart praised Cato as rational for removing himself from a tyrannical environment. Stewart believed that Cato’s actions were so logical and necessary that he encouraged the principle to be established in society at large.

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<sup>353</sup> William Bates, *The Harmony of the Divine Attributes*, (Wilmington: John Adams, 1771), p.353, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 11978.

<sup>354</sup> Bates, *Harmony of the Divine Attributes*, pp.353-354.

<sup>355</sup> Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual and Active Powers of Man*, (Philadelphia: William Young, 1793), p.123, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 26066. William R. Brock notes in *Scotus Americanus* (1982) that this was just one of several works of Scottish philosophy that were widely read in America. The book was published in Philadelphia in 1793, indicating its popularity as local publishers only published foreign works if they were in high demand. William R. Brock, *Scotus Americanus: A Survey of the Sources for Links Between Scotland and America in the Eighteenth Century*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University press, 1982), pp.92-93.

<sup>356</sup> John Stewart, *The Revelation of Nature, with The Prophecy of Reason*, (New York: Mott and Lyon, 1795 or 1796), p.62, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 31238 and Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 29567.

Popular texts circulating in the colonies during this era encouraged a similar admiration for Cato and his decision to commit suicide. Initially published in 1755, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *A Discourse on Political Economy* included a comparison of Cato and Socrates, which concluded in favour of the Roman statesman. Rousseau praised Cato in the *Discourse*, writing: 'Cato has the cause of his country ever at heart; he lived only for its welfare, and could not survive its destruction. ...Cato, compared with Caesar and Pompey, seemed to be a God contending with mere mortals. ...Cato defended his country, its liberty and laws, against the conquerors of the world, and at length resigned his breath, when he no longer had a country to serve. ...A worthy follower of Cato would be one of the greatest'.<sup>357</sup> Rousseau, like Addison, saw Cato's life as intrinsically linked to the survival of the Republic, claiming that Cato's virtue meant he must expire along with the liberty of the Republic. Rousseau, again like Addison, attested to the divinity of Cato and his actions, reinforcing the god-like heights of Roman virtue. In comparing Cato with Socrates, Rousseau concluded that: 'the virtue of the former [Socrates] would constitute his happiness; the latter [Cato] would seek his happiness in that of the whole society. We should be instructed by one, and directed by the other'.<sup>358</sup> Rousseau, a perennial supporter of Cato, whom he called 'the greatest of men', advocated that there was no greater aspiration than to follow and emulate Cato.<sup>359</sup> Rousseau, particularly his works on social contract theory, was widely read in the American colonies, thus further disseminating this Addisonian-style idealisation of Cato.

### American 'Liberty' Plays

Following the increased popularity of Addison's *Cato* in the lead-up to the war, the theatrical narrative of liberty versus tyranny through self-sacrificial actions became increasingly popular, and many plays of a similar Addisonian genre were spawned. The plays date from 1773 to 1777, which shows the immediacy of their composition, as the colonists looked for uniquely American patriot plays as opposed to British

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<sup>357</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, trans. Christopher Betts, *Discourse on Political Economy and The Social Contract* (Albany: Barber and Southwick, 1797), pp. 17-18, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 32780. First American edition was published in 1797.

<sup>358</sup> Rousseau, *Discourse*, p.32.

<sup>359</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality: On the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, (Auckland: The Floating Press, 2009), p.112.

theatre that required an analogical application. These plays drew on the style that Addison had established: they shared a commitment to the patriot movement, and had the interlocking thematic and character trio of tyrant, patriot, and sacrificial victim. These plays demanded virtuous action and a Stoical resolve in subordinating all other needs for the good of the country. The plays also praised Americans who perished in the war, establishing a unique American lineage of martyrdom that enabled Americans to draw on historical examples of martyrs without referencing preceding British martyrs and joined them to the fight against tyranny that dated back to antiquity. The plays also included aphoristic dialogue, like Addison's *Cato*, but were not quoted in the wartime literature to anywhere near the same extent as Addison's classic. As Jared Brown has concluded, 'it is not difficult to find fault' with these texts as literary and dramatic art, but they 'represent the first important stirrings of American drama, and an opportunity for American writers to confront American issues, develop American concerns, and explore American values in their own voices'.<sup>360</sup>

The first of these American liberty plays was a trilogy by Mercy Otis Warren, one of the most prolific authors and playwrights of the era: *The Adulateur* (1773), *The Defeat* (1773), and *The Group* (1775).<sup>361</sup> In the first play, a group of Servian patriots led by Brutus rise up against their tyrannical governor, Rapatio. <sup>362</sup> Brutus champions the Stoic cause, calling for principled resistance and suicide, while his pupil, Marcus, is roused into action by his patriot friend Cassius' meditations on their ancestors who 'for freedom dy'd'.<sup>363</sup> At the funeral for the young boy killed by the tyrannical government there is a riot, akin to the Boston Massacre, where many citizens are killed, and the play concludes with Brutus reminding the Servian patriots that 'this [martyrdom] soon may be your fate'.<sup>364</sup> In *The Defeat* Warren details the

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<sup>360</sup> Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America During the Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.84.

<sup>361</sup> The anonymously published *Blockheads* (1776) and *The Motley Assembly* (1779) are also attributed to her. The Whig play *Blockheads* (1776) was a mock re-enactment of the Battle of Bunker Hill and the subsequent British evacuation of Boston.

<sup>362</sup> Brutus is generally believed to have been a substitute for Warren's brother James Otis, and the Servian Governor Rapatio was Warren's stand-in for Governor Thomas Hutchinson. Jason Shaffer, 'Making "An Excellent Die": Death, Mourning, and Patriotism in the Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution', *Early American Literature*, vol. 41, No. 1 (2006), pp. 1-27, at p.7.

<sup>363</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Adulateur: A Tragedy as it is now acted in Upper Servia*, I.i.13.

<sup>364</sup> The funeral is a reference to Christopher Seider, who is considered the first to die and the first martyr of the war. Seider was the son of poor German immigrants. On February 22, 1770, he joined a crowd mobbing the house of Ebenezer Richardson, a Loyalist supporter, located in the North End, Boston. The crowd threw stones which broke Richardson's windows and struck his wife. Richardson

revolt against Rapatio. The play is dominated by the spectre of Servia's liberation heritage, which Rapatio describes as 'the Mem'ry/ of all who struggle for that native freedom,/.../Transmitted down in Characters of Blood'.<sup>365</sup> Rapatio is eventually brought to justice, where he is represented as a tormented man, a Faust-figure damned because of his ambition and corruption: 'What – do I hear? Is fierce Cerberus there?'<sup>366</sup> In *The Group* Rapatio is replaced with Sylla, reflecting the Bostonian Governor Hutchinson's recall to England and his replacement by General Gage. Warren conjectures what would happen if the British king abrogated the Massachusetts charter of rights and resolves that 'every patriot like old Brutus stands,/The shining steel half drawn – its glittering point,/Resolv'd to die, or set their country free'.<sup>367</sup> Warren expresses the tragic inevitability of the conflict between the Servians and Sylla by having 'A Lady' as a designated mourner, who accepts the necessity of patriotic sacrifice.<sup>368</sup> Warren's three plays serve as a critique of British rule and a call to the patriot movement, with America clearly represented as the Servians, prepared to die for their liberty. Like Addison's *Cato*, Warren demanded a stoical sacrifice for the cause of liberty and paints her characters as viewing life without liberty as worthless. John Adams later praised her as an effective propagandist for the wartime cause.

John Leacock's *The Fall of British Tyranny; or, Liberty Triumphant* (1776), like Addison's and Warren's plays, engaged in the liberty versus tyranny heroics that

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tried to scare them by firing a gun into the crowd, but hit Seider in the arm and the chest. Seider died later that evening. Samuel Adams arranged for the funeral, which over 2,000 people attended. Seider was buried in Granary Burying Ground, near the victims of the Boston Massacre. Alex R. Goldfeld, *The North End: A Brief History of Boston's Oldest Neighborhood*, (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2009), pp.65-66. *The Adulateur* even included an epigraph taken from a speech that Addison's Cato makes to the Utican Senate after rejecting Caesar's overtures, reminding the populace that Roman bravery and virtue are paramount to life. The epigraph reads: 'Then 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 heav'n may say, it ought to be prolong'd'. Addison, *Cato*, II.iii.34-38.

<sup>365</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Defeat*, III.ii.

<sup>366</sup> Warren, *The Defeat*, III.i.

<sup>367</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group*, I.i.

<sup>368</sup> Some years later, possibly as a result of the emerging factionalism and materialism that characterized the 1780s Mercy Otis Warren published the play *The Sack of Rome* (1790). The play showed that Rome's vulnerability to the barbarian conquest was due to the new luxury and self-centeredness that had made the polity dissolute and corrupt, and acted as a warning to the new American nation. Warren dedicated the play to George Washington, who had resigned his commission as commander in chief of the Continental Army after the peace treaty between Great Britain and the United States was signed in 1783 and returned to private life, thus emulating the selfless standards of the Roman Republican heroes. Washington repeated this selfless gesture again thirteen years later when he resigned from the Presidency after two terms, thus establishing the two term limit for the Presidential office.

underpinned the colonists' political rhetoric of the era.<sup>369</sup> The main satiric thrust of the play was to ridicule the ambition and arrogance of the British aristocracy and military, and did so by focusing on Lord Paramount, a caricature of Lord Bute, and his ambition to become dictator of England and the American colonies. The play begins in London in the 1750s where Paramount, in a soliloquy, the classic form of tyrannical self-revelation, reveals he desires 'supreme power' and shall 'begin first by taxing America'.<sup>370</sup> The play's location then shifts to Boston where the fighting begins and the British are portrayed as foolishly having under-estimated the military strength of the American colonies. The play closes after the British success in the battle of Fort Ticonderoga and the announcement of General Montgomery's death in Quebec: 'let it [Montgomery's death] redouble our ardour, and kindle a noble emulation in our breasts – let each American be determined to conquer or die in a righteous cause'.<sup>371</sup> The play had didactic elements common to Addison's *Cato*, including calling the audience to sacrifice their personal ambitions for liberty: 'We will be free – or bravely we will die' and later 'To arms! My dear friends, to arms! And death or freedom be our motto'.<sup>372</sup> The need for death in the cause for liberty is nowhere more apparent than in the soliloquy of Lord Wisdom, a depiction of William Pitt, which echoed the lamentations of Addison's *Cato*. Lord Wisdom offers himself up for the cause of liberty declaring 'Liberty flourishes in the wilds of America...whilst I have a tongue to speak I will support her wherever found...Oh Liberty! Oh, my country!'<sup>373</sup> Just as in the colonists' interpretation of *Cato*, Leacock's play cast America's resistance to Britain as a choice between living under tyranny or dying virtuously. That this play was an American construct poignantly reveals their mindset and approach to the war, believing victory was to be found in death.

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<sup>369</sup> The true identity of the playwright is not confirmed. One J.H.J of Cheviot Ohio noted that 'Joseph Lacoock, Coroner...wrote a play, with good humour, called 'British Tyranny'. Montrose Moses wrote in his preface to his edition of the play that a search through colonial records of Pennsylvania reveals 'no less than three John Leacocks...all of whom were Coroners, as well a Joseph Leacock who occupied the same position'. There was also a Joseph Leacock, a jeweller and silversmith of Philadelphia, who wrote *The Disappointment*, a comic opera for production in Philadelphia in 1767, which was abandoned because it characterised prominent citizens as credulous and foolish. So the ambiguity and confusion continues. Norman Philbrick, *Trumpets Sounding: Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution*, (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1972), p.41. The play was printed in Philadelphia, Boston, and Providence in 1776, indicating its popularity and range of influence

<sup>370</sup> John Leacock, *The Fall of British Tyranny; or, Liberty Triumphant*, I.ii.

<sup>371</sup> Leacock, *Fall of British Tyranny*, V.iv.

<sup>372</sup> Leacock, *Fall of British Tyranny*, III.ii.

<sup>373</sup> Leacock, *Fall of British Tyranny*, II.i.

Two other American liberty plays that emerged from the period were Hugh Henry Brackenridge's *The Battle of Bunker Hill* (1776) and *The Death of General Montgomery, in Storming the City of Quebec* (1777).<sup>374</sup> Brackenridge did not solely follow the generic liberty versus tyranny narrative but sought out new American exemplary figures who were willing to accept martyrdom for the cause of liberty and cast these figures within a genealogy of past heroes. In *The Battle of Bunker Hill* Brackenridge commemorated the valour demonstrated by the American soldiers who fought at Bunker Hill in June 1775. The rhetoric of dying for liberty dominates the dialogue on both sides of the battle; in preparing his American troops for battle Colonel Thomas Gardiner encourages them to emulate 'those three hundred at Thermopylae,/And give our Country, credit in our deaths'.<sup>375</sup> However, the play's central exemplar of patriot sacrifice is General Joseph Warren, who, in the play, is given the opportunity for a resounding dying soliloquy.<sup>376</sup> Warren places himself within the classical republican and British opponents of the House of Stuart genealogy of liberty, while also establishing a new line of specifically American patriots: 'Now I go to mingle with the dead,/Great Brutus, Hampden, Sidney, and the rest,/Of old or modern memory, who liv'd,/A mound to tyrants, and strong hedge to kings'.<sup>377</sup> In *The Death of General Montgomery* Brackenridge adds General Montgomery to the American patriot genealogy. The action of the play takes place on the night of December 31, 1775 and the early morning of the New Year, when the Americans under General Montgomery and Benedict Arnold attempted to capture

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<sup>374</sup> Brackenridge was a fervent patriot, who, along with James Madison and Philip Freneau, had founded the American Whig Society in 1769 when he was an undergraduate at the College of New Jersey (now Princeton). Abbé Robin has noted that both of Brackenridge's plays, along with Leacock's *The Fall of British Tyranny*, were acted by the students at Harvard during the wartime years. Claude C. Robin, *New Travels through North America: In a Series of Letters*, (Boston: E.E. Powers and N. Willis, 1784), p.17, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 18765 .

<sup>375</sup> Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunker Hill*, III.i.

<sup>376</sup> In reality Warren died instantly on the battle field from a bullet to the face at close range. For the interesting afterlife of Warren's skull see Samuel Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty*, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2012), Appendix III – Quest for Warren's Head.

<sup>377</sup> At the beginning of the Revolution Algernon Sidney was a particularly important example of the citizen soldier. He had been a wounded soldier in the battle of Marston Moore, spent time in exile as an opponent of both Cromwell and the Stuarts, had written political treatises that were popular in both Britain and the American colonies, and after conspiring against James II was executed in connection with the Rye House Plot. According to popular legend Sidney also staged a production of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in 1656 as a gesture to criticise Cromwell and had, in fact, played the role of Brutus himself. Alan Craig Houston has observed that, while Sidney's political writings were subject to various interpretations, 'by his martyrdom, [Sidney] graphically demonstrated the evils of unchecked power'. Thus, to the colonists 'the single most important fact about Sidney's life was the manner of his death'. Alan Craig Houston, *Algernon Sidney and the Republican Heritage in England and America*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), p.224.

the city of Quebec. The attack ended in defeat for the Americans and the death of Montgomery. Brackenridge has Montgomery declare his eagerness to succeed or die in the attempt to gain the city, and then elevates the fallen Montgomery to the status of patriot martyr by comparing him not only to Hampden and Sidney, but the British General Wolfe, whose greatest victory and death took place before the walls of Quebec in 1759. The play concludes with the British hanging Montgomery's corpse from the walls of the city and the American Morgan comparing the British with the savage Saracens and Turks, and the vilest of human creatures. When Montgomery died, his eulogies espoused the same idea that he was a martyr of the patriot cause: 'This brave man was determined either to take the city or lose his life. Accordingly he died nobly in the Field. ... Ten thousand ministers of glory shall keep vigils around the sleeping Dust of the invincible Warrior; whilst the precious remains shall be the Resort of every true Patriot in every future age. ... He died it is true, and in dying became invincible'.<sup>378</sup> As with the plays by Addison, Warren, and Leacock, Brackenridge's likewise presented another story of self-sacrifice and martyrdom for the cause of liberty. The commonality between all of these plays was that the hero professed a desire to not outlive liberty and sought death as a viable and desirable alternative. It speaks to the colonists' mindset that they glorified examples of virtuous death rather than patriots who secured liberty through triumphant conquest.

### The Popularity of Plutarch

The Cato narrative also came down to the American colonists through the medium of Plutarch's *Lives*. Plutarch's *Lives* was a series of biographies of famous Greek and Roman leaders, arranged in tandem to illuminate their common moral virtues or failings, written in the late 1st century BCE. Plutarch's writings were continuously popular and had an enormous influence on English and French literature. In eighteenth-century colonial America, one of the most popular classical texts studied, read, and revered by the American colonial populace as a whole was Plutarch's *Lives*. Isaac Kramnick believes that 'the most influential text from antiquity in eighteenth-century America was Plutarch's *Lives of Noble Greeks and Romans*', while Meyer Reinhold unequivocally stated that 'the most popular work of ancient literature

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<sup>378</sup> John Collins Warren Papers, January, 1776, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms N-1731.

(always excepting the Bible) in American for about 250 years was Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>379</sup> Although Plutarch was not studied in grammar school or colleges, there was hardly a library – private, public, or college – or bookseller's catalogue that did not possess a copy.<sup>380</sup> There were various versions throughout the centuries, but John Dryden's 1638 translation was the one most used in the colonies in the eighteenth century until John and William Langhorne wrote another rendition in 1770.<sup>381</sup> In the eighteenth-century French author Charles Rollin's publication *Ancient History* and *Roman History*, which were rapidly translated from French into English, educated several generations of Americans, and consisted of material largely taken from Plutarch.<sup>382</sup> Many Americans were introduced to Plutarch's *Lives* at an early age and knew them intimately. Benjamin Franklin, for example, read Plutarch from his father's library and vividly remembered the occasion: 'My Father's little library consisted chiefly of Books in polemic Divinity most of which I read, and have since often regretted, that at a time when I had such a Thirst for Knowledge, more proper books had not fallen in my way... Plutarch's Lives there was in which I read abundantly, and I still think that time I spent to great Advantage'.<sup>383</sup> When Franklin ordered his first round of books for his library, which eventually became the Library Company of Philadelphia, there was a copy of Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>384</sup> Plutarch's appeal evidently crossed the gender-divide as Eliza Lucas Pinckney, a remarkable South Carolinian farmer and mother of the American patriots Charles Cotesworth Pinckney and Thomas Pinckney, reportedly read the *Lives*. In 1742, when she was a young woman, her copy of Plutarch was almost thrown into the fire by an older woman friend who feared that Eliza's classical reading would corrupt her mind and destroy her chances at marriage.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>379</sup> Isaac Kramnick, 'Ideological Background', in *A Companion to the American Revolution*, ed. Jack Greene and John Pole, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), p.92. Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United State*, (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1984), p.250.

<sup>380</sup> Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, p.250. Reinhold notes that Plutarch's *Moralia* was barely read until Emerson became obsessed with it in 1825.

<sup>381</sup> Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, p.250.

<sup>382</sup> On Rollin's see Meyer Reinhold, *The Classick Pages*, pp.157-159; and William Gribbin, 'Rollin's Histories and American Republicanism', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 29 (1972), pp.611-622. There was an English translation of Rollin's *Ancient History* published in London in 1738.

<sup>383</sup> *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p.58.

<sup>384</sup> Austin Gray, *Benjamin Franklin's Library*, (New York: Macmillan, 1937), p.9.

<sup>385</sup> Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, p.252.

In Puritan New England, Plutarch's *Lives* had appealed to the colonists because it was in line with the late Renaissance reverence for and moralistic interpretation of history.<sup>386</sup> By the middle of the eighteenth century Plutarch's *Lives* were read not only for moral instruction but with an eye to political enlightenment and historical models. The American colonists drew from Plutarch examples of ancient lawgivers and champions of liberty, as well as role models of republican heroism, *exempla* of virtues and vices, and exemplary anecdotes and quotable moral aphorisms. Amongst the colonists' favourites were Cicero, a self-made man and dedicated patriot who fought to the death for republicanism against tyranny; Solon, a man who joined politics with morality, had military exploits on behalf of his country, and as a lawgiver promoted balance and moderation; Phocion, representing patriotism, principled integrity, and receiver of unmerited attacks on an honourable statesman; Timoleon, portraying political withdrawal from power, hostility towards tyrants, and support for due process and freedom of speech; and, finally, Demosthenes, who exalted love of liberty, hostility to tyranny, and the call to sacrifice for freedom.<sup>387</sup> The colonists drew lessons from these *Lives* and incorporated them into their understanding of contemporary politics and worldview. For example, in 1774 Josiah Quincy argued against the Boston Port Bill citing several of Plutarch's *Lives*, namely Caesar, Solon, Tiberius Gracchus, Lysander, Pompey, Brutus, and Galba. Quincy wrote: 'It had been easy, said the great lawgiver Solon to the Athenians, to repress *the advance* of tyranny and prevent its establishment, *but now it is established* and grown to some height it would be more glorious *to demolish* it'; and 'Resolved as we are, replied the hero [Cassius] to his friend [Brutus], ...let us march against the enemy, for *tho' we should not conquer, we have nothing to fear*'.<sup>388</sup> Likewise, in 1782, Charles Lee declared 'I have ever from the first time I read Plutarch been an Enthusiastick for Liberty...and for liberty in a republican garb'.<sup>389</sup> Charles Mullet, whose conclusion is often quoted, determined that: 'Classical authors are to be counted among the "founding fathers." ...The heroes of Plutarch became the

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<sup>386</sup> See Kenneth B. Murdock, *Literature and Theology in Colonial New England*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1949), pp.67-69.

<sup>387</sup> The quintessential anti-models were Sulla, Alexander, Caesar, and Antony. Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, p.254. On the Timoleon cult of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries see Edmund Berry, *Emerson's Plutarch*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp.25-6.

<sup>388</sup> Josiah Quincy, *Observations on the Act of Parliament Commonly Called the Boston Port Bill*, (Boston, 1774), p.63 and 81-82.

<sup>389</sup> Charles Lee to Robert Morris, August 15, 1782, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.51.

heroes of the revolutionary American leaders. Not less than the Washingtons and the Lees, the ancient heroes helped to found the independent American commonwealth'.<sup>390</sup>

The most popular character of Plutarch's *Lives* in eighteenth-century America was, however, Cato the Younger. In English tradition, which permeated into the colonies, Cato represented 'the impeccable model of patriotism, private and public virtue, republicanism, unrelenting opposition to tyranny, incorruptibility, and dedication to public service'.<sup>391</sup> Plutarch's *Life of Cato* gave the colonists this interpretation, as Plutarch depicted Cato as an active and vigilant magistrate, quaestor, consul, and senator: Cato is 'a leader of prudence, humanity, moderation, unshakeable calm, and noble simplicity', while Caesar is a 'despicable tyrant', whose clemency towards those he had exiled was simply a plan to make Caesarism look lawful.<sup>392</sup> Plutarch presented Cato as the best example of the Stoic *sapiens*, perhaps even surpassing the ideal itself. The ideals that Plutarch's *Life of Cato* venerated were the epitome of eighteenth-century English values, making Cato the perfect role model for colonial Americans. Cato's embodiment of private and public virtue made him generally revered by the colonists, but his relentless devotion to liberty and constant denouncement of tyranny made him particularly appealing to the Americans as they descended into war with Britain.

For the American colonists, this glowing account of Cato was not just given to them by Plutarch. Other accounts of Cato's life that the American colonists would have encountered in their classical reading were similarly unanimous in their admiration of Cato on account of his Stoic resolve and virtue. In Lucan's epic *The Civil War*, Cato is presented as being a fearless and tough general, sharing in the hardships of his soldiers.<sup>393</sup> In *On the Ends of Good and Evil* Cicero makes Cato a spokesperson for the virtue of Stoic philosophy and in his *Pro Sestio* declares that Cato manifested 'man's wisdom, and integrity, and magnanimity, and virtue; which is tranquil during a terrible tempest, and shines amid the darkness, and, though driven from its proper position, still remains, and clings to his country, and shines at all times by its own unassisted light, and is never tarnished by the dirt or disgrace of

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<sup>390</sup> Charles Mullett, 'Classical Influences on the American Revolution', *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (1939), pp. 92-104, p.104.

<sup>391</sup> Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, p.254.

<sup>392</sup> Litto, 'Addison's *Cato* in the Colonies', p.432.

<sup>393</sup> Lucan, *Pharsalia*, Book 2 and Book 9.

others'.<sup>394</sup> Seneca wrote of Cato, a phrase that became canonised in Addison's classic: 'Behold a sight worthy of God himself, intent upon his own works, to witness. Here is God's equal in worth, a brave man calm amid misfortunes. I see not, say, that Jupiter has on earth anything more beautiful, if he wished to inspire the soul, than the sight of Cato, his allies already beaten time and again, nonetheless erect amid the ruins of the state'.<sup>395</sup>

Plutarch's heroic account of Cato's virtuous death was supplemented for the American colonists with grammar school and college textbooks that taught them to admire and emulate the Roman hero's actions and character. Textbooks circulating during the pre-war era impressed upon colonial children the virtue of Cato and the destructive ambition of Caesar. Peter Davy's 1758 *Adminiculum puerile: or, An help for school-boys* consistently used passages praising Cato and his deeds in teaching colonial schoolboys Latin. The first passage about Cato reads: 'Cato *sum sapiens et fortis vir, amo republica, et omnis is qui amo et defendo is* [sic]', which translated as 'Cato was a wise and valiant Man, he loved the Commonwealth, and all those that loved and defended it'.<sup>396</sup> Davy established from the beginning that Cato was a virtuous man, who put the good of his country before his own desires and encouraged others to do so. The next passage again impressed upon the schoolboys the necessity to admire Cato: 'Cicero and Cato were wise and learned, they were Men whom Rome and all the World Admired'.<sup>397</sup> The final passage which the boys translated declared: 'None of the Romans were to be compared to Cato for virtue'.<sup>398</sup> With virtue being one of the ultimate characteristics for eighteenth-century gentlemen, Cato was being held up as the exemplum. Davy said of Caesar, on the other hand: '*vir qui appello Julius Caesar merito habeo magnus imperator, sed sum pessimus vir*', which the boys translated as 'Julius Caesar was justly reckoned a great commander, but he was a very ill [i.e. worst] Man'.<sup>399</sup> While Caesar was held up as a figure of military success, he was not considered a person worthy of imitation. Bailey's *English and Latine Exercises for School-Boys*, the 1720 edition used by Joseph Warren when he was at school, reveals that Latin education was also used to

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<sup>394</sup> Cicero, *Pro Sestio*, 60.

<sup>395</sup> Seneca, *De Providentia*, 1.2.9.

<sup>396</sup> Peter Davys, *Adminiculum puerile: or, An help for school-boys*, (Philadelphia: W. Dunlap, 1758), p.23, Early American Imprints, series 1, no. 8111.

<sup>397</sup> Davys, *Adminiculum puerile*, p.24.

<sup>398</sup> Davys, *Adminiculum puerile*, p.38.

<sup>399</sup> Davys, *Adminiculum puerile*, p.23.

affirm the colonists' devotion to virtue.<sup>400</sup> By translating lines such as 'I prefer virtue before the most fine gold; for it is much better' and 'Virtue is for an Ornament to all persons, and no Part of Beauty is wanting to them, that are endow'd with it', the boys were instilled with a value of virtue – a very Catonian ideal.<sup>401</sup>

William Scott's *Lessons in Elocution*, first published in the colonies in 1788, but with four previous British editions, likewise praised Cato and encouraged a positive reading of his suicide. Scott included the prose: '...Thine a steady More,/Who, with a generous, though mistaken zeal,/Withstood a brutal tyrant's useful rage;/Like Cato firm, like Aristides just/Like rigid Cincinnatus nobly poor,/A dauntless soul erect, who smil'd on death'.<sup>402</sup> The textbook also included Alexander Pope's prologue to Addison's *Cato* as well as Cato's soliloquy on the immortality of the soul. Caesar, on the other hand, Scott charged with being only interested in ambition and power: 'he thought Tyranny, as Cicero says, the greatest of goddesses; and had frequently in his mouth a verse of Euripides, which expressed the image of his soul, That is right and virtue were ever to be violated, they were to be violated for the sake of reigning. This was the chief end and purpose of his life'.<sup>403</sup> *The speaker: or, Miscellaneous pieces* by William Enfield, a lecturer at the Academy of Warrington, England, was a textbook for elocution first published in England in 1774 and quickly circulated and published in the colonies. It included Cato's address to the Roman senate, his soliloquy on the immortality of the soul, as well as the scene between Juba and Syphax where Juba declares his desire to emulate Cato and show complete devotion to the cause of the Roman Republic.<sup>404</sup> The textbook also included an oration written by Livy for Lucius Junius Brutus over the body of Lucretia, which praises Lucretia's decision to commit suicide and pledges to fight the tyranny of the Roman kingship and promote liberty, and a number of Shakespeare's scenes with Brutus, Cassius, and Caesar.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Nathan Bailey, *English and Latine Exercises for School Boys*, (Boston: T. Fleet, 1720), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. E187. The Massachusetts Historical Society copy has the signature of Joseph Warren on the front page.

<sup>401</sup> Bailey, *English and Latine Exercises*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. E187, p.96.

<sup>402</sup> William Scott, *Lessons in elocution: or A selection of pieces, in prose and verse, for the improvement of youth in reading and speaking*, (Philadelphia: William Young, 1794), p.245, Early American Imprints, series 1, no.27680.

<sup>403</sup> Scott, *Lessons in elocution*, p.109.

<sup>404</sup> William Enfield, *The speaker: or, Miscellaneous pieces*, (Philadelphia: William Wallis Woodward, 1799), p.231, 406, and 403, Early American Imprints, series 1, no.35446.

<sup>405</sup> Enfield, *The speaker*, p.190.

Noah Webster's highly popular textbooks specifically written for use in American schools also reinforced the lessons of virtue from antiquity. Between 1783 and 1785 a teacher in Goshen, New York, published Webster's three-part textbook series entitled *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, which consisted of a spelling book, a grammar text, and a reader. Webster's spelling book became a standard text in nineteenth-century America and had sold nineteen million copies by the time of his death in 1843.<sup>406</sup> Although Webster's iconic works were not published before the war, they reflect attitudes and thoughts contemporary to that period. In part two, Webster asserts that 'two or more nouns singular connected by a copulative conjunction, must have verbs, pronouns and nouns agreeing with them in the plural number'.<sup>407</sup> Webster gives as the example: 'Brutus and Cassius *were brethren; they were friends* to Roman liberty'.<sup>408</sup> Praising both these Romans as friends to liberty condoned their actions in killing Caesar to prevent the encroachment of tyranny in the Republic, and likewise, excused both of their suicides as part of their unfailing devotion to liberty. Likewise, Joseph Dana's *A new American selection of lessons, in reading and speaking*, first published in 1792, included the famous sentiment that Cato should act as an internal monitor of one's actions. Dana exhorted his pupils: 'when we are by ourselves, and in our greatest solitude, we should fancy that Cato stands before us, and sees every thing we do'.<sup>409</sup> Dana also included two scenes from Addison's *Cato*; the first is the scene where Cato addresses the remainder of the Roman Senate on the question of what to do now they are at Utica. The scene taught the reader that liberty should be valued over life and ended with Cato's resounding conclusion: 'A day, an hour, of virtuous liberty/is worth a whole eternity in bondage'.<sup>410</sup> The other scene from Addison's tragedy was between Cato and Decius where Caesar offers a pardon of Cato. The scene again showed the magnanimity of Cato's character, highlighting his virtue and principled devotion to liberty. Cato reminds Decius that a true Roman is a friend of virtue not Caesar, and that, since his life is grafted to that of the Republic, he shall expire along with the liberty of the

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<sup>406</sup> Catherine Reef, *Education and Learning in America*, (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2009), p.22.

<sup>407</sup> Noah Webster, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1784), p.68, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 18871.

<sup>408</sup> Noah Webster, *A Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, (Hartford: Hudson and Goodwin, 1784), p.68, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 18871.

<sup>409</sup> Joseph Dana, *A new American selection of lessons, in reading and speaking*, (Exeter, New Hampshire: Thomas and Andrews, 1799), p.52, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 35379.

<sup>410</sup> Dana, *A new American selection of lessons*, p.258.

Republic.<sup>411</sup> Alexander Thomas' *The Orators Assistant* (1797) printed in Massachusetts, also included several scenes from Addison's *Cato*.<sup>412</sup> Thomas chose to include the second scene of act two, between Cato and Decius, where Cato speaks as the embodiment of virtue, and declares that Caesar is against the values of liberty and virtue that the Republic represents. Cato champions the cause of the Republic; when asked what it would take to become a friend of Caesar's Cato responds 'Bid him disband his legions,/Restore the commonwealth to liberty,/Submit his actions to the public censure,/And stand the judgment of a Roman senate:/Bid him do this, and Cato is his friend'.<sup>413</sup> Next Thomas includes the dialogue between Syphax and Juba, where Syphax tries to undermine his superior's dedication to Cato and the Republican cause. This scene enabled Addison to praise Roman virtue through Juba's defense of the principle and commend Cato's adherence to the self-sacrificing qualities inherent in Roman virtue. Thomas' final selection again comes from Addison and is the first scene of the second act where Cato addresses the remainder of the Roman Senate. The speech is filled with devotion towards the cause of the Republic, and Cato shows himself willing to devote everything to the liberty of the Republic. Thomas also included a dialogue between Caesar and Brutus from Voltaire's tragedy *The Death of Caesar*. Brutus is presented as an ardent republican, who grapples with the revelation that Caesar is his father. He ultimately puts the needs of the Republic above his familial ties, and is unable to reconcile himself to Caesar and his tyrannical plans for the Republic. These were clearly popular scenes, as Caleb Bingham's *The American Preceptor* (1794) also included the dialogue between Cato and Decius.<sup>414</sup>

### Conclusions

Cato came down to the American colonists as a figure revered in eighteenth-century society for his virtue and honourable death. Both Plutarch's account of Cato and Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy*, bolstered by eighteenth-century intellectual trends, venerated Cato, and idealised his life and suicide. To an American audience,

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<sup>411</sup> Dana, *A new American selection of lessons*, pp.258-259.

<sup>412</sup> Alexander Thomas, *The orator's assistant; being a selection of dialogues for schools and academies, taken from many of the best dramatic writings in the English language*, (Worcester: Isaiah Thomas, 1797), pp.24-26 and pp.86-90, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 32917.

<sup>413</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.ii.31-35.

<sup>414</sup> Caleb Bingham, *The American Preceptor*, (Boston: Thomas and Andrews, 1795), p.134, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 28302.

however, the Cato narrative did more than promulgate virtue; it served as an effective advocate of both anti-British sentiment and American patriotic values. Cato's position at the fall of the Roman Republic resonated with the colonists as they saw in it parallels with their own situation. The colonists' analogies of Britain to Caesar and America as Utica were not merely rhetorical flourishes. They represented the genuine fear of tyranny that they had learnt from nearly all the classical texts from their education. Unconstitutional taxes, however small and seemingly insignificant, violated the sacred principles of liberty and they believed if it was unchecked it would escalate into tyranny and slavery. To the colonists, Cato was an emblem of dispassionate determination and devotion to liberty. His suicide was seen as virtuous, admirable, and a worthy exemplum. Cato's cries for liberty became their own protestations against the encroachments on their liberty by the British. The colonists developed a uniquely Cato-style rhetoric, which drew upon the ideals of liberty and virtue that Addison constructed in his tragedy, and became prominent in the political lexicon of the war. Liberty became a largely unidentifiable ideal that had to be actively defended through virtuous actions epitomised in Cato's character. This Catonian rhetoric exuded statements of devotion to liberty and country, and a preference for death over living under tyranny. The colonists' interpretation and deployment of Cato drew upon the more radical and pessimistic side of his suicide; an interpretation that had not been previously understood by the British and Continental audiences. Cato taught the colonists that liberty was neither inevitable nor imminent, but, rather, that the best solution was to remove themselves from the corrupt world in a Cato-like suicide. The colonists' admiration of Cato presents us with a different understanding of what was at stake for the colonists in their struggles with the British government. Current historiography has presented them as revolutionaries, fighting a struggle for liberty, but their veneration of Cato shows a fatalistic acceptance of defeat and continued British rule, which could only be met virtuously through death.

## Chapter Three

### Old Man Liberty:

### Cato and the Stamp Act Crisis

At the beginning of the 1760s, the British Empire, gloriously victorious in the Seven Years War, was at the height of its expanse and influence. The American colonists, proud participants in British imperialism, glorified their relationship with Britain, believing the mother country to be more successful and virtuous than the Roman Republic, and they represented Englishmen as classical heroes.<sup>445</sup> But the mid-1760s marked the beginning of a change in British-American relations, and, as British policies, requiring the colonies to finance their own defence began to tarnish the relationship, the American colonists changed the way they used classical imagery to describe Britain and their relationship. With the passage of the Sugar Act and the Currency Act in 1764, the colonists began to question the intentions of Britain and feel anxiety about the safety of their English-born rights. But it was the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 that acted as a watershed in the colonies' relationship with England. The Stamp Act Crisis marked the colonies' departure from rhetoric that glorified Britain as the modern-day Roman Republic. Instead, Britain was perceived as the corrupt Rome of the emperors, and there was an outpouring of classical imagery that called upon ancient examples of tyranny to articulate the colonists' suspicions and fears. Describing the situation in the colonies after the passage of the Stamp Act, Eran Shalev observed: 'as mobs burned effigies and tore down houses belonging to stamp collectors, it soon became evident that the loudest voices in the colonies were no longer willing to portray the mother country as a magnanimous

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<sup>445</sup> Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), pp.45-50. In this work, Eran Shalev established the place of the Roman Republic in the American historical imagination. He convincingly shows the imagined relationship that the American colonists had with the Roman Republic, and how it shaped their reactions and mindset in the Revolutionary War. This chapter draws extensively on his work but then brings it into focus around Cato. For general works on the Stamp Act Crisis see James and Helen Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1953) and Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1972).

Rome. Soon those voices began to make use of a less glorious stage in Roman history to describe the actions and historical significance of their mother country'.<sup>416</sup>

Over the following decade the colonists ceased viewing Britain as a glorious and conquering Rome, but, instead, characterised England as the corrupt and tyrannical Roman Empire. By tracing the intellectual revolution that occurred in the American colonies in the years following the French and Indian War this chapter provides the necessary background to understand how the colonists viewed the world through the medium of antiquity and how this informed the classicised identities that they later adopted. At the beginning of the ideological crisis the colonists grappled for various examples of tyranny, drawing on stories from Egyptian, Greek, and Roman history and mythology, as well as the Bible. Over time, however, as the colonists began to unify their thoughts and approach, they drew increasingly on the Cato narrative to express their opinions and mindset. This chapter will assess the literature of the Stamp Act Crisis and subsequent decade to show how the Americans struggled to express their rapidly deteriorating relationship with Britain through various classical identities but came to focus on the Cato narrative as the best representation of their deeply fatalistic outlook. The colonists found that Cato, whose personal battle between tyranny and liberty, and experience of the destruction of the Roman Republic, resonated strongest with them, and best expressed their growing suspicions towards Britain's motives and the perceived threats towards colonial liberty. The result was an outpouring of texts consisting of short allusions to Cato and the production of literature under the pseudonym 'Cato'. References to Cato appeared in literature across various mediums, indicating the resonance of the Cato narrative with all sectors of the colonial populace. This chapter looks at material from political speeches and tracts, as well as newspapers, almanacs, and even sermons, all of which discussed and used the Cato narrative to describe the colonial situation. The Cato identity became all-encompassing for the colonists, and by the mid-1770s, when war with Britain was deemed inevitable, Cato represented the hopeless situation that the colonists found themselves in and their desire not to outlive liberty. Their choice of Cato as the colonial role model shows the colonists' resignation towards continued British governance rather than a people preparing for revolution.

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<sup>416</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, pp.54-55.

### Background to the Stamp Act

The Seven Years War, known as the French and Indian War in the American colonies, took place between 1754 and 1763. The war was fuelled by antagonism between Great Britain and the Bourbon dynasty, which resulted in conflicting colonial and trade empires.<sup>417</sup> Eran Shalev has identified that one of the issues of the intellectual melees between Britain and France was ‘the dispute over *translatio imperii*, or who was to be anointed the new Rome’.<sup>418</sup> Early on in the war, with France’s victory in Minorca, French publications outlined the ideological backdrop to the war. Abbe Seran de la Tour’s *Comparison of the conduct of the Carthagians with respect to the Romans in the Second Punic War* had as the subtitle ‘with the conduct of England with Regard to France in the Declared War between These Two Powers in 1756’.<sup>419</sup> The sub-context clearly stated that France and England were actually vying for the title of Rome and Carthage; the first holding the largest empire at that point in history and the latter being destroyed by Rome. Once Britain was successful in the war - gaining a large part of land in New France, now eastern Canada, as well as Spanish Florida, some individual Caribbean islands in the West Indies, the colony of Senegal on the West African coast, and trading outposts on the Indian subcontinent - the British styled their victory as surpassing the achievements of the Roman Empire. Oliver Goldsmith’s *A History of England*, published in 1764, asserted that the British Empire could ‘now boast more power than even the Great Roman empire’.<sup>420</sup> Likewise, Edward Montagu in his work *Reflection on the Rise and Fall of the Antient Republicks* published in 1759, also measured British achievements in comparison to ancient powers.<sup>421</sup> The anonymously written *The Present State of the British Empire in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia* published in 1768 stated that the British Empire was ‘more extensive and perhaps more powerful than any that has hitherto existed; even the great Roman Empire not excepted’.<sup>422</sup> Even two years before

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<sup>417</sup> See Matt Schumann and Karl W. Schweizer, *The Seven Years War: A Transatlantic History*, (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>418</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.41.

<sup>419</sup> Abbe Seran de la Tour’s *Comparison of the conduct of the Carthagians with respect to the Romans in the Second Punic War*, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.42.

<sup>420</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *A History of England*, (London, 1764) p.241.

<sup>421</sup> Edward Montagu, *Reflection on the Rise and Fall of the Antient Republicks: Adapted to the Present State of Great Britain*, (London, 1759), p.375.

<sup>422</sup> Anonymous, *The Present State of the British Empire in Europe, America, Africa, and Asia*, (London: W. Griffin, J. Johnson, W. Nicoll, and Richardson and Urquhart, 1768), p.486.

America declared its independence, John Entick published *The Present State of the British Empire* and claimed that ‘the British Empire is arrived at the height of its power and glory, to which none of the states and monarchies upon earth could ever lay the like claim. Rome, in all her grandeur, did not equal Great Britain, either in constitution, dominion, commerce, riches or strength... [Great Britain] in its present state excels the ancient and modern state’.<sup>423</sup> These authors all understood the British achievement by means of comparison to Rome and derived Britain’s significance from the fact that it had surpassed Rome. Entick, however, took this conclusion further, perhaps due to the brewing conflict with America, believing that the Roman ‘could not boast of the liberty, rights and privileges, and of that security of property and person’ enjoyed by the English subject’.<sup>424</sup> British achievement was, therefore, not solely based on it surpassing the Roman Empire in both territory and power, but in Britain being able to boast it had created an empire of liberty, which the Romans had not.<sup>425</sup>

The Americans, fighting with the British in the French and Indian War, had also framed the war and Britain’s victories in classical terms. In 1758, the lyric poet Benjamin Prime Young wrote *The Unfortunate Hero*, in which, following the Greek poet Pindar’s style, he depicted the British troops in the field as classical heroes. In the poem, Young classicised the death of British General George Howe by comparing him to a pantheon of Roman heroes. In a style that would be repeated in the following decades, Young wrote of Howe: ‘such were the warriors of days of old/such Cincinnatus, such Camillus bold, and the great Scipio’s rose’.<sup>426</sup> Young promised immortality to Howe, like those of antiquity before him: ‘Thro’ every Age, Thr’ historic page, Their deeds with honour shall rehearse’.<sup>427</sup> Following the victory on the Plains of Abraham and the capture of Quebec in 1759, there was an outpouring of classical literature by the American colonists, relieved that the danger of the French military had subsided significantly. A marching hymn from the War of the Austrian Succession, known as King George’s War in the colonies, entitled *The Recruiting Officer* was republished in 1760. Its jingoistic last stanza cast Britain as Rome and

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<sup>423</sup> John Kerber, *The Present State of the British Empire*, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.44.

<sup>424</sup> Kerber, *Present State*, p.44.

<sup>425</sup> See David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>426</sup> Benjamin Price Young, *The Unfortunate Hero*, (New York: Parker and Weyman, 1758), p.7, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 41003.

<sup>427</sup> Young, *Unfortunate Hero*, p.15,

the French-Canadians as Carthage: 'For a Carthage there's Money store, Besides great quantities of Ore, We'll have a Share as well as they, When over the Hills and far away, King George commands and we'll obey'.<sup>428</sup> A sermon from the same year drew a similar comparison between France and Carthage and Rome and Britain. Thomas Foxcroft told his parishioners 'long had it been the common opinion (*Carthago est delenda*) The American Carthage must be reduced, Canada must be conquer'd'.<sup>429</sup> By repeating the phrase that Cato the Elder concluded every speech to the Roman Senate with, Foxcroft seamlessly wove together Roman and British history with their foes Carthage and France. Eran Shalev has commented that in doing this Foxcroft was 'transforming Canada's defeat into an event of epic, classical dimensions' and the American colonists appeared as 'Roman provincials acting under the auspices of a mighty empire'.<sup>430</sup> Another sermon from 1760 deployed the Carthage analogy but in an eerily prophetic manner. Reverend Jonathan Mayhew warned the colonists of the dangers that befell ancient Rome after the defeat of Carthage: 'When her citizens had no longer any foreign enemy to fear...[the Romans fell into] violent factions, contentions, and civil wars. They lost their liberty in the end; became wretched by means of their own prosperity and greatness; and so the Roman power was destroyed'.<sup>431</sup> Just to enforce the message, Mayhew said 'Something not wholly unlike to this, may possibly befall us in time, the American Carthage being subdued'.<sup>432</sup> When the war was concluded in Britain's favour many American writers and poets looked to the mother country as a new Rome. From Philadelphia, Nathaniel Evans wrote the *Ode on the Late Glorious Successes of His Majesty's Arms*, which pronounced 'Well doth Britannia take the noble ways/Which ancient Rome victoriously pursu'd,/At home her People's peerless Worth to raise,/While by her Arms abroad the Foe's subdu'd'.<sup>433</sup> Likewise, the playwright George Cockington from New Hampshire wrote a historical tragedy entitled *The Conquest of Canada*, which declared that the late war was 'gloriously successful to

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<sup>428</sup> *The Recruiting Officer*, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 49233.

<sup>429</sup> Thomas Foxcroft, *Grateful Reflexions on the Signal Appearances of Divine Providence for Great Britain and Its Colonies in America. A Sermon Preached in the Old Church in Boston*, (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1760), p.30, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 8599.

<sup>430</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.47.

<sup>431</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, *Two Discourses Delivered October 9th*, (Boston: Edes & Gill, 1760), p.65, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 8668.

<sup>432</sup> Mayhew, *Two Discourses*, p.65.

<sup>433</sup> Nathaniel Evans, *Ode on the Late Glorious Successes of His Majesty's Arms and Present Greatness of the English Nation*, (Philadelphia: William Dunlap, 1762), 5.

great Britain, beyond all parallel' and that it was 'amply worthy of being registered in the annals of fame, as rival actions of those patriotic deeds, of the so much admired ancient Greeks and Romans'.<sup>434</sup> In the immediate post-war period, the British Empire was clearly in its prime, and the American colonists relished being a part of it. The Americans felt as though they were part of an imperial movement that exceeded the Roman Empire, not just in size, but in virtue and liberty.

### The Passage of the Stamp Act

At the conclusion of the French and Indian War in 1763, the British were faced with a national debt that had nearly doubled as a result of their wartime expenditures. Since the majority of the expenses had been made in America, and because a British army of ten thousand soldiers remained in the new colonies acquired from France, the British looked to America to help raise the revenue required. In 1763 the British Prime Minister, George Grenville, discovered that the American customs service was not collecting enough in duties to cover their operating costs. He subsequently introduced the Sugar Act in 1764, which altered the colonial import duties, most notably on foreign molasses, and made smuggling more difficult. Aware of the imminent passage of the Act, the American colonists sent protests before and after its enactment, arguing that the tax went beyond the regulation of trade. Formal protests were drawn up and endorsed by the assemblies of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and North and South Carolina, and were delivered to the royal governor or to agents in London who relayed them to the proper British authorities, albeit to no avail. The Sugar Act was swiftly followed by the Currency Act of 1764, which protected British merchants and creditors from being paid in depreciated colonial currency.

The passage of these Acts marked the beginning of a shift in the way that the American colonists viewed Britain, and this was reflected in the way in which they deployed classical examples in describing Britain. In defending the British imposition of taxation on the colonies, British and American Loyalists drew on the Roman example to justify their position. American Tories claimed that the 'Roman *coloniae* did not enjoy all the rights of Roman citizens; on the contrary, they only

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<sup>434</sup> George Cockington, 'To the Public, in *The Conquest of Canada: Or the Siege of Quebec. An Historical Tragedy of Five Acts*, (Albany, 1773), iii-v.

used the Roman laws and religion, and served in the legions, but had not the right of suffrage or of bearing honours. In these respects, our English colonies exactly resemble them'.<sup>435</sup> While the Loyalists compared the British colonial project to Rome's, the Whigs, on the other hand, denounced Britain for reviving and re-enacting the Roman Empire's ways and endorsed a comparison to the Greek model.<sup>436</sup> The British Whigs pointed out the severity and inappropriateness of the Roman *exemplum*, preferring instead a comparison to the more humane Greek example.<sup>437</sup> In 1766 Richard Bland cited Thucydides' discussion of Corcyra in his *An Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies* in order to prove that Greek colonies had enjoyed independence.<sup>438</sup> Likewise, John Adams later in 1775 wrote in the *Letters of Novanglus* that 'the Greeks planted colonies, and neither demanded nor pretended any authority over them, but they became distinct, independent commonwealths'.<sup>439</sup> Unlike a few years earlier, where Britain had been described as surpassing Rome in their achievements and virtue, the image the colonists evoked was that of the oppressive Roman Empire, infringing the rights of the colonists.

The proposal of the Stamp Act in 1765 further altered neoclassical imaginations of Britain: England became the corrupt and tyrannical Rome of the Caesars. When Grenville introduced the Sugar Act to Parliament in 1764, he had included a statement suggesting the future introduction of a stamp tax in the colonies. As before, opposition in the colonies to the proposed Stamp Act was immediate. All thirteen colonial assemblies drafted petitions objecting to the Stamp Act as a form of taxation without representation and, instead, offered to return to more traditional methods of financial requisitions, namely having the Crown nominate a specific sum and allowing the assembly to decide how or whether to raise it. After the first round of petitions reached London in early 1765, the British Parliament refused to receive any more.<sup>440</sup> The passage of the Sugar Act and Currency

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<sup>435</sup> Martin Howard, *A Letter from a Gentleman at Halifax*, (Providence, 1765), 15.

<sup>436</sup> To see just how well the colonists knew the difference between the Greek *apokia* and the Roman *colonia* see Richard Gummere, 'Chapter Six - Colonies, Ancient and Modern', *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*, (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1963).

<sup>437</sup> James Otis, *A Vindication of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*, (Boston, 1764), 21-22.

<sup>438</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, 1.2-3.

<sup>439</sup> John Adams, 'Letters of Novanglus', March 6, 1775, in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856). 10 volumes. Vol. 4. Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2102> on 2013-10-23

<sup>440</sup> Grenville was of the opinion that requisitions did not work effectively, having tried the system before.

Act, and the impending Stamp Act, made the colonists fear and rebel at the first signs of what they interpreted as a dramatic change in imperial policy and a conspiracy to rob them of their liberties. The colonists saw these actions as violations of the British constitution and their rights as Englishmen, and signalled to the colonists the beginning of imperial tyranny.

The initial suspicion and apprehension that the colonists felt towards these new imperial measures was expressed by James Otis in his 1764 pamphlet *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*. The pamphlet, published in response to the passage of the Sugar Act and rumours of the Stamp Act, refuted Parliament's right to tax the colonies. More importantly, Otis employed classical imagery in a manner not previously evident in the colonies' relationship with Britain, and signalled a change in the perceived classical reputation of Britain. Otis began by stating that Britain had the greatest opportunity for 'honest wealth and grandeur...since the days of Julius Caesar', but, breaking with the traditional rhetoric of envisioning Britain as surpassing Rome, he concluded on a pessimistic note referring to the standing armies in North America and warning the American colonists of their dangers: 'are all ambitious generals dead? Will no more rise hereafter? ...The experience of past times will show that an army of 20 or 30 thousand veterans half [of them] 3000 miles from Rome, were apt to proclaim Caesars'.<sup>441</sup> By linking the British Redcoats to standing armies and the rise of Caesar in Rome, Otis expressed the anxiety that the colonists felt towards the intentions of Britain in keeping a standing army in the colonies, especially in light of the perceived infringements upon their liberty brought about by the passage of various taxation laws. Otis, using the fall of the Roman Republic as a warning to the colonists and their situation, set the tone for the following two decades of colonial political propaganda but had to wait for the actual passage of the Stamp Act for the other colonists to follow his lead. In 1779, William Tudor's Boston Massacre oration reflected on the point raised by Otis, echoing the tenor and confirming the legitimacy of Otis' concerns from fifteen years beforehand. In his oration, Tudor emphasised the debilitating influence of standing armies, saying: 'If Rome could have been saved Brutus and his virtuous associates would have saved her; but a standing army, and a perpetual dictator, were, and ever will prove too hard for the patriotic few. Learn

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<sup>441</sup> Otis, *A Vindication*, 64.

hence, my countrymen, that a State may sink so low in slavery that even virtue cannot retrieve her. From these examples, prudence dictates – *resist beginnings*'.<sup>442</sup> Tudor, like Otis before him, realised the dangers of standing armies, believing them to be an indicator of the beginnings of tyranny. Otis indicated that Britain had sunk so low in its virtue that it was irredeemable and that the only path to follow was that of Brutus and his 'virtuous associates': that is, not one of revolution but death.<sup>443</sup> Otis did not see America as rising above Britain and preserving liberty, but was resigned to the colonists succumbing to British corruption.

Despite the protestations of the colonists, the Stamp Act passed with a large majority in February 1765, to go into effect on November 1 of the same year. The Act required all contracts, licenses, commissions, and most other legal documents to be executed on officially stamped paper, otherwise they would not be recognised in the law courts. Likewise, all newspapers and pamphlets were subject to the Stamp Act, as well as playing cards and dice. In October nine colonies sent representatives to the Stamp Act Congress in New York, which passed resolutions affirming colonial loyalty to the King and 'all due subordination' to Parliament but condemned the Stamp and Sugar Acts.<sup>444</sup> The colonists took immediate offense to the Stamp Act, seeing it as an act of tyranny aimed at enslavement and robbing them of their rights. Robert Treat Paine, the Massachusetts lawyer and later first attorney general for the state, wrote in his diary for November 1, 1765 'the Dawn was overcast with Dark destructive Fogs and Nature seem'd to Mourn the Arrival of this ill boded dreaded never to be forgotten first of Nov. ...NB Stamp Act takes place this day'.<sup>445</sup> Even amongst the less politically inclined colonists, an abhorrence of the Stamp Act was apparent. A colonist named Benjamin Bang, whose diary consists exclusively of entries about the weather and agriculture-related matters, notes for October 31, 1765 'This day is our last of Liberty relating to ye Stamp act taking place tomorrow. This is ye dreaded Day although a pleasant one in ye heavens above. Oh ye slavery act' and for the following day 'But oh here begins our first day of Slavery ye Stamp Act takes place'.<sup>446</sup> The

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<sup>442</sup> William Tudor, *An oration, delivered March 5th, 1779*, (Boston: Edes and Gills, 1779), pp.10-11, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 16550.

<sup>443</sup> Tudor, *An oration*, pp.10-11.

<sup>444</sup> *The Declaration Of Rights Of The Stamp Act Congress*, October 19, 1765.

<sup>445</sup> Robert Treat Paine diaries, 1745-1814, November 1, 1765, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. p-392, reel 10-11 (microfilm) or Ms. N-641, reel 10.

<sup>446</sup> Pre-Revolutionary Diaries - Benjamin Bang Diary, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. p-363, reel 1.

Amory Family, a successful shipping and merchant business family in Boston, wrote numerous letters to their overseas clients during the Stamp Act Crisis highlighting the colonists' cause and their desire to secure their liberty. To one of their British clients they wrote: 'We cannot think the wisdom and policy of the government will suffer them again even to attempt what we esteem our natural and inherent rights, as our charter privileges - for should they, they must expect that we shall not be wanting in making every effort to preserve our freedom, more dear to us than life'.<sup>447</sup> The Amory Family would repeat these concerns a few years later in 1768, writing to Edward Pitts in England: 'We have now done with importations from Great Britain. Her trade with the colonies must be lost unless she adopts new measures – the town is now full of soldiers. This serves only to fix the restrictions of the people here, who are determined to have as little connection as possible with a state who, contrary to the plainest principles of right, are endeavouring to enslave them. We don't wish for an independency, but we would not be slaves'.<sup>448</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, Governor of Massachusetts, confirmed the general feeling in the colonies, writing to an unidentified English friend on April 9, 1765: 'The people here look upon their Liberties as gone. When the parliament once begins they say there is no drawing a line as long as the Colonists have any property left'.<sup>449</sup>

The Stamp Act was the death knell to the American colonies' relationship with Britain, and marked an abrupt change in the use of classical language in discussing the mother country. In the 1750s and early 1760s Britain had been described as surpassing the Roman Empire in magnanimity, but this reputation had come under question during the Sugar Act and Currency Act when Britain became likened to a corrupt Rome. The advent of the Stamp Act, however, irrevocably radicalised the colonists' view of the mother country. As Eran Shalev has summarised '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>450</sup> Barely two months after the Stamp Act had been passed, the *Providence Gazette* published

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<sup>447</sup> John and Jonathan Amory to Devonshire and Reeve, Boston – June 16, 1766, Copies of Letters of John and Jonathan Amory 1765-1786, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms N-2024, Vol. 145.

<sup>448</sup> John and Jonathan Amory to Edward Pitts, Boston – October 21, 1768, Copies of Letters of John and Jonathan Amory 1765-1786, MHS, Call No. Ms N-2024, Vol. 145.

<sup>449</sup> Thomas Hutchinson to Unknown English Friend, Boston – April 9, 1765, Thomas Hutchinson Letterbooks, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-144.

<sup>450</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.52.

‘A Letter from a Plain Yeoman’, which used antiquity to express the tyrannical situation the colonies found themselves in. The Yeoman, mixing Biblical and classical illusions, asserted that ‘Pharaoh, Caligula, and but a few more, have been instances of such abusers of power’.<sup>451</sup> The writer, however, did hurry to add that he did ‘not mention those monsters with any design of making an odious parallel between them and any person now in authority’.<sup>452</sup> It is difficult to believe the ‘Yeoman’s’ ironic claim that he did not desire to draw a parallel between the two. References to Caligula, the most notorious Caesar of the Julio-Claudians, known for his cruelty, extravagance, and sexual perversity, and Pharaoh, the enslaver of the Hebrews during their Egyptian captivity, were daring and damning. Shortly after, in 1766, the minister David Rowland compelled the ‘loyal but oppressed, distressed people’ of the colonies to look to Brutus as an example: ‘Soon were the respective colonies formed into a union, and happy agreement, not only to oppose determined ruin, But as *Brutus* once said, “To speak, oppose, yea, to dye too, rather than part with the liberty of Rome,” of Britain’.<sup>453</sup> Rowland, making reference to Brutus, in a religious context in particular, effectively nullified the implications that suicide had for Christian principles. The Brutus narratives taught the American colonists that ‘there are no parts of history, but are full of examples of this kind, the nearer we go back to the beginning of government, the more instance we have of the people’s setting up, and pulling down their monarchs for their tyranny’.<sup>454</sup> Caesar represented just one of many leaders who believed they had divine right to rule over other men, and Brutus reminded the citizenry of the need to be continuously conscious of such men. To the American colonists Brutus continued to serve as a reminder that there were constant conspiracies against liberty which needed to be guarded against. Brutus also supplied the colonists with a course of action against tyranny; in referencing Brutus, they were making allusions to both the legitimacy and necessity of tyrannicide, as well as

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<sup>451</sup> ‘Yeoman’, A Letter from a Plain Yeoman, *Providence Gazette*, May 11, 1765, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.55.

<sup>452</sup> ‘Yeoman’, A Letter from a Plain Yeoman, *Providence Gazette*, May 11, 1765, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.55.

<sup>453</sup> David Rowland, *Divine Providence illustrated and improved. A thanksgiving-discourse...occasioned by the repeal of the stamp-act*, (Providence: Sarah Goddard, 1766), p.11, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 10483.

<sup>454</sup> *The Judgment of Whole Kingdoms and Nations: Concerning the Rights, Power and Prerogative of Kings, and the Rights, Privileges and Properties of the People*, (Boston: I. Thomas, 1773(?)), p.79, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 13632.

making a virtuous death in the face of tyranny.<sup>455</sup> Like the Cato narrative, however, Brutus did not represent an optimistic victory: Brutus the Elder has his sons killed for the sake of liberty and Brutus the Younger, like Cato, committed suicide rather than live under the tyranny of Caesar.<sup>456</sup>

The Stamp Act helped codify the colonists' use of classical language and imagery, and the result was an outpouring of texts that made specific reference to Cato. After the passage of the Act in 1765, the colonists settled on Cato as best representing their grievances and began to invoke him in their fight against Britain. Texts were often written under the pseudonym 'Cato', invoking Cato's focus on self-sacrificing patriotism and devotion to liberty, ideals which became increasingly important to the American colonists. Cato's position at the fall of the Roman Republic spoke personally to the colonists. They found themselves in the same situation: Britain, previously the virtuous modern incarnation of Rome, had become corrupt and tyrannical. In this classically informed worldview, the colonists saw themselves as, like Cato, having to choose between a virtuous death that removed

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<sup>455</sup> There were two particular Brutii from antiquity. Lucius Junius Brutus was touted in Roman history as being the founder of the Roman Republic and is traditionally named as one of the first consuls in 509 BCE. Brutus the Elder was the nephew of Rome's seventh and final king, Tarquinius Superbus. When Tarquinius' son, Sextus Tarquinius, raped Lucretia, who subsequently killed herself believing she had brought shame on the family, Brutus led a rebellion against the king resulting in the people voting for the deposition of the king and the banishment of the royal family. According to Livy, Brutus' first act after the expulsion of the royals was to bring the people to swear an oath to never again allow a king of Rome: '*Omnium primum avidum novae libertatis populum, ne postmodum flecti precibus aut donis regis posset, iure iurando adegit neminem Romae passuros regnare*'. During Brutus' consulship the previously exiled royal family tried to regain the throne and amongst the conspirators were Brutus' two sons. The conspiracy was discovered and the consuls punished the conspirators with death; Brutus stoically watched the execution of his own sons, showing no emotion, according to Livy, during the punishment. Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.57-2.2.3-4. Brutus' much later descendant, Marcus Junius Brutus (the Younger), was also remembered for his opposition to tyranny. Brutus, a politician in the late Roman Republic, took a leading role in the assassination of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March. When Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, took the consulship and followed a similar path to his adopted father, civil war ensued and Brutus fought on the losing side against Octavian. Following defeat in the Battle of Philippi, Brutus committed suicide declaring, according to Plutarch, 'by all means must we fly; not with our feet, however, but with our hands'. Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*, 52.2.

<sup>456</sup> Both Brutus's had long been admired in the trans-Atlantic intellectual tradition. In a 1754 sermon given in Maryland, the Rev. James Sterling praised both Brutus the Elder and the Younger despite their obvious heathen status and violent actions, clearly counting them amongst the ranks of virtuous heathens. He said to his congregation: 'Hence the First *Brutus*, with an Heart as bright and impervious too, as a Rock of polish'd Adamant, asserted the impartial Tribunal of Liberty restor'd; pass'd Sentence of Death on his own Rebel Sons; and sat with an awful Serenity, till he saw it executed on the two degenerate Youths – A Godlike Act! Nor is an *English* Christian Clergyman asham'd to give it from the Pulpit that high Epithet, though perform'd by a Heathan – A Godlike Act; to show amaz'd Posterity; and the Father of his Country rise above the Father of the Children of his Bowels! Thus too the second *Brutus*, with Zeal worthy of the First bath'd his Dagger in the Heart's Blood of a proud Usurper'. James Sterling, *A sermon, preached before His Excellency the governor [sic] of Maryland, and both Houses of Assembly, at Annapolis, December 13, 1754*, (Annapolis: Jonas Green, 1755), p.30, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 7574.

them from corruption or a life under tyranny. James Otis wrote to Mercy Otis Warren in 1766: 'The enemies of our peace entertain hopes we shall get no relief from home, but I am positive all appearances are against them. If we are to be slaves the living have only to envy the dead, for without liberty I own desire not to exist here'.<sup>457</sup> There was no better classical role model than Cato, who encapsulated Otis' sentiment that death was preferable to tyranny and slavery.

### *Cato's Letters*

The pseudonym 'Cato' was greatly admired by the American colonists as it conjured not only the image of the principled hero from antiquity but also *Cato's Letters; OR, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, And Other Important Subjects*, the collection of articles by British writers John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon published from 1720 to 1723. Prior to penning *Cato's Letters*, Trenchard and Gordon had worked jointly on *The Independent Whig*, a highly popular essay series which dealt with their fear of standing armies, Jacobitism, anticlericalism, and argued for the rights of Protestant dissenters. Trenchard and Gordon's interests were, however, far broader, and to give voice to these interests, and perhaps to reach a larger audience through the regular press, in 1720 they embarked upon writing a new series of essays in *The London Journal* over the signature of 'Cato'. The total of one hundred and forty-four essays attacked 'unjust' governments on a wide range of issues and dealt with various aspects of political theory. Writing under the name 'Cato' it is not surprising that they frequently discussed matter such as tyranny and other evils of government (fifteen), the wonders of liberty and its products (fourteen), freedom of speech (four), and general questions regarding morality and manners (approximately twenty-five). The *Letters* emphasised the need for liberty, virtue, and the ability to defend oneself, and were one of the most popular, quotable, and widespread works in the eighteenth century.<sup>458</sup> 'Cato's' career came to an end with the sudden illness and eventual death

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<sup>457</sup> James Otis to Mercy Warren, April 11, 1766, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>458</sup> The principle series of essays was concluded with a 'Farewell from Cato' on July 27, 1723. Only a few uninspiring letters from 'Criton', Gordon's pseudonym, appeared in the latter half of the year. *Cato's Letters* were phenomenally popular from the beginning and became one of the most esteemed sources of political ideas throughout the British Empire in the eighteenth century. The original publication in *The London Journal* had a circulation of six thousand copies of the newspaper per week while the collection appeared. Charles Bechdolt Realey, 'The London journal and Its Authors, 1720-1723', *Bulletin of the University of Kansas*, Vol V (1936), pp.1-38. Realey argued that the *London Journal* was the most influential newspaper in England from 1720-1723. The essays that appeared in

of Trenchard in December 1723.<sup>459</sup> Throughout the *Letters* Trenchard and Gordon used the Roman Republic as an example of both the freedom and liberty that resulted from having virtuous politicians and populace, as well as the dangers posed to liberty by corruption. In Letter 27 they stated that ‘the Roman virtue and the Roman liberty expired together; tyranny and corruption came upon them almost hand in hand’.<sup>460</sup> In choosing to write under the pseudonym of ‘Cato’, Trenchard and Gordon expressed their interest in the lessons of the history of the late Roman Republic and indicated their devotion to the virtues and notions of liberty associated with the name of Cato. Using the pseudonym ‘Cato’ married together republican ideals with the belief in dying for these principles, thereby making *Cato’s Letters* a promoter of the same values inherent in Addison’s *Cato* and Plutarch’s *Life of Cato*. In fact, Gordon later discussed his views on suicide and gave an argument in support of it, stating that it had not been forbidden by the Romans, ‘nor did they apprehend any mischievous consequences from it to the community in general’.<sup>461</sup> Trenchard and Gordon were also undoubtedly influenced by the popularity of Addison’s play which further painted Cato as a heroic and virtuous character. ‘Cato’ remained one of the most popular pseudonyms in the Anglo-American world throughout the eighteenth century.

Quite frequently during the Stamp Act Crisis, sections of Trenchard and Gordon’s *Letters* were reprinted in colonial newspapers.<sup>462</sup> The *New Hampshire*

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the *Journal* were ‘among the most troublesome thorns that pricked the vulnerable sides of the British ministry’. The essays were collated then printed in London, with the series going through six editions of a complete four volume set under the title *Cato’s Letters; OR, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, And Other Important Subjects. Cato’s Letters* (4 vols., London: Wilkins, Walthoe, Woodward, and Peele, 1724). The first full collection. (4 vols., London: W. Wilkins, 1731). (4 vols., London: W. Wilkins, 1733). Third edition. (4 vols., London: W. Wilkins, 1737). Fourth edition. (4 vols., London: Woodward and Walthoe, 1748). Fifth edition. (4 vols., London: Walthoe, 1754-1755). The *Cato’s Letters* series was also translated into Dutch and French and published, respectively, in Amsterdam and Paris. *Brieven over de vryheid en het Geluk des Volks onder pen Goede Regeering in’t Englesch uitgegeeven op den Naam van Cato* (3 vols., Amsterdam: Tongerlo, Houttayn, 1754). One hundred and thirty-three of *Cato’s Letters* were translated into Dutch. *Dix-septieme letter de Caton, traduite de l’Anglais de Thomas Gordon* (Paris: A. Baudoin, 1790). Translated by J.L. Chalmel.

<sup>459</sup> Gordon testified that Trenchard died from an ‘ulcer of the kidneys’, however, it was later implied that Trenchard committed suicide. Gordon, ‘Preface’, *Cato’s Letters*, (London: Walthoe, 1755), 1, lix. William Cole, ‘Accounts of Conveys Middleton, in *Horace Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. W.S. Lewis (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), XV, p.311.

<sup>460</sup> Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato’s Letter*, XXVII.

<sup>461</sup> Thomas Gordon, *The Humourist*, i, 4<sup>th</sup> edn, (London, 1741), ii, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (London, 1735), ii 135, 137-8.

<sup>462</sup> For more on *Cato’s Letters* in the American colonies see Heather Barry, *A Dress Rehearsal for Revolution: John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s Works in eighteenth-century British America*, (Maryland: University Press of America, 2007).

*Gazette*, for instance, featured a reprint of a number of *Cato's Letters*.<sup>463</sup> Colonial printers specifically selected a little over fifty of the total 144 essays for reproduction in their newspapers, clearly choosing ones that resonated with the colonial cause rather than reprinting the entire volumes.<sup>464</sup> The colonists had their own agenda and interests, and only reprinted those *Letters* that addressed these issues. The majority of essays reprinted in the colonial papers discussed the themes of: freedom of speech, free and arbitrary governments, human nature, and power. *Cato's Letters* often offered sentiments that complemented the Catonian rhetoric favoured by the colonists. The *Rise and continuance of the substitutes, in the Continental Army* from 1777, an official wartime document that dealt with the hiring of substitutes to serve in the Army, opened by quoting *Cato's Letters*, specifically one written by John Gordon on the subject of Liberty: 'When a People can no longer expect Redress of public and heavy Evils, nor Satisfaction for public and bitter Injuries, hideous is the prospect which they have before them. If they will tamely suffer a Fall from Plenty to Beggary, they may soon expect another, and a worse, from that is Slavery'.<sup>465</sup> The fact that the colonists chose to use this quote reveals their attitude towards liberty and their belief that Britain was intend on casting them into slavery. The 1764 pamphlet *The conduct of the Paxton-men*, written in support of the Paxton Boys, frontiersmen along the Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania who retaliated against local American Indians, inadvertently discusses *Cato's Letters* and shows how they were received and used politically in the colonies.<sup>466</sup> Written anonymously, but often identified as being penned by Rev. Thomas Barton, the pamphlet noted:

The Author of *Cato's Letters* very justly observes, that 'It is a most wicked and absurd Position, to say, that a People can ever be in such a Situation, as not to have a Right to oppose a *Tyrant*, a *Robber*, or a *Traitor*, who, by *Violence*, *Treachery*, *Rapine*, infinite *Murders* and *Devastations*, has deprived them of Safety and Protection.

It was a known Maxim of Liberty amongst the great, the wise, the free Antients, that a *Tyrant*, or a *Traytor*, was a *Beast of Prey*, which might be killed by a Spear as well as by a fair Chance; in his

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<sup>463</sup> See Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: national Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theatre*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p.48.

<sup>464</sup> Barry, *Dress Rehearsal for Revolution*, pp.30-31.

<sup>465</sup> *The Rise and continuance of the substitutes, in the Continental Army*, (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1777), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. 15575 Evans fiche.

<sup>466</sup> The Paxton Boys were frontiersmen of Scots-Irish origin from along the Susquehanna River in central Pennsylvania. In 1763 they murdered twenty local Native Americans in events collectively called the Conestoga Massacre. In 1764 250 of the Paxton Boys marched to Philadelphia to present their grievances to the legislature. They finally agreed to disperse on the promise by Benjamin Franklin that their issues would be considered.

*Court* as well as in his *Camp*; that *every* Man had a Right to destroy One, who would destroy all Men; that no Law ought to protect him who took away all Law; and, that like *Hercules's* Monsters, it was glorious to rid the World of him, *whenever*, and by *whatever Means forever*, it could be done.<sup>467</sup>

Barton quoted *Cato's Letters* as authority to commit tyrannicide and declared a tyrant could be felled by anyone. He included a reference to Hercules and his twelve labours that involved the slaying of various vicious and monstrous creatures. Hercules has come down through history as a figure often called upon to exemplify the strength, courage, and power of different oppressed peoples, thus demarcating him as a symbol of liberty.<sup>468</sup>

Having established *Cato's Letters* as an authority on the right to oppose tyranny, Barton then reminded his reader of the precedents from antiquity:

Did not the Roman Senators kill *Julius Caesar*, even in the *Senate House*, in order to free their Country of a Tyrant and an Oppressor? Did not *Brutus*, the Elder, put his own Sons to Death for a Conspiracy to restore *Tarquin*? Did not *Mucius Scaevola* gain immortal Honour for an Attempt to kill Lars Porsena..., who was a foreign Enemy, making unjust War upon *Rome*? Did not *L. Quintus Cincinnatus*, a brave and virtuous Dictator of *Rome*, order *Spurius Maelius* to be slain, though there was no Law subsisting, by which he could be put to Death; and through imploring the publick *Faith*, to which he had been a Traytor and sworn Enemy.

Have we not read of Men who have killed themselves, rather than become a Prey to a merciless Enemy – *Brutus* and *Cassius*, the *Decii*, *Otho*, *Celanus*, *Cato*, and many others, have done this, preferring Death to Slavery.<sup>469</sup>

Barton invoked a long line of both tyrannicides and suicides, praising both for their devotion to liberty. He first mentioned Brutus the Elder, who ordered and watched the execution of his own two sons after they tried to reinstate the kingship in Rome, angling to overthrow the more democratic consuls.<sup>470</sup> Gaius Mucius Scaevola was another Roman hero famous for his bravery.<sup>471</sup> Reportedly, in 508CE, during a war between Rome and Clusium, the Clusian king Lars Porsena laid siege to Rome. Scaevola, with the approval of the Roman Senate, snuck into the Etruscan camp and

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<sup>467</sup> *The conduct of the Paxton-men, impartially represented: with some remarks on the Narrative*, (Philadelphia: Andrew Steuart, 1764), pp.23-24, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 9594.

<sup>468</sup> See Alastair Blanshard, *Hercules: A Heroic Life*, (London: Granta Books, 2005).

<sup>469</sup> *Conduct of the Paxton-men* p.24.

<sup>470</sup> For Lucius Junius Brutus see Livy, *Ab urbe condita*, 1.56-2.6; Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*, 1.1; Plutarch, *Publicola*, 6.1-6.4.

<sup>471</sup> For Gaius Mucius Scaevola see Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 2.12-2.13.

attempted to kill Porsena, but accidentally killed Porsena's scribe. Brought before Porsena, Scaevola declared: 'I am Gaius Mucius, a citizen of Rome. I came here as an enemy to kill my enemy, and I am as ready to die as I am to kill. We Romans act bravely and, when adversity strikes, we suffer bravely'.<sup>472</sup> Scaevola represented both a tyrannicide but also one willing to die for the liberty of his country. The next on Barton's list; Spurius Maelius was accused of courting popularity through selling cheap grain with the view to become a king of Rome. The revered Roman dictator Cincinnatus ordered his execution and was praised on account of having preserved Roman liberty.<sup>473</sup> Barton's next group of Roman heroes – Brutus, Cassius, the Decii, Otho, Calanus, and Cato – had all committed suicide rather than live under a tyrant. Brutus, Cassius, and Cato had chosen death at the fall of the Roman Republic, preferring suicide to living under Caesar's regime.<sup>474</sup> The Decii were a plebeian family, who became renowned when two of the family members sacrificed their lives for the preservation of the country. Publius Decius the Elder and the Younger, both at different times, fought wars for Rome, and when the situation began to deteriorate they dedicated themselves, and the army of the enemy, to the gods of the dead, and plunged into battle to be slain just as the Roman side became victorious.<sup>475</sup> Otho was a Roman Emperor, who committed suicide when he heard his army had been defeated. Otho's death was treated as a nobly Stoic end and beneficial to Rome.<sup>476</sup> Finally, Calanus was an Indian sage, reportedly forced to join Alexander once the Macedonian had conquered the Indian capital of Taxila. In Persia, Calanus reportedly 'refused to submit to an invalid regimen, and told Alexander that he was content to die as he was, which would be preferable to enduring the misery of being forced to alter his way of life'.<sup>477</sup> He then built himself a funeral pyre and committed suicide.<sup>478</sup> The commonality between all of these examples from antiquity that Barton named and admired was that the heroes had committed suicide in preference

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<sup>472</sup> Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 2.12.

<sup>473</sup> For Spurius Maelius see Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 4.13; Cicero, *De Senectute* 16; Cicero, *De Amicitia* 8; Cicero, *De republica*, 2.49

<sup>474</sup> For Brutus see Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*; Appian, *The Civil Wars*, Book 5.136; Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 44.12-44.19. For Cassius see Plutarch, *Life of Cassius*. For Cato see Plutarch, *Life of Cato*.

<sup>475</sup> A third Publius Decius Mus, consul in 279 BC, attempted this when he fought against Pyrrhus of Epirus at the Battle of Asculum. Forewarned of the deeds of the consul's father and grandfather, Pyrrhus ordered that Decius should be taken alive, and sent word of this to his opponent. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputation*, 1.37.

<sup>476</sup> Tacitus, *The Histories*, 2.46-56.

<sup>477</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis* 7.3.1-6.

<sup>478</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis*, 7.3.1-6.

to living under tyranny or died while defending liberty. None of them offered an example of liberty triumphing over a corrupt and despotic regime; their glory and reverence was found in death. As the colonies descended into war with Britain it was these examples that they turned to as role models and canonised as heroes. However, it was the image of Cato, who represented passive opposition rather than advocating active resistance to tyranny or even tyrannicide, which became most admired and deployed.

### *Pseudonyms and Pamphlets*

The colonists' identification with Cato went further than simply using his political power in a pseudonym. The literature of the Stamp Act Crisis was littered with references to Cato and his noble stand for liberty, as well as paraphrased and quoted sections of the prose from Addison's tragedy. In response to the passage of the Stamp Act, Naphthali Daggett, the Yale Professor of Divinity, wrote a series of newspaper essays under the name 'Cato' attacking the Connecticut stamp agent Jared Ingersoll and extolling the importance of preserving liberty. Daggett's attacks on Ingersoll began on August 9 with an article in the *Connecticut Gazette* denouncing him as a traitor and charging the British government with sinister designs in enacting the tax legislation. Invoking the name 'Cato' in denouncing the Stamp Act meant that Daggett linked the fall of the Roman Republic and Cato's sacrifice for liberty to the plight of the colonists, and helped establish Cato as the symbol that represented the colonists' beliefs and viewpoint. In 1766 'T. H.' wrote a pamphlet entitled *Considerations upon the rights of the colonists to the privileges of British subjects* where he called upon the colonists to emulate Cato in their contemporary struggles with the British. The pamphlet advised the Americans to 'let Us animate our Hearts, by calling to our Memories the glorious Examples of Antiquity, and generously risque the Whole to preserve the most *valuable Part*'.<sup>479</sup> This was followed by a footnote naming Cato as the particular example from antiquity worthy of emulation and a quote from Addison's play that emphasised Cato's decision to preserve his virtue and find freedom in death:

Let Us draw our Term of Freedom out  
In its full Length, and spin it to the last,

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<sup>479</sup> T.H., *Considerations Upon the Rights of the Colonists to the Privileges of British Subjects*, (New York: John Holt, 1766), p.24, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 10273.

So shall We gain still one Day's Liberty;  
And, Let me perish, but in Cato's Judgment,  
A Day – an Hour of virtuous Liberty  
Is worth a whole Eternity in Bondage.<sup>480</sup>

Holt's pamphlet not only invoked the Cato narrative, but also quoted Addison's play as the authority on Cato, and tied the two to the American cause. Holt was praising Cato's actions in deciding not to outlive liberty and encouraged the colonists to adopt the same determination.

John Adams' 1765 pamphlet *A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law*, which protested the Stamp Act, also drew on Addison's *Cato* and used Catonian rhetoric in arguing the colonists' cause. When Adams had studied at Harvard he had participated in a club that staged college performances. Adams records in his diary: '[The member's] plan was to spend their Evenings together, in reading any new publications, or any Poetry or Dramatic compositions, that might fall their Way. I was as often requested to read as any other; especially Tragedies, and it was whispered to me and circulated among others that I had some faculty for public speaking and that I should make a better Lawyer than Divine'.<sup>481</sup> For Adams, the result of this early exposure to theatre is evident: his writings demonstrate both a fondness for theatrical metaphor and an impressive familiarity with drama, particularly the works of Shakespeare.<sup>482</sup> Addison's *Cato*, which Adams was most likely introduced to during his college years, especially captured his imagination and he made frequent references to it in his 1765 pamphlet.<sup>483</sup>

The *Dissertation* was first published in four instalments in the *Boston Gazette* between August and September 1765. Later that year Thomas Hollis, an English philanthropist, republished the pamphlet in the *London Chronicle* and in 1768 reissued it in London as a pamphlet during the Townshend Duties Crisis. The essay used English Revolutionary history to construct a genealogy of resistance to tyranny in order to justify the colonists' opposition to the Stamp Act. Adams wrote:

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<sup>480</sup> T.H., *Considerations*, p.24. Addison, *Cato*, II.i.96-101.

<sup>481</sup> John Adams, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States: with a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations, by his Grandson Charles Francis Adams* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1856). 10 volumes. Vol. 1. Chapter: CHAPTER I.: Education of Mr. Adams—School at Worcester—Choice of a Profession. Accessed from <http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2099/159533> on 2013-10-23

<sup>482</sup> Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, *Shakespeare in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.30-31.

<sup>483</sup> Addison's *Cato* is found in the Harvard Library catalogue from John Adam's time at college. See *Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723-1790*, eds. W.H. Bond & Hugh Amory, (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1996), p.1.

Let us take it for granted that the same spirit which once gave Caesar so warm a reception, which denounced hostilities against John till Magna Charta was signed, which severed the head of Charles the First from his body, and drove James the Second from his kingdom, the same great spirit (may heaven preserve it till the earth shall be no more) which first seated the great grandfather of his present most gracious majesty on the throne of Britain,—is still alive and active and warm in England; and that the same spirit in America, instead of provoking the inhabitants of that country, will endear us to them for ever, and secure their good-will.<sup>484</sup>

The lineage that Adams established was based on violent resistance to ministerial encroachments on colonial liberties. The essay goes on to praise the radical *Boston Gazette* and its publishers, Benjamin Edes and James Gill, for ‘publishing and pointing out...avarice and ambition’.<sup>485</sup> In both Addison’s *Cato* and the political rhetoric of the era, these characteristics were often associated with Caesar and tyrannical regimes in general. Adams also decried the ‘avarice and ambitions’ of Parliament, the colonial administrators, and their proxies, and condemned them in spite of whatever virtues those men and institutions might possess by quoting Addison: ‘Curse on such virtues, they’ve undone their country’.<sup>486</sup> In the play this is a line from Cato’s speech dismissing the possibility of submission to Caesar in order to spare his own life. While Adams never assigned this allusion to a particular person it may have been aimed at Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, who was a native of the colony and an ally to the crown, or, alternatively, the criticism could have applied to the first minister, George Grenville, a former ally of William Pitt, under whose leadership the Stamp Act had been passed. Adam’s style of establishing a history of opposition to the Stamp Act, and his quotation of *Cato* and use of Catonian rhetoric, captured the spirit of 1765 and further established Cato as the symbol of the colonists’ plight.

Adams pamphlet, and the Catonian sentiments that it carried, was published at a time that greatly impacted the political identity of the colonies. One of the *Boston Gazette*’s publishers, Benjamin Edes, was a member of the Loyal Nine, a group that was central to the Boston chapter of the Sons of Liberty, and by late 1765 the various chapters had begun an impressive inter-colonial correspondence. Pauline

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<sup>484</sup> John Adams, ‘A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law’, in *The Life and Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, 10 vols. (Boston: Little & Brown, 1851), 3:457-58.

<sup>485</sup> Adams, ‘A Dissertation’, 3:447-465.

<sup>486</sup> Adams, ‘A Dissertation’, 3:447-465.

Maier has shown that the newspapers run by the Sons of Liberty or their sympathisers, which could have easily been sent between colonies through the post, played a major role in passing news and ideas within the radical communities of the far-flung colonies.<sup>487</sup> By having his *Dissertation* published in an avowedly radical newspaper and with one of the publishers networked with the radical factions in other colonies, Adams was able to address not only the Bostonians but potentially a great number of the colonies. Thomas Hollis' publication of Adams tract abroad also enabled him to make the colonials' case for patriotic opposition to the Stamp Act possible in the London press and to garner English supporters for the cause. Since Addison's play was popular throughout the trans-Atlantic arena, his allusions to *Cato* and its implications would not have gone astray.

### *Soliloquies*

A number of the Stamp Act texts engaged Addison's text in the lengthier forms of a soliloquy. The *New Hampshire Gazette* ran a dramatic monologue in the editorial voice of the newspaper, as it prepared, *Cato*-like, to commit suicide in order to evade the tyranny of the Stamp Act. The monologue began with an allusion to Portius's sombre opening lines from *Cato*, noting the arrival of 'Th' great, th' important day, big with fate/Of *Cato* and of Rome', declares that the paper 'chuse[s] Death in hopes of escaping this Servitude'.<sup>488</sup> Likewise, after the passage of the Stamp Act, on 30 December 1765 the *Boston Gazette* ran a parody of the famous soliloquy again from the fifth act of *Cato* where *Cato* contemplates suicide. In this scene, *Cato* enters holding in one hand a dagger and in the other the *Phaedo* 'Plato's book on the immortality of the soul'.<sup>489</sup> Concluding that '[i]t must be so – Plato thou reason'st well!', *Cato* determines that his suicide would win him the moral victory since he would escape the corrupt political situation and secure his virtue and liberty. *Cato* addresses his soul in the second person:

The stars shall fade away, the sun himself  
Grow dim with age, and nature sink in years,  
But thou shalt flourish in immortal youth,  
Unhurt amidst the war of elements,

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<sup>487</sup> Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution*, pp.8-91.

<sup>488</sup> *New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth), 31 October 1765, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.48. The lines from Addison's *Cato* are I.i.3-5.

<sup>489</sup> This is a nice way of avoiding a direct allusion to suicide. Much better to call the work Plato's work on the immortality of the soul, than Socrates' thoughts on suicide.

The wrecks of matter, and the crush of worlds<sup>490</sup>

In the *Gazette* parody, Cato is replaced with ‘America’, the dagger with ‘the Stamp Act’, and the volume of Plato with the Resolves passed by the Stamp Act Congress in October 1765, which formally declared the opposition of the colonies to British taxation. By replacing ‘Cato’ with ‘America’ rather than ‘Liberty’, it meant that the sacrificial victim was ‘America’. The parody mirrors Addison’s text faithfully, and when ‘America’ addresses the soul in the second person it is named ‘Liberty’: America says to Liberty, with an empathic gesture included in the stage direction, which reads ‘in a Moment stabs Thee to the heart’. The passage reads:

Assures me thou shalt still survive:  
(...) Kingdoms shall fade away, proud France herself  
Decline with Age, and [B]ritain sink in Years  
But thou shalt flourish in these Western Climes,  
Unhurt nor heed the Jars of Eastern Realms  
The shock of Emp[ir]es and the Crush of Th[an]es.<sup>491</sup>

The anonymous parody asserts a specifically Catonian identity for America’s opposition to Britain. It is the vision of liberty embodied in the self-sacrificing actions of patriots opposing tyranny. Cato’s fifth-act soliloquy became so commonly used during the period of the Stamp Act Crisis that the *Massachusetts Spy* printed a parody in which a hungry Cato meditated his impending consumption of a joint of ‘beef! Most glorious beef!’<sup>492</sup> In the parody the author is able to replace liberty with beef, and make Cato’s intense musings about seeking freedom sound comical. The fact that the soliloquy could be used as the basis of a humour piece indicates that it was well-known throughout the colonies, and used for such intense political musings that a light-hearted parody was in need.

### *Liberty Funerals*

There were new performance practices that evolved out of the Stamp Act Crisis, the most popular being the ‘Liberty Funeral’. This was a mock internment for an effigy; generally either the figure of an old man or the vulnerable figure of a young Lady Liberty or possible Lucretia-figure designed to illustrate the fatally deleterious effects of the stamp tax on liberty. Lucretia was a Roman lady raped by the son of the last

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<sup>490</sup> Addison, *Cato*, V.i.27-31.

<sup>491</sup> *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 30 December 1765, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.49.

<sup>492</sup> *Massachusetts Spy* (Worcester), 13 December 1770, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.52.

king of Rome. She subsequently committed suicide, preferring death to living with a tainted virtue. Her death spawned an uprising against the monarchy and resulted in the establishment of the Roman Republic.<sup>493</sup> The representation of liberty as a young, vulnerable lady was quite well established - since antiquity all the virtues and moral terms were represented by women, but an old man embodying liberty was not common. With Cato being so popular in the literature, it is easy to make a connection between the old man at the liberty funerals and Cato. There is not another candidate, other than Cato, in the contemporary tradition that fits the description and ideological intent. In September 1765 the *New York Gazette, or The Weekly Post Boy*, invited the people of New York to attend the funeral of 'Lady N-th Am-can Liberty', scheduled for 1 November in the evening.<sup>494</sup> The street drama, however, did not go ahead as the political leaders counselled peaceful protest saying 'whenever the stamp-paper arrives, let us not sully our character by any violent measures; let them lie disregarded'.<sup>495</sup> Despite the New York funeral not proceeding, the Sons of Liberty coordinated mock funeral processions for liberty on November 1 in Portsmouth, Newport, Baltimore, and Wilmington, and other liberty funerals took place in Rhode Island, Maryland, North and South Carolina, Charleston, and New Hampshire, where the obituary for liberty listed its age as 145, making it coeval with the founding of the Plymouth colony.<sup>496</sup> A liberty funeral was organised for Boston, although it is unknown whether it actually took place, and muffled bells, the style of New England funerals, rang throughout Philadelphia on 1 and 2 November.<sup>497</sup>

There was a connection between the liberty funerals and Addison's *Cato*. The *Boston Gazette's* account of the Newport protest, which was a reprinting from the *Newport Mercury*, began with an Addisonian allusion. The narrator intoned: "The Dawn was overcast, and heavily in Clouds brought on the Day[,] the great, the important Day! Big with Fate of ruin'd trade, and loss of Liberty!"<sup>498</sup> This was a paraphrasing of Portius's line: 'the great, th' important day, big with the fate/Of Cato and of Rome'.<sup>499</sup> The allusion reaffirmed a common interpretation of events of 1765

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<sup>493</sup> See Livy, *Ad Urbe Condidta*, 1.57-58.

<sup>494</sup> Milton Klein, *The Empire State: A History of New York*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p.206.

<sup>495</sup> Klein, *The Empire State*, p.206.

<sup>496</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.50.

<sup>497</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.50.

<sup>498</sup> *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 11 November 1765; *Newport Mercury*, 4 November 1765, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.50.

<sup>499</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.3-5.

where the British and their colonial representatives serve as Caesar and the colonies as Utica. The public invitation for the Newport ceremony specifically invited the ‘true sons’ of the old man ‘Freedom’ to attend, allowing the identification of the Sons of Liberty and other colonial patriots with the loyal Portius. The newspaper account of the event read:

Summon’d by Death’s clanking Knell, the Funeral began to move at 12 O’Clock, from the Crown Coffee-House, toward the Burying Ground. – The Concourse of the Mourners and Spectators was prodigious, consisting of Persons of all ranks, from the highest even down to the Blacks, who seem’d from a Sense of their Masters’ Sufferings, to join the Mourning Course. The Proclamation was solemn, and with sullen Tread, and heavy Hearts, at length arrived at the Place of Interment, where the Mourners were about taking their LAST FAREWELL of their old friend LIBERTY – “Oh LIBERTY! –Oh! FREEDOM!- Oh, where art Thou going? – My ruin’d country!” The mournful Aspiration was scarcely utter’d, when a Son of Liberty, emerging from the horrid Gloom of Despair, addressed himself thus: ‘Oh Liberty! The Darling of my Soul! GLORIOUS LIBERTY! Admir’d, ador’d, by all true Britons! – LIBERTY dead! It cannot be!” A Groan was then heard, as if coming from the Coffin; and upon closer Attention, it proved to be a trance, for old FREEDOM was not dead.<sup>500</sup>

The quotations from Addison in the account of the Newport funeral and the funeral’s imitation of immortality, an element present in both the original and parodied versions of Cato’s soliloquy, suggests the association of Cato with the funeral, and can even be seen as a nation-wide engagement with Catonian rhetoric and the sentiments embodied in the Addisonian hero. Britain was represented in the advancing off-stage Caesar, Freedom stood for Cato, the sacrificial element was patriotism, and the marching colonials themselves were reminiscent of the exiled Roman Republicans left to bear the corpse of the Republican. The ceremonial resurrection of liberty revises Addison’s narrative, suggesting that Cato’s sacrifice and moral victory was an immortal one that would be forever remembered.

### Repeal of the Stamp Act

In May 1766 the British Parliament repealed the Stamp Act, temporarily defusing the mounting tensions between the colonies and Britain, as well as removing the immediate necessity for the colonists to make further comparisons between Rome

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<sup>500</sup> *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 11 November 1765; *Newport Mercury*, 4 November 1765, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.51.

and England. The Americans saw the termination of the Stamp Act as akin to lifting the yoke of slavery and restoring their English-born rights. Robert Treat Paine, who had resoundingly condemned the implementation of the Act, wrote in his diary for May 4, 1766: ‘This day spent in rejoicing for the repeal of the Stamp Acts, a Procession at Plymo. of all orders everyone carrying a Badge of their business and a standard before them with this Inscription, *Stamp Act repeal’d Liberty restored, all Trades flourishing, GOD save the King & Bless the Parliament*’.<sup>501</sup> Benjamin Smith from Massachusetts, writing to William Smith about the repeal of the Stamp Act, believed that the colonists had prevented a descent into abject slavery by so vehemently opposing the legislation: ‘how must your Governors and all your high Prerogative men look now. Those I mean who were at all events for cramming down the Stamp Act and preached up non-resistance and passive obedience. Had the colonies submitted they would soon have been carried on from one degree of slavery to another’.<sup>502</sup>

Although the colonists rejoiced in the repeal of the Act, much damage between the two countries had been done, and the colonists were wary of the future. George Mason, writing to the Committee of London Merchants, predicted that George Grenville, the culprit behind the Stamp Act, would lead Britain into further disaster. Returning to classical analogies to emphasise his prophecy, Mason said that Grenville ‘dared to act the part that Pericles did, when he engaged his country in the Peloponnesian War, which...ended in the ruin of all of Greece, and fitted it to the Macedonian yoke’.<sup>503</sup> Although the power of Athens was depleted after the Peloponnesian War, Mason’s claim that this directly resulted in the ruin of Greece was farfetched. Athens made a recovery in the Corinthian War, and conversely, Spartan power was depleted by Thebes in the Battle of Leuctra. Hence, the political and military dynamics of Greece had changed vastly between the Peloponnesian War and the Macedonian conquest. Furthermore, Mason seemed to condense Pericles and Demosthenes, a leading Athenian orator and politician who consistently opposed Macedonian expansion, into the same entity, making for a confusing illusion. But if Mason genuinely believed Pericles to be responsible for the downfall of Greece, then

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<sup>501</sup> Robert Treat Paine diaries, 1745-1814, May 4, 1766, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. p-392, reel 10-11 (microfilm) or Ms. N-641, reel 10.

<sup>502</sup> Benjamin Smith to William Smith, Charleston - 16 May, 1766, Smith-Carter Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms N-2170 or P-147, reel 1.

<sup>503</sup> George Mason quoted in Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.81.

it was quite an indictment of Grenville. In a more straightforward criticism of Britain, when the *Virginia Gazette* published ‘An Ode Occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp Act’, it called for Grenville’s name to be ‘mentioned with Tyrants in historic page, Descend with Infamy thro’ every Age, Our Nature’s Scorn and Shame’.<sup>504</sup>

Although the immediate Stamp Act Crisis was over, from 1766 until 1773, when America and Britain began to descend rapidly into war, the colonists reacted to each new piece of British legislation impinging on the colonies with suspicion and anxiety. Elbridge Gerry wrote to Samuel Adams in 1773 highlighting the continued suspicion of Britain: ‘If the government of G. B. [Great Britain] is determined to pursue its Measures the Vassalage of the Colonies is agreed on all sides to be the Consequences; and in such a situation I humbly Conceive that the People ought by their Guardians (their Watchmen) to be apprised of their Situation and to have the Opportunity of Choosing their Submission to Slavery, or of righteously supporting with their lives, their Rights & Liberties.’<sup>505</sup> Cato continued to be called upon during this period, representing the colonists’ plight and stressing the threat posed by British tyranny to individual citizens and the liberty of the colonies. In a 1769 pamphlet entitled the *Farmer’s and Monitor’s letters, to the inhabitants of the British colonies* John Dickinson quoted a line from Addison’s *Cato* in discussing the colonists’ opposition to British laws. Dickinson chose a section from a speech by Portius, who praised Cato in fighting the cause ‘of honour, virtue, liberty, and Rome’ and for his ‘sufferings shine, and spread a glory around him’: ‘oppression, tyranny, and power usurp’d/Draw all the vengeance of his arm upon them’.<sup>506</sup> The pamphlet then drew the correlation between Cato’s principled cause and the American patriot movement:

Why, my friend, said a Gentleman the other day, do you employ your time in writing on Liberty, which may possibly bring you into some difficulties or danger; when you might use it so much more to your own employment? –Because, 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; because the liberties of my country are invaded, and

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<sup>504</sup> ‘An Ode Occasioned by the Repeal of the Stamp Act’, *Virginia Gazette*, August 15, 1766, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.58.

<sup>505</sup> The original is underlined. Elbridge Gerry to Samuel Adams, Marblehead – February 1, 1773, Elbridge Gerry Collections, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Offsite Storage, Carton 1, SH 1571 G.

<sup>506</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.34, 32, 36-37.

in danger of entire destruction, by the late acts of the *British* parliament; because I would with joy be the sacrifice to the re-establishment of them, upon a sure and solid foundation.<sup>507</sup>

A few years later in 1772 John Dickinson was portrayed in a manner that again tied together both Cato and the American cause, in what became one of the most famous invocations of Cato during the late colonial period. Nathaniel Ames, son of the original American almanac maker, who himself had acted in *Cato* while a student at Harvard during the French and Indian War, included in the 1772 almanac an engraving of Dickinson.<sup>508</sup> Dickinson was portrayed ‘with his elbow resting on “Magna Carta” and holding a scroll inscribed “Farmer’s Letters”’, a reference to Dickinson’s influential 1767 anti-tax pamphlet *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. Under the image, it was written:

‘Tis nobly done to stem Taxation’s Rage,  
And raise the Thoughts of a degenerate Age,  
For Happiness and joy, from Freedom spring,  
But Life in Bondage is a worthless Thing.

The verse is derived from Lawrence Eusden’s introductory poem to *Cato*:

‘Tis nobly done thus to enrich the stage  
And raise the thoughts of a degenerate age,  
To show how endless joys from freedom spring  
How life in bondage is a worthless thing.<sup>509</sup>

By placing Dickinson at the centre of the image, Ames confirmed that the issue of taxation without representation was the source of colonial unrest, and by incorporating both the Magna Carta and the lines from Eusden he suggested that the roots of American colonial opposition were founded primarily in British political principles. But the Addisonian allusion established *Cato* as a foundational text of the patriot movement and transformed Cato’s ‘unstinting resistance to power into an injunction to be followed by each of his readers in their role as subjects of the crown’.<sup>510</sup> Cato thus became the icon of the era and the symbol that represented the colonists’ beliefs and standpoint. The presence of Cato in the mindset of the colonist is also evident in the fact that from 22 November 1771 to 6 April 1775 the

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<sup>507</sup> John Dickinson, *Farmer's and Monitor's letters, to the inhabitants of the British colonies*, (Williamsburg: W. Rind, 1769).

<sup>508</sup> See July 3, 1758, July 6, 1758, and July 14, 1758 entries in Nathaniel Ames’ Diary (extracts), manuscript, Dedham Historical Society, Massachusetts, Call No. F 73.3 Ames v.1 and F 73.3 Ames v.2.

<sup>509</sup> *An astronomical diary; or Almanack for the year of our Lord Christ 1772*, (Portsmouth: D. and R. Fowle, 1772), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. 11964 Evans fiche.

<sup>510</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.52.

*Massachusetts Spy* printed in its masthead Cato's prayer to liberty after condemning Sempronius's mutineers to death: 'Do thou Great Liberty inspire our souls,/and make our Lives in thy Possession happy,/Or, our deaths glorious in thy Defence'.<sup>511</sup>

### Descent into War

The Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770 made real the 'liberty or death' scenario that Cato called for, but it was the Boston Tea Party in 1773 that brought to the fore the necessity of sacrifice in the cause of liberty. The Boston Tea Party was a political protest by the Sons of Liberty in Boston on December 16, 1773. It was a direct action against the Tea Act, which had been passed by the British Parliament in 1773, placing a tax on tea. The Act was seen as just another in a long line of legislative initiatives that were eroding American liberties. In writing to Abigail Adams about the consequences of the Tea Party, John Adams discussed the necessary of sacrifice and martyrdom in the search for liberty: 'We live my dear soul, in an Age of Tryal. What will be the Consequences I know not. The Town of Boston, for ought I can see, must suffer Martyrdom: it must expire: And our principal Consolation is, that it dies in a noble Cause. The Cause of Truth, of Virtue, of Liberty and of Humanity'.<sup>512</sup> Adams was clearly contemplating the struggle with Britain through the framework of martyrdom, meaning that he felt that the only route to liberty was not revolution but death.<sup>513</sup> The following year, Adams again wrote to Abigail about the necessity of placing liberty in front of all other consideration: 'Our Consolation must be this, my dear, that Cities may be rebuilt, and a People reduced to Poverty, may acquire fresh Property: But a Constitution of Government once changed from Freedom, can never be restored. Liberty once lost is lost forever. When the People once surrender their share in the Legislature, and their Right of defending the Limitations upon the Government, and of resisting every Encroachment upon them, they can never regain it'.<sup>514</sup> Adams believed, like Cato, that liberty was paramount to everything else, and urged Abigail to remember this as the tensions between Britain and the American

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<sup>511</sup> *Massachusetts Spy*, November 22, 1771 to April 6, 1775.

<sup>512</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, May 12, 1774, Adams family papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>513</sup> Abigail would later, in 1781, again invoke the name 'Cato', comparing Elbridge Gerry to the Roman. See Abigail Adams to Elbridge Gerry, Braintree - July 20, 1781, Adams family papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54. Original held by the American Philosophical Society.

<sup>514</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia - July 7, 1775, Adams family papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

colonies increased. Samuel Adams, also reacting to the Boston Tea Party, wrote several letters to James Warren emphasising the need to preserve liberty and virtue. On March 31, 1774 he wrote: 'It is our Duty at all Hazards to preserve the Publick Liberty. Righteous Heaven will graciously smile on every manly and rational Attempt to secure that best of all his Gifts to Man from the ravishing hand of lawless and brutal power'.<sup>515</sup> A month later he again asked Warren: 'I beseech you to implore every Friend in Boston by every thing dear and sacred to Men of Sense and Virtue to avoid Blood and Tumult. They will have time enough to dye'.<sup>516</sup> Samuel Adams, like his cousin John, believed that liberty was the only value worth living for, and embraced a scenario which would see the obtaining of liberty only through a virtuous death. Equally pessimistic about the outcome of a war between Britain and America, John and Jonathan Amory wrote to their English clients Harrison and Ausley in September, 1774: 'Should the next parliament, instead of adopting lenient measures, pursue the steps of the last, and endeavour to enforce the measures of Lord North by military power, America will soon become a scene of blood; for you may rely upon it they are determined to risque their lives and fortunes rather than become the slaves of arbitrary power'.<sup>517</sup>

In the early months of 1774, the colonies were anxiously awaiting to see how the British would respond to the Tea Party, and speculation ran high that the period of relative quiet was over. In this climate, political rhetoric inciting Britain as a corrupt Rome began to escalate again. James Warren enunciated these feelings to John Adams in a letter dated January 3, 1774: 'I have for some time thought it necessary that the People should strike some bold stroke, and try the Issue. They have long enough submitted to Oppressions and Insults following one another in a rapid Succession without finding any Advantage. They have now indeed passed the [Rubicon] River, and left no Retreat, and must therefore abide the Consequences'.<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>515</sup> Samuel Adams to James Warren, Boston – March 31, 1774, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>516</sup> Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia – May 21, 1774 Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>517</sup> John and Jonathan Amory to Harrison and Ausley (?), Boston, September 17, 1774, Copies of Letters of John and Jonathan Amory 1765-1786, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms N-2024, Vol. 145.

<sup>518</sup> James Warren to John Adams, Plymouth – January 3, 1774 Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

Warren was drawing a comparison between Britain and Caesar, likening Britain's actions to those of Caesar crossing the Rubicon, which marked the beginning of the Civil War and eventual destruction of the Roman Republic. If Britain was Caesar, then the American colonists were the Republican opposition, and their fight against Caesar was foreshadowed to end, like Cato, in death and failure. In a letter to James Iredell dated 26 April, 1774, William Hooper elaborated to the fullest extent the depiction of Britain as a corrupt and tyrannical Rome. Written just as the Intolerable Acts, a series of punitive laws passed by Britain that effectively stripped Massachusetts of self-government, were passed Hooper, a North Carolinian, opined the causes of decay that the two empires shared: "The extent of the British dominion [like the Roman] is become too unwieldy for her to sustain. Commerce hath generated a profusion of wealth, and luxury and corruption...Venuity is at the standard it was when Jugurtha left Rome... [W]hat strikes them [the British] as the glow of health, is but the flushing of fever... Rome in its greatest luster was upon the verge of dissolution".<sup>519</sup> Rome, Hooper continued, "from being the nursery of heroes, became the residence of musicians, pimps, panders, and calamities... The Empire...fell a sacrifice to a herd of savage miscreants, and the most polished state in the world sunk at once into absolute barbarism. She had been some time ripe for this fate".<sup>520</sup> Hooper reinforced that this elaborate composition was not merely for academic proof of classical knowledge, but that he genuinely viewed the events of the 1760s and 1770s through the lens of Roman history by concluding: "reverse the catastrophe, and might not Great Britain be the original from which this picture is taken?"<sup>521</sup> Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts similarly elaborated a vivid image of Britain as a despotic Rome in his *Observations on the Act of Parliament Commonly Called the Boston Port-Bill* (1774). Quincy named Caesar as the chief tyrant, whose smile "deceived the Roman Common-wealth, till the increase of his power bid defiance to opposition. ...[T]he complaisant courtier made his way into the hearts of his countrymen. They would not believe... that the smiling Caesar would filch away their liberties, that a native born and bred a Roman would enslave his country the

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<sup>519</sup> William Hooper, to James Iredell, April 26, 1774, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.260. Similarly, a year later John Adams asked "Is not the British constitution arrived nearly to that point, where the Roman Republic was when Jugurtha left it, and pronounc'd It a venal city ripe for destruction, if it can only find a purchaser?" Adams, "Novanglus", February 13, 1775, *Papers of John Adams*, pp.2:265-267.

<sup>520</sup> William Hooper, to James Iredell, April 26, 1774, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.260.

<sup>521</sup> William Hooper, to James Iredell, April 26, 1774, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.260.

land of his fathers the land of his birth the land of his posterity'.<sup>522</sup> Quincy declared that the same process was imminent in America: 'Is not Britain to America, what Caesar was to Rome?'<sup>523</sup> Rome, which only a decade earlier had been esteemed as an example of glorious empire had been transformed into a paradigm of debauchery, corruption, and impending tyranny.

As war became inevitable, the colonists retreated into Catonian rhetoric, finding their situation to be hopeless and believing that liberty and virtue were more important than life. In commenting on the suspension of foreign trade, John Adams set the tone regarding the need for sacrifice, reminding James Warren that 'Coffee, Wine, Punch, Sugar, Molasses, etc' were mere luxuries and that 'Silks and Velvets and Lace must be dispensed with. But these are Trifles in a Contest for Liberty'.<sup>524</sup> Timothy Pickering, a Massachusetts politician who went on to become the third Secretary of State, more pointedly declared that 'at the same time I think it my duty not to desert my country in that cause which I have hitherto espoused; a cause which I believe to be founded in justice altho' in conducting it many irregularities may have been committed; a cause which if given up, or the supporters of it be overcome, liberty itself I fear will expire: and at present I do not feel an inclination to survive the liberties of my country'.<sup>525</sup> Pickering gave voice to sentiments that could have come from Cato himself. Likewise, Jonathan Sewall wrote to Thomas Robie in July, 1775, casting the conflict in dramatic terms and again not foreseeing an American victory: 'I have a strong desire to see the end of the play, of which I have seen but two acts as yet; and by the scenery the next will be much more crowded with smoke, fire, and bloodshed, and such like ornament of tragedy; and it's not impossible that the finishing stroke of the last act may be the death of the last person of the drama, like Swift's "Tom Thumb" the Great'.<sup>526</sup> Writing in 1800, Ezekiel Savage in a funeral address for George Washington said of the situation in the colonies before the war: 'The year 1775 was pregnant with scenes of distress to our country, which now flow upon our imagination in frightful colours. The government of Great Britain, like an

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<sup>522</sup> Josiah Quincy, *Memoir of the Life of Josiah Quincy, Jun., of Massachusetts*, (Boston: Cummings, and Hilliard, 1825), p.418.

<sup>523</sup> Quincy, *Memoir*, p.435.

<sup>524</sup> John Adams to James Warren, October 20, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>525</sup> Timothy Pickering to M. Higginson, Marblehead - April 22, 1775, Timothy Pickering Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-31, vol.5.

<sup>526</sup> Jonathan Sewall to Thomas Robie, Garrison at Boston - July 15, 1775, Jonathan Sewall Letters, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-902, one box.

unnatural parent, had goaded us with reiterated injuries; till in that memorable year, bereft of all the feelings of a mother, on the plains of Lexington she plunged her relentless dagger into the bosom of her children. Then was the ardour of our countrymen roused to action, and their blood boiled with a sense of injury. The warmth of Brutus was in every heart, and the fire of Gracchus was on every tongue'.<sup>527</sup>

In this climate, references to Cato re-surfaced with vengeance. Cato embodied the hopelessness of the situation that colonists found themselves in, and their preference to find liberty in death rather than outlive their freedom. The colonists were often encouraged to emulate Cato's morality and act as though they were constantly being watched by the great Roman. The *Burlington Almanac* printed in 1774 reminded Americans: 'Be fearful only of thyself: and stand in awe of none more than of thine own conscience. There is a Cato in every man; a severe censor of his manners. And he that reverences this judge, will seldom do any thing he need repent of'.<sup>528</sup> In September 1775 the *Pennsylvania Evening Post* reprinted the 1749 prologue to *Cato*, which had been spoken by the then Prince George. In specifying the occasion and speaker's role as the good son Portius, the paper was able to imply that King George was the speaker without explicitly naming him. With the Prologue celebrating 'those heroes.../Whom the Great William brought to blessm [Britain]' and the identification of William of Orange's descendent with the king, the editor's implications were that King George, in taxing the colonies, had betrayed his constitutional principles, his American subjects, and even his own British heritage.<sup>529</sup> In the same year the *Georgia Gazette* published a long and angry letter from 'An American' that deplored British tyranny and quoted from Cato's speech invoking 'the gen'rous plan of power deliver'd down,/ From age to age, by your renown'd forefathers' and seeking inspiration from 'great Liberty'.<sup>530</sup> The tenor of the paper suggested that at any moment the colonists might be forced to 'don the toga of the Catonian effigy and play not only the patriot stoically withstanding an imperial siege

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<sup>527</sup> Ezekiel Savage, *An eulogy on Gen. George Washington*, (Salem: Joshua Cushing, 1800), p.10, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 38466.

<sup>528</sup> *Burlington Almanac for the year of our Lord 1774*, (New Jersey: Isaac Collins, 1774), p.30 (?), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 13048.

<sup>529</sup> *Pennsylvania Evening Post* (Philadelphia), 14 September, 1775, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.54. The *Post* titled the poem as a 'prologue spoken by a Great personage before the tragedy of Cato, in the year 1749, when he performed the part of Portius'.

<sup>530</sup> *Georgia Gazette*, December 6, 1775, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.54.

but also the patriot martyr'.<sup>531</sup> A pamphlet from 1775 entitled *The Crisis* was more direct in its usage of the story of Brutus. Using the example of Brutus the Younger, the pamphlet declared: 'Like Brutus rough, I'll plant the dagger home/Tyrants and traitors Caesar ne'er forgives:/Tremble such monsters whilst that Casca lives'.<sup>532</sup> This pamphlet made reference to Servilius Casca, another of the assassins of Caesar, who, like Brutus and Cassius, is assumed to have committed suicide after the Battle of Philippi. Suicide was strictly against Christian law, but, yet, here were several heroes from antiquity being held-up for doing just that. Reflecting upon the revolution in 1798, a sermon delivered in Wiscasset again invoked heroes from antiquity as the exemplum of patriotism, naming 'The noble sacrifices, the virtuous struggles of Fabius and Cincinnatus, of Brutus and Cato, citizens of ancient Rome, and of other Patriots in former and later ages'.<sup>533</sup> The minister believed that 'we also in America can boast of many of our brethren, who have jeopardized their lives in the cause of liberty and of their country's rights'.<sup>534</sup> Likewise, in a sermon given in 1775, when the colonies were on the brink of war with Britain, the minister extolled Cato and Brutus as exemplar, saying:

The second *Cato*... This wonderful man defended, to the very last ebb of life, a miniature of republican freedom; feeling no other concern, but what the calamities of his country excited. Here is genuine love to his country, founded on solid and permanent principles; remaining continually the same, amid all the changes of the times. This is a man who merits immortal reputation and the warmest expressions of gratitude from his countrymen. Such also was *Brutus of Rome*; such were *Sidney and Hampden of Britain*; such are numbers, which at once rise up to view, in this western world; who amid a crowd of heroes, shine forth eminently distinguished'.<sup>535</sup>

As late as 1777, the colonists were still being encouraged to look to Cato as an example of character and conduct. *Father Abraham's almanac* for the year 1777 included the 'sentiments of that sage Roman CATO worthy of particular attention at this time'.<sup>536</sup> The almanac reminded its readers of Cato's virtues, that he could never

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<sup>531</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.53.

<sup>532</sup> *The Crisis, Number XVII*, (New York: John Anderson, 1775), p.148, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 13983.

<sup>533</sup> Alden Bradford, *Two sermons, delivered in Wiscasset*, (Wiscasset: Henry Hoskins and John Scott, 1798), pp.9-10, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 33450.

<sup>534</sup> Bradford, *Two sermons*, p.10.

<sup>535</sup> Isaac Story, *The love of our country recommended and enforced*, (Boston: John Boyle, 1775), p.14, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 13643.

<sup>536</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack, for the year of our Lord 1777*, (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1776), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 15062.

'lie passed one day without doing good'.<sup>537</sup> More importantly, the almanac instructed that Cato believed 'there is no witness any man ought to fear, but that of his own conscience. Nor did his practice fall short of his principles'.<sup>538</sup> The almanac praised Cato for adhering to his principles, which resulted in his suicide.

### Conclusions

When the Declaration of Independence was imminent, John Adams wrote to James Warren declaring that the 'word through Virginia was that North Carolina were making great Preparations for War, and were determined, to die poor and to die hard, if they must die, in Defence of their Liberties'.<sup>539</sup> Equally pessimistic about America's chances in the war, General Thomas Mifflin wrote to Elbridge Gerry: 'Look around you – it is the eleventh hour – I am sorry to say you have nothing to hurl to but a death bed. Repentance'.<sup>540</sup> At the actual signing of the Declaration Benjamin Harrison, one of the signers from Virginia, known for his humour, made a comment that encapsulated the mindset of the American patriots at that moment in time. Harrison, who weighed approximately two hundred and fifty pounds, after signing was heard to tell Elbridge Gerry: 'I shall have a great advantage over you, Mr. Gerry, when we are all hung for what we are now doing. From the size and weight of my body, I shall die in a few minutes, but from the lightness of your body, you will dance in the air an hour or two before you are dead'.<sup>541</sup> Benjamin Rush later recalled that Harrison's humour was the only thing that interrupted the 'pensive and awful silence which pervaded the house when we were called up, one after another, to the table of the President of Congress to subscribe [to] what was believed by many at that time to be our own death warrants'.<sup>542</sup> These were not the sentiments of men who felt that they were embarking on a war that could only result in independence and liberty. They did not seem themselves as 'revolutionaries', but, instead, were signing their names to a declaration that indicated they preferred liberty over life. So real was

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<sup>537</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack 1777.*

<sup>538</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack 1777.*

<sup>539</sup> John Adams to James Warren, April 20, 1776, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>540</sup> General Thomas (?) Mifflin to Elbridge Gerry, New York – June 29, 1776, Elbridge Gerry Collections, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Offsite Storage, Carton 1 SH 1571 G.

<sup>541</sup> Benjamin Rush to John Adams, July 20, 1811, quoted in *The Quotable Founding Fathers: A Treasury of 2,500 Wise and Witty Quotations from the Men and Women Who Created America*, ed. Buckner F. Melton, Jr. (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2005), p.55.

<sup>542</sup> Benjamin Rush to John Adams, July 20, 1811, quoted in *Quotable Founding Fathers*, pp.54-55.

antiquity to the colonists that shortly after signing the Declaration of Independence, Charles Henry Lee told Patrick Henry 'I us'd to regret not being thrown into the world in the glamorous third or fourth century [B.C] of the Romans; but now I am thoroughly reconcil'd to my lot'.<sup>543</sup> In this neoclassical landscape, the Americans felt that their struggles were those of ancient Rome and imagined themselves as fighting on a neoclassical stage. In this arena, it was Cato that best represented their cause.

Tracing the intellectual revolution that took place in the American colonies in the decade following the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 is revealing of the colonial mindset and important to understanding their approach to the war with Britain. In the wake of the French and Indian War the colonists participated in a transatlantic rhetoric that glorified Britain as the new Rome, and the colonists saw the world and their place in it through the lens of Roman history. Americans were happy to be part of an empire that ensured constitutional liberties and promoted virtuous governance. With the passage of the Sugar Act and Currency Act in 1764 the colonists began to question Britain's motivations and feared for their English-born rights. Through their classically informed worldview they naturally turned to classical analogies of tyranny to express their concerns and anxieties. The passage of the Stamp Act the following year only increased colonial concerns and ultimately acted as the death knell to British-American relations. If Americans saw Britain as a new Rome, but feared that it had become corrupt and tyrannical, then George the Third must have been a Caesar and their current course would ultimately be the fall of Rome. In this classically inspired landscape, the American colonists represented Cato, unsuccessfully railing against the encroachment of tyranny. The colonists identified with Cato's plight of being caught between liberty and tyranny, and as the colonies progressed towards war with Britain, the radical message of Cato became increasingly emphasised as relevant and necessary. The literature of the era reveals a deep and society-wide identification with the Roman hero; Cato was everywhere with his message of unstinting resistance to arbitrary power being held up as a model worthy of emulation. In embracing Cato, the colonists chose a story of death amid the loss of liberty. The colonists did not reach back to antiquity for examples to envisage a glorious future, but saw themselves, like Cato at the fall of Rome, as preparing for a virtuous death.

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<sup>543</sup> Charles Henry Lee, quoted in Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), p.41.

## Chapter Four

### Colonial Catos:

### Americans Performing Politics

On the morning of 6 March, 1775, *Rivington's Gazette* reported that Joseph Warren entered the Boston Old South Church to deliver the fifth Boston massacre commemoration dressed in a 'Ciceronian toga'.<sup>544</sup> Warren continued to orate in a 'Demosthenian posture', lecturing the colonists on the virtues of the Roman people in opposing tyranny. Although this was a remarkable episode, it was surprisingly not an isolated event in the late colonial period. From the passage of the Stamp Act until the early years of the war there were a number of neoclassical political performances in which colonists dressed in either literal or metaphorical togas. These episodes highlight the relevancy and potency of classical images and rhetoric to late colonial America. By looking at these classical performances we better understand the historical imagination that animated the American patriot cause, especially the intense relationship that they perceived as existing between antiquity and colonial America. The colonists felt most comfortable expressing their political grievances and positions through the medium of classical antiquity, and they used their neoclassical self-fashioning to shape the wartime rhetoric and colonial identity.

This chapter will look at four colonists, Joseph Warren, Patrick Henry, Nathan Hale, and George Washington, and how they transcended the textual confinement of classical discourse through Roman self-fashioning and performance. The neoclassical performances discussed in this chapter show that the patriots deliberately chose a particular pantheon of Roman heroes to emulate. Throughout the pre and immediate war period, the colonists engaged with classical antiquity as a way of comparing the rise and fall of the Roman and British Empires. Beginning with Warren, his orations established himself and the American movement as part of a

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<sup>544</sup> 'A Spectator', *Rivington's Gazette*, March 16, 1775, quoted in Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2009), pp.124-125.

lineage of resistance to tyranny that included Cicero and Demosthenes, two heroes from antiquity who had preferred death to living under tyranny. However, as suspicion and resentment towards Britain increased, and war became overtly more probable, the colonists narrowed their choice of classical models and focused on one Roman in particular. Henry, Hale, and Washington frequently and consciously chose to emulate Cato, and in their neoclassical performances they drew on the same rhetoric about liberty and tyranny that had been popularised by Addison's *Cato*. The performances discussed in this chapter show us how and why the patriots actively chose to emulate Cato in their classical productions, and how the political message of Cato influenced spectators. In emulating Cato, the colonists linked the American situation to that of the late Roman Republic and rallied the patriot movement around a symbol that offered unstinting resistance to arbitrary power, as well as death and failure in the battle against tyranny. In emulating Cato resistance to Britain was framed as a choice between living under tyranny or virtuous death – revolution was not seen or contemplated as an option.

### Joseph Warren

Joseph Warren was a doctor and politician, who played a leading role in the American Patriot movement in Boston.<sup>545</sup> Perhaps a result of his untimely death and absence from the building of a new nation, John Cary believes that Warren was deprived of a justified ranking in the American patriot pantheon 'together with Adams as one of the two most important revolutionary leaders in the Massachusetts revolutionary movement'.<sup>546</sup> Today, Warren is known mainly to Bostonians and his theatrical classically endowed speeches are celebrated only amongst academics. Warren's family had settled in America nearly a century before the war with Britain and he was born in Roxbury in 1741, the eldest of four children. Warren was educated in his hometown school, during which time his father gave him '200 shillings worth of Latin books', which established Warren in his later command of the language.<sup>547</sup> In 1759, Warren entered Harvard but within two weeks of starting college he was

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<sup>545</sup> The two standard biographies of Joseph Warren are: John Cary, *Joseph Warren: Physician, Politician, Patriot* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961); and more recently a superb and thorough account of Warren's life comes from Samuel Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren: The Boston Tea Party, Bunker Hill, and the Birth of American Liberty*, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 2012)

<sup>546</sup> John Cary, *Joseph Warren: Physician, Politician, Patriot*, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1961), p.viii.

<sup>547</sup> Quoted in Cary, *Joseph Warren*, p.10.

orphaned. Tradition attributes Warren's Roxbury neighbours with funding the continuation of his studies and this would help explain his later stint as the Roxbury Latin grammar-school teacher following his graduation from Harvard.<sup>548</sup> At this time, admission to Harvard was largely based on competence in both Greek and Latin languages and, upon gaining entry to college, further study of the classics was undertaken. Warren's interest in and facility with these languages and their literatures are suggested by his frequent use of Latin and occasional use of Greek phrases and quotations in later adult letters and speeches. Whilst a student at Harvard, Nathaniel Ames, a college friend and the future almanac publisher, noted that Warren produced and directed a staging of Addison's *Cato* in his dorm suite. Ames' diary tells us that on July 3, 1758, the play was 'acted at Warren's Chamber', that three days later there was a repeat performance that went 'to perfection', and that the last performance on July 14 showed 'Cato more perfect than before'.<sup>549</sup> It is possible, although Ames does not record, that Warren acted in the leading role of Cato himself, since we know that he had a love of performance and theatrical side.<sup>550</sup>

After graduating in 1759, Warren returned to Roxbury to teach at the Latin grammar school for a year.<sup>551</sup> He pursued a Master of Arts degree, which was typical of Harvard students at that time. This involved off campus self-study and readiness for an oral dissertation delivered in Latin during graduation ceremonies, which Warren successfully presented in 1762.<sup>552</sup> Warren then moved to Boston to study medicine under Dr James Lloyd and quickly became 'one of the outstanding doctors of Boston'.<sup>553</sup> During the smallpox epidemic of 1763, Warren opened an inoculation clinic in Boston Harbor and it was through this practice that Warren met John

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<sup>548</sup> Samuel Forman notes that 'it was common at that period for promising young men to be sponsored in whole or part at college in expectation of service in the public grammar school immediately following graduation and prior to subsequent professional pursuits'. Forman further notes that John Adams and Nathan Hale followed this course upon graduation at Milton, Massachusetts, and New London, Connecticut, respectively. Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, p.29.

<sup>549</sup> Nathaniel Ames, 'Year of a College Student's Life', in *American History Told by Contemporaries: Building of the Republic 1689 - 1783*, Vol. 2, ed. Albert Bushnell Hart, (Jerusalem: The Minerva Group, 2002), p.269.

<sup>550</sup> Warren's love of performance possibly prompted his involvement in the Boston Tea Party. Samuel Forman has suggested that Warren was one of the Tea Party 'Mohawk Indians', since historians have credited members of the St Andrew's Masonic Lodge, of which Warren was member, with being instrumental to the episode. See Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, p.122 and chapter 11.

<sup>551</sup> R.W. Hale, *Tercentenary History of the Roxbury Latin School, 1645-1945*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside press, 1946), p.68.

<sup>552</sup> Warren's dissertation argued against the belief that all disease was caused by obstruction of bodily vessels. Topics were generally assigned by the college faculty. For information regarding how this topic challenged contemporary medical beliefs and practices see Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, p.41.

<sup>553</sup> Cary, *Joseph Warren*, p.33.

Adams when he gave him his small pox inoculation in 1764. In the same year Warren met his wife Elizabeth Hooten, who later died in 1772 leaving him with four children. In addition to Adams, another of Warren's patients was Thomas Hutchinson, the Royal Governor of Massachusetts.<sup>554</sup> Warren's medical practices prepared him for his later involvement with the wartime movement, by forcing him into contact with both Tories and Whigs, particularly from families of political importance in the region.<sup>555</sup>

While practicing medicine in Boston, Warren joined the Masonic Lodge of St Andrew and was eventually appointed as a Grand Master in 1773. Warren's Masonic membership acted as a catalyst for his involvement in politics, as the association brought him into contact with radical leaders of the Sons of Liberty, including John Hancock and Samuel Adams. The passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, brought to the fore Warren's natural political inclinations and he contributed articles to the public prints. He mainly wrote under the pseudonyms 'Paskalos' and 'True Patriot', sharply attacking Governor Francis Bernard and forcing him eventually, with the help of Samuel Adams and others, to return to England.<sup>556</sup> In 1774 Warren, heavily involved in the political currents of the times, drafted the Suffolk Resolves, to be presented at the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, criticising the relationship that had evolved between Britain and the North American colonies. The Suffolk Resolves, consisting of an opening paragraph followed by nineteen numbered paragraphs of grievances, foreshadowed the Declaration of Independence. Warren was scathing of the British governance of the colonies: 'Whereby the charter of the colony, that sacred barrier against the encroachments of tyranny, is mutilated and, in effect, annihilated; whereby a murderous law is framed to shelter villains from the hands of justice; whereby the unalienable and inestimable inheritance, which we derived from nature, the constitution of Britain, and the privileges warranted to us in the charter

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<sup>554</sup> See *Joseph Warren Account Books, 1763-1788*, vol. 1 and vol. 2, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-2074.

<sup>555</sup> Forman notes that after his success in the smallpox epidemic people of the 'upper sort' began to use Warren as their physician. Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, p.91.

<sup>556</sup> The attribution of the pseudonym 'Paskalos' to Warren is on thematic and textural grounds; Paskalos' letters are written in Warren's distinctive style. Harbottle Dorr, the contemporary annotator of New England newspapers, did not, however, speculate on the identity of Paskalos. Forman has speculated that Warren's pseudonym may refer to Renee Pascal. Forman believes that 'Paskalos', if one accepts statements in his editorial letters at face value, was writing as a Whig-leading independent. Renee Pascal's early writings were in science, but his later philosophical tomes became more universal, perhaps a career trajectory that Warren was trying to emulate. Pascal's earliest publications were on hydraulics, a topic resonating with Warren's master's degree dissertation topic. Paskalos also has the additional meaning in Greek of 'all good', which Warren, with his classical background would have been aware of.

of the province, is totally wrecked, annulled, and vacated, posterity will acknowledge that virtue which preserved them free and happy'.<sup>557</sup> While Samuel Adams attended the Continental Congress with the Suffolk Resolves, Warren organised the public army, collecting weapons and gun powder in preparation for an increasingly inevitable conflict with Britain. His leadership qualities were recognised and he was appointed President of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress in the same year.

While living in Boston, Warren bore witness to what became known in the collective colonial mind as the Boston Massacre.<sup>558</sup> On the night of March 5, 1770, British soldiers fired on a mob that was verbally abusing and harassing them, killing three civilian Bostonians instantly and wounding eight more, two of whom later died from their injuries. Eight of the soldiers were arrested and charged with murder, but, defended by John Adams, six of the soldiers were acquitted and the remaining two were convicted of manslaughter and given reduced sentences. The massacre was likely not the result of murderous intentions by the British sentry, as some of the Americans claimed, or due to an American plot, as some on the British side believed. The traditional Whig fear of standing armies, combined with the ominous ratio of four thousand British soldiers to fifteen thousand Bostonians led to the clash. The immediate labelling of the incident as a 'massacre' by the town's Whig leadership meant that the event was used to manipulate and instigate further opposition to British presence in the city and to draw attention to the question of what British power was doing in America.

In March 1771, a year after the massacre, a committee on which Warren sat suggested that an oration be given in commemoration of the event. James Lovell, a distinguished Bostonian, was chosen to declaim on the occasion and thus began the

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<sup>557</sup> Joseph Warren, 'The Suffolk Resolves', 1774. The Suffolk Resolves were written in response to the series of Acts passed by Britain, nick-named by the American colonists as the Intolerable Acts. The Boston Port Act closed the Boston Harbour until the British East India Company had been repaid for their damaged tea. The Massachusetts Government Act brought the colony under British government rule, whereby the colonial government was appointed by the governor or the king. The Administration of Justice Act allowed royal official accused of crimes to be removed to another colony, which George Washington dubbed the 'Murder Act' believing it allowed the circumvention of justice. David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774*, (New York: Norton, 1974), p.9. The Quartering Act made more effective measures for housing British troops in the colonies, and was the least disputed of the acts. And, finally, the Quebec Act, which extended the boundaries of what was then the British Province of Quebec south to the Ohio River and west to the Mississippi, and instituted reforms generally favorable to the French Catholic inhabitants of the region. It upset land settlers in the colonies and people also feared that the French Canadians were being courted to help oppress British Americans. Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, pp.11-12.

<sup>558</sup> The definitive work on the Boston Massacre is still Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre*, (New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 1970).

tradition of an annual oration that continued until the practice was suspended after the July 4 celebrations in 1783. It also became practice for the oration to be published in pamphlet form, generally by Bostonian publisher Edes and Gill soon after its delivery and for it to be given wide circulation, with John Adams being quoted to say that the orations were read ‘scarcely ever with dry eyes’.<sup>559</sup> The annual orations, which produced ‘some of the most sensational rhetoric heard in the Revolutionary era’, came to have an important socio-political function in Boston. John Adams noted that there were ‘few men of consequence who did not commence their career by an oration at the 5<sup>th</sup> of March’, and it did mark the launch of careers for illustrious politicians such as John Hancock, Benjamin Church, and Joseph Warren.<sup>560</sup> According to contemporaries, this tradition presented by ‘eloquent orators’ kept the revolutionary fires ‘burning with an incessant flame’ for thirteen years.<sup>561</sup> These speeches, which were selected and distributed by a select section of Bostonian society, were able to promote a certain ideology. Sandra Gustafson has noted that ‘the Boston Massacre orators established the authority of the Whig leadership through their display of physical courage in the face of hostile auditors and through their figures of memory and meditation’.<sup>562</sup> The oration series also codified how the Boston populace remembered and perceived certain events during the pre-war and early national period. The orators were able to construct the people’s colonial identity out of the experience of suffering and death at the hands of British soldiers. Albanese has written that the commemoration orations became ‘a glorious recital of the myth of the Revolution. Often they would begin with lofty declamation on the ideals of government with frequent citation of Greek and Roman models. ...Ultimately, the orations aimed at the renewal of mythic innocence, ever under the threat of corruption, through action in the public cause’.<sup>563</sup>

With the annual commemoration in place, Warren was selected to deliver the 1772 oration. Warren drew four thousand spectators in bad weather to the Old South Church. Drawing on the conventions of classical rhetoric, which became popular

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<sup>559</sup> John Adams, quoted in Barnet Baskerville, *The People’s Voice: The Orator in American Society*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1979), p.13.

<sup>560</sup> Sandra Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power: Oratory and Performance in Early America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p.16.

<sup>561</sup> David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution* (1793), 2 vols., (New York: Russell and Russell, 1968), 1:85.

<sup>562</sup> Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*, p. xxiv.

<sup>563</sup> Catherine L. Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), p.73.

during the eighteenth century, Warren, like twelve of the thirteen orations, began with a classical motto.<sup>564</sup> He chose a few lines from Virgil's *Aeneid* to evoke an emotive setting for the oration: '*quis talia fando/Myrmidonum, Dolopumve, aut duri miles Ulysssei, /Temperet a lacrymis*'.<sup>565</sup> Warren set the scene for the Bostonians by quoting the opening lines from Book Two, in which Aeneas bears 'unspeakable grief' in telling Dido of the fall of Troy.<sup>566</sup> Warren felt that his tale of the encroaching tyranny of Britain warranted the same expanse of grief from his fellow Americans that Aeneas felt. Warren went on to inform his audience of the deleterious effects of having a standing army in a free society, reminding them that 'you have appointed this anniversary as a standing memorial of the bloody consequences of placing an armed force in a populous city'.<sup>567</sup> He implored his audience that 'public happiness depends on a virtuous and unshaken attachment to a free constitution'.<sup>568</sup> He looked to the Roman Republic and condemned those Romans who had been 'seduced by base corruption, betrayed their country', while praising those who had a 'noble attachment to a free constitution, which raised ancient Rome from the smallest beginnings, to that bright summit of happiness and glory to which she arrived'.<sup>569</sup> Warren lectured:

It was this attachment which inspired her senators with wisdom; it was this which glowed in the breasts of her heroes; it was this which guarded her liberties, and extended her dominions, gave peace at home, and commanded, respect abroad; and when this degenerated into tyrants and oppressors; her senators forgetful of their dignity, and seduced by base corruption, betrayed their country... Thus this empress of the world lost her dominions abroad, and her inhabitants, dissolute in their manners, at length became contented slaves; and she stands to this day, the scorn and derision of nations, and a monument of this eternal truth, that public happiness depends on a virtuous and unshaken attachment to a free constitution.<sup>570</sup>

Concluding this extensive description of Rome's decline, Warren finished by reminding the colonists that it was America's Roman-like attachment to a

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<sup>564</sup> Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1993), p.29

<sup>565</sup> Translation: 'What Myrmidon, or Dolopian, or warrior of fierce Ulysses, could keep from tears in telling such a story?' Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. II, 6-8.

<sup>566</sup> 'Virgil, *Aeneid*, Bk. II, 3.

<sup>567</sup> Joseph Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1772 at the Request of the Inhabitants of the Town of Boston; to Commemorate the Bloody Tragedy of the Fifth of March*, (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1772), p.12, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 12600 .

<sup>568</sup> Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1772*, p.7.

<sup>569</sup> Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1772*, p.6..

<sup>570</sup> Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1772*, p.7.

constitution, 'founded on free and benevolent principles, which inspired the first settlers of this country'.<sup>571</sup> America, Warren made it clear, was like Rome not only in its inhabitants' capacity for civic virtue, but in the situation in which they found themselves: where their free constitution was being impinged upon by the corrupting forces of those who had lost their attachment to liberty and were content to live under relative slavery. At this time, 1772, few Americans, if any, imagined that independence was only a mere four years away, and accordingly, the emphasis of Warren's classical allusions was still on the comparison of the rise and fall of the Roman and British Empires and on the corruption and loss of virtue this entailed. Warren drew a parallel between the American colonies and the Roman Republic and advised that the colonies were in the same precarious situation as Rome when it declined into imperial slavery. Thomas Hutchinson, the governor of Massachusetts, remarked on Warren's oration, saying 'the fervour could not fail in its effect on the minds of the great concourse of people present'.<sup>572</sup> From the other side of politics, the *Boston Gazette* remarked on 'the unanimous applause of [Warren's] audience'.<sup>573</sup> The town voted Warren its thanks and requested that a copy of the oration be published. Reportedly, the thirty-five minute oration 'did much to shape the ideas of later generations of Americans on the Boston Massacre'.<sup>574</sup>

Warren's 1772 commemoration was so successful that he was asked again in 1775 to speak for the occasion.<sup>575</sup> Unlike his 1772 address, which came at a point of relative tranquillity in the hostilities between Britain and the colonies, Warren's 1775 oration came at a significant moment in relations between America and its mother land. After the 1773 Boston Tea Party relations between Massachusetts and Britain had rapidly deteriorated until the colony was finally declared to be in a state of open rebellion. By early spring of 1775, war seemed inevitable and Warren's oration preceded the fateful battle of Lexington and Concord by a little more than a month.

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<sup>571</sup> Warren, *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1772*, p.6.

<sup>572</sup> Thomas Hutchinson, quoted in Richard Forthingham, *Life and Times of Joseph Warren*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1865), p.178.

<sup>573</sup> *Boston Gazette*, quoted in Forthingham, *Joseph Warren*, p.178.

<sup>574</sup> Cary, *Joseph Warren*, p.107.

<sup>575</sup> It is possible that the 1774 Boston Massacre oration was described in classical terms as well. Hannah Winthrop wrote in a letter to her friend Mercy Otis Warren on April 1, 1774, likely referring to the 1774 oration given by John Hancock: 'I give you joy on a late spirited oration. May America never fail to her sons to lead her in the way of truth and Justice. An oration delivered with Ciceronian eloquence incircling in a pleasing captivity the senses of a crowded Auditory'. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren April 1, 1774, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 17452-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

Warren thus staged his second massacre oration at a time when even the smallest spark would have inflamed volatile sentiments. While Warren's oration is a largely forgotten moment in the story of the war's early days there is little doubt that his 1775 oration was a crucial ingredient in Boston's resistance to Britain and that it resonated with Bostonians for many years after the orator himself had passed from the scene.

On the 6th March, 1775 the *Boston Evening Post* informed its readers that 'this day an oration will be delivered by Joseph Warren Esq., in commemoration of the bloody tragedy on the 5th March 1770'.<sup>576</sup> Warren's address took place at the Old South Meeting House, which was packed with an 'immense concourse of people'.<sup>577</sup> The hall was overcrowded with the audience occupying the aisles and the soldiers on the stairs. The presence of disgruntled soldiers awaiting the annual diatribe condemning British presence in the colonies and their imperial tyranny in general would have added an ominous feeling to the proceedings. Samuel Adams reported that the British Redcoats were likely to 'take the occasion to beat up a Breeze', which could easily have led to a new massacre.<sup>578</sup> Later accounts report that a 'threat [was] uttered by some of the British officers, that they would take the life of any man who should dare to speak of the massacre on that anniversary'.<sup>579</sup>

The Tory newspaper *Rivington's Gazette* of New York published an account of Warren's oration as witnessed by 'A Spectator':

At last, a single horse chair stopped at the apothecary's, opposite the meeting, from which descended the orator of the day [Warren]; and, entering the shop, was followed by a servant with a bundle, in which were the Ciceronian toga, etc. Having robed himself, he proceeded across the street to the meeting, and, being received into the pulpit, he was announced by one of his fraternity to be the person appointed to declaim on the occasion. He then put himself into a Demosthenian

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<sup>576</sup> *Boston Evening Post*, March 6, 1775, quoted in James Spear Loring, *The Hundred Boston Orators, Appointed by the Municipal Authorities and Other Public Bodies, from 1770 to 1852*, (Boston: J.P. Jewett and Company, 1852), p.60.

March 5, 1775 was a Sunday so the annual oration was scheduled for Monday, March 6.

<sup>577</sup> Frederick MacKenzie, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.124.

<sup>578</sup> Samuel Adams, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.124. Thomas Hutchinson in his diary recalls that an English soldier told him of an alleged plot to assassinate Joseph Warren during his oration: Col. James...tells as odd story of the intention of the officers the 5 March, that 300 were in the Meeting to hear Dr Warren's Oration: that if he had said anything against the King, &c., an officer was prepared, who stood near, with an egg, to have thrown in his face, and that was to have been a signal to draw swords, and they would have massacred Hancock, Adams, and hundreds more; and he added, he wished they had. I am glad they did not: for I think it would have been an everlasting disgrace to attack a body of people without arms to defend themselves'. Thomas Hutchinson quoted in Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, p.228.

<sup>579</sup> Cary, *Joseph Warren*, p.174.

posture, with a white handkerchief in his right hand, and his left in his breeches, — began and ended without action.<sup>580</sup>

Watching this performance, Samuel Adams remarked that the British officers ‘behaved tolerably well till the oration was finished’, and Frederick MacKenzie reported that ‘the oration...was delivered without any other interruption than a few hisses from some of the officers’.<sup>581</sup> Although the *Gazette* is currently the only known contemporary source for the toga story, in 1910, at the unveiling of the statue of General Warren, erected in the town of Warren, Pennsylvania, by the Daughters of the American Revolution, Charles Stone quoted an unnamed ‘earlier historian’ as commenting on Warren’s massacre oration: ‘The scene was sublime. Such another has seldom happened in the history of man and is not surpassed in the records of nations. The thunders of Demosthenes rolled at a distance from Phillip and his host; and Tully [Cicero] poured forth the fiercest torrent of invective when Cataline was at a distance, and his dagger no longer to be feared; but Warren’s speech was made to proud oppressors resting on their arms; whose errand it was to overawe and whose business it was to fight’.<sup>582</sup>

Portraying Warren in a ‘Ciceronian toga’ and as standing in a ‘Demosthenian posture’ was significant for a number of reasons merely beyond associating the American with classical antiquity. Cicero and Demosthenes were considered to be the greatest orators in Rome and Athens respectively, and in Plutarch’s *Lives*, they are paired as the two greatest rhetoricians in antiquity, equal also in achievements and character. Cicero had attacked Marc Antony in the Roman Senate in a series of fiery speeches he called ‘Philippics’, and he was in fact honouring Demosthenes, who had three centuries earlier similarly damned Philip II of Macedon in fierce addresses. Both Demosthenes’ and Cicero’s crusades against tyranny had not ended well: Demosthenes committed suicide to avoid arrest after promoting Athenian

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<sup>580</sup> Samuel Forman has suggested that Mercy Scollay, Joseph Warren’s fiancée, may have sewn and fitted Warren’s toga since her later letters reveal she had a facility with needlework. She was possibly even present at the oration since the Daughters of Liberty had been successful in petitioning the town in 1771 to attend such gatherings. Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, p.227. There is another account of Warren’s oration given by Thomas Bolton, a loyalist. In this account, Bolton derides Warren’s ‘enthusiasm’, ‘sedition’, and ‘profit in oration making’, but he does not mention the wearing of a toga. Thomas Bolton, ‘An Oration’, in Potter and Thomas, *The American Colonial Idiom*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), pp.303-304.

<sup>581</sup> Samuel Adams, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.125. Frederick MacKenzie, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.125.

<sup>582</sup> Charles Stone, *Gen. Joseph Warren: an address; delivered July 4th, 1910*, (S.l.: s.n., 1910), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Warren.

independence of Macedonia, and Cicero, having chosen the losing side in the Civil War, was named an enemy of the state, meaning anyone could kill him and claim part of his estate, and had his hands and head nailed to the Rostra in the Roman Forum. Describing Warren as both ‘Ciceronian’ and ‘Demosthenian’ joined him to a succession of immortal classical orators who are remembered for fiercely condemning tyranny and for perishing for their attachment to liberty rather than living under a tyrannical regime. As Patrick Henry would do a few months later, Warren, dressed in a toga and denouncing British rule, was effectively calling ‘give me liberty or give me death’, but having equal emphasis on both parts of the expression.

The toga was the principal garment of a freeborn Roman male citizen. Stressing that Warren wore a ‘Ciceronian’ toga differentiated his garment from the Greek rectangular mantle, the *himation*, and clearly associated him with Roman patriots and their values. Because a Roman toga was worn without any kind of fastening device, the wearer had to keep his left arm crooked to support its voluminous drapery. The simplicity in both colour and design of Warren’s attire stood in stark contrast to the British redcoat antagonists, emphasising the purity of his cause. Warren’s choice of attire indicated that he would not be intimidated in his denunciation of British rule as tyranny. The gesture gave the neo-Roman speaker an ideal chance to show that true virtue could not be cowed by the threat of mere violence. As such, Warren was emulating the way of the great Roman heroes: Cicero, for example, could take on the great and powerful Julius Caesar precisely because he was entirely immune to threats of violence. Virtue, in his lexicon, would always prevail over base power.<sup>583</sup> Likewise, when Cato filibustered against an agrarian law, Caesar, who had proposed the law, responded by having Cato dragged from the senate house by lictors, Roman civil servants who acted as official bodyguards. Many senators protested this extraordinary and unprecedented use of force by leaving the forum, with one senator proclaiming ‘I’d rather be in prison with Cato than here with

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<sup>583</sup> Eran Shalev has argued that the war between Britain and the American colonies could easily have started that day of Warren’s second oration. Perhaps inspired by Thomas Hutchinson’s report of the potential assassination attempt, Shalev paints a scene of increasing tensions between the British and the Bostonians at the Old South Meeting House and an outbreak in hostilities that resulted in several dead on both sides. At the centre of the fallen, Shalev places the orator lying in a blood stained toga. Warren would have looked like Cato, acting as the patriot martyr calling for liberty and dying at the height of his virtuous actions. Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, pp.122-130.

you [Caesar]'.<sup>584</sup> Like Cato, Warren knew that virtue and unflinching resistance to tyranny were qualities far superior to concern about one's life.

Warren skilfully blended the performative elements of his oration with the spoken elements. While many of the facts surrounding Warren's oration are disputed, the actual words of his speech are not since they have survived in pamphlet form. As with his 1772 oration, Warren began by citing classical authorities, this time Virgil and Horace. Both quotations were layered with meaning and importance. The Virgil, '*tantae molis erat, Romanam condere gentem*', taken from the opening section of Book One of the *Aeneid*, outlines the series of problems Aeneas and his followers had after fleeing Troy prior to eventually reaching Italy and founding Rome.<sup>585</sup> In using this line Warren highlighted the struggles of the American colonists against all the odds but emphasised the importance of their mission. At this point in 1775, despite being little more than a year away, independence was far from the minds of most colonists. Instead, this line was not about the founding of a new Rome in America but about the importance of emulating Roman-style resolve. The quotation from Horace, '*qui, metuens, vivet, liber mihi non erit umquam*', reminded the Americans that fear itself was another form of tyranny.<sup>586</sup> This section from Horace's *Epistles* gives the meaning of true goodness, emphasising the importance of virtue and the dangers of vice, but has pastoral overtones. The Epistle ends with the lines: 'The good and wise man will dare to say: 'Pentheus/...what shame can you force me to suffer/And endure?' 'I'll take your goods.' My cattle you mean,/Possessions, couches, silver: do so'. 'I'll chain you, hand/And foot, and imprison you under a cruel jailor.'/'Yet, whenever I wish, the gods will set me free.'/I take it he means, 'I'll die'. Death is the final goal'.<sup>587</sup> Warren was thus reminded his audience that freedom and virtue were to be found through death.

The pulpit from which Warren orated was shrouded in black as a sign of bereavement, and the patriot declared: 'I mourn over my bleeding country: with them I weep at her distress, and with them deeply resent the many injuries she has received from the hands of cruel and unreasonable men'.<sup>588</sup> Warren then gave a

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<sup>584</sup> See Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 38.2-3.

<sup>585</sup> Translation: 'It was of such difficulty to found the Roman kind'. Virgil, *Aeneid*, I.33.

<sup>586</sup> Translation: 'He who lives in fear, will never, to my mind, be free'. Horace, *Epistles*, I.16.66.

<sup>587</sup> Horace, *Epistles*, I.16.73-79.

<sup>588</sup> Both 'A Spectator' and Frederick MacKenzie in his diary mention the black cloth hung on the pulpit. Joseph Warren, *An oration delivered March sixth, 1775. At the request of the inhabitants of*

historical account of New England's settlement, as well as a philosophical and ideological argument in defence of the colonists' position. One of the strong themes of the oration was the liberty, both religious and political, that America traditionally made available to its inhabitants, arguing that the colonies were established as a haven from tyranny by people who preferred the dangers of the New World to the 'slavery' they were experiencing in Europe.<sup>589</sup> Warren declared that England, which had once 'boasted a race of British kings, whose names should echo...Cyrus, Alexander, and the Caesars' was now decaying under the yoke of 'an avaricious minister of state, [who] has drawn a sable curtain over the charming scene'.<sup>590</sup> Warren saw the colonists' position as that of Republican Rome: Britain was threatening the principles of liberty and freedom enshrined in its own constitution. In the face of British corruption and tyranny Warren urged his fellow Americans to adopt the 'maxim of the Roman people, which eminently conduced to the greatness of that state, never to despair of the commonwealth. The maxim may prove as salutary to us now, as it did to them'.<sup>591</sup> Whether the audience viewed Warren as Demosthenes, Cicero, or another from the pantheon of ancient heroes, they knew that these classical heroes had only found liberty and succeeded in preserving their virtue through death. One can only imagine how much more convincing these classical musings would have been from an orator clad in a toga.

It is possible that, since no other account than the *Rivington's* narrator, a Tory newspaper, survives of Warren's classical costume, that the toga was an invention of Tory propaganda to undermine or ridicule Warren's ideology or perhaps his person.<sup>592</sup> The important question, however, is not whether Warren wore a toga but whether Warren could have worn such a garment in the circumstances. From the immediate reaction to the Boston Massacre, the whole episode was described and cloaked in terms of antiquity, and subsequently anything related to the massacre was

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*the town of Boston, to commemorate the bloody tragedy, of the fifth of March, 1770*, (New-York: John Anderson, 1775), p.2, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 14609.

<sup>589</sup> 'They [the colonists] found the land swarming with savages, who threatened death with every kind of torture. But savages, and death with torture were far less terrible than slavery: nothing was so much the object of their abhorrence as a tyrant's power: they knew that it was more safe to dwell with man in his most unpolished state, - than in a country where arbitrary power prevails'. Warren, *An Oration Delivered March Sixth, 1775*, p.3.

<sup>590</sup> This reference to 'Caesars' in the plural indicates that Warren was referring to some of the good emperors that Rome experienced, rather than Julius Caesar. Warren, *An Oration Delivered March Sixth, 1775*, p.7.

<sup>591</sup> Warren, *An Oration Delivered March Sixth, 1775*, p.13.

<sup>592</sup> Shalev notes that the account of 'A Spectator' was not republished in Boston and was generally less available to Whig readers. Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.127, f.48.

likewise interpreted through the medium of antiquity. Robert Treat Paine, the prosecutor on the Boston Massacre court trial, was told by an admirer that his court performance was ‘Ciceronian like’.<sup>593</sup> John Adams, for the defence, was told that his court acts were ‘equal to the greatest orator that ever spoke in Greece or Rome’, and Adams even began taking his notes on the trial in Latin.<sup>594</sup> The commemoration orations frequently drew on classical references and were dominated by classical themes, using classical mottos, rhetoric, and illustrations. For example, Benjamin Church in the 1773 commemoration address said that ‘the citizens of Rome, Sparta, of Lacedaemon, at those blessed periods when they were most eminent for their attachment to liberty and virtue, could never exhibit brighter examples of patriot zeal, than are to be found at this day in America’.<sup>595</sup> John Hancock likewise warned in his 1774 massacre oration of the dangers of standing armies, linking them to the fall of Rome: ‘with such as these, usurping Caesar passed the Rubicon; with such as these, he humbled mighty Rome, and forced the mistress of the world to own a master in a traitor’.<sup>596</sup>

These oratorical classical allusions that came to dominate the Boston Massacre orations were also in line with the newly established rhetorical convention of moulding a classical identity. During the 1750s and 1760s English rhetoricians, who were also popular in the colonies, redefined the function and nature of rhetoric. These rhetoricians drew extensively on classical Roman rhetoric, which was ‘broadly understood as the active art of moving and influencing men, of galvanising their passions, interests, biases, and temperament’.<sup>597</sup> Literary historian Jay Fliegelman has argued that the orator’s primary obligation was no longer to communicate thought and feeling, but to display the experiencing of those feelings, which resulted in a greater theatricalisation of public speaking. The new oratorical style that was embraced by colonial orators, such as George Whitfield, ‘posing, gesturing, and

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<sup>593</sup> Quoted in Richard Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of information in Early America*, (New York: Oxford university Press, 1989), p.101.

<sup>594</sup> Quoted in Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, p.102. Notes by John Adams The Trial of the British Soldiers of the 29th Regiment of Foot, for the Murder of Crispus Attucks and others March 5, 1770, held before the Superior Court (November 27, 1770), John Davis Papers, 1627-1846, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-1097.

<sup>595</sup> Benjamin Church, *An oration; delivered March 5th, 1773, at the Request of the inhabitants of the town of Boston; to Commemorate the bloody tragedy of the fifth of March, 1770*, p.10, (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1773), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 12723 .

<sup>596</sup> John Hancock, *An oration; delivered March 5, 1774: 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, 1774).

<sup>597</sup> Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, p.29

acting out Bible scenes' enabled patriotic sacrifice to be acted out rather than verbally alluded to. Warren's 1775 commemoration came during this period, meaning his 'Demosthenian posture' would have played out in his body language and his 'Ciceronian toga' would not only have been accepted but suited to the occasion as part of the cultural ecology. Since there is no evidence of people protesting against the story, if the toga incident had been fabricated it was clearly acceptable in this classically saturated political climate to depict a Bostonian orator in a toga without people questioning its validity.

Three months after this oration, Warren died on the slopes of Bunker Hill. On June 13, 1775, during the Siege of Boston, the colonial forces learnt that the British were planning to send troops out from the city to occupy Bunker and Breed's Hills. The Americans fortified the hills but the British engaged, capturing their position after three assaults. While the result was a victory for the British, they suffered heavy losses: over 800 wounded and 226 killed, including a notably large number of officers. The battle is remembered in the American mindset as a Pyrrhic victory, since the British occupation of Bunker Hill was a minor achievement and the process cost them significantly.<sup>598</sup> In 1836 Alexander Everett reminded Bostonians of this fact in a commemoration oration likening Bunker Hill to the massacre of the Spartans by the invading Persian army at Thermopylae. Everett informed his audience that: 'The importance of battles is in no way proportioned to the numbers engaged in them; nor is the successful party in all cases the one that derives the greatest advantage from the encounter. The defeat of the three hundred Spartans who fell at the pass of Thermopylae was of deeper moment to the independence of Greece than the splendid triumphs of Marathon and Salamis. That stern laconic inscription: - Traveller ! tell at Sparta that three hundred of her sons died here in her defence: - spoke more eloquently to the generous Grecian heart than the long official reports of a hundred victories'.<sup>599</sup> In the collective American memory, those who died at Bunker Hill and in the concurrent burning of Charlestown were heroes and

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<sup>598</sup> George Washington to Samuel Washington, July 20, 1775, Founders Online, National Archives (<http://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/03-01-02-0083>, ver. 2013-08-02). Source: *The Papers of George Washington*, Revolutionary War Series, vol. 1, 16 June 1775–15 September 1775, ed. Philander D. Chase. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1985, pp. 134–136.

<sup>599</sup> Alexander Everett, *An address delivered at Charlestown, Mass.: on the 17th of June, 1836, at the request of the young men, without distinction of party, in commemoration of the Battle of Bunker Hill*, (Boston : Beals & Greene, 1836), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. E241.B9 E92 1836.

martyrs to the American patriot movement and the cause of liberty.<sup>600</sup> A song written in 1825 to the tune of Yankee Doodle to commemorate the Battle of Bunker Hill reminded the singers and audience of the ‘immortal Heroes! Deathless is your fame’.<sup>601</sup> It went on to sing of the patriots cause reminding the Americans that the Bunker Hill soldiers had intended to ‘gain our freedom, or we die/In freedom’s sacred cause’.<sup>602</sup> However, of the patriot martyrs who fell at Bunker Hill, none was more famous than Warren.

Prior to the conflict, Warren was at Watertown with the Provincial Congress when Colonel Prescott received orders to fortify Bunker Hill. After the adjournment of the evening session, Elbridge Gerry, a member of the Committee of Safety of which Warren was Chairman, recalls sharing sleeping arrangements with Warren that night and having Warren confide in him his intention to join Prescott at the battle. When Gerry tried to dissuade him and warned Warren of the dangers, Warren reportedly fatalistically quoted the Roman poet Horace ‘*Dulce et decorum pro patria mori*’.<sup>603</sup> This phrase was attributed to Warren in the three generations of posthumous fame that he enjoyed, some even claiming he uttered them after he was shot on the battlefield, but considering he sustained a close range shot to the head, it is unlikely.<sup>604</sup> The supposed quote from Warren became immortalised when shortly

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<sup>600</sup> During the Battle of Bunker Hill, the British were forced to set Charlestown alight as they received heavy musket fire from the town. The British did this by heavily bombing the area, and, since the buildings were primarily made of wood, it burned easily and rapidly. Following the battle, John Collins visited Charlestown and wrote: March, 1776: ‘This day I visit Charlestown, and a most melancholy heap of ruins it is. Scarcely the vestiges of those beautiful buildings remain to distinguish them from the mean cottages. The hill which was the theatre upon which the bloody tragedy of the 17<sup>th</sup> June was acted, commands the most affecting view of ever saw it in my life: the walls of magnificent buildings tottering to the earth below; above a great number of rude hillocks under which are deposited the remains of clusters of those deathless Hero’s who fell in the field of Battle. Collins emphasises the significance and heroism of those who died at Charlestown by describing their memory as ‘deathless’. This joins them to the American genealogy of martyrs. John Collins, March 1776, John Collins Warren Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms N-1731, box one.

<sup>601</sup> Battle of Bunker Hill, Tune “Yankee Doodle’ Ode for the 17th June, 1825, (Boston?: s.n., 1825), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Bdses 1825 June 17.

<sup>602</sup> Battle of Bunker Hill, Tune “Yankee Doodle’ Ode for the 17th June, 1825, (Boston?: s.n., 1825), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Bdses 1825 June 17.

<sup>603</sup> Translation: ‘It is sweet and fitting to die for the country’. James Austin, *The Life of Elbridge Gerry: With Contemporary Letters. To the Close of the American Revolution*, Vol. 1., (Boston: Wells and Lily, 1828), p.84. The passage is from Horace, *Odes*, III.ii.13 and translates as ‘it is a sweet and proper thing to die for one’s country’.

<sup>604</sup> Abigail Adams wrote to her husband with the news that ‘our ever-valued friend Warren, dear to us even in death, was not treated with any more respect than a common soldier’. The British, whom Abigail describes as ‘those who do not scruple to bring poverty, misery, slavery, and death upon thousands’, had ‘consulted together and agreed to sever his [Warren’s] Head from his body, and carry it in triumph to Gage, who no doubt would have “grin’d horrible a ghastly smile” instead of imitating Caesar who far from being gratified with so horrid a Spectacle, as the Head even of his Enemy, turned away with disgust and gave vent to his pitty in a flood of tears’. To Abigail, the British were worse than

afterwards a song was written about Warren's death at Bunker Hill and the chorus contained the line 'O 'tis sweet for our country to die'.<sup>605</sup> Besides Gerry's recollection of the incident years after the event, John Adams quoted the phrase in a letter to James Warren dated July 6, 1775, saying 'Alass poor Warren! *Dulce et decorum est pro Patria mori*'.<sup>606</sup> Warren had reportedly uttered similar sentiments in 1774 when in support of the patriot movement he preached to his fellow colonists: 'When liberty is the prize, who would stoop to waste a coward thought on life?'<sup>607</sup> On the battlefield Warren had also shown valour; in a letter written shortly after the battle John Bromfield claimed that 'It is said he rec'd a mortal wound on the retreat and was offer'd assistance when he first fell, but declin'd it saying he had but a few moments to live, and told the man who offer'd his assistance to go where he might be more servicable'.<sup>608</sup>

The response to Warren's death by his close friends was an outpouring of sentiment that praised Warren for his devotion to the cause of liberty and expressions of glory to be found in his death. The day after the fighting concluded, James Warren, dispirited by the loss of Warren and so many other American soldiers, and on hearing the news that Samuel Adams was 'very unwell' wrote pessimistically to his wife 'I hope some of us will survive this contest', reflecting the belief that victory was not inevitable but death more assuredly likely.<sup>609</sup> Upon hearing the news of Warren's death, Samuel Adams wrote to James Warren: 'I

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Caesar. The quote Abigail included in her letter comes from Milton's *Paradise Lost* Book II, ll. 840–849 where he talks about a wicked person content in their evil endeavours. Abigail Adams to John Adams Braintree July 31, 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344. For an interesting account of the afterlife of Joseph Warren's skull see Forman, *Dr Joseph Warren*, Appendix III.

<sup>605</sup> George S. Jackson, *Early Songs of Uncle Sam*, (Wellesley: Branden Books, 1962), p.100.

<sup>606</sup> The rest of the paragraph reads: 'Yet I regret his Appointment to such a Command. For God Sake my Friend let us be upon our Guard, against too much Admiration of our greatest Friends. President of the Congress Chairman of the Committee of safety, Major General and Chief surgeon of the Army, was too much for Mortal, and This Accumulation of Admiration upon one Gentleman, which among the Hebrews was called Idolatry, has deprived us forever of the Services of one of our best and ablest Men. We have not a sufficient Number of such Men left to be prodigal of their Lives in future'. John Adams to James Warren, Phyladelphia, June [July] 6 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>607</sup> Warren apparently he wrote this on 24 August 1774. *Monument to Joseph Warren: its origin, history and dedication, 1894-1904*, (Boston: Municipal Printing Office, 1905), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. E263.M4 W24.

<sup>608</sup> John Bromfield to Jeremiah Powell, Newbury Port, June 21, 1775, Miscellaneous Bound Manuscripts, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Misc. Bd. 1775 June 21.

<sup>609</sup> James Warren to Mercy Otis Warren, Watertown, June 18, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

sincerely lament the Loss of our truly amiable and worthy Friend Dr. Warren. There has scarcely if ever been a Cause so evidently just as that in which he fell so gloriously'.<sup>610</sup> James Warren later attended Warren's funeral and wrote to John Adams that Warren had been 'at once admired and lamented in such a manner as to make it difficult to determine whether regret or envy predominated'.<sup>611</sup> James Warren's expression of envy for Warren's death, while likely being a conventional funerary sentiment, nonetheless inspired an admiration and validation of dying for the cause of liberty and fostered a desire to actively emulate it. Abigail Adams also wrote of the funeral that 'A young fellow would not have wished a finer opportunity to display his talents. The amiable and heroic virtues of the deceased, recent in the minds of the audience; the noble cause to which he fell a martyr; their own sufferings and unparalleled injuries, all fresh in their minds, must have given weight and energy to whatever could be delivered upon the occasion'.<sup>612</sup> John Adams responded to James Warren's letter with similar sentiments of admiration for Joseph Warren, writing 'our dear Warren has fallen, with Laurels on his brows as fresh and blooming as ever graced an Hero'.<sup>613</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, writing to John Adams, indulged in similar imagery writing 'but nothing that has taken place is more regretted than the death of your friend, the brave, the humane, the good Dr. Warren...he fell covered with laurels and the wing of fame is spread over his monument'.<sup>614</sup> The repetition of the depiction of Warren being covered in laurels is curious; in ancient Rome the laurel wreath was given to military commanders who had displayed particular martial victory and they were crowned during their triumph.<sup>615</sup> Warren, despite the Americans losing the battle and Warren himself even dying in the conflict, was

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<sup>610</sup> Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, June 28, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>611</sup> James Warren to John Adams, Watertown, June 20, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>612</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, April 7, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 345.

<sup>613</sup> John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>614</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, Watertown, July 5, 1775 Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>615</sup> Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante, *The World of Roman Costume*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), p.82.

praised for his dedication to the patriot cause; perhaps, like Cato, finding more glory in dying for liberty than in surviving under potential tyranny.

In the many eulogies dedicated to Warren's memory he was described in terms of an ancient hero and as a martyr of liberty. Two weeks after his death, a eulogist for the *Pennsylvania Packet* admitted Warren into a pantheon that included 'each Roman, every Greek, whose name glows high recorded in the roll of fame'.<sup>616</sup> He was also compared to the Spartan general Leonidas confronting the massive Persian army at Thermopylae with his limited number of soldiers: 'so fell Leonidas, the Spartan chief'.<sup>617</sup> A lengthy eulogy in the *Virginia Gazette*, again repeated the analogy, although believed that Leonidas had been successful at Thermopylae, which was historically incorrect: 'unlike the Spartan general only in not expiring in the arms of victory'.<sup>618</sup> Another eulogy named Brutus and Cincinnatus as Warren's companions in the afterlife, declaring them all to be 'the great, the brave'.<sup>619</sup> The Thomas Pemberton Papers at the Massachusetts Historical Society contain a eulogy that also envies Warren's glorious death and seeks emulation: 'Say what joy thrill'd after it of ye prospect of having thy brows enscribed with the Patriots crown of martyrdom?'<sup>620</sup> Likewise, a eulogy published in Boston in 1781 again grouped Warren with ancient heroes: 'Patriots and heroes, once, renown'd in war/Brutus and Cassius, foremost of the throng/Present the garland, and begin the song' claiming they were all 'in fields elysian'.<sup>621</sup> The *Pennsylvania Magazine*, published in Philadelphia, for June 1775 a eulogy for Warren that was purportedly supplied by a gentleman of that city. An extract surmises the general sentiment surrounding the death of Warren: 'But even in this unfortunate event he has served his country; for he has taught the sons of freedom in America, that the laurel may be engrafted upon the cypress, and that true glory may be acquired not only in the arms of victory, but in the arms of death'.<sup>622</sup> Even in 1836, Alexander Everett, having likened Bunker Hill to

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<sup>616</sup> Originally printed in the *Pennsylvania Packet*, July 3, 1775 and was reprinted in the *Massachusetts Spy, or American Oracle of Liberty*, July 26, 1775, quoted in Forthingham, *Joseph Warren*, p.536.

<sup>617</sup> Quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.132.

<sup>618</sup> Quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.132.

<sup>619</sup> *Ode on the birth-day of the president of the United States, 1796*, (Philadelphia: s.n., 1796), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 30924.

<sup>620</sup> Eulogy on Joseph Warren, Thomas Pemberton Papers 1773-1805, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms N-685, Appendix 35.

<sup>621</sup> 'A Columbian', *An eulogium on Major General Joseph Warren, who fell in the action at Charlestown, June XVII, MDCCCLXXV*, (Boston: John Boyle, 1781), p.20, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 17149.

<sup>622</sup> *Pennsylvania Magazine*, June 1775, quoted in Forthingham, *Joseph Warren*, p.536.

the Battle of Thermopylae, praised Warren for his willingness to die for the cause, declaring that he achieved more in death than he did in a life time: ‘And you, gallant Warren, ! when you rushed in the fervid rashness of your youthful patriotism to yonder mount and poured out your life-blood upon its top, did more perhaps for your country in that moment of mortal agony than even your dauntless courage, your prudent counsel, our fiery zeal, your talents splendid as they were, could have accomplished by the labours of a life!’<sup>623</sup> Warren was perceived to be the first well-known martyr of the American cause, and reminded the colonists that in death and defeat there was honour, glory, and the cause of liberty. Along with monuments erected in memory of Warren, it was suggested to Congress that medals be struck with his image and a motto commemorating his ‘great actions’. These medals were to be ‘presented by Congress to such of the officers as shall perform some great and noble act’.<sup>624</sup> In the late nineteenth century, Warren was memorialised at the Bunker Hill monument, where he was depicted in statue form wearing a toga. The design of the statue was decided upon in consultation with Warren’s descendants, and they chose to depict him in his ‘Ciceronian’ toga of great fame.<sup>625</sup>

Two decades after Warren died, his death was dramatised by John Daly Burk in the 1798 play *Bunker Hill, or The Death of General Warren*. The play was a

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<sup>623</sup> Alexander Everett, *An address delivered at Charlestown, Mass.: on the 17th of June, 1836, at the request of the young men, without distinction of party, in commemoration of the Battle of Bunker Hill*, (Boston: Beals & Greene, 1836), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. E241.B9 E92 1836.

<sup>624</sup> Nathaniel Greene to John Adams, Morris Town, May 2, 1777, Adams-Greene Correspondence, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Adams Pamphlet File JA 49.

<sup>625</sup> The depiction of political leaders in togas was not something limited to the colonies. Across the channel, William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, who had earlier defended America’s grievances with Britain during the Stamp Act Crisis and was instrumental to the repeal of the Stamp Act, was described in classical terms. His address to the British parliament was described by Thomas Hopkinson as demonstrating ‘a Cato’s firmness and a Tully’s Zeal, And every Worth that grac’s the Roman sires’. Pitt was later memorialised in statue form as a toga-wearing Roman. On order of the colony, English sculptor Joseph Wilton carved the statue, portraying Pitt dressed in a toga with one arm holding the Magna Carta and the other extended upward. The statue was originally placed on the corner of Broad and Meeting St in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1780 the statue was damaged when a British canon struck the outstretched arm during the siege of Charleston. By 1791 it was considered a nuisance, partly because of its location in a primary street intersection, and partly because Pitt’s vehement opposition to American independence. In 1794, City Council contracted for its removal. In 1808 the statue lay in the garden of the Charleston orphanage house, which petitioned to have it erected. It remained at Orphan House until 1881 when it was moved by the South Carolina Historical Society to Washington Park. In the 1980s it was put inside the Charleston Museum, but moved in 2002 to its original spot on the corner of Broad and Meeting St. Charles Wilson Peale was, likewise, commissioned by the Westmoreland County, Virginia, to paint a portrait of Pitt. Peale undertook the task and represented Pitt in full Roman attire, including a toga, a Roman tunic, and Roman sandals. The painting currently hangs at the Westmoreland County Museum and Library. Frank Sommer has ever suggested that Peale intended Pitt to look like Brutus, the assassin of Caesar. Frank Sommer, ‘Thomas Hollis and the Arts of Dissent’, in *Prints in and of America to 1850*, ed. John D. Morse, (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1970), p.143.

historical tragedy highly influenced by the neo-Roman tradition of Addison's *Cato*. The play was remarkable because it involved Rome and Rome's heroes as much as it involved America and the battle in Boston: the play actually mentions more Romans by name than Americans. Like Addison's *Cato*, Daly's *Bunker Hill* covered a relatively short period of time and had as its protagonist a dogmatically virtuous character. Daly cast the diffident and arrogant British soldiers as the pro-Caesar tyrants and the unflinching and virtuous American rebels therefore embodied the heroes of the Roman Republic. In this Roman-inspired landscape, it comes as no surprise that Warren was likened to the greatest of Romans: like Warren, 'so Cato, the great Roman, us'd to act'.<sup>626</sup> Warren, seeking to emulate the Roman hero, declares that: 'I devote myself, my services, my life to freedom' and on contemplating his death Warren could 'think of nothing but of souls, who in contempt of death their country sav'd, of Curtis, of Scœvola, and of Brutus, of Cato, Cassius, Decii, and Camilli'.<sup>627</sup> The American hero's only wish was to be added to this succession of martyrs: 'the name Warren, and hand them together down in succession to posterity'.<sup>628</sup> Daly even has Warren declare 'Liberty or Death' before his final battle, an imitation not only of Addison's Cato but of the American-Romans Patrick Henry and Nathan Hale who had consciously played a Catonian role during the war. Defeat was thus transformed into an opportunity to demonstrate America's glory and, like Cato, Warren exits life preferring the liberty and virtue to be found in death rather than enduring the tyranny, slavery, and corruption of a tyrannic regime. As late as 1857, Warren was still being esteemed as a model worthy of emulation: in a paper read to the New England Historical and Genealogical Society James Loring proclaimed 'Fly to your houses, and tell your children the particulars of the melancholy sight. Chill their young blood with the histories of the cruelties of tyrants, and make their hair stand on end with descriptions of the horrors of slavery! Equip them immediately for the field. Show them the ancient charter of their privileges. Points to the roofs under which they drew their first breath and shew them the cradle in which they were rocked. Call upon Heaven to prosper their arms, and charge them

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<sup>626</sup> John Daly Burk, *Bunker-Hill, or, The death of General Warren: an historic tragedy in five acts*, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, pp.207-208.

<sup>627</sup> Burk, *Bunker-Hill*, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, pp.207-208.

<sup>628</sup> Burk, *Bunker-Hill*, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, pp.207-208.

with your last adieu, to conquer, or, like Warren, to die in the arms of liberty and glory'.<sup>629</sup>

Throughout his lifetime, Warren had a close relationship with the classics and was particularly associated with a pantheon of Roman heroes that included Cicero and Demosthenes. Although Warren was rarely explicitly likened to Cato, such an association would have been acceptable through extension, as Cato embodied similar ideals and sentiments as Cicero and Demosthenes. From his theatrical pursuits at college, possible involvement in the Boston Tea Party as a Mohawk Indian, theatrical massacre orations, and dramatic quoting of Horace days before his death, Warren used the classics to discuss his political grievances, and express the colonists' standpoint with Britain. Warren's most infamous performance, his 1775 Boston massacre address, was a culmination of the political and the classical. Wearing a 'Ciceronian' toga and emulating Cicero and Demosthenes, Warren communicated a clear message to the colonists: virtue made him immune to threats of violence and dying for liberty was the only choice in the circumstances. Drenched in the classics through education and social expectations, the Bostonian patriots would have seen and interpreted Warren's call as thus. Warren saw the war with Britain not as a 'revolution' but as a chance to make a final stand for liberty, in a style that emulated the Roman heroes. Warren did not seek victory but actively sought death and martyrdom.

### Patrick Henry

While Joseph Warren aligned himself with a pantheon of Roman heroes who had preferred death to living under tyranny, Patrick Henry, another colonial politician central to the patriot movement, was more specific in his choice of Roman role models. Like Warren, Patrick Henry originally aligned himself with a general lineage of classical martyrs, but as the colonies descended into war, it was Cato that he felt best represented the colonists' cause and he consciously chose to emulate the Roman.

Born in Hanover County, Virginia in 1736, to a middle ranked landed gentry family, Patrick Henry was a 'rising star in the American Revolutionary movement'.<sup>630</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> James Spear Loring, *The Relics of General Joseph Warren: A paper read before the New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Wednesday, November 4, 1857, in Historical magazine and notes and queries*, (Dec. 1857), pp. 363-367, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Box-L 1857.

Contemporary descriptions of Henry generally began by commenting on his limited education. In the elite culture of the Southern colonies the lack of formal education could be crippling to a person's career and social standing. As one of eight children, Henry had attended local schools for a few years but was then educated at home, receiving a basic classical education, learning some Greek and Latin, as well as other rudiments. John Adams, after meeting Henry at the Continental Congress, commented on this, noting that Henry 'has no public education. At fifteen he read Virgil and Livy, and has not looked into a Latin book since'.<sup>631</sup> Thomas Jefferson also stated many years after the war that Henry was 'a man of very little knowledge of any sort, he read nothing and had no books...He could not write'.<sup>632</sup> St George Tucker likewise recalled that when he first saw Henry, he looked at him 'with no great prepossession'.<sup>633</sup>

While Henry was deemed to be poorly educated none of his contemporaries failed to acknowledge his mesmerising oratorical skills. Even Jefferson, after pointing out Henry's educational limitations, said that Henry spoke 'as Homer wrote', while others observed 'that almost supernatural transformation of appearance...[was] invariably wrought by the excitement' and manipulation of his oratorical genius.<sup>634</sup> Throughout his political career, it was Henry's exceptional oratorical skills that made him memorable and successful. In Virginia, where popular oratory in the wake of the Great Awakening popular oratory had 'weakened the role of the written word itself' in favour of the power of public speaking, the rising conflict with Britain provided emerging political figures, such as Henry, with space in the public sphere to demonstrate their talent, patriotism, and mould a new classical

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<sup>630</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.142.

<sup>631</sup> John Adams diary October 11, 1774, *Adams Family Papers 1639-1899*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 2. Adams wrote in his diary for October 11, 1774 that he 'spent the evening with Mr. Henry, at his lodgings, consulting about a petition to the King. Henry said he had no public education; at fifteen he read Virgil and Livy, and his not looked into a Latin book since. His father left him at that age, and he has been struggling through life ever since. He has high notions, talks about exalted minds, &c. He has a horrid opinion of Galloway, Jay, and the Rutledges. Their system, he says, would ruin the cause of America. He is very impatient, to see such fellows, and not be at liberty to describe them in their true colors'.

<sup>632</sup> Daniel Webster, 'A Memorandum', *The Papers of Daniel Webster: Correspondence*, vol. I eds. Charles M Wiltse and Harold D Moser, (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1974), 1:372-373.

<sup>633</sup> St George Tucker, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.142.

<sup>634</sup> Jefferson seems to have forgotten that Homer never wrote, but spoke. Thomas Jefferson, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.142.

consciousness.<sup>635</sup> Despite his lack of classical education, throughout his entire political career Henry's oratorical skills led him to being described in Greco-Roman terms. He was repeatedly referred to as 'the Demosthenes of America' or, as Lord Byron styled, the 'forest-born Demosthenes', linking Henry, like Warren, to a historical genealogy of patriot who chose death rather than life under a corrupt government.<sup>636</sup> When Henry addressed the Continental Congress they were said to have listened to him 'in the spirit of Aeneas' audience at Dido's palace', which placed Henry as Aeneas, the shipwrecked war refugee, telling the Carthaginians the tale of the destruction of his homeland.<sup>637</sup> George Mason, another Virginian delegate to the Congress, went further and said of Henry; 'had he lived in Rome about the time of the first Punic War... Mr. Henry's talents must have put him at the head of that glorious common wealth'.<sup>638</sup> By the time of his two most famous orations – the 1765 'treason' speech and the 1775 'Liberty or Death' oration – Henry was already recognised by his contemporaries and his words interpreted in terms of ancient and epic history. Henry was one of the few truly recognised national figures, who was known throughout the colonies, and until Washington took command of the Continental Army, Henry was arguably also the most deeply classicised figure of his day.

Henry first came into public notice during the 'Parson's Cause', which was an important legal and political dispute often touted as a significant event in the lead-up to the outbreak of hostilities between Britain and the colonies. Legislation passed in 1748 determined that Virginia's Anglican clergy would be paid sixteen thousand pounds of tobacco per year, one of the colony's major commodities. Following poor harvest in 1758, in which the price of tobacco rose from two to six pennies a pound, effectively inflating clerical salaries, the Virginia colonial legislature passed the Two Penny Act allowing debts in tobacco to be paid in currency at a rate of two pennies per pound. King George III vetoed the law, causing an uproar in the colonies, as the

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<sup>635</sup> Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power*, p.158. For more information about the evolution of oratory in Virginia, see Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power*, pp.159-161 and Rhy Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), pp.242-60 and 323-357.

<sup>636</sup> John Adams diary October 11, 1774, *Adams Family Papers 1639-1899*, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 2. John Adams wrote in his diary for August 28, 1774 'Duane...says the Virginians speak in raptures about Richard Henry Lee and Patrick Henry, one the Cicero, and the other the Demosthenes of the age'.

<sup>637</sup> Charles Thompson, quoted in Richard Gummere *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*, (Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1963), p.18.

<sup>638</sup> George Mason, *The Papers of George Mason 1725-1792*, ed. Robert Allan Rutland, 3 vols. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1970), 1: p.179.

colonists saw this as a breach of their legislative authority. When Reverend James Maury sued Hanover County Court for back wages in 1762 he effectively became a representative of the British cause. Colonel John Henry, father of Patrick Henry, presided over the court case and Patrick Henry, relatively unknown at that time, gave an impassioned speech advocating in favour of colonial rights in the case. Henry denounced the clerics who challenged Virginia's laws as 'enemies of the community' and argued 'that a King, by disallowing Acts of this salutary nature, from being the father of his people, degenerated into a Tyrant and forfeits all right to his subjects' obedience'.<sup>639</sup> Henry's speech was persuasive: the jury awarded Maury one penny in damages, effectively nullified the Crown veto, and no other clergy sued.

In the Stamp Act Crisis Henry amplified this same idea to the point of treason in defending his resolutions against the Stamp Act in a speech given in May 1765 in the Virginia House of Burgesses. In doing so, Henry presented himself for the first time in classical terms. Henry drew on Roman imperial history to describe the actions and historical significance of Britain. He introduced a set of radical resolutions denouncing the British Parliament, saying that through taxing the colonies they had usurped the powers vested in the colonial legislature, who alone had the power to tax Americans. In his speech he praised his resolves and ended with the heated declamation: 'Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George III may profit by their example'.<sup>640</sup> Another account records that Henry cried 'Tarquin and Caesar had each his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third...' but he was interrupted by cries of 'Treason!' preventing him from finishing his speech.<sup>641</sup> Henry purportedly responded with: '...may profit by their example. If this be treason, make the most of it!' In naming Caesar and Charles the First, Henry evoked notorious autocratic rulers that had been assassinated by their own people. Both Tarquin the Proud, the last King of Rome, and Julius Caesar, the destroyer of the Roman Republic, were dethroned in the name of liberty by members of the Brutii family: Tarquin was driven out of Rome but Julius Caesar was stabbed to death in the Senate by a group of leading politicians led by Marcus Junius Brutus. Likewise, Charles the First was the last monarch to suffer regicide in contemporary British history. In delivering this speech Henry was presenting himself as a modern-

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<sup>639</sup> Ann Maury, *Memoirs of a Huguenot Family*, (New York: G.P. Putnam & Sons, 1872), p.421.

<sup>640</sup> Patrick Henry, *'If This Be Treason' Speech*, House of Burgesses, Williamsburg, Virginia, May, 1765.

<sup>641</sup> David McCants, *Patrick Henry, the Orator*, (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990), p.121.

day Brutus threatening George the Third. Henry, either in his own mind or those of his audience, may have already situated himself as the third potential tyrannicide, the follower of Brutus and Cromwell. Another account of the speech given by a French traveller, who was present in the audience, records that ‘he [Henry] had read that in former times tarquin and Julius had their Brutus, Charles had his Cromwell, and he Did not Doubt that some good American would stand up, in favour of his Country’.<sup>642</sup> When condemned for treason Henry apologised if he had ‘affronted the speaker, or the house, he was ready to ask pardon, and he would show his loyalty to his majesty King G. the third, at the Expence of the last Drop of his blood’, while excusing himself of having spoken in the ‘heat of passion’ and out of concern for ‘his Country’s Dying Liberty’.<sup>643</sup> By apologising, Henry disavowed his words but acknowledged how sincere and necessary his words were. The audience was left to decide for themselves whether they should believe the speech, the apology, or both. The speech demanded that the audience judge the sentiments that Henry embodied and, by extension, the degree to which they personally agreed with the sentiments that Henry espoused.

Henry’s classical performances culminated on 23 March, 1775, with his oration to the Virginia Convention at St. John’s church in Richmond. The Virginia House of Burgesses was debating whether a Virginian militia should be formed in the wake of the outbreak of hostilities in Massachusetts at Lexington and Concord. Henry presented Resolutions that put the colony of Virginia ‘into a posture of defense...embodying, arming, and disciplining such a number of men as may be sufficient for that purpose’.<sup>644</sup> Before the vote was taken on his resolutions, Henry delivered a speech, imploring the delegates to vote in favour of the suggestions. In a short oration Henry contemplated what he considered to be an issue ‘nothing less than a question of freedom or slavery’.<sup>645</sup> He took a strong pro-war stance, advising the delegates to establish a militia and develop a plan of defence for the colony. He unflinchingly urged resistance to Britain, declaring: ‘The war is inevitable – and let it

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<sup>642</sup> French traveler, quoted in Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power*, pp.168-169.

<sup>643</sup> ‘Journal of a French traveller in the Colonies, 1765’, *AHR*, XXVI (1920-1921), pp. 726-741, p.745. McCants argues for the authenticity of the French traveller’s version and also observes that the apology did not detract from Henry’s original daring statements. See McCants, *Patrick Henry*, p.50.

<sup>644</sup> Patrick Henry’s resolution, quoted in Elizabeth Baker ed., *Great Speeches*, (Whitefish: Kessinger Publishing, 2005), p.30.

<sup>645</sup> Patrick Henry, “Liberty or Death” Speech, St. John’s Church, Richmond, Virginia, March 23, 1775, in *The World’s Great Speeches*, eds. Lewis Copeland and Lawrence W. Lamm, (New York: Dover, 1973).

come! I repeat it sir, let it come!’ By all reports, Henry spoke without any notes in a voice that climaxed with the now famous ending: ‘Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty, or give me death!’<sup>646</sup> The oration was powerful: Colonel Edward Carrington, standing outside the church listening through an open window, exclaimed, ‘Right here I wish to be buried’ - a desire his widow later fulfilled.<sup>647</sup> Thomas Marshall, a member of the convention, remarked to his son the future Justice John Marshall that the speech was ‘one of the most bold, vehement, and animated pieces of eloquence that had ever been delivered’.<sup>648</sup> At the conclusion of the oration the audience reportedly welcomed Henry with the same cry of ‘Liberty or Death’ and Henry’s resolutions passed by a narrow margin, thus entering Virginia into the war. Henry’s closing stance became watchwords of the war for the Culpepper, Virginia minutemen: in August 1775 when Henry became colonel of the 1<sup>st</sup> Virginia Regiment, the soldiers had as their flag a coiled rattlesnake with, on either side, the words of Patrick Henry: ‘Liberty or Death’. Thus, Henry’s immortal words, radicalising the choice between liberty and death, entered the iconography of the war.

Modern scholarship has frequently commented on the evangelical style of Henry’s speech. Charles Cohen writes that ‘through invocations of religious significance, appeals to God, and adept use of the Bible, a political address becomes a lay sermon’.<sup>649</sup> As such, much significance has been made of Edmund Randolph’s description of the oration comparing Henry to St Paul preaching to and converting the Greeks in Athens.<sup>650</sup> Similarly, James Parker, a merchant who disliked both Henry’s posturing and his politics, wrote some days after the convention: ‘This Creature is so infatuated, that he goes about I am told, praying and preaching

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<sup>646</sup> Henry, ‘*Liberty or Death*’ Speech.

<sup>647</sup> Lewis W. Burton, ‘Annals of Henrico Parish, Diocese of Virginia and Especially of St. John’s Church, the Present Mother Church of the Parish, from 1611 to 1884’, in ed. J. Staunton Moore, *The Annals and History of Henrico Parish*, (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Company, 1979), p.24. Grave personally seen under the windowsill on a trip to St John’s Church, Richmond, Virginia, in July 2012.

<sup>648</sup> Thomas Marshall, quoted in McCants, *Patrick Henry*, p.57.

<sup>649</sup> Charles Cohen, ‘The “Liberty or Death” Speech: A Note on Religion and Revolutionary Rhetoric’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Oct., 1981), pp. 702-717. See also, Rhys Isaac, ‘Patrick Henry: Patriot and Preacher?’, *Virginia Cavalcade* 31 (1982), pp.168-1745.

<sup>650</sup> Edmund Randolph, *History of Virginia*, ed. Arthur H. Shaffer, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970), p.179 and p.212. See Gustafson, *Eloquence is Power*, p.164. For an analysis of the Jeremiadic elements of the speech see Cohen, ‘“Liberty or Death” Speech’, pp. 702-717.

amongst the common people'.<sup>651</sup> However, focusing solely on Henry's Pauline image and use of Christian imagery ignores the classical overtones of the oration; in fact, a few lines after likening Henry to Paul, Randolph describes Henry as part of the Roman pantheon of heroes. Far from presenting himself as Paul, in the 'Liberty or Death' oration Henry, through his oratorical ability and carefully chosen quotations, managed to convince his audience not only that he was a classical Roman, but Cato of Utica in particular.

As with his Stamp Act oration delivered a decade before, Henry posed in front of his audience as a classical republican figure. He had evoked a modern day Brutus threatening George III with regicide, but in 1775 Henry chose to embody the embattled Cato at Utica. Henry's powerful and memorable ending - 'Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!' - was derived directly from Addison's *Cato*.<sup>652</sup> In the second act of Addison's tragedy, Cato has the line: 'It is not now a time to talk of aught/But chains or conquest; liberty or death'.<sup>653</sup> This line is delivered in the play in a private conversation between Cato and Prince Juba, after the Senate has resolved to defy Caesar. The correlation between the oration and the play is even more tangible: Henry's speech, which included the endorsement of inevitable war, is similar to that speech given by Sempronius to the Roman Senate. Sempronius says: 'My voice is still for war./Gods, can a Roman Senate long debate/Which of the two to chuse, slavery or death!'<sup>654</sup> Despite his later treachery, here Sempronius appropriates Cato's characteristically patriotic rhetoric and Henry's usage therefore effectively sanitises the traitorous undertones inherent in the quotation. The importance and omnipresence of Addison's *Cato* in America, particularly its influence on Virginians who lacked a college education, such as Washington and Henry, is well documented. Addison's tragedy was an enormously popular and influential 'instrument of political propaganda' and Henry was wielding it as such in this demonstration.<sup>655</sup> Henry's paraphrasing of Cato or Catonian rhetoric meant that he was not able to be seen as

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<sup>651</sup> James Parker to Charles Steuart, Apr. 6, 1775, quoted in Archibald Francis Steuart, 'Letters from Virginia, 1774-1781', *Magazine of History*, III (1906), pp.151-161, p.158.

<sup>652</sup> Henry, 'Liberty or Death' Speech.

<sup>653</sup> Joseph Addison, *Cato: A Tragedy*, II.iv.90-91.

<sup>654</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.i.24-26.

<sup>655</sup> Frederic Litto, 'Addison's *Cato* in the Colonies', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 23 no. 3 (1966), pp. 431-49, p.449.

any other Roman figure, such as Brutus or Cassius, but Cato the Younger calling for liberty or death at the fall of the Roman Republic.

In paraphrasing Addison's *Cato*, Henry solicited a specific classical illusion from his patriot audience. At least three commentators on Henry's speech describe him and the speech in classical terms. Edmund Randolph in *The History of Virginia* described how 'Henry moved and Richard Henry Lee seconded it. The fangs of European criticism might be challenged to spread themselves against the eloquence of that awful day. It was a proud one to a Virginian, feeling and acting with his country. Demosthenes invigorated the timid, and Cicero charmed the backward'.<sup>656</sup> Randolph also noted the balance between Henry's stoic gaze and the intense theatricality of his performance, which included 'slavelike gestures of submission and bondage, the shattering of chains, and the plunging of an invisible dagger into his breast', suggesting that Henry was, in fact, reenacting Cato's final deliberations at Utica about life, freedom, slavery, and death.<sup>657</sup> Randolph's description, which was written after the conclusion of hostilities between Britain and the colonies, while rich in classical allusions paled in comparison to Virginian jurist St George Tucker's account of the same oration. Tucker painted a classical pantheon into which Henry joined himself during his oration. Tucker writes: 'imagine to yourself this speech delivered with all the calm dignity of Cato of Utica; imagine to yourself the Roman Senate assembled in the capital when it was entered by the profane Gauls, who at first were awed by their presence as if they had entered an assembly of the gods. Imagine that you had heard that Cato addressing such a Senate...and you may have some idea of the speaker, the assembly to whom he addressed himself, and the auditory'.<sup>658</sup> In his description, Tucker casts Henry as Cato, the Virginians as the

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<sup>656</sup> Randolph, *History of Virginia* p.212.

<sup>657</sup> Randolph, *History of Virginia*, p.212. The 'Liberty or Death' oration has been used by countless schoolchildren who, mimicking Henry's alleged histrionics by stabbing themselves with make-believe paper cutters, have sought glory in countless elocution contests. There is a story that ex-President John Tyler told to one of Henry's great-grandchildren, that at the height of Henry's oration he plunged a paper cutter toward his breast. William Winston Fontaine, 'Diary of Col. William Winston Fontaine', *William and Mary Quarterly*, XVI (108), pp.157-159, 161n.

<sup>658</sup> St George Tucker, quoted in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 1:264-265. Tucker has confused two stories here. First, he has made reference to a Cato's final speech at Utica, which Plutarch paints as having been delivered with reason and calm. Secondly, Tucker has included the story of the sack of Rome by the Gauls in 387BCE. 'When he had occupied Rome, Brennus surrounded the Capitol with a guard. He himself went down through the forum, and was amazed to see the men sitting there in public state and perfect silence. They neither rose up to meet their enemies when they approached, nor did they change countenance or colour, but sat there quietly, at ease and without fear, leaning on their staves and gazing into one another's faces. The Gauls were amazed and perplexed at the

Roman senators, and the British as the barbarian Gauls. While paraphrasing Cato's words, Henry is depicted by Tucker as a modern-day Cato in front of the Roman senate defying Rome's enemies. John Roane gives us a third account of the oration, again likening Henry to Cato: Henry 'stood like a Roman Senator defying Caesar, while the unconquerable spirit of Cato of Utica flashed from every feature; and he closed the grand appeal with the solemn words "or give me death!"'.<sup>659</sup> Roane even comments that Henry's body language while delivering the speech was as if his arms had been shackled: 'After remaining in this posture of humiliation long enough to impress the imagination with the condition of the colony under the iron heel of military despotism...he looked for a moment like Laocoon in a death struggle with coiling serpents'.<sup>660</sup> Laocoon was a Trojan priest who warned the Trojans not to accept the Greek's wooden horse. To determine whether the horse was hollow or not he inserted a spear into its side, but the gods, on the side of the Greeks, immediately sent two serpents who killed him and his sons, in order to prevent the Greeks being found inside the horse. Laocoon's struggle with the serpents was memorialised in c25BCE by a sculptor from Rhode Island.<sup>661</sup> The sculpture graphically captures Laocoon and his sons being strangled by the serpents and he is depicted desperately fighting off the enemies. Roane, therefore, was styling Henry as fighting colossal obstacles, attempting to reveal the dire situation of his country but dying in the process. Henry was described as a classical orator not just in literature but also in the iconography of the era. In a series of etchings/drawings of men central to the patriot movement, including John Adams and Joseph Warren, Patrick Henry was depicted with a coat draped in the manner of a toga, and with one foot placed forward.<sup>662</sup> This was a very traditional classical pose used to depict a Roman of power and influence, and the fact that in the series of pictures Henry alone was depicted in this style testifies to his classical persona and image.

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unwonted sight, and for a long time hesitated to approach and touch them, regarding them as superior beings. But at last one of them, plucking up his courage, drew near Papius Marcus, and stretching out his hand, gently grasped his chin and stroked his long beard, whereupon Papius, with his staff, smote him a crushing blow on the head. Then the Barbarian drew his sword and killed him'. Plutarch, *Life of Camillus*, 22.4-6.

<sup>659</sup> John Roane, quoted in William Wirt Henry, *Patrick Henry: Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, 3 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), 1:270.

<sup>660</sup> Roane, quoted in Henry, *Patrick Henry*, 1:270.

<sup>661</sup> The statue is attributed by the Roman author Pliny the Elder to three sculptors from Rhodes: Agesander, Athenodoros and Polydorus. The statue is currently housed in the Vatican. Pliny, *Natural History*, 36.37.

<sup>662</sup> See Jeremiah Colburn Autograph Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. Special Colls. Bostonian Society.

Henry's stance as a 'Roman Senator defying Caesar' and with his final call of 'Liberty or Death' being derived directly from the literary image of Cato known so well to the colonists, he was unable to be mistaken as portraying another of Caesar's opponents, Brutus or Cassius, but had to be seen as Cato and the American colonists as the embattled Roman Republic vying, ultimately unsuccessfully, for their liberty. In 1765 he had presented himself as a tyrannicide, perhaps Brutus calling for the regicide of Caesar, but in 1775 he found Cato at Utica better suited the political circumstances. Henry's embodiment of Cato and call for preference of death over slavery encompassed a number of powerful ideas circulating at the time: the political watchwords – 'liberty' and 'tyranny' - of the British Atlantic; the ghosts of the patriot-martyrs of the Roman Republic; and the dichotomy between tyrant and patriot. Henry's choice of Cato, in particular, reflects the mindset of the colonists at the time: through invoking Cato Henry did not offer the colonists an optimistic view of the future, but, rather, death, suicide, and the fall of liberty. Henry was successful in convincing the Virginian politicians to embrace the example of Cato as they entered the war with Britain, with stoic resolve that liberty was to be found in death.

### Nathan Hale

Nathan Hale was 'one of the first and noblest self-martyrs of the American Revolution', who like Henry turned to Cato as a source of inspiration at a crucial point in the war.<sup>663</sup> Hale was born in Coventry, Connecticut, in 1755 the sixth of twelve children to successful and prosperous farmers Richard and Elizabeth Hale. In an 1844 *Memoir*, Charles Babcock, Hale's first biographer, perpetuated the sentiments towards Hale that were present immediately after his death. Babcock described Hale as having 'high aims and aspirations, he was early distinguished for a heroic devotion to free principles and his country. His infancy was nursed, and his manhood fed, in the very air of freedom'.<sup>664</sup> At the age of fourteen Hale was sent with his brother Enoch, two years his senior, to Yale College. While Hale was a student at Yale he and his brother acted in Linonian Society theatrics, their fraternity, and on

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<sup>663</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale.

<sup>664</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale.

occasion Hale wrote and performed epilogues for the productions.<sup>665</sup> It is probable that through both his studies at Yale and his theatrical pursuits he encountered Addison's *Cato*, as the society possessed copies of Addison's dramatic works.<sup>666</sup> In 1773, at the age of eighteen, he graduated with first-class honours and became a teacher, first in East Haddam and later in New London. It is likely that during his time as a teacher in New London, he taught his pupils Addison's *Cato*. Betsy Hallam, who was one of the New London girls that attended Hale's 'morning class of young ladies', wrote a letter to Hale on October 17, 1775.<sup>667</sup> In it she quoted nine lines from *Cato*, which Hale himself likely introduced her to. In view of the events soon to take place, Betsy's choice of quotation was oddly prophetic:

Remember, O my friends, the laws, the rights,  
The generous plan of power deliver'd down,  
From age to age, by your renown'd forefathers,  
(So dearly bought, the price of so much blood)  
O let it never perish in your hands!  
But piously transmit it to your children.  
Do thou, great Liberty, inspire our souls,  
And make our lives in thy possession happy,  
Or our deaths glorious in thy just defence.<sup>668</sup>

Shortly after Betsy wrote this letter, Hale fulfilled Cato's call to make one's life glorious in the just defence of liberty.

When the war broke out in 1775, Hale joined the Connecticut militia and was elected first lieutenant. When his militia unit participated in the Siege of Boston, Hale remained behind. It is unclear whether this was due to him not wanting to fight or because his teaching contract in New London did not expire until several months later in July. On 4 July, 1775, Hale received a letter from a classmate and friend, Benjamin Tallmadge, who had witnessed the Siege of Boston, writing: 'was I in your condition...I think the more extensive Service would be my choice. Our holy Religion, the honour of our God, a glorious country, & a happy constitution is what we have to defend'.<sup>669</sup> Several days later, Hale accepted a commission, perhaps inspired by

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<sup>665</sup> Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: national Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theatre*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), pp.33.

<sup>666</sup> *Catalogue of Book in the Linonian and Brothers' Libraries*, (New Haven: Oliver Steele, 1808).

<sup>667</sup> Betsy Hallam to Nathan Hale, Winter Hill, October 17, 1775, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Call No. MS Vault Shelves Hale, Object No. 2053410.

<sup>668</sup> Betsy Hallam to Nathan Hale, Winter Hill, October 17, 1775, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, Call No. MS Vault Shelves Hale, Object No. 2053410.

<sup>669</sup> Benjamin Tallmadge, quoted in Morton Pennypacker, *General Washington's Spies on Long Island and in New York*, (Brooklyn: Long Island Historical Society, 1939), p.19.

Tallmadge's letter, as first lieutenant in the 7th Connecticut Regiment under Colonel Charles Webb of Stamford. The following spring, Hale moved with the army to Manhattan to prevent British troops gaining control of New York. After the disastrous American loss at the Battle of Brooklyn in August 1776, the first major battle after the Declaration of Independence, Washington and the Continental Army were forced to retreat to Manhattan. At this point in the war, Washington, desperate to know British troop movements asked for a volunteer from his officer corps to cross enemy lines and gather intelligence. According to the memoirs of General William Hull, a schoolmate of Hale's, Hale accepted the mission after the first man who was approached had declined it. Hull objected to Hale's decision to take up the mission, claiming that Hale's 'nature was too frank and open for deceit and disguise' and that 'he was incapable of acting a part equally foreign to his feelings and habits'.<sup>670</sup> Babcock's memoir would later regale Hale's heroism and declare that his 'motive was no narrow or selfish one. It was the common good of all - his country. She appeared reduced to the last gasp; her spirit was broken and fainting; her banner had been stricken down; her first young war cry of freedom seemed fast sinking in the tempest of foes now gathering darkly and fiercely around her!'<sup>671</sup> Despite the objections, Hale travelled from Washington's encampment on Harlem Heights to Norwalk, Connecticut, before sailing to Huntington on September 12. Disguised as a Dutch schoolmaster, nine days later Hale was captured by Major Robert Rogers and his Rangers while sailing the Long Island Sound, trying to cross back into American-controlled territory. An account of his capture by Consider Tiffany, a Connecticut shopkeeper and Loyalist, claimed that Rogers saw Hale in a tavern, recognised him, and lured Hale into betraying himself by posing as a patriot. Another account says that Hale's Loyalist cousin, Samuel Hale revealed his true identity. Babcock reports that on being examined he was found to have notes and drawings on enemy camps and movements 'written in Latin'.<sup>672</sup>

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<sup>670</sup> William Hull, *Revolutionary services and civil life of General William Hull; Prepared From his Manuscripts, by his Daughter, Mrs. Maria Campbell: together with the History of the Campaign of 1812, And Surrender of the Post of Detroit, by his Grandson, James Freeman Clarke*, (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1848), p.35.

<sup>671</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale.

<sup>672</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale. Edward Everett Hale in 1881 reiterated this claim. 'He was ordered to remain, was seized and examined. On his person were he notes he had taken, written, as it proved, in Latin'. Edward Everett Hale, *Capt. Nathan Hale: An address delivered at Groton, Connecticut, on*

Spies were hung as illegal combatants according to the standards of the time. As such, on the morning of September 22, 1776, Hale was marched along Post Road to the Park of Artillery and hanged. Babcock later declared: ‘He falls for a glorious cause, a cause which now seems expiring, but which heaven shall yet prosper. The cause which his young soul has so nobly chosen, and his manly arm so well defended; for which he had been willing to hazard all, and is now prepared to suffer all’.<sup>673</sup> Hull reports the full account of Hale’s death as it was related to the American forces by the British officer Captain John Montresor. According to Hull, Montresor recalled that at the execution ‘Captain Hale...was calm, and bore himself with gentle dignity, in the consciousness of rectitude and high intentions’.<sup>674</sup> Montresor was present at the execution and relayed to Hull a few days later that Hale’s dying observation was that ‘I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country’.<sup>675</sup> Hale’s final choice of words were either a reference to or a misreported direct quote of Cato’s line from Addison’s tragedy: ‘What pity is it/That we can die but once to serve our country!’<sup>676</sup> It was fitting that a man, such as Hale, versed in *Cato* at Yale and an avid admirer of play, teaching it to the ladies of New England, drew on the Roman hero for his final

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*the Hale Memorial Day, September 7, 1881*, (Boston: A. Williams & Co., 1881), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. B Hale.

<sup>673</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale.

<sup>674</sup> Hull, *Life*, p.38. Another account given by a British officer, Lieutenant Frederick Mackenzie, also praises Hale’s ‘great composure and resolution’ before the gallows. George Dudley Seymour, *Documentary Life of Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: Private Printing, 1941), p.292.

<sup>675</sup> Seymour, *Nathan Hale*, p.27-28. The earliest version of Hale’s defiant statement appeared less than five years after his execution. The Boston *Independent Chronicle* on May 17, 1781 printed what was proclaimed as Hale’s final sentence: ‘I am so satisfied with the cause in which I have engaged, that my only regret is, that I have not more lives than one to offer in its service’. Reprinted in *The Remembrancer, or Impartial Repository of Public Events*, (London, 1782), 1:285. See also Henry Phelps Johnston, *Nathan Hale, 1776: Biography and Memorials*, (New Haven, Conn., 1914), pp.136-137. Hale’s dying sentiment became more widely known in 1799 when Hannah Adams wrote a survey of New England history. Hannah Adams, *A Summary History of New England*, (Dedham, Mass., Herman Mann, 1799), p.359. Adams based her account of Hale’s words on the testimony of Hull, who was informed by Montresor. According to this account it was ‘his dying observation’ “that he only lamented that he had but one life to lose for his country”. Adams’ book was subsequently published in an abridged edition and used for students. Hannah Adams, *An Abridgment of the History of New-England, for the Use of Young Persons*, (Boston, 1805), p.159. At around the same time another historian, Abiel Holmes, revised the statement into a first person sentence: ‘I only lament, that I have but one life to lose for my country’.

<sup>676</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.181-182. F.K. Donnelly has suggested that Hale was inspired by John Lilburne rather than Addison’s *Cato*. Lilburne, the Leveller leader, said at one of his many trials: ‘I am sorry I have but one life to lose, in maintaining the truth, justice, and righteousness, of so gallant a piece’. Elsewhere Lilburne declared that ‘if I had a million of lives, I would sacrifice them all against you’. Lilburne’s words were often reprinted in eighteenth-century American political pamphlets and in the *Biographia Britannica*, where it is quite possible that Hale came across them as a student and later as a college master. F.K. Donnelly, ‘A Possible Source for Nathan Hale’s Dying Words’, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser., 42, no.3 (July 1985), pp.394-96.

words. Montresor noted that Hale had requested both a Bible and a clergyman, but had been denied both, and that two letters written by Hale in his cell, one intended for his brother and the other for a fellow American officer, were burned so that ‘the rebels should not know that they had a man in their army who could die with so much firmness’.<sup>677</sup> By the account of a British officer present at the execution, British troops ‘got, out of a rebel gentleman’s garden, a painted soldier on a board, and hung it along with the Rebel [Hale]; and wrote upon it - General Washington’.<sup>678</sup> Shaffer has commented that this action together with the inverted presence of George III’s regal image reflected in the corpse of Hale brought together the image of the tyrant, the patriot, and the sacrificial victim, elements central to the storyline of Addison’s *Cato* and other patriot plays of the Revolutionary era.<sup>679</sup>

Hale’s choice of words at his execution invites a performative reading of his death. Shaffer has suggested that perhaps Hale’s theatrical experiences during college had led him to approach his own moment of death with the ‘self-observant eye of an actor, striving to convey both stoicism and passion’.<sup>680</sup> In Addison’s *Cato* the highest service one can do for their country is sacrifice their life fighting against tyranny. Addison has Cato speak these words over the body of his dead son: ‘Thanks to the Gods! My boy has done his duty’ followed by the remorseful line ‘what pity is it that we can die but once to save our country’.<sup>681</sup> Content in the knowledge that his son has done his duty through making the ultimate sacrifice, Cato can rejoice in his son’s death reminding the audience that it is Rome that matters not the individual. In choosing to recite this particular line at his death, Hale cast himself as both the ‘self-sacrificing son who emulates...his father’s principled suicide and the appreciative paternal commentator on such a death’.<sup>682</sup> Hale was also both acting out the call for ‘liberty or death’ that Patrick Henry had made, but also fulfilling Abigail Adams’ prophetic observation that many Americans would fight the cause and die

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<sup>677</sup> Hull, *Life of General William Hull*, p.38. Hull claims that the letter was meant for Hale’s mother, but she sadly predeceased him. The diary of Hale’s brother, Enoch, confirms that the letter was instead intended for Enoch. Seymour does not reproduce the passage about the destruction of Hale’s letter.

<sup>678</sup> *Kentish gazette* (Canterbury), 6-9 November 1776, reprinted in Seymour, *Nathan Hale*, p.302.

<sup>679</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, pp.31-32.

<sup>680</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.40.

<sup>681</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.80, 93-94.

<sup>682</sup> Julie Ellison, *Cato’s Tears and the Making of Anglo-American Emotion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p.69.

with 'With the Speech of Cato in their Mouths'.<sup>683</sup> In choosing these lines, Hale also linked himself to a pantheon of heroes who had chosen liberty through death rather than suffering under tyranny. Hale saw, like Cato, that his victory was won through his virtuous death in the pursuit of liberty. Shaffer has argued that patriots who undergo execution or who decided to commit suicide elevate themselves to mythical status: 'the expenditure of blood by the patriot gives rise to a new mythology of blood based not on regal birthright but on a performative willingness to suffer and bleed for the good old cause, a literal and rhetorical grafting of one's life, fortune, and sacred honor onto the figure of the imperiled nation'.<sup>684</sup>

Hale has been interred in the American memory as one of the great patriot martyrs of the war. In commemorating Hale's patriotic death, the power of Cato in the mindset of the colonists is evident in the closing stanza of one of his eulogies:

The faith of a martyr the tragedy showed,  
As he trod the last stage, as he trod the last stage.  
And Britons will shudder at gallant Hale's blood,  
As his words do presage, as his words do presage.

Thou pale king of terrors, thou life's gloomy foe,  
Go frighten the slave, go frighten the slave;  
Tell tyrants, to you their allegiance they owe--  
No fears for the brave, no fears for the brave!<sup>685</sup>

The ballad casts the execution as a tragedy, with Hale as the sacrificial victim. It reinforces the validity of Hale's death by emphasising his lack of fear of death in the face of tyranny. Like Joseph Warren, Hale was remembered as a martyr, who served as a symbol of 'a new kind of national political commitment that their very deaths made possible'.<sup>686</sup> His life and death served as an instructive tale of a virtuous death and of sacrifice for one's country. Babcock later wrote that 'such sacrifices [as Hale's] have ever been rare, and they who made them, have, in all ages, been looked upon as among the exalted models of human kind'.<sup>687</sup> Babcock inducted Hale into the pantheon of Roman heroes, listing the American alongside of various Romans who

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<sup>683</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, Boston, December 5, 1773, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>684</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.26.

<sup>685</sup> Robert E Moody, 'Boston's First Play', *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 92 (Boston: The Massachusetts Historical Society, 1980), pp.117-139.

<sup>686</sup> Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p.21.

<sup>687</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale.

had made great sacrifices for the freedom of their country: ‘Well did ancient Rome prize her Horatii, her Curtius, her Decius, and her Regulus, with her proudest names. Carthage, also, could boast her two Phileni: Sparta her Leonidas, and Athens her Themistocles’.<sup>688</sup> According to Babcock, Hale died ‘not for ambition, not for power or a throne, but for country – for all mankind’.<sup>689</sup>

A generation after his death, in 1845 David Trumbull wrote *The Death of Captain Nathan Hale: A Drama in Five Acts* for the Nathan Hale Monument Association. The play glorifies the story of the martyr-spy, even including an African-American character named Cato of whom Hale declares ‘I know you too well not to trust you’, suggesting that had Hale lived in pre-Civil War America he would have been on the abolitionists’ side.<sup>690</sup> The play concludes with Hale declaring as the curtain closes ‘Would that I had another life to give thee, O my country!’<sup>691</sup> In 1881 Edward Everett Hale still found Hale’s death to be worthy of emulation: ‘It is not to success in battle, it is not to eloquence of speech, it is to prompt self-sacrifice, it is to readiness to die when one’s country calls, that the honours of to-day are given. It is to such sacrifice, such loyalty, proud indeed, this day, that he is called upon to say a halting word in memory of Nathan Hale’.<sup>692</sup>

Centuries after his execution, in 1914, a statue representing Hale with his hands tied behind his back, prepared for the scaffold, was installed at Yale. The statue bears an inscription of Hale’s famous last words on its base. When the statue was removed once in 1969 for cleaning, a former university official noted that ‘New Haven schoolboys attending summer programs on campus amused themselves by climbing upon the pedestal and posing for passing photographers’.<sup>693</sup> Clearly, the narrative of Hale’s brave sacrifice for liberty held a lingering appeal for people to reenact. Full size copies of the statues stand at: the CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia; in front of the Tribune Tower in Chicago; on the campus of the Phillips

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<sup>688</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale.

<sup>689</sup> James Babcock, *Memoir of Captain Nathan Hale*, (New Haven: S. Babcock, 1844), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call no. B Hale. Babcock also likens Hale to a diverse group of martyrs including: the Roman Horatii, Joan of Arc, William Wallace, and the English republicans Hampden, Sidney, and Russell.

<sup>690</sup> David Trumbull, *The Death of Captain Nathan Hale: A Drama in Five Acts*, IV.i.

<sup>691</sup> In the play Cato makes an appearance, but as a loyal and loving servant to Hale.

<sup>692</sup> Edward Everett Hale, *Capt. Nathan Hale: An address delivered at Groton, Connecticut, on the Hale Memorial Day, September 7, 1881*, (Boston: A. Williams & Co., 1881), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. B Hale.

<sup>693</sup> See Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.41.

Academy in Andover, Massachusetts; and in the Federal Triangle of Washington, D.C., near the Department of Justice.<sup>694</sup>

Like Warren and Henry, Nathan Hale was closely familiar with the classics and the figure of Cato through his Yale education and teaching of the Addisonian classic in his early career. In his final act, Hale reached naturally for the words of Cato as best expressing his sentiments and depicting how he wished to be remembered. The quote from *Cato* reminded the audience that victory was to be found in virtuous death and that through his execution Hale was in fact securing the liberty that he sought. Instead of invoking a figure that offered hope of success in the battle against tyranny, Hale, instead, portrayed Cato, whose death marked the extinction of the Roman Republic and the beginning of a period of corruption and authoritarian rule. In linking his death to the fall of Rome, Hale expressed a fatalistic acceptance of continued British rule and his desire to exit the scene. When remembered by the nation, Hale was depicted as the self-sacrificing martyr who, like Cato, had found liberty through death.

### George Washington: A Lifetime of Catonian Performances

As a result of the well documented nature of his life, scholars can easily claim that of all the late colonial Americans, it was George Washington that most profoundly and consistently used Addison's *Cato* as political rhetoric and a manual for self-emulation.<sup>695</sup> Washington was born in 1732 in Westmoreland County, Virginia, the first child of Augustine Washington and his second wife Mary Ball Washington. Washington's ancestors had immigrated to Virginia in 1657 and become slave-owning tobacco planters, meaning that by the time George was born, the family was a moderately prosperous member of the Virginia gentry. Washington's father died in 1743, which prevented him from crossing the Atlantic to receive the rest of his education at England's Appleby School, as his older brothers had done. He was educated by a variety of local tutors, but, unlike his contemporaries, never learnt

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<sup>694</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.41.

<sup>695</sup> Forrest MacDonald, 'Foreword', *Addison's Cato: A Tragedy and Selected Essays*, ed. Christine Dunn Henderson and Mark E. Yellin, (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2004). Jeffrey Morrison, *The Political Philosophy of George Washington*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p.91. Carl Richard, *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts: How the Ancients Inspired the Founding Fathers*, (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), p.151. While Washington appears to have been exceptional in his love of Addison's *Cato* and its impact on him unique, it is likely that if other colonists were as comprehensively documented then a similar trend may appear elsewhere.

Greek or Latin. Although Washington was, as John Adams sharply pointed out, ‘not a scholar’, he was overtly conscious of continuous self-improvement and acquired a classical education through study later in life of classical texts, particularly Cicero’s *On Obligations* and Seneca’s *Morals*.<sup>696</sup> As a young boy William Fairfax, Washington’s mentor and surrogate father, through the use of Roman analogies was able to impress upon a young Washington that ‘the greatest of all achievements was, through honourable deeds, to win the applause of one’s countrymen’.<sup>697</sup> Washington went on to become close friends with the whole Fairfax family, who outwardly conformed to Christianity but actually derived their real inspiration from Plutarch’s *Lives*, Marcus Aurelius, and other accounts of Stoic philosophers.<sup>698</sup> The family may have introduced the young Washington to Stoic philosophy and, regardless, he would have absorbed some of the tenants from his neighbours, whom he visited frequently. In his adult life Washington read history intentionally, usually English-language histories of Greece and particularly of Rome. By the time of the French-Indian War he had already read a translation of Caesar’s *Commentary on the Gallic Wars*.<sup>699</sup> When Washington married in 1759, he inherited Martha’s first husband’s volumes of *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, likely an English translation of Suetonius’ tome, and a copy of Cicero’s *On Obligations*. Washington later acquired for himself different multi-volume histories of Rome including Edward Gibbons *Rise and Fall*, which was published between 1776 and 1783, as well as Plutarch’s ubiquitous *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*.

Of all the classical texts that Washington read and studied, it was Addison’s *Cato* that, next to the Bible, he most frequently quoted and paraphrased throughout his lifetime, even calling the play ‘the very Bible of Republican idealism’.<sup>700</sup> Classical allusions and references to *Cato* abound in Washington’s correspondence, testifying to the importance of the play in shaping his character and mindset. It is a measure of how classical, indeed Roman, the colonists were when in a letter from George

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<sup>696</sup> John Adams, quoted in Jeffrey Morrison, *The Political Philosophy of George Washington*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p.88. The full quote reads: ‘that Washington was not a scholar is certain. That he was too illiterate, unlearned, unread for his station is equally past dispute’.

<sup>697</sup> William Fairfax, quoted in Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge M.A.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.37.

<sup>698</sup> H. C. Montgomery, ‘Washington the Stoic’, *The Classical Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 6 (Mar., 1936), pp. 371-373, p.371.

<sup>699</sup> Morrison, *George Washington*, p.63.

<sup>700</sup> George Washington, quoted in Charles A. Knight, *Joseph Addison and Richard Steele: A Reference Guide*, (Boston: G.K Hall, 1994), p.231.

Washington to Thomas Jefferson Washington wrote about a statue of himself to be depicted ‘in the garb of antiquity’ and then immediately after discussed the classically named Society of the Cincinnati.<sup>701</sup> Washington devotedly read both the play and Addison’s *The Spectator*, and the works influenced him, his thoughts and manners, more than any other single text or any other individual of that generation. Throughout his life, Washington, being neither a bookish man nor one given to quotation, consistently drew on the verses of *Cato* to express himself, indicating that the play impressed upon him deeply. Washington styled himself on Cato and he was so successful and convincing in this endeavour that his biographer, James Thomas Flexner, claimed ‘Washington was Cato turned Virginia country gentleman.’<sup>702</sup> Samuel Eliot Morrison, who wrote about Washington in the twentieth century, affirmed that Cato the Younger was ‘Washington’s favourite character in history’.<sup>703</sup> Washington’s biographers agree that he saw the figure of Cato as an ideal that conditioned his conduct during his life. Thus, the main characteristics associated with Washington – his austere, just, upright, unswerving, and highly conscious Stoicism – were a result of his consistent study at Addison’s *Cato*.

Washington used the quotations from the play to describe difficult decisions he was making or how he felt under certain circumstances, and the play coloured the way he approached and responded to the political crises of the era. In 1775 Washington was able to prevent the resignation of General John Thomas, who was angered by an undeserved demotion, by paraphrasing Cato’s line: ‘Surely every post ought to be deemed honourable in which a man can serve his country’.<sup>704</sup> In 1781 when the British threatened to shell Mount Vernon, Washington’s cousin, Lund Washington, bought off the British troops. Instead of being thankful, Washington rebuked Lund saying ‘It would have been a less painful circumstance to me to have heard, that in consequence of your non-compliance with their request, they had burnt my House, and laid the Plantation in ruins’.<sup>705</sup> It is quite possible that these

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<sup>701</sup> George Washington to Thomas Jefferson, August 1, 1786 quoted in *The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick. 39 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 28:504-5.

<sup>702</sup> James Thomas Flexner, *George Washington*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1965-1969), vol.1, p.242.

<sup>703</sup> Samuel Morrison, quoted in *Sailor Historian: The best of Samuel Eliot Morison*, ed. Emily Morison Beck, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), p.262.

<sup>704</sup> George Washington to John Thomas, July 2, 1775, quoted in *The Life and Services of Major General John Thomas*, ed. Charles Coffin, (New York: Egbert, Hovey & King, 1844), p.13.

<sup>705</sup> George Washington to Lund Washington, April 30, 1781, quoted in *Writings of George Washington*, 22:14.

words were inspired by *Cato* in a scene where the hero declares: 'I should have blushed if Cato's House had stood/ Secure, and flourish'd in a Civil-war'.<sup>706</sup>

Washington's lifetime study of Addison's *Cato* was instrumental to helping him formulate his understanding of the relation of public virtue and vice in private life. Believing in the importance of public virtue, Washington often repeated verbatim the lines spoken by Cato: 'When Vice prevails, and impious men bear sway,/The Post of Honour is a private station'.<sup>707</sup> In 1795 Washington said to his Secretary of War that when personal interests were pursued at the expense of the public good, passions dominated reason, and political vice prevailed. Washington then quoted Addison to explain that he, like Cato, desired a private life removed from the corrupting influences of politics: 'difficulty to one, who is of no party, and whose sole wish is to pursue, with undeviating steps a path which would lead this Country to respectability, wealth and happiness is exceedingly to be lamented'.<sup>708</sup> Yet such was 'turbulence of human passions in party disputes; when victory, more than truth is the palm contended for, "that the post of Honour is a private station"'.<sup>709</sup> That there was a serious political mindset behind this statement was reinforced by letters from June 1796 when Washington was coming to the end of his Presidency. Once again juxtaposing political strife, which was at the time manifesting as party strife, with private virtue, Washington quoted these lines from Addison to his aide and authorised biographer, David Humphreys: 'But these [newspapers] attacks, unjust and unpleasant as they are, will occasion no change in my conduct; nor will they work any other effect in my mind, than to increase the anxious desire which has long possessed my breast, to enjoy in the shades of retirement the consolation of having rendered my Country every service my abilities were competent to...When you shall think with the poet [Addison] that "the post of Honour is a private station" and may be inclined to enjoy yourself in my shades (I do not mean the shades below, where if you put it off long, I may be) I can only tell you that you will meet with the same cordial reception at Mount Vernon that you have always experienced at that place'.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>706</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.67.

<sup>707</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.iv.69.

<sup>708</sup> George Washington to the Secretary of War, July 27, 1795, quoted in *Writings of George Washington*, 34:251.

<sup>709</sup> George Washington to the Secretary of War, July 27, 1795, quoted in *Writings of George Washington*, 34:251.

<sup>710</sup> George Washington to David Humphreys, June 12, 1796, in *Writings of George Washington*, 35:91-92.

Washington quoted the same line in a letter to Alexander Hamilton dealing with his farewell address. He wrote: ‘having from a variety of reasons (among which a disinclination to be longer buffeted in the public prints by a set of infamous scribblers) taken my ultimate determination “To seek a post of honor in a private Station” I regret exceedingly that I did not publish my valedictory address the day after the Adjournment of Congress’.<sup>711</sup> In this instance, Washington was using the quotable line from *Cato* to reflect upon the republican principle that when political vice predominates, retirement is honourable. But Washington also implied that his retirement was in the best republican tradition since it came at the end of more than four decades of public service, and, therefore, having done his duty he had earned his reward of retiring to his private life.

Washington’s stated preference for a private life over public service was strengthened by his reading of Seneca. Around the age of seventeen, Washington acquired a copy of Seneca’s *Morals by Way of Abstract*, an English translation that included ‘Of Benefits’, ‘Of a Happy Life’, ‘Of Anger’, ‘of Clemency’, and the philosophical ‘Epistles’.<sup>712</sup> Washington closely read this lengthy version, over five hundred pages, and absorbed its principles. Seneca outlines the contrast between private and public life, saying that politics is our local world, while philosophy is the whole world, and that choosing a life of politics helps those in the vicinity but a life of philosophy is beneficial to the world at large. By studying, teaching, and writing philosophy, Seneca believed that we are able to help others who are not necessarily spatially close to us.<sup>713</sup> When Washington died in 1797, he was praised for both his dedication to the public good but also his well-earned retirement that enabled him to pursue a personal agenda. One eulogy, written by Kilborn Whitman and published in 1798 in Boston said of Washington: ‘National characters, not originating in fixed moral causes, are sometimes produced from causes accidental. If a Brutus is raised to authority, and will sacrifice his son if he violates the laws; or if a Washington will sacrifice private interest to public good; such instances will do much to form a

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<sup>711</sup> George Washington to Alexander Hamilton, June 26, 1796, in *Writings of George Washington*, 35:103.

<sup>712</sup> The inventory of the Boston Athenaeum collection of Washington’s library books states that there is a copy with Washington’s autograph in his youthful hand, suggesting that he acquired the volume around the age of seventeen. See Morrison, *George Washington*, p.100, f.164.

<sup>713</sup> Seneca, *On Peace of Mind* 3.1–3 and Seneca, *On the Private Life* 3.4–4.2.

national characteristic'.<sup>714</sup> Daniel Sewall likewise praised Washington for his dedication to the public good in his eulogy for Washington, pronounced at the Middle Parish in Kittery, Maine:

Then our beloved General cheerfully resigned his commission, with his sword into the hands of Congress, who gave it, and refused even the smallest compensation for his services thro' the contest and gladly retired from the fatigues of war, to taste the sweets of peace in private life: while the gratitude of a whole people sought the most expressive language of manifesting itself to him, and offered prayers to heaven for blessings on his head.

...It is happy to observe, that amidst all the diversity of sentiment, and collision of parties; amidst all the accusations of foreign influence and domestic corruption, which have unhappily agitated our country; his integrity has remained unimpeached and unsuspected. Even those who differed from him in sentiment, have acknowledged that his mind was guided by the purest motives, and that he endeavoured to pursue, with undeviating rectitude of intention, the public good.<sup>715</sup>

Stoicism, through the medium of both Seneca and Addison's *Cato*, also taught Washington, who was naturally short tempered, the importance of maintaining calm, particularly the philosophic Stoic calm that comes from giving reason pre-eminence over the passions. Washington himself indicated that he was passionate by nature, writing in 1799 to the Reverend Bryan Fairfax: 'The favourable sentiments which others, you say, have been pleased to express respecting me, cannot but be pleasing to a mind who always walked on a straight line, and endeavoured as far as human frailties, and perhaps strong passions, would enable him, to discharge the relative duties to his Maker and fellowmen, without seeking any indirect or left handed attempts to acquire popularity'.<sup>716</sup> However, as early as the French and Indian War William Fairfax had praised the young Washington for 'that philosophic mind you have already begun to practice'.<sup>717</sup> Jefferson after Washington's death, despite his reservations about Washington's intellect, praised him for his philosophic calm: 'his

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<sup>714</sup> Kilborn Whitman, *An oration, pronounced at Bridgewater, October 4, 1798, at the request of the Columbian Society*, (Boston: Samuel Etheridge, 1798), pp.13-14, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 35024.

<sup>715</sup> Daniel Sewall, *An eulogy, occasioned by the death of General Washington: Pronounced at the Middle Parish in Kittery, February 22, 1800*, (Portsmouth: Oracle-Office, 1800), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. 38488 Evans fiche or Box 1800 or E187 (Washington).

<sup>716</sup> George Washington to Reverend Bryan, Lord Fairfax, January 20, 1799, in *Writings of George Washington*, 37:94-95.

<sup>717</sup> William Fairfax to George Washington, September 5, 1754, in *Writings of George Washington*, 1:113.

passions were naturally strong; but his reason, generally stronger'.<sup>718</sup> Washington's desire to gain a philosophic calm is also evident from his frequent quoting of a trio of lines by Addison's *Cato*. In the play *Cato* says: 'Thy steady temper, Portius/Can look on guilt, rebellion, fraud, and Caesar/In the Calm lights of mild philosophy'.<sup>719</sup> After the Revolution, Washington wrote to the Marquis de Chastellux, a French Officer who served in the Revolutionary War, saying 'I am at length become a private citizen of America, on the banks of the Patowmac; where under my own Vine and my own Fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp and the intrigues of a court, I shall view the busy world, "in the calm light of mild philosophy", and with that serenity of mind, which the Soldier in his pursuit of glory, and the Statesman of fame, have not time to enjoy'.<sup>720</sup> Likewise, after leaving the Presidency Washington wrote to Charles Cotesworth Pickney that 'for myself I am now seated in the shade of my Vine and Fig tree, and although' I look with regret on many transactions which do not comport with my ideas, I shall, notwithstanding, "view them in the calm lights of mild philosophy", persuaded, if any great crisis should occur, to require it, that the good sense and Spirit of the Major part of the people of this country, will direct them properly'.<sup>721</sup> In a two week period in 1797 Washington quoted the same lines directly from *Cato* to Rufus King, David Humphreys, and the Earl of Buchan.<sup>722</sup>

A stoical resolve in Providence was another trait that Washington claimed to learn from Addison's *Cato*. In the play Lucius declares that trusting in Providence was the best thing a Roman can do: 'To urge the Foe to battle,/(Prompted by blind rage and wild despair)/Were to refuse th' awards of Providence,/And not to rest in Heav'ns determination'.<sup>723</sup> Washington occasionally used the Anglicised Roman term 'fortune' rather than the Christian 'Providence', but adopted the more Christian belief that Providence was benign rather than morally indifferent.<sup>724</sup> The trouble with the Roman concept of Providence was that its determinations were often inscrutable;

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<sup>718</sup> Thomas Jefferson, 'The Anas', in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson, (New York: Library of America, 1984), p.661.

<sup>719</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.17.

<sup>720</sup> George Washington to Chevalier de Chastellux, February 1, 1784, in *Writings of George Washington*, 27:314-315.

<sup>721</sup> George Washington to Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, June 2, 1797, in *Writings of George Washington*, 35:471.

<sup>722</sup> George Washington to Rufus King, June 25, 1797, in *Writings of George Washington*, 35:475. George Washington to David Humphreys, June 4, 1797, in *Writings of George Washington*, 35:481. George Washington to the Earl of Buchan, July 4, 1797, in *Writings of George Washington*, 35:488.

<sup>723</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.i.64-67.

<sup>724</sup> Morrison, *George Washington*, p.94.

Portius says of Cato's understanding of Providence as the 'ways of Heav'n are dark and intricate;/Puzzled in mazes, and perplexed with errors,/Our understanding traces 'em in vain'.<sup>725</sup> Throughout his political career Washington tried to cultivate a stoical reliance on Providence and he frequently drew on *Cato* to express his belief in Providence. In the play, Porcius says to the future traitor Sempronius, "Tis not in mortals to command success,/But we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it'.<sup>726</sup> Washington wrote to Comte de Grasse, who at the time was being court martialled, that he was 'under full persuasion that the enquiry will throw additional lustre on your character. "It was not in your power to command success; but you did more, you deserved it"<sup>727</sup> Twice during his early commands in 1775 Washington fell back on this couplet. In October he wrote to the governor of Rhode Island saying that a naval captain's 'voyage had been unfortunate, but it is not in our Power to Command Success, tho' it is always our duty to deserve it'.<sup>728</sup> Then again in early December Washington used the lines again but this time, oddly prophetically, with Benedict Arnold before he turned traitor. He wrote to Arnold 'It is not in the Power of any Man to command Success; but you have done more – you have deserved it'.<sup>729</sup> It was an apt quote for Washington to chose, considering it appears in the play when Cato's son Portius boasts to the secret traitor Sempronius. Arnold himself later used the quote in writing to Major Andre in 1779, likely trying to ingratiate himself with the dashing young secret agent, 'I cannot promise Success; I will deserve it'.<sup>730</sup> Even John Adams once used the phrase in writing to his wife, saying 'we cannot insure success, but we can deserve it'.<sup>731</sup>

The inscrutability of Providence became a recurrent theme in Washington's writings. He believed that 'the ways of Providence are inscrutable, and Mortals must submit' and he expressed this belief with numerous secular and religious

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<sup>725</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.50-52.

<sup>726</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.ii.45-46.

<sup>727</sup> George Washington to Comte de Grasse, May 15, 1784, in *Writings of George Washington*, 27:401.

<sup>728</sup> George Washington to Governor Nicholas Cooke, October 29, 1775, in *Writings of George Washington*, 4:53.

<sup>729</sup> George Washington to Benedict Arnold, December 5, 1775, in *Writings of George Washington*, 4:148.

<sup>730</sup> Benedict Arnold to Major Andre, 1779, quoted in Henry Steele Commager and Richard Brandon Morris, *The Spirit of 'Seventy-Six*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p.748.

<sup>731</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, Philadelphia, February 18, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 345.

correspondents over four decades of his public life.<sup>732</sup> In September 1758, when Washington was fighting the Braddock campaign, he wrote to a friend: ‘All is lost, if the ways of Men in power, like the ways of Providence are not Inscrutable; and, why [are] they not? For we who view the Action’s of great Men at so vast a distance can only form conjectures agreeable to the small extant of our knowledge and ignorant of the Comprehensive Schemes intended; mistake, plaugily, in judging by the lump’.<sup>733</sup> During the war years Washington wrote that the design of Providence could be perceived but that the entire plan was not able to be seen: ‘The hand of Providence has been so conspicuous in all this, that he must be worse than an infidel that lacks faith, and more swicked, that has not gratitude enough to acknowledge his obligations, but, it will be time enough for me to turn preacher, when my present appointment ceases; and therefore, I shall add no more on the Doctrine of Providence’.<sup>734</sup> When Washington was not able to foresee the whole plan of Providence he tried to bear his ignorance like Cato and other Roman Stoics: ‘I look upon every Dispensation of Providence as designed to answer some valuable purpose, and I hope I shall always possess a sufficient degree of fortitude to bear without murmuring any stroke which may happen’.<sup>735</sup>

Washington also drew on *Cato* for some of the most personal aspects of his life. He famously drew on passages from the play during a love affair he had with Sally Cary Fairfax. When Washington became engaged to Martha Custis in 1758, most historians now agree that he was still deeply in love with Sally Fairfax, the brilliant young wife of his neighbour and mentor George William Fairfax of Belvoir. In two letters he wrote to Sally that year he used passages from *Cato* to discreetly express his still-enduring love for her. The first letter, written September 12, 1758 from Fort Cumberland, contains two full paragraphs describing his perplexity as a ‘votary of love’ for a woman he cannot name.<sup>736</sup> He does not name Sally, but he asserts that his love is and must be a secret, and that, regardless, his honour and the

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<sup>732</sup> George Washington to Thaddeus Kosciuszko, August 31, 1797, in *Writings of George Washington*, 36:22.

<sup>733</sup> George Washington to John Robinson, September 1, 17458, in *Writings of George Washington*, 2:276.

<sup>734</sup> George Washington to Thomas Nelson, August 20, 1778 quoted in Jeffrey Morrison, *George Washington*, p.95.

<sup>735</sup> George Washington to Lund Washington, May 29, 1779, in *Writings of George Washington*, 15:180.

<sup>736</sup> George Washington, quoted in Albert Furtwangler, ‘Cato in Valley Forge’, in *American Silhouettes: Rhetorical Identities of the Founders*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp.64-84, p.45.

welfare of his country require him to engage his thoughts elsewhere. The editor of Washington's writings, John C. Fitzpatrick, has suggested that this is a reference to the section in *Cato* where Juba, who is in love with Cato's daughter, cannot state his love nor have any hope of it while Utica is besieged and devotion rightly belongs to the republic. Portius makes it clear by saying:

He loves our sister Marcia, greatly loves her,  
His eyes, his looks, his actions all betray it:  
But still the smother'd fondness burns within him,  
When most it swells, and labours for a vent,  
The sense of honour, and desire of fame  
Drive the big passion back into his heart.<sup>737</sup>

Juba's situation and this passage resonated with Washington because he similarly felt that as a good soldier fighting a necessary cause he could and should set aside thoughts of love. At the same time, although confiding his love to Sally Fairfax he suggests that like Juba consulting Cato, he is unable to open such matter with Sally's superior, in this case her husband and Washington's good friend. The next letter from Washington to Sally, dated September 25, 1758, makes this interpretation more explicit. Washington wrote: 'Do we still misunderstand the true meaning of each other's Letters? I think it must appear so, tho' I would feign hope the contrary as I cannot speak plainer without, But I'll say no more and leave you to guess the rest'.<sup>738</sup> He turns the conversation to the actions of the war, but returns again with a restrained but direct compliment: 'I should think my time more agreeable spent believe me, in playing a part in *Cato*, with the Company you mention, and myself doubly happy in being the Juba to such a Marcia, as you must make'.<sup>739</sup> Again the implication here is that, just like Juba and Marcia, the two are covertly in love but unable to express it due to honour and external circumstances.

Like nearly all the colonists, Washington frequently used classical pseudonyms, repeatedly using 'Cicero' and 'Fabius' as pseudonyms and watchwords during the war. Washington, however, took the classical pseudonym tradition further than many. He named his horses and slaves after famous Romans, calling his plough horse Pompey, and for a time engaging in a distasteful practice of naming the disfigured slaves on his plantation after powerful ancient and mythical figures, such

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<sup>737</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.i.83-88.

<sup>738</sup> George Washington to Mrs. George William Fairfax, September 25, 1758, in *Writings of George Washington*, 2:293.

<sup>739</sup> George Washington to Mrs. George William Fairfax, September 25, 1758, in *Writings of George Washington*, 2:293.

as Hercules, known for his mythical strength, and Paris, suggesting the slave was either known for his adultery or ugliness.<sup>740</sup> He gave the name Caesar to a particularly strong willed slave, writing in 1796 'Is he a runaway? If so, it is probable he will escape altogether as he can read, if not write'.<sup>741</sup> Gary Nash has noted that classical names were amongst the most common given to slaves in the generations prior to the American Revolution, but the pattern shifted after the war with Biblical and English names taking preference.<sup>742</sup> Nash reports that the most commonly used classical name for slaves was Caesar, with Cato, Scipio, Diana, and Chloe often being used.<sup>743</sup> Caesar and Scipio, in particular, were highly powerful military figures who had commanded armies and been successful in warfare. Cato, likewise, had proven his power and independence through oratory and his eventual suicide. Diana and Chloe were known for their beauty and virtue. As avid readers of Roman Republican history, the colonial Americans would have understood the ironic inversion of power present in naming their slaves after such powerful, independent, and commanding classical entities.

### *Newburgh Speech*

One of Washington's most important usages and dramatic modelling of Cato came in 1783 in a speech to his mutinous officers at Newburgh, New York. In March 1783, when the war was at its end, the Continental Army threatened an uprising. The soldiers were discontent with Congress because their pay was in arrears and there was a lack of funding for pensions that had been promised. Washington, who actually supported the strengthening of a weak Congress, did, however, realise, due to his classical conditioning, the hazard of a military coup as both dangerous and dishonourable. In his speech to the officers he used the same three tactics that Cato had employed in Act III, Scene V of Addison's tragedy, when he faced the mutineers of his army at Utica. Cato had condemned the rebels but Washington was able to adopt a friendlier tone with his audience, since he was able to feign ignorance of the identity of the rebels. However, like Cato, Washington appealed to his officers to

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<sup>740</sup> Morrison, *George Washington*, p.89. Paris is described as 'ugly' in *The Iliad*, Book 2.

<sup>741</sup> George Washington to William Pearce, February 21, 1796, in *Writings of George Washington*, 34:476.

<sup>742</sup> Gary Nash, *Forging Freedom: The Formation of Philadelphia's Black Community, 1720-1840*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), p.83.

<sup>743</sup> Dionysus, Jupiter, Mars, Pundis, Septimus, Daphne, Dirander, Parthena, and Sabina less frequently appear. Nash, *Forging Freedom*, p.81.

maintain their republican honour. He urged them not to ‘adopt measures which may cast a shade over that glory which has been so justly acquired; and tarnish the reputation of an Army which is celebrated thro’ all Europe for its fortitude and Patriotism’.<sup>744</sup> Washington returned to this theme of preserving their republican honour at the end of his speech, saying: ‘You will give one more distinguished proof of unexampled patriotism and patient virtue, rising superior to the pressure of the most complicated sufferings. And you will, by the dignity of your conduct, afford occasion for posterity to say, when speaking of the glorious example you have exhibited to mankind, “Had this day been wanting, the world had never seen the last stage of perfection to which human nature is capable of attaining”’.<sup>745</sup> The last lines of this speech were similar with a scene from *Cato*:

To strike thee dumb, turn up thy eyes to Cato!  
There may’st thou see to what a godlike height  
The Roman virtues lift up mortal men.<sup>746</sup>

Similarly, in Act III Cato asked:

...And will you thus dishonour  
Your past exploits, and sully all your wars?  
Do you confess ’twas not a zeal for Rome,  
Nor love of liberty, nor thirst of honour,  
Drew you thus far; but hopes to share the spoil  
Of conquered towns and plundered provinces?  
Fired with such motives you do well to join  
With Cato’s foes, and follow Caesar’s banners.<sup>747</sup>

In paraphrasing these quotes from *Cato*, Washington reminded the Continental Army that the virtue of the cause lay with the Americans, and that in following him, a proto-Cato figure, they would themselves be able to revel in the glory of the cause. Washington’s third tactic, also modelled on Addison’s Cato, was to press upon the officers his previous public service in the hopes of endearing sympathy and respect from them. Colonel David Cobb recalled that Washington preceded his speech with the statement: ‘Gentlemen, you will permit me to put on my spectacles, for I have not only grown gray, but almost blind, in the service of my country’.<sup>748</sup> In the play, Cato was more direct about reminding his troops of the hardships he had endured in the

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<sup>744</sup> George Washington, ‘Newburgh Speech, March 15, 1783’, in *George Washington’s Newburgh Speech*, (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1966).

<sup>745</sup> Washington, ‘Newburgh Speech’.

<sup>746</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.50-53.

<sup>747</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.v.6-13.

<sup>748</sup> Colonel David Cobb, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.59.

deserts of Libya, where he had seen to his own troops needs before tending to his own needs:

Behold my bosom naked to your swords,  
And let the man that's injured strike the blow.  
Which of you all suspects that he is wrong'd,  
Or thinks he suffers greater ills than Cato?  
Am I distinguished from you but by toils,  
Superior toils, and heavier weight of cares?

...  
Have you forgotten Lybia's burning waste,  
Its barren rocks, parch'd earth, and hills of sand,  
Its tainted air, and all its broods of poison?  
Who was the first to explore th' untrodden path,  
When life was hazarded in ev'ry step?  
Or, fainting in the long laborious march,  
When, on the banks of an unlook'd-for stream,  
You sunk the river with repeated draughts,  
Who was the last of all your host who thirsted?<sup>749</sup>

The response, from both Cato's and Washington's soldiers, was reportedly the same: tearful remorse.<sup>750</sup> Both Cato and Washington, in paraphrasing and emulating Cato, were able to remind their respective armies of the virtue of their cause and service that one should give to liberty and their country. Continuing to fight for liberty under the deleterious and pessimistic circumstances was presented as the right and glorious choice.

### *Valley Forge*

It was in 1778 that Washington staged one of his most important Catonian performances: Albert Furtwangler has said that at this time 'Washington and Addison's hero actually met and regarded one another at a crucial point in the war'.<sup>751</sup> At this stage in the war, the American forces were depleted and struggling. A letter from Samuel Adams to James Warren in August 1777 updated Warren on the situation of the Continental Army. The letter painted a sorrow scene for the American cause:

None of the Militia from the State of Massachusetts or this, will remain with me above five or six days longer. The time of service for which Colonel Long's regiment is engaged, expires on the 7th inst. This

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<sup>749</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.v.18-23, 27-35.

<sup>750</sup> Morrison, *George Washington*, p.92. Morrison claims this by paraphrasing Alexander Pope's Prologue, therefore making it a sketchy claim.

<sup>751</sup> Furtwangler, 'Cato in Valley Forge', p.47.

diminution with what we sustain by desertion, sickness, and in skirmishes with the enemy will reduce us to an alarming weakness.

It is impossible at present to procure a return, but I am very certain that we have not above four thousand continental troops; if men, one third of which are negroes, boys, and men too aged for field, or indeed any other service, can, with propriety be called troops. ...The fact is as I have stated it, literally so, and I may add, that a very great part of the army took the field, in a manner, naked; without blankets, ill armed, and very deficient in accoutrements, and still continue so to be, without a prospect of relief.<sup>752</sup>

A few days later, John Glover wrote to James Warren repeating similar sentiments: 'Our Army at this Post, is weak and shatter'd, much Confus'd, and the Number by no means equal to the Enemy; nor is there the Least probability of a Reinforcement'.<sup>753</sup>

With the American troops in a depressed condition, in November 1777 the British General William Howe led an attack on Washington's forces in Pennsylvania. He soundly defeated the Continental Army at Brandywine and Germantown, and they occupied Philadelphia. As soon as the British occupied Philadelphia advertisements appeared for a copyist, an account clerk, and carpenters – all 'wanted for a play-house'.<sup>754</sup> Between January and May of that year the resulting company put on thirteen theatrical productions, not including the elaborate pageant called the *Mischianza* that was performed for Howe just before he sailed back to England. In contrast, Washington and the Continental Army were forced to retreat to nearby Valley Forge where they endured a miserable winter with low morale. No such theatrical production for them would have been thought possible during the winter; all materials went into building shelters for the soldiers and with a desperate lack of army uniforms and shoes, costumes were not comprehensible. The diary of Albigence Waldo, surgeon at Valley Forge, reveals the extent of the misery the Continental Army endured: I am Sick - discontented - and out of humour. Poor food - hard lodging - Cold Weather - fatigue - Nasty Cloaths - nasty Cookery - Vomit half my time – smok'd out my senses - the Devil's in't - I can't Endure it'.<sup>755</sup> The spring

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<sup>752</sup> Samuel Adams to James Warren Philadelphia, August 12, 1777 '[Enclosure.] STILWATER, August 4th, 1777, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>753</sup> John Glover to James Warren Stillwater, August 6, 1777, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>754</sup> *Pennsylvania Ledger*, December 31, 1777, quoted in Thomas Clark Pollock, *The Philadelphia Theatre in the Eighteenth Century*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933), p.34.

<sup>755</sup> The Diary of Albigence Waldo, quoted in Margaret Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America*, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), p.9.

brought some relief to the Continental Army: those soldiers who had survived the winter were bonded in a close solidarity; food, clothing and other provisions began to arrive; and some of the officers' wives joined their husbands at camp and entertained the troops at night by taking turns singing.<sup>756</sup> The most important news reached the camp on 6 May when a military alliance with France was announced, the French having recognised American independence on 30 April.

At Valley Forge the contrast between the Americans and the British was clear: the British forces not only conquered the American capital but lived there in conspicuous ease, while nearby the American forces battled to stay alive in the harsh winter climate. The situation for the Continental Army and the patriot movement in general was bleak. In an address to the Massachusetts militia given during the winter spent at Valley Forge, the Reverend Peter Thacher highlighted the tremendous threat that the recent British victories posed to both the American cause and the leader of the movement, Washington. Thacher said 'why doth [imagination] transport me to the field of blood, the place of execution for the friends of American liberty! Who doth it there call me to view led to the scaffold, with the dignity of a Cato, the firmness of a Brutus, and the gentleness of a Cicero in his countenance? It is the gallant Washington deserted by his countrymen and sacrificed because he loved his country and fought in its defense!'<sup>757</sup> In this vision, Thacher constructed Washington as a patriot sacrifice in the tradition of Roman republican martyrs: Washington, like Cato, Brutus, and Cicero, was fighting a battle against tyranny that he would not win. Thacher went on to include 'Hancock, an Adams one and the other, a Franklin, a Rutledge' in this 'group of heroes' creating a modern-day American version of the pantheon of heroes from antiquity.<sup>758</sup>

It was during this time at Valley Forge that Washington decided to stage a performance of *Cato*. Washington's production was in stark violation of the Continental Congress's 1774 ban on 'gaming, cock-fighting, exhibitions of shews [sic], plays and other expensive diversions and entertainments'.<sup>759</sup> The one surviving

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<sup>756</sup> Rupert Hughes, *George Washington: The Savior of the States, 1777-1781*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1930), p.326.

<sup>757</sup> Reverend Peter Thacher, *A sermon, preached before the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, June 3, 1793; being the day of their annual election of officers*, (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1793), p.17, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 26249.

<sup>758</sup> Thacher, *A sermon*, p.17.

<sup>759</sup> Felicia Hardison Londré and Daniel J. Watermeier, *The History of the North American Theater: The United States, Canada and Mexico, from Pre-Columbian Times to the Present*, (New York: Continuum, 1998), p.73.

account of this event is a letter on May 14, 1778 by William Bradford Jr., the future attorney general, who was at Valley Forge as a lieutenant colonel. He wrote to his younger sister in Trenton, where the Bradford family had gone into exile from Philadelphia:

The camp could now afford you some entertainment. The manoeuvring of the Army itself is a sight that would charm you. — Besides these, the Theatre is opened — Last Monday *Cato* was performed before a very numerous and splendid audience. His Excellency & Lady, Lord Stirling, the Countess & Lady Kitty, & Mrs Green were part of the Assembly. ...The scenery was in Taste — & the performance admirable — Col. George did his part to admiration—he made an excellent die (as they say)—...If the Enemy does not retire from Philad[elphia] soon, our Theatrical Amusements will continue — I hope however we shall be disappointed in all these by the more agreeable entertainment of taking possession of Philad[elphia]. — There are strong rumours that the English are meditating a retreat — Heaven send it — for I fear we shall not be able to force them to go these two months.<sup>760</sup>

Bradford's next letter, dated May 20, shows that despite the hope for further theatrical amusement, *Cato* was the only one performed for certain. He wrote again to his sister: 'I no longer invite you here — all is hurry & bustle — our play & other amusements seem to be laid aside & every one is preparing for a sudden movement'.<sup>761</sup>

Although there is no evidence of who had the idea of staging the play, Washington's attendance of the production shows not only his fondness for the play, but his approval of this staging, despite the ban on theatre. Like many of his decisions, Washington's staging of *Cato* at Valley Forge had a didactic intention behind it. After a serious defeat by the British and during one of the harshest winters the Continental Army endured, Washington hoped that when his officers and troops sat down to hear Addison's verses they would find in it an apt account of their own condition. Perhaps Washington's intention was just as Porcius had expressed in the play: 'I'll animate the soldiers drooping courage,/With love of freedom, and contempt of life:/I'll thunder in their ears their country's cause'.<sup>762</sup> The narrative of *Cato* at the downfall the Roman Republic resonated with the soldiers at Valley Forge at this point in the war: the figures on stage and the surroundings in which they

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<sup>760</sup> William Bradford Jnr to Rachel Bradford, May 14, 1778, in Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America During the Revolution*, (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p.59.

<sup>761</sup> William Bradford Jnr to Rachel Bradford, May 20, 1778, in Brown, *Theatre in America*, p.59.

<sup>762</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.ii. 151-153.

found themselves nicely reflected the condition of their men at Valley Forge. Utica, the last bastion of liberty for the Roman Republic, was America's Valley Forge. The analogy was clear: the Americans had just endured battle with their former countrymen and a harsh winter, a frigid equivalent of Addison's 'burning wastes,/Its barren rocks, parched earth, and hills of sand,/Its tainted air, and all its broods of poison'.<sup>763</sup> In this transportation of Utica to American soil, Washington was clearly the Cato figure, just as Thacher had described, sharing in the miseries with his troops and contemplating liberty or death for the patriot cause. Just as Juba says of Cato, Washington likewise was:

Renouncing sleep, and rest, and food, and ease,  
He strives with thrift and hunger, toil and heat;  
And when his fortune sets before him all  
The pomps and pleasures that his soul can wish,  
His rigid virtue will accept of none.<sup>764</sup>

Jason Shaffer has claimed that 'Washington's soldiers interpreted the general's Catonian status in a surprisingly optimistic fashion' but with only Bradford's account of the production, we cannot know how it was received.<sup>765</sup> Instead of choosing a morale-boosting play, such as the popular *The Recruiting Officer*, Washington's first choice was a play that would resonate with the army but not offer them victory or a happy ending, but defeat and suicide. Washington, thoroughly versed in Stoicism through his lifetime reading of *Cato* and study of Seneca, more likely wished to impart the importance of public virtue and philosophic calm to his troops necessary in such a negative situation. Just as Cato had looked upon his situation and decision to commit suicide with philosophical rationality, Washington sought his troops to do the same. America was perceived as being at the junction between republican liberty and imperial tyranny, and, through the staging of *Cato*, the colonists were again reminded that the most virtuous action under the circumstances was death. The British army was stationed so close to the American encampment of Valley Forge that 'scouts and spies were in constant traffic between the armies and both sides were fully aware of what the other was doing'.<sup>766</sup> As such, it is likely that the choice of performing *Cato* was aimed at both the American army as well as Howe's thespian

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<sup>763</sup> Addison, *Cato*, III.v.27-29.

<sup>764</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.55-59.

<sup>765</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.60.

<sup>766</sup> Gillian Russell, *The Theatres of War: Performance, Politics, and Society, 1793-1815*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp.28-29.

troops in their comfortable Philadelphia lodgings. The counter-performance gave the image of an unbroken army still capable of staging its own production, despite the hard winter conditions. The choice of *Cato* broadcast to the British army the American's belief in the justice of their cause and their willingness to face death in their crusade against tyranny.

### *Eulogies*

When Washington was alive, he was constantly revered as a god-like role model. When Abigail Adams first met Washington she wrote to her husband describing the general in divine terms. She wrote:

I was struck with General Washington. You had prepared me to entertain a favourable opinion of him, but I thought the half was not told to me. Dignity with ease and complacency, the gentleman and soldier, look agreeably blended in him. Modesty marks every line and feature of his face. Those lines of Dryden instantly occurred to me:

“Mark his majestic fabric; he's a temple  
Sacred by birth, and built by hands divine;  
His soul's the deity that lodges there;  
Nor is the pile unworthy of the god”.<sup>767</sup>

The historian Marcus Cunliffe tells us that ‘babies were being christened after him [Washington] as early as 1775, and while he was still President his countrymen paid to see him in waxwork effigy.<sup>768</sup> To his admirers he was “godlike Washington” and his detractors complained to one another that he was looked upon as a “demi-god” whom it was treasonable to criticize’.<sup>769</sup> Washington's image was everywhere: his portrait was engraved on coins and adorned the wall of the wealthy and poor, and he was a favourite subject of song, poetry, and drama. When Washington died, 4 March, 1797, the whole nation went into mourning. The outpouring of grief was so intense that many clergymen feared that America had provoked the envy of God himself.

When Washington died, the eulogies that flowed from the nation, constantly likened him to numerous heroes from antiquity, including his life-long role model, Cato. It was customary at the time of Washington's death to dramatise one's virtues through selecting examples from biblical and classical history, and eulogists took

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<sup>767</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams Braintree, July 16, 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>768</sup> Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), pp.15-16.

<sup>769</sup> Marcus Cunliffe, *George Washington: Man and Monument*, (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), pp.15-16.

drama from both the Old Testament and the highly popular Plutarch's *Lives*. The literary historian Michael Gilmore has written that Washington's eulogists were eager 'to present the first president as the equal, if not indeed the superior, of any ancient'.<sup>770</sup> Quite often the eulogists simply needed to refer to Washington's classical virtues – 'his patriotism, martial prowess, civic altruism disinterestedness, self-effacement, sincerity, and humility' – for the audience to see him as a Roman.<sup>771</sup> When the 'Father of His Country', a title also given to Cicero, was compared in eulogies to Romans, the analogies were abundant. Pastor Thomas Paine made comparisons between Washington and Fabius, who 'like thee, could "save a nation by delay"' and Cincinnatus, 'who, like thee, in the vigor of Roman heroism, could return from the conquest of his country's enemies, to his humble Mount Vernon beyond the Tyber'.<sup>772</sup> Daniel Sewall's eulogy for the leader had both Cincinnatian and Catonian overtones, describing Washington in Cincinnatian terms but quoting Addison's Cato's desire for the private life: 'cheerfully resigned his commission, with his sword into the hands of Congress, who gave it, and refused even the smallest compensation for his services thro' the contest and gladly retired from the fatigues of war, to taste the sweets of peace in private life'.<sup>773</sup> Washington, like Cincinnatus, had selflessly relinquished his position of supreme power, but, like Cato, believed that a private life was the ultimate reward for his sacrifices.<sup>774</sup> Fisher Ames compared Washington to a less canonical classical figure, writing that Washington resembled the Theban Epaminondas, who led Thebes out of Spartan subjugation and into a preeminent position in Greek politics, 'in the purity and ardour of his patriotism'.<sup>775</sup> Some

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<sup>770</sup> Michael Gilmore, 'Eulogy as Symbolic Biography: The iconography of Revolutionary Leadership, 1776-1826', in *Studies in Biography*, ed. Daniel Aaron, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), pp.131-157.

<sup>771</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.210.

<sup>772</sup> Thomas Paine A.M., 'A Eulogy, Pronounced at Newport, January 2d, 1800', quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, pp.210-211.

<sup>773</sup> Daniel Sewall, *An eulogy, occasioned by the death of General Washington: Pronounced at the Middle Parish in Kittery, February 22, 1800*, (Portsmouth: Oracle-Office, 1800), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. 38488 Evans fiche or Box 1800 or E187 (Washington).

<sup>774</sup> Daniel Sewall, *An eulogy, occasioned by the death of General Washington: Pronounced at the Middle Parish in Kittery, February 22, 1800*, (Portsmouth: Oracle-Office, 1800), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. 38488 Evans fiche or Box 1800 or E187 (Washington).

<sup>775</sup> Fisher Ames, 'An Oration', in *A Selection of orations and eulogies, pronounced in different parts of the United States, in commemoration of the life, virtues, and pre-eminent services of Gen. George Washington*, (Amherst: Samuel Preston, 1800), p.55, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 36859 or no. 38483.

compared Washington to Brutus the Elder, declaring that while ‘Brutus rescued from Tarquin a small state – Washington from a George the third of the globe.’<sup>776</sup>

Still emulating his life-long hero, even in death Washington was likened to Cato in his eulogies. One eulogy wrote that Washington was ‘...not a Caesar, plotting to establish his own power on the ruins of the Republic; but a Cato ready to devote his fortune and his life to the salvation of his country: not a Sulla, terminating his military career by the usurpation of the civil authority; but a Cincinnatus, voluntarily relinquishing the sword for the plough, and retiring from the camp to the farm’.<sup>777</sup> Another eulogy said of Washington that ‘who by uniting the blended capacities of head and heart, adds to the wisdom and patriotism of a Washington, the firmness and sapience of a Cato’.<sup>778</sup> Likewise, Caleb Alexander praised Washington in a eulogy saying of the General that ‘Although born and educated in the midst of pleasures and gaiety, he shone in the morals of Seneca, the philosophy of a Socrates, and patriotism of a Cato’.<sup>779</sup> In a sermon given by Alden Bradford in Wiscasset on the death of Washington, Bradford described Washington in Catonian terms and his efforts in the war as emulating those of Addison’s Cato:

At his country’s call, when oppression and despotism, with gigantic steps, were trampling upon her sacred rights, the IMMORTAL WASHINGTON advanced in the font of danger to defend the expiring germ of freedom, “nor valued his life dear to himself”, that he might save his countrymen from cruel, ignominious servitude. ..Rather than enjoy the pleasures and luxuries of a foreign court; he chose to suffer affliction and poverty with his fellow-citizens; or nobly die in support of their valued rights and liberties.<sup>780</sup>

John Pierce claimed in his eulogy that Washington even exceeded Cato in his virtue: ‘with his example in view, you will have far greater inducements to virtue, than the

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<sup>776</sup> William Clark Fraser, *Funeral Oration*, (Wilmington: Franklin Press, 1800), p.9, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 37448.

<sup>777</sup> Abiel Holmes, *A sermon, preached at Cambridge, on the Lord's-Day, December 29, 1799, occasioned by the death of George Washington*, (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1800), p.10, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 37641.

<sup>778</sup> Samuel Relf (?), *President II. Being observations on the late official address of George Washington*, (Philadelphia?: s.n. Printed for the author, 1796), p. 5, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 31042.

<sup>779</sup> Caleb Alexander, *A sermon; occasioned by the death of His Excellency George Washington*, (Boston: Samuel Hall, 1800), p.13, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 36793.

<sup>780</sup> Alden Bradford, *A eulogy, in commemoration of the “sublime virtues” of General George Washington*, (Wiscasset: Henry Hoskins, 1800), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 37032.

ancient Romans, when they brought to their imaginations the august presence of Cato'.<sup>781</sup>

Washington's eulogists seemed to agree, however, that 'neither the annals of ancient or modern times afford a parallel of the character we are contemplating' and that 'his deeds of merit have surpassed all the human efforts of past and modern ages'.<sup>782</sup> Eulogists frequently found Washington to be superior to the examples from antiquity: 'unlike the wisely cautious Fabius, Washington could "seize victory by enterprise'; unlike the virtuous Cincinnatus, he could "protect from faction the liberties he had wrested from invasion"; and unlike the victorious Julius Caesar, Washington did not cross "the banks of the Rubicon", and thus did not succumb to his personal ambitions'.<sup>783</sup> Washington's memorialists concluded that the president was better than his classical models and that 'Rome with all her heroes – Greece with all her patriots, could not produce an equal'.

### Conclusions

The various neoclassical performances that took place in the war period show that the American colonists perceived themselves as having an intense relationship with antiquity, particularly the late Roman Republic. The colonists felt most comfortable expressing their political grievances and positions through the medium of the classics, and their audiences evidently embraced that form of dialogue as it equally resonated with them. The frequent and public nature of these neoclassical performances shows that the general populace felt comfortable engaging with such a narrative of Roman history and saw their relationship with Britain through the lens of Roman history. In relating to the political situation of the late Roman Republic, the colonists saw in the events of the fall of Rome their own possibilities. By analysing the specific classical allusions, images, and rhetoric that the colonist chose to invoke, a particular version of Roman history emerges as relevant to the mindset of the American colonists. Joseph Warren established a link with a classical

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<sup>781</sup>John Pierce, *A eulogy on George Washington the great and the good, delivered, on the anniversary of his birth*, (Boston: Manning & Loring, 1800), p.21, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 38267.

<sup>782</sup> Charles Atherton, 'A Eulogy, Pronounced at Amherst, before the Inhabitants of the Town of Amherst, the Inhabitants of the Town of Milford and the Benevolent Lodge' February, 22, 1800, quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.211.

<sup>783</sup> David Ramsay, *An Oration on the Death of Lieutenant-General George Washington, Late President of the United States*, (Charleston, 1778), p.27.

pantheon that included heroes, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, who were remembered for their unflinching resistance to tyranny and their decision to die rather than live under such arbitrary governance. As the colonists' neoclassical performances continued further into the 1770s the colonists rallied around Cato as the ideal Roman to emulate. Patrick Henry, Nathan Hale, and George Washington all chose Cato specifically to embody. They powerfully wielded the identity of Cato to drive other colonists into action or to make their own deeds memorable and resonant. In consistently invoking Cato in their orations, they linked the American situation to that of the late Roman Republic and rallied the patriot movement around a symbol that offered unflinching resistance to tyranny that resulted in death. The image of Cato did not portray victory, but death and the fall of liberty. The patriots did not cast themselves as victorious classical heroes or revolutionaries, but, through invoking Cato, reminded the colonial populace that true victory was to be found in virtuous death.

## Chapter Five

### Roman Matrons:

#### Substituting Cato for Women

In 1769 Christopher Gadsen, wartime general and statesman from South Carolina, made an appeal to the American colonies in determining how to make resistance to Britain effective. In a pamphlet entitled *To the Planter, Mechanics, and Freeholders of the Province of South Carolina, No Ways Concerned in the Importation of British Manufactures*, Gadsen implored the male colonial populace:

I come now to the last, and what many say and think is the greatest difficulty of all we have to encounter, that is, to persuade our wives to give us their assistance, without which 'tis impossible to succeed . . . for 'tis well known, that none in the world are better oeconomists . . . than ours. Only let their husbands point out the necessity of such conduct; convince them, that it is the only thing that can save them and their children, from distress, slavery, and disgrace; their affections will soon be awakened, and cooperate with their reason.<sup>784</sup>

Gadsen's appeal to women was typical of the eighteenth century: it was directed at their husbands, as women were not viewed as a political entity, or a specific political group able to be collectively targeted. Gadsen, however, recognised that in order for American resistance to be successful the support of the female populace had to be engaged since women managed household economies, meaning they would be able to undermine the political boycotts that became central to the colonies' stance against Britain. With this need identified, women became targeted as a political

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<sup>784</sup> Christopher Gadsen, 'To the Planters, Mechanics, and Freeholders of the Province of South Carolina, No Ways Concerned in the Importation of British Manufacturers', June 22, 1769, in *The Writings of Christopher Gadsen*, ed. Richard Walsh, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1966), pp.83-84. Gadsen's spelling of the word 'oeconomists' is curious in that it is reminiscent of Xenophon. Although Xenophon was generally not part of college curriculum until after 1783, Xenophon is listed in the libraries of and talked about by some of the colonists, such as John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, suggesting that his major works were known in educated circles. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* looks at household economics and sees marriage as an economic partnership aimed at increasing property. In doing so, Xenophon views women as partners in the domestic sphere, and is he touted by some as a proto-feminist. Gadsen's ideas of the influence of women in the domestic scene and his spelling of 'oeconomists' resonate with the views espoused by Xenophon. David Robson, *Educating Republicans: The College in the Era of the American Revolution, 1750-1800*, (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1985), p.167. Xenophon, *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*, (Cambridge Mass.: Leob Classical Library, 1923).

group of their own, and throughout the 1760s and 1770s they began to find their own political voice and determine ways in which they could interact with the political sphere. In this period, colonial American women became more politically aware and active than they had ever been in previous generations. Women became activists, boycotters, soldiers, and political writers; they read about and commented on political affairs more widely and freely than ever before.

Caroline Winterer's *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900* is currently the most thorough investigation of American colonial women's relationship with antiquity.<sup>785</sup> Winterer has focused on the use of the concept and expression 'Roman matron', which was used by late colonial women, as opposed to other previous studies that have looked at the terms 'republican mother' and 'republican wife, neither of which were used at the time.<sup>786</sup> Winterer most convincingly shows that in dealing with the events of the 1760s and 1770s, like the politically empowered male populace, American colonial women saw the situation through the lens of Roman history and chose to deal with the demands of the war by adopting classical identities. Just as Joseph Warren donned a 'Ciceronian' toga for his 1775 Boston Massacre oration and John Adams took the pen name Lysander after the Spartan war hero, women chose heroines from antiquity to represent their beliefs and viewpoints. The passage of eighteen centuries meant nothing to these women who, simply by signing themselves as a classical figure, implied that they had the same values, the same hopes and fears, and could attain the same heroic virtues as the Roman matrons from antiquity.<sup>787</sup> Historical accounts helped women navigate this new arena of female patriotism and to imagine themselves as active political entities. Most consistently, American colonial women invoked the image of Roman matrons as a way of establishing their voice in the republican debate and interacting with the contemporary political situation. The

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<sup>785</sup> Caroline Winterer, *The Mirror of Antiquity: American Women and the Classical Tradition, 1750-1900*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009). For the period following the American Revolution see Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910*, (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002).

<sup>786</sup> For discussions on the republican mother see Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). For discussion on the republican wife see Jan Lewis, 'The Republican Wife: Virtue and Seduction in the Early Republic', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 44 (October 1987), pp.687-721.

<sup>787</sup> For the European artistic tradition that dated back to the Renaissance of royal and aristocratic women posing as classical goddesses see Annette Dixon, *Women Who Ruled: Queens, Goddesses, Amazons in Renaissance and Baroque Art*, (London: Merrell in association with the University of Michigan Museum of Art, 2002) and Catharine MacLeod and Julia Marcari Alexander, *Painted Ladies: Women at the Court of Charles II*, (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2001).

image of the Roman matron showed and allowed the colonists to actively participate in republican political life, which was traditionally a masculine arena and ideology but their specific choice of Roman heroines enabled them to express their devotion to liberty and republican ideals.

While the use of classical pseudonyms reflected a desire to be associated with the image of the virtuous classical Roman woman and helped to facilitate female political participation, this fact has been generally studied in isolation to the broader classical phenomenon of the era.<sup>788</sup> As a result, it has not been previously established that colonial American women primarily engaged with Roman matrons who offered narratives of suicide. The Roman heroines that were most frequently recommended to colonial women were not apolitical or uncontroversial figures, offering models of motherhood or simple political engagement. Instead they chose women who had committed suicide preferring death to living without liberty or in a situation that compromised their virtue. Republicanism demanded denial of oneself in service to the country, and at times it demanded this sacrifice to be through death. True republicans, whether male or female, were expected to sacrifice everything, not for their families, but for the country. In the literature of the era we find that women engaged with narratives of classical suicide and contemplated republican demands through Stoic exemplar. The female patriots' choice of Roman exemplars mirrored that of the personas that their husbands, fathers, and brothers chose to adopt. Just as American male patriots chose to emulate Cato, women were able to subscribe to the same 'liberty or death' heroics that Cato espoused by adopting Roman matrons that offered a similarly radical example of the pursuit of liberty and virtue. The female colonists' choice of neoclassical identities reveals a society-wide acceptance of the inevitability of British tyranny and a desire to show devotion to the republican cause through seeking death rather than an existence under corrupt governance. In their preference for death we are reminded that the colonists did not see themselves as fighting a 'revolution', but, rather, saw this as a last stand for liberty against the tyranny and corruption of the British Empire.

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<sup>788</sup> See Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*; Philip Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia: Female Political Identity and the Historical Imagination, 1770-1800', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 62 (April 2005); Heidi Hackel and Catherine Kelly, *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); and Gay Gibson Cima, *Early American Women Critics: Performance, Religion, Race*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

### Classical Education and Women

It had been a tradition since the Renaissance to educate boys in the classics.<sup>789</sup> Learning Greek and Latin equipped them for careers in statesmanship, and in doing so it indoctrinated them into the mysteries and privileges of languages, exemplar, and sayings that gentlemen knew and ladies did not. Since women were excluded from colleges and philosophical societies, as well as professions such as law, politics, and the ministry, there was no necessity for them to receive a classical education. Additionally, while it was believed that a classical education ennobled a male, it was assumed, on the other hand, that it would corrupt the female mind, so serious study was discouraged. The classically educated woman was deemed to be greatly unfeminine; she was considered to be *virilis femina* or *homasse*.<sup>790</sup> Even as late as 1789, an anonymous writer claimed 'I know no way of rendering classical knowledge ridiculous as by clothing it in petticoats'.<sup>791</sup> The *American Magazine*, published in Boston between 1743 and 1746, reprinted articles from London, which warned the female populace of the dangers of being highly educated in the classics. An article in 1744 that gave advice to young married women warned them to 'shun learned clacks, and Females talking Greek'.<sup>792</sup> An essay entitled *The Polite Philosopher* (1758) included a section of Seneca in Latin which 'for the sake of the Ladies' was translated into English, assuming that women could not or should not have knowledge of classical languages.<sup>793</sup> Generally, up until the mid-eighteenth century, women were educated as an afterthought and, when educated, only up to a level that was functionally required in society.<sup>794</sup> There were, of course, some exceptions, such as

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<sup>789</sup> See Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth and Sixteenth Century Europe*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986) and Walter Ong, 'Latin Language Study as a Renaissance Puberty Rite', *Studies in Philology*, 56 (1959), pp.103-124.

<sup>790</sup> Both terms basically mean 'man-woman'. For 'virilis femina' see Natalie Zemon Davis, 'Gender and Genre: Women as Historical Writers, 1400-1820', in *Beyond Their Sex: Learned Women of the European Past*, ed. Patricia H. LaBalme, (New York: New York University Press, 1980), p.158. For 'homasse' see Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women, and Historical Practice*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.16. Both quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.13.

<sup>791</sup> Anonymous, 'On Female Authorship', in *The Lady's magazine: or, Entertaining companion for the fair sex*, (London: J. Robinson, 1789), p.298.

<sup>792</sup> 'Advice to a Young Lady Just after Her Marriage', *American Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, December 1744, p.699, quoted in Hackel and Kelly, *Reading Women*, p.107.

<sup>793</sup> James Forrester, *The Polite Philosopher*, (New York: J. Parker and W. Weyman, 1758), p.4, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 8124.

<sup>794</sup> For early schooling in colonial America, see Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The Colonial Experience, 1607-1783*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), which touches briefly on women's education. See also E. Jennifer Monaghan, 'Literacy Instruction and gender in Colonial New England', in *Reading in America: Literature and Social History*, ed. Cathy N. Davidson, (Baltimore:

the Quakers and German Pietists, who established secondary schools for girls, where women were generally taught rudimentary reading and writing by their families or privately funded schools that admitted women.<sup>795</sup> Women from elite families had a few more opportunities, such as ‘adventure’ schools which offered Latin as part of their curriculum, or by partaking in their brother’s tutelage.<sup>796</sup> Occasionally a highly privileged girl would be educated in Greek and Latin and encouraged to emulate classical female heroines, but this was generally a lesson in virtue.

In the mid-eighteenth century, British polite culture, originally modelled on French precedents, began to permeate the colonies and a whole new arena for social interactions between the sexes developed.<sup>797</sup> Salons and tea tables quickly became the scene for upwardly mobile men and women to gather for conversation, reading, society games, and the like. Central to these conversations was classical learning, a subject on which all could contribute to his or her own measure. For men, demonstrating their classical learning, a subject long associated with the pinnacles of masculine erudition, judgment, and statecraft, only required restraint at times so to not appear a bore or a scholar, two attributes believed to be incompatible with the ideal of a gentleman. For women, conversations revolving around the classics became a complicated juggling act: without formal schooling women were expected to have knowledge of antiquity, and while ancient history was an acceptable subject for women to study, classical languages were not. To further complicate the situation, a woman’s conversation was expected to be ornamental and not instructive in its own right; she should have enough knowledge to take an interest in a male companion’s conversation without surpassing his grasp of the subject.

Publications helped women navigate the fine line between acquiring a beneficial amount of classical knowledge and appearing corrupted by education. The advice book *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady* by Hester Chapone, first published in London in 1773, advised women regarding classical learning that it was ‘shameful...to be unacquainted with the nature and

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John Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp.53-80. Thomas Woody, *A History of Women’s Education in the United States*, 2 vols. (New York: Science Press, 1929) although published well over half a century ago is still the best resource.

<sup>795</sup> Mary Kelley, *Learning to Stand and Speak: Women, Education, and Public Life in America’s Republic*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.35.

<sup>796</sup> Margaret Nash, *Women’s Education in the United States, 1780-1840*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), p.36.

<sup>797</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.14.

revolutions of their governments, and with the characters and stories of their most illustrious heroes'.<sup>798</sup> Chapone went on to warn women, however, of the dangers of female erudition: 'the danger of pedantry and presumption in a woman - of her exciting envy in one sex and jealousy in the other - of her exchanging the graces of imagination for the severity and preciseness of a scholar, would be, I own, sufficient to frighten me from the ambition of seeing my girl remarkable for learning'.<sup>799</sup> Likewise, *Father Abraham's Almanac* for 1772 told the cautionary tale of why 'the sagacious Sophronia remains unmarried'. The story blamed the fact that Sophronia was 'taught to love Greek, and hate the men from her very infancy'; the author concluding that the two factors go hand-in-hand.<sup>800</sup> Publications generally encouraged women to study the classics on the grounds that women in antiquity offered models of maternal or virtuous excellence. In June 1745, an article encouraged women to emulate the educated women of antiquity, such as Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, who 'contributed much to the Eloquence of her Sons', or the daughter of Loelius, who 'express'd in her Conversation the Eloquence of her Father'.<sup>801</sup> Such women were deemed to be 'the honour of her Sex' but continued to cast their involvement with classics on a purely maternal level.<sup>802</sup> Even wives and daughters of clergymen read classical texts and some took up Latin for the explicit purpose of reading 'pagan literature' to glean lessons in virtue.

In the female world of classicism, Caroline Winterer has concluded that there were four books in particular that stand out as favourites amongst female readers: Charles Rollin's *Ancient History* (13 vols. 1730-1738), Alexander Pope's *The Iliad* (1715-1720) and *The Odyssey* (1725-1726), and Fenelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus* (first published in French in 1699).<sup>803</sup> While men also loved these volumes, Winterer notes that they stand out as books and authors most frequently

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<sup>798</sup> Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind, Addressed to a Young Lady*, (Hagerstown, MD: William D. Bell for Gabriel Nourse, 1818), 2:195. The book was first published in 1773, with four additional editions in England by 1783; there were American editions published as late as 1834.

<sup>799</sup> Chapone, *Letters*, 2:121.

<sup>800</sup> *Father Abraham's Almanack, for the year of our Lord 1772*, (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1771), p.19, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 12276.

<sup>801</sup> 'Of Illustrious Women', *The American Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, June 1745, p.245, quoted in Heidi Hackel and Catherine Kelly, *Reading Women: Literacy, Authorship, and Culture in the Atlantic World, 1500-1800*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p.107.

<sup>802</sup> 'Of Illustrious Women', in Hackel and Kelly, *Reading Women*, p.107.

<sup>803</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, pp.26-39.

mentioned in women's diaries, letters, and magazines.<sup>804</sup> These books were popular for a number of reasons: Rollin's and Fenelon's works were written in a modern vernacular language, and since knowledge of classical languages was generally discouraged amongst women these publications allowed them to engage with the classical world without the requisite Greek or Latin. Furthermore, these works were either compatible with or explicitly designed to cultivate female godliness and virtue.<sup>805</sup> A 1745 article in the *American Magazine* advised reading Rollin's work because it was able to 'inspire the love of virtue, and respect for religion'.<sup>806</sup> Abigail Adams greatly enjoyed Rollin's *History*; in 1774 she wrote to John that she found 'great pleasure and entertainment in its pages' and later when John Quincy Adams was seven years old that she had 'perswaded Johnny to read me a page or two every day'.<sup>807</sup> Likewise, Pope's highly popular translations, which sold twenty thousand copies in 1774 alone, offered a moral world that was able to be reconciled with Christianity. The Quaker Elizabeth Drinker (1735-1807) noted in her diary that after spending the morning at church she 'began to read Pope's Homer; the Iliad', showing that she saw no conflict in attending both church and the classics the same day.<sup>808</sup> Fenelon's *Les Aventures de Telemaque* (1699) was again a deeply moralising tale but primarily aimed at a male audience since it dealt with issues of kingship and self-mastery. Winterer has, however, suggested that American women saw a reflection of their lives in the tale of *Telemachus*. She argues that Calypso represented the scope and limitations of the female world, and that as a victim of the competing agendas of Venus and Minerva, Calypso was destined to be alone on the island forever, time only punctuated by men arriving and leaving, and her modifying her speech and silence to

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<sup>804</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.26.

<sup>805</sup> Caroline Winterer has also suggested that another reason was because these works linked women with the expanding eighteenth-century Atlantic trade in goods and intellectual trends. She says that women 'did not just read the books, but surrounded themselves with a veritable gallery of related artifacts that they either bought ready-made or created. Women moved easily between the bookish culture of letters and the material culture of accomplishment, and did not see the cultures as opposed but as parallel paths to the formation of sensibility and taste'. For more on this see Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, pp.26-27.

<sup>806</sup> 'M. Crevier's Answer to Mr. Voltaire', *The American Magazine*, December 1745, p.541, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.27.

<sup>807</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams - Braintree, August 19, 1774, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>808</sup> Elizabeth Drinker, Journal Entry for December 4, 1759, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.31.

meet the needs of her male companions, much like the American women in eighteenth-century salons.<sup>809</sup>

Women also gained a classical education through their access to private colonial libraries and circulating libraries. Records of these libraries indicate that the amount of classical texts often rivalled in number the traditional and perpetually popular Christian devotionals. While women were able to borrow classical texts and ancient history books from the circulating libraries, letters and diaries indicate that private libraries were considered to be the property of men and that often women had to negotiate with male relatives for borrowing rights.<sup>810</sup> William Byrd II (1674-1744) of Westover quarrelled with his first wife ‘because I was not willing to let her have a book out of the library’, but fell in love with his second wife partly on account of her knowledge of Greek: ‘when indeed I learned that you also spoke Greek, the tongue of the Muses, I went completely crazy about you’.<sup>811</sup> James Logan (1674-1751), one of the most accomplished humanists in the American colonial period, did not believe in teaching his daughters Greek and Latin but did understand the moral instruction to be found in classical learning. As a result, with his daughters in mind he produced an English translation of Cato’s moral sayings that was published as *Cato’s Moral Distiches* (1735).<sup>812</sup> Benjamin Rush was an exception; when he married Julia Stocken in 1776 he assembled a library for her, which he referred to as ‘your library’, and it included one hundred volumes.<sup>813</sup> He wrote to her: ‘you are anxious to cultivate your mind, & to rise above the drudgery to which our sex have consigned yours, and those follies to which too many of your sex have consigned themselves’.<sup>814</sup> Women did not solely confine themselves to reading ancient history and fiction, but, as Linder Kerber has noted, from lists that survive from booksellers, lending

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<sup>809</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, pp.37-38.

<sup>810</sup> For a discussion on the library rights of colonial American women see Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.21, f.14.

<sup>811</sup> William Byrd, *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709-1712*, eds. Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, (Richmond: Dietz Press, 1941), p.461.

<sup>812</sup> James Logan, *Cato’s Moral Distiches. Englished in Couplets*, (Philadelphia: Benjamin Franklin, 1735). The publication may not have been overly appealing to young women since the original work was aimed primarily at young men. It also advised boys: ‘Regard not Woman’s Passions, not her Smiles/With Passion she ensnares, with Tears beguiles’. Logan, *Cato’s Moral Distiches*, p.11.

<sup>813</sup> Benjamin Rush to Julia Stockton, *My Dearest Julia: The Loveletters of Dr. Benjamin Rush to Julia Stockton*, (New York: Neale Watson Academic Publications, 1979), pp.42-43, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.21.

<sup>814</sup> Benjamin Rush to Julia Stockton, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.21.

libraries, and notes by diarists it is clear ‘women read *Cato’s Letters*’, revealing their interest in political tracts and contemporary politics.<sup>815</sup>

The classicisation of women became important to the founding of America through the love of classics and classical values they distilled to their children. The *United States Magazine* declared in 1779 that ‘women should be well instructed in the principles of liberty in a republic. Some of the first patriots of antient times, were formed by their mothers’.<sup>816</sup> The Jurist James Wilson praised examples of Roman motherhood, as proof that mothers played a vital role in shaping the civic consciousness of their sons.<sup>817</sup> An example of this would be the Founder’s commitment to agrarian ideals, which quite likely came from their mother’s home schooling and fireside education. Virgil’s the *Georgics* and other favourites of the pastoral tradition became staples of the republican revolutionary tradition because Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and others linked agrarianism with the nurturing of civic virtue.<sup>818</sup> Eliza Lucas, a colonist in South Carolina who at seventeen found herself running her father’s plantation while he remained permanently in absentia, found both instruction and great comfort from reading Virgil. She wrote regarding Virgil, almost certainly about the *Georgics*: ‘I have got no further than the first volume of Virgil but was most agreeably disapointed to find my self instructed in agriculture as well as entertained by his charming penn; for I am persuaded tho’ he wrote in and for Italy, it will in many instances suit Carolina’.<sup>819</sup> At twenty-two Lucas married Charles Pinckney and her children were educated, at her fireside, in the classics, undoubtedly including her Virgilean favourites. Two of her children went on

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<sup>815</sup> Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, p.236. See also p.236, f.4.

<sup>816</sup> ‘Maxims for Republics’, *American Magazine*, 1787, quoted in Cynthia A. Kierner, *Beyond the Household: Women’s Place in the Early South, 1700-1835*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), p.108.

<sup>817</sup> James Wilson, ‘On the Natural Rights of Individuals’, in *The Works of James Wilson*, ed. Robert Green McCloskey, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 2:599.

<sup>818</sup> For the pastoral tradition in American republicanism, with particular reference to Virgil, see Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp.159-169.

<sup>819</sup> Eliza Lucas to Mary Bartlett, ca. April 1742, in *The Letterbook of Eliza Lucas Pinckney, 1739-1762*, ed. Elise Pinckney, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), pp.35-36 Virgil is often mentioned in women’s letters, diaries, and education manuals, and was approved as a pagan text worthy of reading by a Christian suggesting a wide reading of the text. Hester Chapone, a very influential voice in the education of girls in the eighteenth century, assumed that an accomplished women would have read Virgil and in translation – ‘every body reads [them] that reads at all’ – and recommended that Virgil be read in Annibale Caro’s Italian version. Hester Chapone, *Letters on the Improvement of the Mind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn., (Dublin: United Company of Booksellers, 1777), pp.100-103. Madeleine De Scudery also included Virgil as a text for women to read in her education manual. Madeleine de Scudery, *Letters on Education*, (1790).

to become staunch patriots: Charles Cotesworth Pinckney (1746-1825) was a brigadier general in the war and a signer of the Constitution, and Thomas Pinckney (1750-1838) also served in the war and later became governor of South Carolina. Similarly in the Adams household, with John's long absences it fell to Abigail to carry out the complicated classical pedagogy subscribed by her husband and the tutor he employed, John Thaxter. In John's letters to Abigail and the children he encouraged them all to do translations of classical history, Latin for Nabby, and both Greek and Latin for John.<sup>820</sup> The fact that Nabby was educated in Latin suggests that John and Abigail were sensitive to new educational ideas that demanded deeper classicism in women.

### Female Worthies

Although not strictly a classical work, the most common literary genre that helped shaped the classical identity of eighteenth-century American colonial women was the genre of the 'female worthies'.<sup>821</sup> Paralleling the tradition of exemplar history for male heroes, these works were a catalogue of illustrious women from history, which included Roman matrons, Spartan women, female monarchs, and intellectual prodigies through the centuries. Ironically, in engaging with historical role-playing women were going against the grain of traditional historiography. The classical, humanist, and republican traditions believed that history was solely to educate statesmen and warriors, meaning that women had no place in the reading of history. But history in the eighteenth century, whether aimed at the male or female populace, was unapologetically moralistic and presented examples of virtue for a reader to emulate and vice that they must avoid. In a widely quoted definition Lord Bolingbroke, the British statesman, declared that history was philosophy teaching by

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<sup>820</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, February 18, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 327. Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 16-18, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 345.

<sup>821</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis has written: 'The genre of women's history is no newcomer on the scene. In one form it goes back to Plutarch, who composed little biographies of virtuous women, intended to show that the female sex could and should profit by education. Taken up again by Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, the collective memorials of 'Women Worthies' continued in an unbroken line – from the City of Ladies of Christine de Pisan through Madame Briquet's 1804 Dictionary...of French Women...known for their writings... Sometimes the subjects had talents in many fields; other times they were all religious...or all literary....or all political'. Natalie Zemon Davis, "Women's History" in Transition: The European Case', *Feminist Studies* 3, 3/4 (Spring/Summer 1976), pp.83-103, p.83. On the early tradition on celebrating/denigrating 'women worthies' see Mary Spongberg, *Writing Women's History Since the Renaissance*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2002).

examples.<sup>822</sup> History was, therefore, presented in an episodic manner where specific events, individuals, or quotes were wrestled from their context in order to extract the lesson. The didactic supposition held that a single splendid example could animate the reader more powerfully than any abstract philosophy ever could. Some American female writers shared this humanist view of history. Susannah Rowson (1762-1824) hoped that the readers of her history of women would acquire ‘a noble emulation to equal those who have gone before us’.<sup>823</sup> Likewise, Judith Sargent Murray (1751-1820) wrote a novel in which she had a mother tell her daughter to read history because ‘it is by the careful investigation of proper, great and virtuous actions, as performed by other, that the glow of emulation is enkindled in our bosoms’.<sup>824</sup>

Modern scholars have frequently criticised the female worthy genre for being anecdotal, unchronological, of offering contradictory models of womanhood, both conventional and transgressive, and of being of little value to women who wanted to campaign for full-fledged citizenship.<sup>825</sup> Despite these legitimate criticisms, eighteenth-century women did, however, believe that viewing history as a series of events, or individuals divorced from their context, enabled them to best explore an idea, including that of female patriotism. These works were vital in helping the women establish female patriotism as a legitimate concept, to feel comfortable in the political arena, and to give them a means of accessing and interacting with republican ideals that were traditionally patriarchal. As Phillip Hicks has surmised:

Women were told they were not fit for a classical education, and yet they were able to find role models for themselves in classical dramas, translations, and histories. They were told modesty was their distinctive virtue, and yet they saw in the female worthies a vehicle for their own fame. Republican ideology declared politics off-limits to them, and yet they discovered republican heroines whose very existence invalidated this claim of gender exclusivity.<sup>826</sup>

Besides offering models worthy of emulation, the female worthies also demonstrate how history and political action could be linked in women’s minds. They showed

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<sup>822</sup> Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *On the Study and Use of History*, (Basil: J.J. Tourneisen, 1791), p.36.

<sup>823</sup> Susannah Rowson, *A Present for Young Ladies, Containing Poems, Dialogues, Addresses, &c., as Recited by the Pupils of Mrs. Rowson’s Academy, at the Annual Exhibitions*, (Boston: John West, 1811), p.83-86, quoted in Lucia McMahon, *Mere Equals: The Paradox of Educated Women in the Early American Republic*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), p.56.

<sup>824</sup> Judith Murray Sargent, *The Gleaner*, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), p.365.

<sup>825</sup> Mary Kelley, ‘Designing a Past for the Present: Women Writing Women’s History in Nineteenth-Century America’, *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, 105, pt. 2 (1996): p.325, pp.328-29; Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, pp.258-259.

<sup>826</sup> Hicks, ‘Portia and Marcia’, p.268.

women how political actions could take place outside of the immediate political arena, and how women could easily and appropriately play a role in them. However, through their reading of the female worthies and history textbooks, American colonial women encountered a much filtered version of Roman history and had a particular construct of how women should engage in the political sphere. It is interesting to consider the infamous but politically powerful Roman matrons that the colonial women did not read about: Messalina, who had a reputation for promiscuity and plotted against her husband; Poppaea, whom Tacitus described as being ruthlessly ambitious and using intrigue to become Roman empress; Agrippina, similarly accused of being domineering but also possibly responsible for poisoning the emperor Claudius; and, finally, Caesar's wife Pompeia, who was divorced by Caesar after a religious scandal.<sup>827</sup> The Roman matrons who were chosen to be included in the female worthies were picked in order that a deliberate message could be conveyed to the reader. Not surprisingly Roman matrons who displayed great virtue and devotion to motherhood featured regularly, but the inclusion of various Roman women who committed suicide suggests that a deliberate Roman Stoic agenda on was being pushed onto eighteenth-century women.

The role that the female worthies played in politically motivating the colonial American women is evidenced in the anonymously penned 'Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism' published in 1779 in the *United States Magazine*. The author imagined being guided through part of heaven inhabited by female patriots: 'Those, said the angel, in the grove of olives are Jewish ladies, and those of queenly stature, more eminent amongst them, are Deborah and Miriam the sister of Moses. Those in the myrtle bower are from Greece in the happy days of her commonwealths, and she whom you see at at [sic] their head, is the Spartan lady who, when she bound the buckler on her son going out to battle, said, Return either with it or upon it. Those amongst the shady oaks are Roman ladies, and one whom you see of a more noble presence is Porcia, the wife of Brutus, and the daughter of Cato'.<sup>828</sup> Following the introduction of Zenobia, Joan of Arc, and Boadicea, the wives of John Adams and Samuel Adams are presented, following a number of unnamed women from several

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<sup>827</sup> For the story of Messalina see Tacitus, *Annals*, XI.1-2, 12, 26-38. For the story of Poppaea see Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII.45-46, XIV.63-64, XVI.6. For the story of Agrippina see Tacitus, *Annals*, XII.1-10, 64-69, XIV.1-9; Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum*, V.44 and VI.5.3, 28.2, 34.1-4; and Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXIII.11-14. For the story of Pompeia see Plutarch, *Life of Caesar*, 9.1-10.6.

<sup>828</sup> 'Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism', *United States Magazine*, March 1779, pp.122-24, quoted in Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', p.273.

of the colonies.<sup>829</sup> In presenting Abigail Adams and Elizabeth Adams as living patriots the author inoculates women in general against the unfeminine characteristic of heroism and political notoriety, as well as feminising the masculine reward of historical immortality. Like Mercy Otis Warren had written earlier in 1774, these women had emulated Roman matrons and joined the ‘rolls of fame’.<sup>830</sup> Hannah Winthrop echoed Warren’s sentiments, writing in the same year: ‘And be it known unto Britain, even American daughters are Politicians and Patriots and will aid the good work with their Female efforts’.<sup>831</sup>

A year after the ‘Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism’ was published one of the most famous moments of female political involvement in the war took place. In 1780 a group of women from Philadelphia decided to raise funds for Washington’s troops. Esther De Berdt Reed, the initiator of the movement, issued a broadside on their behalf entitled ‘The Sentiments of an American Woman’. Reed made clear the inspiration for the movement, writing: ‘Our ambition is kindled by the fame of those heroines of antiquity, who have rendered their sex illustrious, and have proved to the universe, that ... we should at least equal, and sometimes surpass [Men] in our love for the public good’.<sup>832</sup> Nearly half of the broadside concerned itself with the history of female worthies and with claiming solidarity with them. Reed catalogued an impressive array of female patriots sampled from throughout history, including heroines drawn from the Old Testament, such as Deborah, Judith, Esther, and the mother of the Maccabean martyrs; Coriolanus’s mother and the Roman matrons who gave up their ornaments to pay the Gaul’s ransom; celebrated female rulers such as Elizabeth I, Marie de Medici, and Catherine the Great; and Joan of Arc.<sup>833</sup> Reed wrote: ‘I glory in all that which my sex has done great and commendable. I call to mind with enthusiasm and with admiration, all those acts of courage, of constancy and patriotism, which history has transmitted to us’ and with which ‘we associate ourselves’.<sup>834</sup> The choice of including the story of the Roman matrons, who ‘resigning the ornaments of their apparel, their fortune, to fill the

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<sup>829</sup> ‘Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism’, quoted in Hicks, ‘Portia and Marcia’, p.273.

<sup>830</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, ‘To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.’ in *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, (Boston: 1790), p.212, quoted in Hicks, ‘Portia and Marcia’, p.278.

<sup>831</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, January, 1774, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>832</sup> ‘Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism’, quoted in Hicks, ‘Portia and Marcia’, p.274.

<sup>833</sup> ‘Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism’, quoted in Hicks, ‘Portia and Marcia’, p.274.

<sup>834</sup> ‘Vision of the Paradise of Female Patriotism’, quoted in Hicks, ‘Portia and Marcia’, p.274.

public treasury, and to hasten the deliverance of their country', was particularly poignant in serving as a precedent for the Philadelphia campaign.<sup>835</sup> Reed mobilised the women of Philadelphia to obtain donations and was able to raise three hundred thousand dollars for Washington's troops, which was used to purchase shirts for the men.<sup>836</sup> Reed was able to step into such a public political arena because she perceived herself as part of a long line of patriotic women that stretched back all the way to antiquity. Through historical role-playing and donning the Roman matron identity she felt entire comfortable in the political arena and equal to the politics of the day.

The success of the movement by the ladies of Philadelphia spurred a number of similar projects. In New Jersey a group of women attempted to duplicate the project and organised a similar fund-raising drive where wives of prominent politicians sought contributions in each county. Eventually Mary Dagworthy transmitted \$15,488 directly to George Washington; however, the wartime inflation was so bad that it only provided 380 pairs of stockings for New Jersey troops.<sup>837</sup> Another smaller donation came from women in Maryland, sent by Mary Digges Lee, the wife of the governor Thomas Sim Lee, and it was again used to buy shirts and stockings for the southern army.<sup>838</sup> Martha Jefferson, on the prompting of Martha Washington, wrote to Sarah Tate Madison encouraging the scheme of 'furnishing my countrywomen an opportunity of proving that they also participate of those virtuous feeling which gave birth to it'.<sup>839</sup> However, the scheme lapsed due to any solid commitment. Although the fundraising scheme was short lived it did provide an ideological justification for women's involvement in politics and facilitated a way in

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<sup>835</sup> There does not appear to be any further reception of the Roman women giving up their jewels story. However, Esther De Berdt Reed's sentiments were widely published and praised throughout the colonies. The article even makes an appearance in a military journal from 1780 where the soldier writes: 'It is with inexpressible satisfaction that we learn the patriotic ladies of Philadelphia and its vicinity, have distinguished themselves by a generous and liberal regard to the sufferings of our soldiery, and have engaged in the benevolent work of raising contributions among themselves, and stimulating others, for the purpose of affording a temporary relief for the soldiers on service in that vicinity. I extract from the newspapers, the sentiments of an "American Woman". Addressed to American ladies relative to the subject, which should be recorded for the honor of the sex'. Quoted in James Thacher, *A Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War, from 1775 to 1783*, (Boston: Richardson & Lord, 1823), p.288.

<sup>836</sup> Carol Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers: Women in the Struggle for America's Independence*, (Sydney: Random House, 2007), p.48.

<sup>837</sup> Mary Dagworthy to George Washington, July 17, 1780, in *The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick, 39 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 19:293.

<sup>838</sup> Berkin, *Revolutionary Mothers*, p.47.

<sup>839</sup> Martha Jefferson to Sarah Tate Madison, August 8, 1789, quoted in Cynthia Kierner, *Martha Jefferson Randolph, Daughter of Monticello: Her Life and Times*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2012), p.30.

which women could easily and successfully engage with the political sphere. This model of political involvement remained the standard throughout the years of the early American republic.

### The Rise of the Roman Matron

The era that was most celebrated for their female heroines in the female worthies was that of ancient Rome. From the fall of Tarquin the Proud, the last king of Rome, until the Roman Empire, Roman matrons were continuously praised for their virtue, courage, and stoical attitudes towards misfortunes. Beginning in the early 1770s some American women whose husbands were deeply involved in the patriot movement came to identify themselves with Roman matrons. Like their husbands who took on Roman identities of great Republican statesmen, women began signing letters, and writing articles or books under Roman pen names, and sitting for portraits dressed as Roman matrons. It seems an odd choice that a woman would chose a classical republican identity since republicanism was a severely masculine ideology that viewed women as the font of political corruption.<sup>840</sup> Like the Old Testament Christian tradition, republicanism was patriarchal and assigned women the role of domestic guardians of morality. When women engaged with classical role-playing they were going against republican ideals that placed women as unfit to be the readers, writers, or subjects of history that dealt primarily with war and politics. However, in not focusing solely on the theory of the ideology, but, rather, on its practice, they did indeed find a ready source of encouragement: the women of the Roman Republic were political heroines who acted independently of their male relations as a political entity and made key contributions to society. In them, the colonial women found inspiring examples of learning, courage, and patriotism, and antiquity offered them direct sanctions for their newfound political roles.

For American colonial women, the Roman matron connotation had very specific characteristics, which were partly shaped by the female worthies that collated a specific version of Roman women. By matron, they seem to have employed the traditional Latin sense of the word *matrona*, meaning a woman who was both married and a mother, but also with an element of dignity, rank, and moral and

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<sup>840</sup> Linda Kerber, "I have don...much to carry on the warr": Women and the shaping of Republican Ideology after the American Revolution', *Toward an Intellectual History of Women*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), pp.100-131, p.111.

sexual virtue. The women who identified with Roman matrons during the war period most often had, as Mercy Otis Warren wrote to Abigail Adams in early 1775, ‘partners of Distinguished Zeal, integrity and Virtue’.<sup>841</sup> By Roman, the definition was not as clear cut; quite often the colonists grouped matrons of ancient Greece, Rome, and even at times Carthage, under the umbrella of ‘Roman matron’. There was, however, a perception in the eighteenth century that Roman women generally enjoyed more liberties than their Greek or Carthaginian counterparts. The lawyer James Wilson voiced a common belief when he argued that classical Greek women were degraded by the rigid sex separation of their society: he observed that the ‘fair sex’ was ‘neglected and despised’.<sup>842</sup> William Alexander similarly wrote in the influential *History of Women* (1779) that ‘it was the Romans who first gave to that sex public liberty, who first properly cultivated their minds, and thought it necessary to do so as to adorn their bodies. Among them were they first fitted for society, and for becoming rational companions; and among them, was it first demonstrated to the world, that they were capable of great actions, and deserved a better fate than to be shut up in seraglios’.<sup>843</sup> In addition to enjoying more liberties, the other major characteristic of a Roman matron was her deep conservatism. Roman women could not vote, hold office, and had limited access to the courts. Daughters were under control of the *paterfamilias* until such time that they married and that power was then transferred to her husband.<sup>844</sup> This deep conservatism helped make the Roman matron image applicable to American women as the debate about natural rights in the 1760s and 1770s did not extend to the female populace.

The English historian Catharine Sawbridge Macaulay (1731-1791) was particularly influential in the popularisation of the Roman matron image in colonial America. Born in England, Macaulay, like most girls of her elite status, had been tutored at home. However, on finding the conventional female accomplishments to be ornamental, she sought further education from her father’s library.<sup>845</sup> While we

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<sup>841</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, Plymouth, January 28 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>842</sup> Wilson, ‘On the Natural Rights of Individuals’, in *Works of James Wilson*, 2:599.

<sup>843</sup> William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London: C. Dilly, 1782). 1:203-204.

<sup>844</sup> In Greece women were not only excluded from public life, but literary and archaeological evidence suggests that they were segregated within their own households. Women largely stayed in the women’s area, the *gynaikonitis*, and men to the *andronitis*.

<sup>845</sup> Connie Titone, *Gender Equality in the Philosophy of Education: Catharine Macaulay's Forgotten Contribution*, (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2004), pp.18-19.

cannot be sure what she read there, when Elizabeth Carter, the English translator of the Greek Stoic philosopher Epictetus, met Macaulay she commented that her conversation included ‘the Spartan laws, the Roman politics, the philosophy of Epicurus, and the wit of St. Evremond’.<sup>846</sup> Macaulay went on to successfully foray into a field exclusively reserved for men: she seemingly transcended the limitations of female ability by writing a history book. Her work *History of England from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line* (8 vols. 1763-1783), while popular with Whigs on both sides of the Atlantic, particularly brought her to the attention of colonial American women.<sup>847</sup> The *History* singled out male and female opponents of King Charles I, patriots comparable with Roman heroes and worthy of American imitation. She lamented how few women, both past and present, had shown true zeal for their country. Having always been an author deeply steeped in republican sympathies and read by Whig rights alongside of *Cato’s Letters*, this work was a highly partisan history about royal absolutism in England that endorsed the execution of Charles I and depicted the years of the English Civil War as a golden era of republican experimentation. Of the role of women, she argued that the royal court was a Oriental style harem where women meddled behind closed doors. She contrasted this to the government of ancient Rome, which, in its most virtuous period, was ‘never influenced by the low cabals and intrigues of loose vicious women, which is ever the consequence of those effeminate manners which prevail in monarchies’.<sup>848</sup> Macaulay’s *History* was a success with radical Whigs in both England and the American colonies, but, more importantly, it introduced the idea that women could learn the love of liberty through reading about antiquity.<sup>849</sup> Macaulay encouraged such a view in her *History*, writing ‘from my early youth I have read with delight those histories that exhibit Liberty in its most exalted state, the annals of the Roman and Greek republics’.<sup>850</sup> Macaulay went on to champion classical education for girls; in her *Letters on Education* (1790), which enjoyed many years of popularity and praise, with several letters being reprinted in various

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<sup>846</sup> Most likely Macaulay’s knowledge of ‘the Spartan laws’ came from a reading of Plutarch’s *Life of Lycurgus*. Although given some of the other items likely to have been in her library she may also have been reading Xenophon and Aristotle. Macaulay would have read Epicurus through the medium of Diogenes Laertius’ *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*.

<sup>847</sup> Titone, *Gender Equality*, p.20.

<sup>848</sup> Catharine Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James I to that of the Brunswick Line*, (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1767), 3:187-188.

<sup>849</sup> Titone, *Gender Equality*, p.20.

<sup>850</sup> Macaulay, *History of England*, 1:vii.

publications, and even being named by Mary Wollstonecraft as being partly responsible for inspiring her to write *A Vindication on the Rights of Women* (1792).<sup>851</sup> In the *Letters* Macaulay prescribed for girls: Plutarch's *Lives*, Livy, Sallust, Tacitus, Epictetus, Seneca, Virgil, and Terrence.<sup>852</sup> She supplemented this with Rollin's *Ancient History*, to be studied in French, Fenelon's *Telemachus*, and Joseph Addison's *Cato* and the *Spectator*.<sup>853</sup> Macaulay ensured that these directions were firmly interpreted as applying to girls: she addressed the letters to a fictional recipient named Hortensia, likely modelled after the Roman woman who had dared to address the forum, and at the end of her work she carefully noted 'But I must tell you, Hortensia, lest you should mistake my plan, that though I have been obliged (in order to avoid confusion) to speak commonly in the masculine character, that the same rules of education in all respects are to be observed to the female as well as to the male children'.<sup>854</sup>

One of the early works of female worthies that included a number of women from antiquity, particularly Roman matrons, was Madeleine de Scudery's *The Female Orators* (1714), which was translated from French to English and reprinted a number of times in the eighteenth century. In her introduction to the 'Fair Sex' Scudery declared that eloquence was a 'bright *Ornament* to All', and presented a series of fictional orations, which she herself had penned, in which various famous historical women delivered inspiring words and showed themselves to be pivotal to great events in antiquity.<sup>855</sup> The publication included an oration of Panthea, the wife of Abradatas, who stabbed herself after her husband died in battle, desiring to be entombed with him rather than live without his presence.<sup>856</sup> Lucretia, the Roman maid whose rape and suicide spawned a revolt against the monarchy and the subsequent establishment of the Roman Republic, was also given a chance to defend her actions. Lucretia offered her defence: 'Lucretia's example will persuade the Roman Ladies never to survive their Glory: I must vindicate the Esteem that they

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<sup>851</sup> Wollstonecraft herself stated that when she first thought of writing the *Vindication* she 'anticipated Mrs. Macaulay's approbation'. Mary Wollstonecraft quoted in Catharine Gardner, 'Catharine Macaulay's "Letters on Education": Odd but Equal', *Hypatia*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Winter, 1998), pp. 118-137, p.118. Titone, *Gender Equality*, p.30.

<sup>852</sup> Catharine Macaulay, *Letters on Education*, (London: C. Dilly, 1790; Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1994), p.129-130.

<sup>853</sup> Macaulay, *Letters on Education*, p.129-130.

<sup>854</sup> Macaulay, *Letters on Education*, p.142.

<sup>855</sup> Madeleine de Scudery, *The Female Orator*, (London: T Tebb, 1714), p.1.

<sup>856</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.77.

always had of my Virtue'.<sup>857</sup> Scudery concluded in favour of Lucretia's actions, declaring: 'never was crime better punish'd; never was an Outrage better revenge'd'.<sup>858</sup> Scudery also included the oration of the Jewish Mariamne, wife of Herod the Great, who famously had her executed for falsely suspecting her to be plotting against him. Knowing that she has been condemned to death, Mariamne's objective in the oration was 'to the end that all who hear me may let Posterity know, that my very Enemies could not, with all their Malice, stain the Virtue of *Mariamne*'.<sup>859</sup> She continued that: 'It is neither fear of Death, nor desire of Life, that makes me speak to day; the one prepares Crowns for me, and the other can give me nothing but Trouble'.<sup>860</sup> Mariamne declared that she 'would await the hour of my agony with such constancy'; constancy, the ability to be unmoved by emotion, being the prime virtue of a Stoic.<sup>861</sup> An oration by Porcia, the wife of Brutus and daughter of Cato, was also included. After determining that she did not wish to outlive her husband or the Roman Republic, Porcia decided to commit suicide, desiring to live-up to the lineage of her family, which included the noble suicides of Cato and Brutus. Porica called on her lineage to explain her right and necessity in committing suicide: 'Porica has too great a Soul to lead a Life unworthy of her Birth, and of the honour of having had for her Father and Husband the two most illustrious of the ancient Romans: As for those who live to day, they are the Remains of *Julius Caesar's* Slaves'.<sup>862</sup> The entirety of Porcia's oration is a condemnation of the current situation at Rome, a lamentation of the tyranny the Roman people found themselves under, and a vindication of Brutus', Cato's, and ultimately Porcia's decision to die rather than submitting to slavery: 'Brutus...had at least the Glory of dying without being a Slave'.<sup>863</sup> Porcia encouraged active emulation of Brutus' and Cato's actions believing that 'true Zeal for Virtue consists in the desire of imitating it; for they who praise virtuous People without tracing them as far as they can, deserve Blame rather than Praise, because they know the Good, and don't follow it'.<sup>864</sup> The language Scudery uses, in particular the repetition of terms such as 'liberty', 'slavery', and 'tyranny',

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<sup>857</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.100.

<sup>858</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.101.

<sup>859</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.18.

<sup>860</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.18.

<sup>861</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.11.

<sup>862</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.61.

<sup>863</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.63.

<sup>864</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.63.

made this story resonate with eighteenth-century colonial American audiences as it was similar language to that of Addison's *Cato*. The radical and determinate language used by Porcia in the oration is indicative of the tenor with which Abigail Adams later used the pen name.

Scudery directly addressed the issue of female suicide in the publication. Scudery firstly included an oration from Sophonisba, the Carthaginian noblewoman who poisoned herself rather than be humiliated in a Roman triumph after the Roman conquest of Carthage. On realising her fate, and fearing humiliation and slavery, Sophonisba revealed her suicidal intentions to Massinissa, declaring: 'He knows not that desire of Liberty is much stronger in me than that of Life; and that for preferring the first, I'm capable of losing the other with Joy'.<sup>865</sup> In talking of the Roman subjugation of Carthage, Sophonisba determines that death is preferable to life under tyranny in language reminiscent of Addison's *Cato*: 'when all things are lost, there remains no more for our choice but Chains or Death; we must break the Cords of Life to escape those of Bondage'.<sup>866</sup> Scudery endorses Sophonisba's decision to die, blaming instead Scipio and Massinissa for their actions and the outcome. However, in the following oration, Zenobia to her Daughters, Scudery questions suicide: 'you may easily see, in this speech and the preceding one, that there are two sides to everything and that through different paths you arrive at the same end – I mean virtue. Sophonisba chooses to die, the valiant Zenobia chooses to live'.<sup>867</sup> Zenobia, the queen of Palmyra and, briefly, Egypt, was defeated by the Romans and taken captive to Rome where she lived out her days in relative luxury, having been given a villa by the Emperor Aurelian. Scudery does not pass judgement on either Sophonisba or Zenobia's actions, but simply shows that there are different and equally valid paths to virtue. Ultimately the reader is left to decide for themselves which action is best; however, a substantial number of the women in the publication chose to die virtuously than live under sufferance. The overall theme of the work encouraged women to bear adversity with virtue, grace, and courage, whereby women should value their character and reputation above their own lives. There was also a strong emphasis on being devoted to one's husband. Scudery's work was empowering to women in the eighteenth century by giving them a historical lineage

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<sup>865</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.40.

<sup>866</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.46.

<sup>867</sup> Scudery, *Female Orator*, p.48.

of women who were highly capable and commanding either through politics, through such illustrious figures as Zenobia, and poetry, such as the poet Sappho, or in addressing the public, given in the example of Agrippina addressing the Roman people. The work was clearly influential in the colonies: Estehr Edwards Burr (1732-1758), the mother of Aaron Burr Jr., wrote to a friend in 1757 that ‘The Female Orator I admire exceedingly. The Carracter and conduct of Emilla is truly Amiable and to be patterned after by all her sex’.<sup>868</sup>

Another work in the American colonies that catalogued exemplary Roman women was William Penn’s *No Cross, No Crown*, printed originally in England in 1669 and first published in American in 1741. Penn’s work was read in the colonies and frequently appears in book seller and library catalogues.<sup>869</sup> Penn aimed to show the ‘Voluptuous Women of the Times...their Reproof in the Character of a brave *Heathen*, and learn, That solid Happiness consists in a *Divine and Holy* Composure of Mind, in a neglect of Wealth and Greatness, and a contempt of all Corporal Pleasures, as more befitting Beasts than Immortal Spirits’.<sup>870</sup> Penn criticised women for ‘giving preference to poor Mortality, and spending their Lives to gratifie the Lusts of a little dirty Flesh and Blood’.<sup>871</sup> Penn held up a number of Roman matrons as models of female virtue and character. The work begins with the story of Lucretia ‘a most Chaste *Roman* Dame’, who was raped by Tarquin the Proud, the last tyrant king of Rome.<sup>872</sup> After the assault Lucretia called for her husband and family, revealed the news, and ‘slew herself in their presence’.<sup>873</sup> Penn praises Lucretia’s sentiment but, as a Christian, was not able to condone the act: ‘I praise the *Vertue*,

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<sup>868</sup> Esther Edward Burr to ‘Fidelia’, May 24, 1757, *The Journal of Esther Edwards Burr, 1754-1757*, ed. Carol F. Karlson and Laurie Crumpacker, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p.262, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.17.

<sup>869</sup> William Penn was an Englishman, early Quaker, and the founder of the province of Pennsylvania in the American colonies in 1681. Prior to arriving in America Penn had written a series of pamphlets, the first entitled *Truth Exalted* (1668), which were against all religions except Quakerism. He was imprisoned in the Tower of London after writing a follow up tract entitled *The Sandy Foundation Shaken* (1668). While imprisoned Penn wrote *No Cross, No Crown* (1669, which was remarkable for its historical analysis and citation of sixty-eight authors whose quotations and commentary he had committed to memory and was able to summon without any reference material at hand. Penn was released after eight months in prison. Seeing conditions deteriorate for Quakers in England, Penn appealed directly to the King, proposing a mass emigration of English Quaker to the American colonies. He subsequently established Pennsylvania, being fundamental to the establishment of the colony. See Hans Fantel, *William Penn: Apostle of Dissent*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1974).

<sup>870</sup> William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, (Boston: Rogers and Fowle, 1774), p.86, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 6041.

<sup>871</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p.87.

<sup>872</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, pp.83-84.

<sup>873</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, pp.83-84.

not the *Act*'.<sup>874</sup> Lucretia's death spurred her husband, father, and friends to institute a successful revolt against Tarquin in Rome. Penn then moves on to Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi, who he declares was esteemed 'not more for the greatness of her *Birth*, than her exceeding *Temperance*'.<sup>875</sup> He particularly praises her for never wearing rich attire but preferring plain clothing, making her 'a good Pattern for the Vain and Wanton Dames of the Age'.<sup>876</sup> Penn then includes Pontia as another Roman matron known for dying instead of living with a compromised virtue. Valerius Maximus tells the story that Pontius Aufidianus '*qui postquam conperit filiae suae virginitatem a paedagogo proditam Fannio Saturnino, non contentus sceleratum seruum adfecisse supplicio etiam ipsam puellam necavit*'.<sup>877</sup> In Valerius Maximus' account, Pontia does not appear to have an active role in the decision to die, but, nonetheless, Penn seems to believe that she decided to commit suicide and praises her for her decision to '*Dye by his [her father's] cruelty, than be polluted by his [the tutor's] Lust*. So she took her Life that he could not violate her *Chastity*'.<sup>878</sup> In Penn's rendering of the story Pontia, like Lucretia, determined that death was better than living with the shame of rape and a polluted virtue, and while Penn censures Lucretia he does not condemn Pontia. Arria is another Roman matron likewise praised by Penn for showing her husband how fearlessly she could die by her own hand, after he is condemned to commit suicide but is fearful in doing so until Arria stabs herself first declaring '*Non dolet, Paete!*'<sup>879</sup> At the same time as her husband was in jail contemplating his death, their son was dying. Arria never told her husband the news and when she visited him she told him that the boy was improving. If emotion threatened to get the better of her she excused herself from the room and would, in Pliny's words, 'give herself to sorrow', then return to her husband with a calm demeanor.<sup>880</sup> The final Roman matron that makes Penn's list of outstanding women is Paulina, Seneca's wife. He praises her for choosing 'to be *the Companion of his Death, as she had been of his Life: And her Veins were cut as well as his*'.<sup>881</sup> Despite

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<sup>874</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, pp.83-84.

<sup>875</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p.84.

<sup>876</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p.84.

<sup>877</sup> Translation: Pontius Aufidianus, 'who, after had had learned that his daughter's virginity had been betrayed by the tutor Fannius Saturninus, was not satisfied with the punishment of the wicked slave also killed the girl'. Valerius Maximus, *Factorum Et Dictorum Memorabilium Libri Novem*, 6.1.3.

<sup>878</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, pp.84-85.

<sup>879</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p.85. Pliny, *Epistles*, 3.16.

<sup>880</sup> Pliny, *Epistles*, 3.16.

<sup>881</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p.86.

her efforts Paulina did not eventually die, but Penn still does not censure her actions but, instead, in words similar to Tacitus', finds her enduring paleness, a reminder that half her life had gone with her husband, a badge of honour.<sup>882</sup> The commonality between all the Roman matrons that Penn praises and encourages as models of emulation is that a number of them did commit self-murder. Just as Cato became popular in the eighteenth century for dying for his principles, Penn saw the honour and nobleness to be found in women dying for liberty or virtue.

Many of Penn's short biographies of Roman women were reprinted in various American almanacs. The story of Paulina made an appearance in *Pennsylvania Town and Country-Man's Almanac* for 1773, under the heading 'remarkable instance of Female Resolution'<sup>883</sup> A short biography praising the devotion she showed to her husband appeared in the 1790 school textbook entitled *Dr Goldsmith's Roman History* and in the 1796 instruction book for women, along with Portia and Arria.<sup>884</sup> Penn's section about Cornelia was reprinted in *Father Abraham's Almanack* for 1777, where Cornelia's story was printed under a section entitled 'a striking instance of Female Wisdom'.<sup>885</sup> James Wilson later praised Cornelia for her virtue and childrearing, noting that 'I have read the letter of Cornelia, the mother of the Gracchi; and it appears that her sons were not so much nourished by the milk, as formed by the style, of their mother'.<sup>886</sup> This particular almanac also featured Penn's story of Theoxena, 'a *Roman Lady...of great virtue*', who found herself in a town inhabited by Macedonians.<sup>887</sup> Fearing that she would 'fall under the power of his [the King of Macedon] soldiers to be defiled, chose to die'.<sup>888</sup> The almanac praises her for 'choosing death, rather than save her life with the hazard of her virtue'.<sup>889</sup> This is also followed by Penn's commendation of Pandora and Protogenia, two Athenian ladies, who 'seeing their country like to be overrun by its enemies, freely offered their lives

<sup>882</sup> Penn, *No Cross, No Crown*, p.86. See Tacitus, *Annales*, XV.63.1-3; 64.2.

<sup>883</sup> *The Pennsylvania town and country-man's almanac*, (Wilmington: John Adams, 1772), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 12581.

<sup>884</sup> Oliver Goldsmith, *Dr Goldsmith's Roman History*, (Philadelphia: Robert Campbell, 1795), pp.196-197, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 28755. 'By a friend to the sex', *Sketches of the history, genius, disposition, accomplishments, employments, customs and importance of the fair sex, in all parts of the world*, (Philadelphia: Samuel Sanson, 1796), pp.23-25, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 31688 or no. 38508.

<sup>885</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack, for the year of our Lord 1777*, (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1776), p.23, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 15062.

<sup>886</sup> Wilson, 'The Study of Law', in *Works of James Wilson*, 1:88-89.

<sup>887</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack, 1777*, p.23. Presumably the source here is Livy, *History of Rome*, 40.4.

<sup>888</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack, 1777*.

<sup>889</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack, 1777*.

in sacrifice to appease the fury of their enemies, for the preservation of their country'.<sup>890</sup> Although it is not Penn's biography, *Father Abraham's Almanack* of 1773 and *Weatherwise's Town and Country Almanack* for 1781 also praised Cornelia for her devotion to her sons' upbringing in sections both entitled 'A Hint to Ladies Concerning the Education of Children'.<sup>891</sup> The Roman matron Arria was also praised as a model of 'female resolution' in the almanacs. In the 1772 edition of *Poor Roger: The American Country Almanack* the story of Arria and her husband Paetus is recounted.<sup>892</sup> The fact that many of these stories appear in almanacs dating from the early 1770s, suggests that there is a correlation between the led-up to the war and the desire for women to take on a self-sacrificing role.

Another popular work that praised the courage, virtue, and self-sacrifices of various Roman matrons was M. Thomas's *Essays on the Character, Manners, and genius of Women in difference ages*. Translated from French into English in 1774 by a Mr. Russell, the book has a section entitled 'of the great and virtuous actions of women in general', which was a summary of Plutarch's 'On the Virtuous Actions of Women'.<sup>893</sup> While Thomas denied that Roman matrons 'possessed that military courage, which Plutarch has praised in certain Greek and barbarian women', he did, however, describe them as taking on a politically active role in Rome that although outside the mainstream political arena, still empowered them as a political entity.<sup>894</sup> He writes that: 'to these austere manners the Roman women joined an enthusiastic love of their country, which discovered itself upon many great occasions'.<sup>895</sup> Thomas then mentions several pertinent moments when Roman women displayed their love for their country: 'on the death of Brutus [Junius], they all clothed themselves in mourning. In the time of Coriolanus they saved the city ...[and] the senate decreed them public thanks. ...The Roman women saved the city a second time, when besieged by Brennus. They gave up all their gold as its ransom. For that instance of their generosity, the senate granted them the honour of having funeral orations

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<sup>890</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack*, 1777.

<sup>891</sup> *Father Abraham's almanack, for the year of our Lord 1773*, (Philadelphia: John Dunlap, 1772), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 13069. *Weatherwise's town and country almanack, for the year of our Lord 1781*, (Boston: John D. M'Dougall and Company, 1880), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 16979.

<sup>892</sup> *Poor Roger: The American Country Almanack*, (New York: Samuel Inslee, and Anthony Car, 1771), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 12132.

<sup>893</sup> M. Antoine Léonard Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women in different ages*, (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1774), p.14, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 13650.

<sup>894</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, p.35.

<sup>895</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, p.36.

pronounced from the rostrum, on common with patriots and heroes'.<sup>896</sup> Thomas goes on to devote a section of the work to Stoicism. He praises the philosophy, writing that 'it produced, indeed, in that city the most amazing contrasts: - the most exalted courage was often found by the side of the most debasing cowardice'.<sup>897</sup> He then praises certain Roman women who were 'nursed in this sect', listing first of all Portia, the daughter of Cato, and the wife of Brutus. He writes that she was 'raised to the very summit of their ideas. In the conspiracy against Caesar, she shewed herself worthy to be associated with the first of humankind, and trusted with the fate of empires. After the battle of Philippi, she would neither survive liberty nor Brutus, but died with the bold intrepidity of Cato'.<sup>898</sup> Portia's suicide was quite drastic and memorable: contemporary sources reported that she died by swallowing hot coals.<sup>899</sup> The colonists would have been aware of this as the story was repeated in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and in John Adams of Philadelphia's popular textbook *The Flowers of Ancient History*.<sup>900</sup> Thereby, in praising Portia's death, Thomas was also supporting the method in which she took her life. Thomas goes on to praise Arria who, 'when her husband hesitated on killing himself, took the dagger and pierced her own breast, and delivered to him the dagger with a smile'.<sup>901</sup> Paulinia, the wife of Seneca, who attempted suicide at the same time as her husband, is the last of Thomas' list of Stoic women, and he concludes that 'during the few year which she [Paulina] survived him, "bore in her countenance" says Tacitus, "the honourable testimony of her love, a PALENESS which proved that part of her blood had sympathetically issued with the blood of her spouse'.<sup>902</sup>

J.G.A. Pocock asks in *Barbarism and Religion* why the female colonists 'adopted so primarily masculine a central value as that of classical citizenship', but the answer was, in part, that Roman women, who were educated, political by nature, and of a high class, resonated with American women and showed them how to participate in republican political life.<sup>903</sup> What Pocock failed to realise was that this

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<sup>896</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, p.36.

<sup>897</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, p.36.

<sup>898</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, p.46.

<sup>899</sup> Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.17.

<sup>900</sup> John Adams, *The Flowers of Ancient History*, (Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson and Co., 1795), p.190, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 28149.

<sup>901</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, pp. 46-47.

<sup>902</sup> Thomas, *Essay on the character, manners, and genius of women*, p.47.

<sup>903</sup> JGA Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion: Narratives of Civil Government*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), vol. 2:257.

was the only manner in which women could be politically engaged. Firstly, the idea of the Roman matron was, as Caroline Winterer has described, ‘an embryonic political language that ultimately would help to connect women to a republican polity that found few ways to include them in the rituals of citizenship’.<sup>904</sup> Women had long read about great women from history, but the Roman matron resonated immediately with their newfound social and political situation. The Roman matron image allowed women to enter into the elite male fiction of which the classical past was the foundation and to engage in a political dialogue that they had previously been largely excluded from.<sup>905</sup> Secondly, although the rhetoric of the eighteenth century slowly began to erode the traditional patriarchal family structures, the reality was that elite men’s level of education, and therefore their exposure to classical literature, far outpaced that of their wives. While women from elite families did have some knowledge of the heroic women of republics of antiquity, the image of the Roman matron built a fragile bridge across the classical divide of eighteenth-century marriages. Especially during the long separations husbands and wives generally endured during the wartime years, the Roman matron allowed women to ‘join men of their social rank in a commonality of cause’.<sup>906</sup> Winterer has noted that ‘the Roman matron now became a new voice for elite women, a secular link to political revolution and a domestic code shared with men deeply involved in the patriot cause’.<sup>907</sup> Thirdly, the conservatism inherent to the Roman matron image helped elite American women support a political revolution that was neither a social nor a domestic revolution. Finally, and most importantly, the Roman matrons most often recommended as role models for eighteenth-century American colonial women were those Roman heroines who had demonstrated stoic resolve and their ability to sacrifice, often their own lives, for liberty and virtue. Rather than embracing apolitical models of virtue and courage, American women were given Roman matrons such as Portia, Arria, and Paulina, all who actively sought death rather than living under tyranny. This was a radical and alien choice that some American patriots

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<sup>904</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.41.

<sup>905</sup> Winterer has also argued that in order to become the *novus ordo seclorum*, a new order of the ages, women needed to be Roman matrons just as men needed to be the Roman soldiers and senators. However, this phrase was not used amongst the colonists until 1782 when it was chosen as the motto of the Continental Congress. Applying this phrase to what was happening in the early 1770s is problematic. Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.41.

<sup>906</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.42.

<sup>907</sup> Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.42.

thrived on, while others found the demands too high to meet. The colonial women's choice of Roman matrons matched the political rhetoric that their male relatives espoused during the war. Just as Cato was held up for men to aspire towards, women were encouraged to emulate those Roman matrons who had shown exemplary courage, virtue, loyalty, and stoic resolve. American female colonists were able to participate in the same Catonian rhetoric and heroics that their male counterparts espoused and used it to express the same level of dedication to liberty. In showing their devotion to liberty, colonial women mirrored the male patriot's fatalistic approach to the war; they chose role models that offered instances of virtuous death rather than victorious and optimistic *exempla*.

### Roman Matrons in Action

Since women were excluded from the traditional political arenas – the assembly, the pulpit, and the battlefield – they depended more heavily than men on literary networks to display their political character. Women sometime published political works invoking women's history, they published essays under classical pseudonyms, but most frequently women exploited the political possibilities of genuine epistolary exchange. Through adopting classical pen names, colonial American women expressed their willingness to sacrifice for the patriot cause and their stoical resolve in doing so. Phillips Hicks has stated that 'these women saw political events through the lens of Roman history and chose to cope with the demands of the war by associating themselves with Roman worthies. Their classical identities put a human face on the forbidding republican philosophy they professed as their political creed'.<sup>908</sup> The pen names used reveals that women frequently chose to adopt classical names of women who had, like Cato, committed suicide in order to preserve their virtue and escape tyranny.

Catharine Macaulay was delighted when a patriotic Bostonian began writing to her under the name 'Sophronia' in 1769.<sup>909</sup> Little is known of the identity of this woman, but her pen name, Sophronia, indicates her stoic dedication to the patriot cause. From antiquity, Sophronia was a Roman matron of the early fourth century, who was kidnapped by the tyrant Emperor Maxentius and decided to commit suicide

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<sup>908</sup> Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', p.289.

<sup>909</sup> Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', pp.276-77.

rather than be raped by him.<sup>910</sup> While the analogy is not as clear-cut as Cato's death at Utica, the elements are still the same: preferring death to living under tyranny and compromising one's virtue. Sophronia does not commonly appear in the literature of the era, with the story first seeming to appear in the almanacs after 1769, so the writer may have derived the name straight from the classical text. An alternative, however, could be that the name was derived from an almanac story about a girl named Sophronia who preferred learning Greek to getting married. The choice of Sophronia as a pen name in this context could have been in support of Macaulay's championing of education equality. Macaulay herself was very supportive of the American patriot movement, writing to James Warren in 1769 'I beg leave to assure you that every partisan of liberty in this Island sympathises with their American Brethren: have a strong sense of their Virtues and a tender feeling for their sufferings, and that there is none among us in whom such a disposition is stronger than in myself'.<sup>911</sup>

The correspondence between Oliver Wolcott Sr. and his wife Laura Collins Wolcott, shows how the Roman matron image was used as a common language through which to discuss the political circumstances. In May 1776 Wolcott wrote to his wife when he was in Philadelphia serving as a delegate from Connecticut to the Continental Congress. Over the following decade he was more often absent from home than with his family, leading militia brigades against the British, signing the Declaration of Independence, and later supporting the ratification of the Constitution. With British troops on the move and Laura in Connecticut running the farm and business, as well as raising their four children, Oliver sought to calm his own or her anxieties: 'Possess your own mind in Peace – Fortitude not only enables us to bear Evils, but prevents oftentimes those which would otherwise befall us – The Roman and Grecian matrons not only bore with magnanimity the Suspensions of Fortune, but various kinds of adversity, with amazing Constancy, an America lady instructed in sublimer Principles I hope will never be outdone by any of these illustrious Examples if she should be called to the Exercise of the greatest female

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<sup>910</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 8.14.16-17. Rufinus gives her name as Sophronia.

<sup>911</sup> Catharine Macaulay to James Otis, London, April 27, 1769, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

heroism'.<sup>912</sup> Laura Wolcott's response to her husband has been lost, but we know that she was dedicated enough to the patriot cause to help melt down an equestrian statue of George III and make it into lead cartridges for the Continental army. Later, in 1779, Ralph Earl immortalised her in a painting where the background includes a classical column and Laura's arm rests on a Roman architectural slab.

In contrast, those women whom themselves or their husbands did not overtly desire to join the patriot cause did not engage with the Roman matron identity. Annis Boudinot Stockton was a well-educated lady, having been educated by her brother's tutor. At a relatively young age she began writing neoclassical poems and circulating them amongst her accomplished literary circle of men and women.<sup>913</sup> When she married Richard Stockton in 1757 or 1758, she remodelled the family's estate gardens after her poetic idol Alexander Pope's famous grounds at Twickenham.<sup>914</sup> Annis Stockton was also a fan of Catharine Macaulay; she wrote in a poem around the time of Macaulay's visit to the American colonies that 'the Muse salutes thee as the female's pride'.<sup>915</sup> Given her classical education and active interest in antiquity, Stockton was in an ideal position to view the war in classical terms. Throughout the war she wrote poems praising the military victories of Washington and comparing him to ancient Greek and Roman heroes, in particular Fabius, a nickname that became popular after the poem was published in 1787, who was a Roman general reputed for being skilful and innovative, as well as being willing to relinquish the title of dictator.<sup>916</sup> However, Stockton wrote under the pseudonym Emelia, a name that was not obviously connected to the republican female worthies that were touted as popular and used by the likes of Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren, and she never assumed a classical pen name. Stockton's lack of classical identity was likely because of two reasons: firstly, Stockton and her husband lived in New Jersey, which unlike Massachusetts, was not a center for early radicalism, furthermore, Stockton's husband Richard was a reluctant patriot, hoping for

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<sup>912</sup> Oliver Wolcott, Sr. to Laura Wolcott, May 11, 1776, *Oliver Sr. Papers*, (Sub-series 1.ii, Folder 1.14), Connecticut Historical Society, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.40.

<sup>913</sup> Annis Boudinot Stockton, 'On Seeing Mrs Macaulay Graham', in *Only for the Eye of a Friend: The Poems of Annis Boudinot Stockton*, ed. Carla Mulford, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995), p.131.

<sup>914</sup> Pope had poured the profits from the sale of his *Iliad* into establishing a lush arcadia dotted with classical statuary, temples, and grottos.

<sup>915</sup> Stockton, 'On Seeing Mrs Macaulay Graham', p.131.

<sup>916</sup> Stockton, 'On Seeing Mrs Macaulay Graham', p.152-153.

moderation and reconciliation, and only joined the cause comparatively late in the piece.

Stockton's contemporary Hannah Griffiths was a likewise well-educated and poetic woman. While there is scant evidence for her actual education, as a Quaker in the Philadelphia area she would have been privilege to the sect's emphasis on spiritual equality of men and women, making the communities more receptive to female education.<sup>917</sup> Throughout her life Griffiths wrote poetry with references to classical antiquity under the neoclassical pseudonym of 'Fidelia'.<sup>918</sup> In addition, she also greatly admired Elizabeth Carter, the translator of Epictetus, who like Griffiths never married, and wrote a poem praising her virtue.<sup>919</sup> In the lead up to the outbreak of hostilities between the colonies and Britain, Griffiths viewed the events in strictly classical terms. She invoked the nine muses of Greek history to praise William Pitt, the British politician, for opposing the Stamp Act and in a 1773 poem entitled 'Beware the Ides of March' she warned the British Caesar to mind the Marcus Brutus of the colonies who opposed the Tea Act of 1773.<sup>920</sup> Like Stockton, however, Griffiths never adopted a classical pseudonym.<sup>921</sup> Griffiths clearly viewed the American political situation through the lens of Roman history and was able to engage with politics through the use of the Roman narrative, but, however, like Stockton she did not engage on a personal level with a substantial classical identity. Perhaps, being unmarried, she did not feel she fitted the mould of a Roman matron.

### *Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren*

The two most famous female users of classical pen names during the wartime period were Abigail Adams and Mercy Otis Warren.<sup>922</sup> Adams and Warren had been friends

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<sup>917</sup> 'By the Same on reading Eliza Carters Poems', *Milcah Martha Moore's Book: A Commonplace Book from Revolutionary America*, eds. Catherine La Courey Blecki and Karen A. Wulf, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), pp.11-13, quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.66.

<sup>918</sup> 'By the Same on reading Eliza Carters Poems', quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.66.

<sup>919</sup> 'By the Same on reading Eliza Carters Poems', quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.66.

<sup>920</sup> 'By the Same on reading Eliza Carters Poems', quoted in Winterer, *Mirror of Antiquity*, p.66.

<sup>921</sup> Griffiths did later address two letters about her decision to remain unmarried to a correspondent with the pen name 'Sophronia'. This was either a reference to Sophronia, the Roman matron who had committed suicide rather than be raped by the Roman Emperor Maxentius, or, more likely, a woman who appeared in almanac stories who was said to 'hate men' and 'love Greek' so much so that she never married.

<sup>922</sup> For a biography of Warren see Rosemarie Zagari, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution*, (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 1995) and Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995). For a biography of Abigail Adams see Edith Belle Gelles, *Abigail Adams: A Writing Life*, (New York: Routledge, 2002) and Edith Belle Gelles, *Portia: The World of Abigail Adams*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

since the spring of 1773 when Abigail had accompanied John Adams to Plymouth to attend a court session and the two had visited James and Mercy Otis Warren. Soon after the visit, Mercy initiated contact with Abigail, which flattered the latter as, at the age of twenty-nine, she was sixteen years Mercy's junior. The two women both possessed sharp intellects and almost identical concerns about female circumstances; it was to Mercy that Abigail revealed her most feminine and feminist thoughts. This marked the beginning of a long and fulfilling friendship between the two. By 1774 their spouses' commitment to the patriot movement had become more demanding and Adams and Warren were expected to pledge greater political involvement and personal sacrifice to the cause. Both women were already highly politicised through the close involvement of their husbands in the politics of the era and their friendship grew increasingly closer as they simultaneously bore the increasing demands of the patriot movement. It was from this tense period that the women developed their pen names, and used them engage in politics.

Abigail Smith's use of alternative classical identities began as a teenager when her circle of girlfriends employed pen names. Despite her limited education and complete lack of any formal classical training, Abigail and her friends were clearly aware and well versed in the eighteenth-century practice of employing classical phrases and pseudonyms.<sup>923</sup> Rollin's *Ancient History*, which Abigail thoroughly enjoyed reading, was just the type of work that cultivated this easy familiarity with antiquity.<sup>924</sup> She originally chose the pen name Diana, the virginal Roman goddess of the hunt and protector of children, and her friends responded to her letters under the names Calliope, Silvia, Myra, and Aspasia, a range of innocuous classical names having poetical or muse connotations, except Aspasia, who was famous for her involvement with the Athenian statesmen Pericles.<sup>925</sup> Diana was an apolitical choice, especially compared to the later pen names she adopted in 1763 and 1764 while courting John Adams, such as Aurelia, who, while being the mother of the dictator

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<sup>923</sup> We know a fair amount of Abigail's early education as she comments about it in 1817: 'my early education did not partake of the abundant opportunities which the present days offer, and which even our common country schools now afford. I never was sent to any school. ...Female education, in the best families, went no further than writing and arithmetic; in some few and rare instances, music and dancing'. Charles Francis Adams, *Familiar Letters of John Adams and His Wife Abigail Adams, during the Revolution*, (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1876), p.xi.

<sup>924</sup> For Abigail's enjoyment of Rollin's see Abigail Adams to John Adams - Braintree, August 19, 1774, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>925</sup> Lynne Withey, *Dearest Friend: A Life of Abigail Adams*, (New York: Free Press, 1981), p.12. For Aspasia see Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 523-527 and Plutarch, *Pericles*, 24-25.

Caesar, was praised by Tacitus as the ideal Roman matron, and her use of Marcia, possibly taken from the fictional Cato's daughter that Addison created, and Paulina, Seneca's wife who tried to commit suicide alongside her husband.<sup>926</sup> When John and Abigail married, they continued to use the flexible language of classical cognomens and phrases to discuss private, marital matters, express growing affection for each other, and deal with the constraints of the public service. But it was through the encouragement of John, who was himself a consummate user of classical pseudonyms, usually choosing to embody great law-givers from antiquity through adopting the names Lysander, Cicero, Lycurgus, and Solon, that Abigail transformed her usage of classical entities from the apolitical Diana to the politically savvy Portia.<sup>927</sup>

Since Adams often made analogies between Britain's imperial crisis and the Ides of March for Caesar in her letters, it seems pretty clear that her choice of Portia refers to the Roman matron as opposed to the heroine Portia found in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*.<sup>928</sup> In Roman Republican history, Portia was the daughter of Cato the Younger and the wife of Brutus, one of the assassins of Julius Caesar. Portia was devoted to Brutus in their marriage, but he declined to confide in her, fearing that she, as a woman, was prone to gossip and unable to remain discreet. To prove that she would not reveal anything, even under torture, Portia inflicted a wound upon herself, which gained Brutus' trust in her and she became his political and personal confidante. He later said of her that 'though the natural weakness of her body hinders her from doing what only the strength of men can perform, she has a mind as valiant and as active for the good of her country as the best of us'.<sup>929</sup> Portia is most remembered for her gruesome suicide that saw her commit suicide by swallowing hot coals. After the Battle of Philippi (42BCE), which marked the end of the republican resistance to Caesar, Portia's husband Brutus committed suicide, and

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<sup>926</sup> Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, xxviii.

<sup>927</sup> There were two possible meanings to John Adams' adoption of Lysander. Firstly, there was Lysander the fifth century Spartan general who commanded the Spartan fleet in the Hellespont, defeating the Athenians. The following year, he was able to force the Athenians to capitulate, bringing the Peloponnesian War to an end, and he organised the dominion of Sparta over Greece in the last decade of his life. On the other hand, Lysander also has the meaning of 'a freer of men'. Given that Adams used the pen name early in his courtship with Abigail, he could have been referring to himself as a Lysander the general to emphasize his masculinity, or, alternatively, given that Adams was a lawyer and not inclined to pursue military accomplishments in the field, it is also possible that the choice of Lysander was a reference to his legal ambitions.

<sup>928</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree (?), July 5, 1775 Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>929</sup> Plutarch, *Marcus Brutus*, 23.6.

not desiring to live without either Brutus or liberty, Portia followed his example. It is likely that Abigail was introduced to Portia from Rollin's *Ancient History*, although a sketch of her character may have been obtained from Thomas's *Essays* or Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* where Portia is presented as intelligent, loving, determined in her devotion, and her suicide by swallowing hot coals is also included. The details of Portia's suicide was not tamed nor removed from modern accounts; in John Adams's *The Flowers of Ancient History* he informs the reader that Portia 'killed herself by eating hot burning coals'.<sup>930</sup> Likewise, Portia's suicide was immortalised twice in the seventeenth century; by Pierre Mignard in the painting *The suicide of Porcia* depicting the Roman matron looking upward to heaven as she tongs coals out of the fire, and a print by Jacques Bellange entitled *Portia, Wife of Brutus, Committing Suicide by Swallowing Live Coals*. Like Cato, Portia found death to be preferable than living under a tyrannical regime, and she was revered by her peers and later writers in enacting this choice. In choosing 'Portia' as a pen name, Abigail was channelling not just Portia's reputed intelligence and marital devotion, but also her radical suicide and devotion to liberty.

Abigail first signed her name 'Portia' in a letter to John on May 4, 1775; the first letter to him since he had left Braintree to serve in the Second Continental Congress in Philadelphia.<sup>931</sup> For the next nine years, until April 12, 1784, when the hardest years of the war were behind them, Abigail signed her name as 'Portia'. Abigail was most faithful in her usage of the pen name Portia with her husband, he being the first, last, and most frequent recipient of letters from Portia; she was most dedicated in using the name in the periods May to October 1775 and then again from 1780-1783.<sup>932</sup> Her second favourite correspondent was Mercy Otis Warren and she used her pen name more devotedly with her than with John in the period 1775-1780, suggesting that the self-sacrificing image resonated more with a female correspondent than a male. John was so delighted by her pen identity that he kept using it long after she ceased signing with it. Despite encouraging Abigail's 'Portia' identity, John never signed any of his letters to her or anyone else as 'Brutus'. Given the limited availability of political expression for women, pen names was the one area in which they could persistently espouse their political beliefs and

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<sup>930</sup> Adams, *Flowers of Ancient History*, p.201.

<sup>931</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, Braintree, May 4, 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>932</sup> For all the specific period and dates of letters see Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', p.282, f.21.

commitments, making it unsurprising that Abigail used more politically provocative pen names than John. John was probably reluctant to identify himself as an assassin, even a republican one bringing down the tyrant Caesar. He also had no need to prove or cultivate his own political commitments to the patriot movement since he was visibly active in the cause, whereas for Abigail her correspondence was the only forum in which she could develop a classical, political persona and be a political entity. By the time she signed her last letter as Portia on April 12, 1784, Adams had used the pen name on numerous occasions and to a coterie of people, including: Eunice Paine, both James and Mercy Otis Warren, John Thaxter, James Lovell, Hannah Quincy Lincoln Storer, Elbridge Gerry, and Charles Storer.<sup>933</sup> Quite often these correspondents addressed their letters to Portia or otherwise encouraged her in her classical identity.<sup>934</sup>

The character of Portia resonated with Adams in several ways. Portia embodied Abigail's personal and spousal identity: that of a wife and mother left to run the family home while her husband, a leading and absent patriot, fought the onslaught of tyranny. Also like Portia, Adams was privileged to her husband's political secrets and acted as his sounding board, confidante, and advisor. Edith Gelles has offered an excellent analysis of the pen name: 'The imagery of wisdom, erudition, and humanity implicit in Portia satisfied her self-image...Abigail's model was the obscure wife of a great politician, above all, a domestic figure—a Roman wife'.<sup>935</sup> What Gelles has missed however, was that Portia embodied the selflessness and sacrificial devotion to liberty and one's country that Abigail aspired to emulate. Abigail had long understood the necessity of the conflict with Britain, writing to Mercy in February 1775: 'I would not have my friend imagine that with all my fears and apprehension, I would give up one Iota of our rights and privileges...we cannot be happy without being free, ...we cannot be free without being secure in our property, ...we cannot be secure in our property if without out consents others may by right take it away. —We know too well the blessings of freedom, to tamely resign it'.<sup>936</sup> When the battle of Lexington and Concord took place in April, 1775, Adams was inspired by Mercy's letter discussing Aria and Portia as models of suicide and

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<sup>933</sup> For the dates of letters at these various correspondents see Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', p.282, f.21.

<sup>934</sup> Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', p.282.

<sup>935</sup> Gelles, *Portia*, xviii, p.31, p.47. See also Gelles, *Abigail Adams*, p.47.

<sup>936</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, February 3[?], 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 345.

wishing to put forth a stoical front where her friend failed, and Abigail picked up her pen and wrote to her husband ensuring him that she had ‘endeavored to be very insensible and heroic’ under the new circumstances in which she found herself.<sup>937</sup> Thus, on assuring John that she would be sensible and selfless, the pen name ‘Portia’, embodying the ideals of Stoicism, was far more applicable to Abigail’s political and personal circumstances than ‘Diana’.

Regardless of espousing the necessity for war with Britain, Abigail still endured long and often painful separations from her husband but invoked the sacrificial stoical resolve of Portia in order to suffer them. In June 1775 Abigail wrote to John that it was only through duty to country that she had convinced herself to part with him, despite her fears for his health and the family’s safety.<sup>938</sup> Barely a month later she signed herself as ‘Portia’ in a letter of similar sentiment to Mercy: ‘My Friend [John Adams] will leave me tomorrow morning and will have a much more agreeable journey for the rain. I find I am obliged to summon all my patriotism to feel willing to part with him again. You will readily believe me when I say that I make no small sacrifice to the publick’.<sup>939</sup> A few months later, Abigail again wrote to Mercy declaring to her friend: ‘I think I make a greater Sacrifice to the publick than I could by Gold and Silver, had I it to bestow. Does not Marcia join in this sentiment with her –Portia’.<sup>940</sup> In 1776 Abigail again wrote to John justifying another long and ‘painfull separation’ by using republican ideology: ‘Our country is as it were a secondary God, and the First and greatest parent. It is to be preferred to Parents, Wives, Children, Friends, and all thing the Gods only excepted’.<sup>941</sup>

Abigail’s closest friend, Mercy, also encouraged Abigail to see the necessity and patriotism in sacrificing so much for the country, writing in 1779 when John had just returned from a diplomatic visit to Europe: ‘What are the Little streams of social affection, the Heart felt pleasure of the Wife, the parent and the Friend, who would

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<sup>937</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, May 4, 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>938</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, June 16[?], 1775, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 344.

<sup>939</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, August 27, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>940</sup> Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, November 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>941</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, May 7, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 343.

not sacrifice without a sign these smaller Considerations when *pro bono publico* Requires'.<sup>942</sup> In 1782 when Mercy herself struggled with the self-sacrificial demands of the war and James Warren refused office again Abigail was not as complimentary, writing scathingly to John that James was under the influence of 'His Lady' and questioned 'Who is there left that will sacrifice as others have done? Portia I think stands alone, alone alas!'<sup>943</sup> John admired his wife and her stoical attitude; he wrote to James Warren that 'I have ever been convinced that Politicks and War, have in every Age been influenced, and in many, guided and controuled by [women]...But if I were of opinion that it was best for a general Rule that the fair should be excused from the arduous Cares of War and State; I should certainly think that Marcia and Portia, ought to be Exceptions, because I have ever ascribed to those Ladies, a Share and no Small one neither, in the Conduct of our American Affairs'.<sup>944</sup> By 1783, when the war over Abigail no longer saw the necessity of adopting the self-sacrificing Roman matron persona and with John in a diplomatic posting in Europe she underscored her refusal to join him by signing herself as 'A. Adams' for the second time in eight and a half years.<sup>945</sup> She signed herself as 'Portia' for the last time April 12, 1784 in one of her last letters before departing to Europe to join her husband underscoring the sacrifices she was again making for her country in leaving her home and family.

Only once did Abigail go completely against the Roman matron identity that her Portia-persona embodied. In her famous letter of March 31, 1776, she wrote to her husband at the continental congress in Philadelphia and implored him to 'remember the ladies' and grant constitutional rights and legal protections to women.<sup>946</sup> Abigail boldly wrote to John: 'Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the Husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Ladies we are determined to foment a

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<sup>942</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, August 6, 1779, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>943</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, November 25, 1782, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 359.

<sup>944</sup> John Adams to James Warren, September 26, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>945</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, November 13, 1782, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 359.

<sup>946</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31 - April 5, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 345.

Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation'.<sup>947</sup> Besides desiring equality of the sexes, Abigail asked this because she felt that being excluded from political office, incapable of partaking in political debate and voting, and unable to prove themselves loyal to the country through military service, women were less likely to form deep ties to their country. On the brink of declaring independence and heading into a long war with Britain, Abigail felt it not only necessary for women to forge a deep patriotism with the country but also for them to feel that their stoical sacrifices were not in vain. It was difficult to fight for liberty and equality of rights when the disempowerment of women was so stark a contrast. John ignored Abigail's cries for equality writing in response that he 'cannot but laugh' at the notion, and that Men would not 'repeal' their own dominance. Frustrated with John, Abigail turned her pen to Mercy only to be disappointed there as well. Mercy apparently preferred more traditional roles for women and urged Adams to stay focused on the Roman matrons, writing: 'why should not the same Heroic Virtue, the same Fortitude, patience and Resolution, that Crowns the memory of the ancient Matron, Adorn the Character of Each modern Fair who Adopts the signature of Portia. Surely Rome had not severer trials than America, nor was Cesar...more to be Dreaded than George the 3d'.<sup>948</sup> Abigail revisited this topic later in a letter to John dated June 17, 1782 where she wrote: 'patriotism in the female sex is the most disinterested of all virtues. Excluded from honours and from offices, we cannot attach ourselves to the State of Government from having held a place of Eminence. Even in freest countrys our property is subject to the control and disposal of our partners, to whom the Laws have given a sovereign Authority. Deprived of a voice in Legislation, obliged to submit to those Laws which are

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<sup>947</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, March 31, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 345. The idea of women being exempt from laws into which they had no input had classical precedents in women such as Lysistrata and Hortensia, Lysistrata was the heroine of a play of the same name by the Greek playwright Aristophanes. *Lysistrata* is a comic account of her extraordinary mission to end The Peloponnesian War, by persuading the women of Greece to withhold sexual privileges from their husbands and lovers as a means of forcing the men to negotiate peace. The women want to exercise some power in this situation where they had no political influence of the peace negotiations. Hortensia was the daughter of a Roman consul, who was chosen as the elite Roman women to represent their grievances to the triumvirs when a tax targeting the 1400 wealthiest Roman women was introduced to help fund a war they had no control over. Hortensia's oration was quite successful and was later praised by Appian. Appian *The Civil Wars*, IV, 34. However, since Aristophanes' plays and the story of Hortensia do not seem to be particularly popular during this period, it is much more likely that Abigail was inspired by more contemporary philosophy.

<sup>948</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, March 1, 1777, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

imposed upon us, is it not sufficient to make us indifferance to the publick welfare? Yet all History and every age exhibit Instances of patriotic virtue in the female Sex; which considering our situation equals the most Heroick'.<sup>949</sup> Despite these difficulties later in 1782 Abigail wrote to John declaring that 'all History and every age exhibit Instances of patriotic virtue in the female sex'.<sup>950</sup> She concluded that: 'I will take praise to myself. I feel that it is my due, for having scarified so large a portion of my peace and happiness to promote the welfare of my country'.<sup>951</sup>

Abigail's most frequent female correspondent and closest friend, Mercy Otis Warren, also donned a classical Roman identity. Although Mercy received no formal education, she did, however, study with the Reverend Jonathan Russell while he tutored her brothers in preparation for Harvard College.<sup>952</sup> Mercy was clearly at home with Latin and Greek, writing to her friend Hannah Winthrop in 1769 commenting on the death of a mutual friend Mrs Waldo 'the physicians call the disorder an *opidthiotonos*, a hard word for ladies but you remember I live within the sound of Greek'.<sup>953</sup> In March 1775 Mercy debuted her pen name by signing herself as 'Marcia' in a letter to her husband James Warren. Unlike Abigail's husband, Warren did not encourage the usage of a Roman pseudonym and never acknowledged her pen name by using it to address her. He later blamed his wife's bouts of depression on her 'mischievous' imagination and did not wish to encourage it any further.<sup>954</sup> After this initial letter, Warren resumed signing herself 'M. Warren' or 'Mercy Warren' until July when she chose to debut another Roman pseudonym: Cornelia. As a highly intelligent author and lecturer, as well as the mother of five sons, the pseudonym Cornelia seemed more fitting for Mercy. Cornelia was also renowned for devoting herself to her children's education and encouraging them to be politically active; two of her sons went on to champion the cause of the people and were killed

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<sup>949</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, June 17, 1782, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 357.

<sup>950</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, June 17, 1782, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 357.

<sup>951</sup> Abigail Adams to John Adams, June 17, 1782, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 357.

<sup>952</sup> Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren*, p.2.

<sup>953</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, October, 1768, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>954</sup> In response to Mercy's first letter as 'Marcia', James tried calming his wife down: James Warren to Mercy Otis Warren, April 6, May 18, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

as a result.<sup>955</sup> However, five weeks later Warren reverted to ‘Marcia’, possibly on account of Abigail having signed herself as ‘Portia’ for the first time on August 27 effectively asking her to reciprocate. Warren incarnated herself as ‘Marcia’ to John Adams and a week later, September 11, 1775, and penned her first letter to Abigail under the classical pseudonym. Warren was always less comfortable with her classical identity than Adams: she used it for a shorter duration, less consistently, and with a smaller group of people.<sup>956</sup> Over the years Warren used her pen name with James Warren, John Adams, but most faithfully with Abigail Adams with whom she felt at ease to nurture and develop her classical identity.

Warren’s choice of classical pseudonym was not as clear or uncomplicated as Abigail’s use of Portia since a number of Marcia’s existed in the ancient world. One possible source for the name Marcia was the addressee of Seneca’s work on stoical consolation. This Marcia was a model of ancient virtue who preserved the historical writings of her father Aulus Cremutius Cordus, who was persecuted for his work on the republican heroes Brutus and Cassius.<sup>957</sup> Marcia could also have been the wife of Cato the Younger, whom Plutarch tells us was ‘a woman of reputed excellence’.<sup>958</sup> Although Marcia once set up a political alliance for her husband, she is best remembered for falling victim to what Julius Caesar termed ‘wife trafficking’: Cato divorced Marcia, arranged for her to be married to a friend, and upon the death of the friend remarried Marcia.<sup>959</sup> Most likely, however, Warren styled herself on the fictional Marcia from Addison’s tragedy *Cato*. Like Adams, Warren read a great deal of ancient history in translation, but her knowledge of Addison’s play was intimate.<sup>960</sup> Mercy based three of her later plays on the literary tradition that Addison had established and emulated his work in both style, content, and republican and patriotic values. In the play, Addison gives Cato a fictional daughter

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<sup>955</sup> Suzanne Dixon, *Cornelia: Mother of the Gracchi*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp.1-2.

<sup>956</sup> Warren's use of Marcia was limited to her husband, the Adamses, her son Winslow, and Hannah Quincy Lincoln Storer.

<sup>957</sup> Seneca, *De Consolatione ad Marciam*.

<sup>958</sup> Plutarch, *Cato Minor*, 25.

<sup>959</sup> Quintus Hortensius, an admirer and friend of Cato, recently widowed desired to marry Cato’s daughter Porcia, in order to obtain heirs. Cato objected to the marriage since Porcia was already engaged and there was a significant age difference between her and Hortensius. Cato suggested, on the other hand, that he marry his own wife Marcia. Cato promptly divorced Marcia, she married Hortensius, and after Hortensius’ death Cato remarried Marcia, who was then a wealthy widow. Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Younger*, 25.2-5.

<sup>960</sup> For her reading and education, see Lester H. Cohen, ed. Foreword and Editor’s Note, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*, by Mercy Otis Warren (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1988), 1: xviii, xxxiii-xxx.

named Marcia who is praised for being virtuous like her father and consistently ‘tow’rs above her sex’ in terms of her devotion to Republican Rome, her stoic resolve, and moral nature.<sup>961</sup> Juba, her love interest, praises her republican qualities but notes that she retains her femininity: ‘Cato’s soul/Shines out in everything she acts or speaks,/While winning mildness and attractive smiles/Dwell in her looks, and with becoming grace/Soften the rigour of her father’s virtues’.<sup>962</sup> Also like her father, Marcia’s personal desires were outweighed by the duty she feels towards her father and country: ‘While Cato lives, his daughter has no right/To love or hate, but as his choice directs’.<sup>963</sup> As a result, Marcia postpones romantic involvement with the Numidian prince so that both he and her father can concentrate on fighting Caesar. Like Portia, Marcia embodied republican values, desiring to sacrifice her own happiness for the betterment of the country.

In choosing ‘Marcia’ as a pen name Warren linked herself to a long line of women who were well versed in republican ideology. Both of the Marcias from antiquity and Addison’s fictional Marcia were of moral character, known as domestic figures, were visible to history primarily through their connection to famous republican men, and all had opportunities to display their strong stoic resolve. Mercy had learnt early in life the necessity of self-sacrifice for a cause. In 1766 Mercy received a letter from her brother who wrote candidly about the cost of his activities in defense of American liberties:

...for nearly two years I have not had it in my power to spend any time for myself; it has been taken up for others and some of them perhaps will never thank me. The time however I hope is at hand when I shall be relieved from a task I shall never envy any man who is performing it shall pass the anxious wearisome days and nights which I have seen. This country must soon be at rest, or may be engaged in contests that will require neither the pen nor the tongue of a lawyer.<sup>964</sup>

Warren’s brother, however, possessed stoic resolve, writing: ‘If we are to be slaves the living have only to envy the dead, for without liberty I own I desire not to exist

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<sup>961</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.154.

<sup>962</sup> Addison, *Cato*, I.iv.158-162.

<sup>963</sup> Addison, *Cato*, IV.i.20-21.

<sup>964</sup> James Otis Jr. to Mercy Otis Warren, April 11, 1766, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

here'.<sup>965</sup> This in itself echoes similar sentiments to Addison's *Cato* when Sempronius declares 'Can a Roman senate long debate Which of the two to choose, slavery or death!' or Cato's own line 'It is not now time to talk of aught/But chains or conquest, liberty or death'.<sup>966</sup> In 1774 one of Warren's poems, entitled 'To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.', mirrored the sentiments that her brother had expressed a decade earlier and she called for women to emulate the stoic resolve displayed by Roman women. The poem was written in response to the First Continental Congress's call for austerity measures and argued that women would have to adopt a Roman stoicism to pass this pending test of civic virtue. She wrote that women must be beyond the reproach of 'a rigid Cato's frown' and, as Macaulay had also warned, avoid the example of women in 195BCE who had tried to repeal sumptuary laws in opposition to Cato the Elder, proposing instead: 'those modest antiquated charms/That lur'd a Brutus to a Portia's arm's'.<sup>967</sup> Warren extolled the austerity measures, writing: 'Let us resolve on a small sacrifice,/And in the pride of Roman matrons rise;/Good as Cornelia, or a Pompey's wife,/ We'll quit the useless vanities of life'.<sup>968</sup> Warren took her appeals even further and advised women to embrace the full example of the Stoical Roman matron and be prepared to give up their very lives. She encouraged: 'America has many a worthy name,/Who shall, hereafter, grace the rolls of fame./Her good Cornelias, and her Arrias fair,/Who, death, in its most hideous forms, can dare'.<sup>969</sup> Warren later wrote in 1778 to her husband expressing similar sentiments about sacrifices that had to be made for patriotism and the betterment of the country: 'How often has the young gentleman who is the bearer of this agreed with me in sentiment that the reward of patriotism was not in this world, and as he is just setting out in the craggy path of political strife may he conduct so as to reap the laurels due to unblemished virtue'.<sup>970</sup>

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<sup>965</sup> James Otis Jr. to Mercy Otis Warren, April 11, 1766, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>966</sup> Addison, *Cato*, II.i.24-26 and II.iv.90-91.

<sup>967</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, 'To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.' in *Poems, Dramatic and Miscellaneous*, (Boston: 1790), p.209, p.210.

<sup>968</sup> Warren, 'To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.', p.210. 'Pompey's wife' is most likely a reference to Julia because she was the only one of the five with a reputation for virtue. Also Dante links Julia with Cornelia along with Marcia and Lucretia, as feminine virtues in Book IV of *Inferno*.

<sup>969</sup> Warren, 'To the Hon. J. Winthrop, Esq.', p.208.

<sup>970</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 2, 1778, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

Suicide was an issue that Warren had thought about. In her January 28, 1775 letter to Abigail Adams she raised the option of suicide, asking: 'And Which of us should have the Courage of an Aria or Portia in a Day of trial like theirs. For myself I dare not Boast, and pray Heaven that Neither Me nor my Friend May be ever Called to such a Dreadful proof of Magnanimity'.<sup>971</sup> Warren resolved, however, that if left in a situation comparable to Aria or Portia she would do her best to defy British tyranny but she would not be able to bring herself to offer the great Stoic gesture and commit suicide. The fact that Warren was even contemplating the logistics of suicides reveals the pressure placed on women at the time to show a stoical resolve and solidarity with their husbands in the patriot cause. Like many of the era, Warren had difficulty rationalising suicide with Christian ethics, writing: 'I do not mean to die by our own hand Rather than submit to the yoke of Servitude & survive the Companions of our Hearts, nor do I think it would have been the Case with either of those Celebrated Ladies had they lived in the Days of Christianity, for I think it is much greater proof of an Heroic soul to struggle with the Calamities of life and patiently Resign ourselves to the Evils we Cannot avoid than cowardly to shrink from the post allotted us by the great Director of the Theatre of the Universe Before we have finished our part in the Drama of life'.<sup>972</sup> In choosing 'Marcia' as her pen name Warren was not aspiring to the life-or-death heroics of the Roman suicides of Portia or Arria, but indicated that while she was as virtuous as a Roman matron, she was not as overtly political as Portia, and would retain more traditional femininity. In Marcia, Warren was able to link herself to the greatest republican family, without having to be held to the highest standards of Stoicism. The multiplicity of 'Marcia's in the ancient world also meant that she was not accountable to a single historical model and had more room to manoeuvre.<sup>973</sup>

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<sup>971</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, January 28, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>972</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, January 28, 1775, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>973</sup> The variety of 'Marcia's did present a few interpersonal associations: Marcia the Younger was the half-sister of Portia, while Marcia the Elder was the step-mother of Portia, perhaps expressing a sisterly or maternal affection for Abigail. In *The Defeat*, Warren cast John Adams as the character Hortensius, meaning, if she identified herself with Marcia the Elder, she was the wife of Cato loaned to Hortensius, John Adams.

While desiring to emulate the Stoical Roman matron, in private Warren had her own conflicting emotions.<sup>974</sup> From the summer of 1774 until the following spring, Warren grappled with the idea of sacrifice for the cause. She was plagued with visions of sons and husbands separated from their families, and wrote to her close friend Hannah Winthrop in August 1774 that ‘while I feel greatly concerned for the welfare of my country, my soul is not so far Romanised but that the apprehensions of the wife and the mother are continually awake...Who in these modern days has arrived at such degree of Roman virtue, as not to grudge the costly sacrifice?’<sup>975</sup> In early 1775 when British troops became present in Boston, Warren, fearing for her life, turned to Abigail. On January 28, 1775, Warren began corresponding with Adams regarding their common predicament and lay the foundations for their future correspondence: ‘I am very sensible with you my dear Mrs. Adams that by our happy Connection with partners of Distinguished Zeal, integrity and Virtue, who would be Marked out as Early Victims to successful Tyranny, we should thereby be subjected to peculiar Afflictions but Yet we shall never wish them to do anything for our sakes Repugnant to Honor or Conscience. But though we may with a Virtuous Crook be Willing to suffer pain and poverty With them, Rather than they should Deviate from their Noble Principles of Integrity and Honor, yet where Would be our Constancy

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<sup>974</sup> To Hannah Winthrop, who was often melancholy and pessimistic about the course of the war, Mercy wrote optimistic and encouraging letters: ‘I arose in the morning weary & undetermined whether to proceed on my Journey homewards, or return again to him whom I had reason to fear was one of tho devoted victims marked out by the guilty tools or Administration to satiate tho vengeance of disappointed Tyranny; for if they should sacrifice a number of those who have boldly exerted themselves in the noble cause of Freedom, they could not hope thereby to extinguish tho heavenly spark; their blood, I trust would be precious seed from whence would spring a glorious race of Patriots & Heroes; Heroes, youthful & undaunted, who in full confidence of the Justice of their cause will buckle on tho harness & not trusting for victory in the strength of their own sword, they will go forth relying on the God of Armies as their leader, whose right hand hath planted this vino, & who I doubt not will nourish it till its branches spread from Sea to Sea, & this Western world becomes perhaps the only Asylum of Religions Freedom, & in her turn may boast or Science & of Empire; of Empire not established in the Thraldom of notions, but on a more equitable bass, & on such an exalted plan, that while for mutual security the Authority of Rulers is acknowledged, they may not be prompted by Ambition & Avarice to infringe the natural rights of their fellow-men, or debase their own species by requiring abject and unworthy submissions where there is no distinction but what arises from the weakness & imperfection of human nature, which has made it necessary to submit to some subordination. Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, September, 1774 (typed), Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel. Hannah responded: But that Centre of Consolation to which you point me, that grand superintendant of the universe is the only firm foundation for us to Build our hopes upon, our Cause of righteous. Let us Posses our souls in Patience. ...How can this insulted People any longer forbear bursting forth with rage and desperation?’ Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, September 27, 1774, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>975</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, August, 1774, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

and Fortitude Without their Assistance to support the Wounded Mind'.<sup>976</sup> Phillip Hicks has noted that this was Mercy paraphrasing a section of Macaulay's *History* involving Lady Croke. Warren saw Croke as a role model and likewise was willing to promise any domestic sacrifice rather than to have her husband waver politically to avoid British reprisals against her family.<sup>977</sup> In writing to Mercy, John Adams reminded her of the sacrifices necessary for a republican government. He wrote to her: 'There must be a possitive Passion for the public good, the public Interest, Honour, Power, and Glory, established in the Minds of the People, or there can be no Republican Government, nor any real Liberty. And this public Passion must be Superiour to all private Passions. Men must be ready, they must pride themselves, and be happy to sacrifice their private Pleasures, Passions, and Interests, nay their private Friendships and dearest Connections, when they Stand in Competition with the Rights of society'.<sup>978</sup> John concluded that there may not be enough of this kind of virtue in the colonies to bring about success against Britain: 'I sometimes tremble to think that, altho We are engaged in the best Cause that ever employed the Human Heart, yet the Prospect of success is doubtfull not for Want of Power or of Wisdom, but of Virtue'.<sup>979</sup> Mercy came to prefer domestic sacrifice over the life-or-death resolve that both her brother and the Adams impressed upon the situation.

Ultimately, Warren realised that while she aspired to republican ideals and to emulate the Stoical Roman matrons, she was not, however, equal to the task. Mercy began the war desiring to take on a republican role but when her husband began turning down political posts and was embittered by a series of political defeats in the late 1770s, Mercy became disillusioned with politics and pessimistic about the course of the war. Her use of her pen name reflects these developments: there was an initial

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<sup>976</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, January 28, 1775 Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>977</sup> Hicks, 'Portia and Marcia', p.280.

<sup>978</sup> Adams, however, doubted that the American colonists would be able to meet the requirements, continuing in his letter: 'Is there in the World a Nation, which deserves this Character. There have been several, but they are no more. Our dear Americans perhaps have as much of it as any Nation now existing, and New England perhaps has more than the rest of America. But I have seen all along my Life, Such Selfishness, and Littleness even in New England, that I sometimes tremble to think that, altho We are engaged in the best Cause that ever employed the Human Heart, yet the Prospect of success is doubtfull not for Want of Power or of Wisdom, but of Virtue'. John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, April 16, 1776, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>979</sup> John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, April 16, 1776, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

burst in 1775 and 1776 as she determined to emulate the Roman matron, but the signature became intermittent thereafter on the realisation that a republican role did not suit her. She eventually dropped her pen name in 1780. She frequently turned to Abigail and asked her to do what she felt she could not: in October 1776, consoling Abigail on another long absence from John, she wrote: ‘the High Enthusiasm of a truly patriotic lady will Cary Her through Every Difficulty, and Lead Her to Every Exertion. Patience, Fortitude, Public Spirit, Magnanimity and self Denial are the Virtues she Boasts. I wish I Could put my Claim to those sublime qualities. But...I own my weakness and stand Corrected’.<sup>980</sup> Warren eventually conceded that ‘I have more of the Christian temper than the stoic in my soul’.<sup>981</sup> She was also comfortable espousing Stoic sentiment to encourage Abigail, writing 2 January, 1778 ‘Great Advantages are often Attended with Great Inconveniencies, And Great Minds Called to severe tryals. If your Dearest Friend had not Abilities to Render such important services to his Country, he would not be Called to the self Denying task of leaving for a time His Beloved Wife and Little prating Brood. Therefore while I Weep with my Friend the painful absence, I Congratulate her that she is so Nearly Connected with a Gentleman Whose Learning, patriotism And prudence qualify Him to Negotiate at Foreign Courts the affairs of America at this Very Critical period.’<sup>982</sup>

Warren was ultimately less dependent than Abigail on her classical pen name to justify her political involvement and soon realised that her role lay in exhorting republican values, whether in print or private, rather than living them in her family life. Warren’s identification with the Roman matron image and purporting of republican values came instead from her literary accomplishments. Warren had long been interested in republican history and her trilogy of satirical plays, *The Adulateur* (1772), *The Defeat* (1773), and *The Group* (1775) had championed the patriot cause. However, Warren’s interest in Roman matrons was most evident in her later plays

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<sup>980</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, October 15, 1776, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 346.

<sup>981</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren March 15, 1780 Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>982</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, 2 January, 1778, Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel. Mercy continues: I think I know your public spirit and Fortitude to be such that you will Throw no Impediment in his way. Why should you. You are yet young and May set Down together many Years in peace after He has finished the Work to his own Honour, to the satisfaction of his Constituants and to the Approbation of his Conscience. You Cannot my Dear avoid Anticipating the Advantages that will probably Redound from this Honorable Embassy to Your self, to your Children and your Country’.

where the subject almost became an obsession. Warren's plays frequently mentioned women from history – including Portia, Cornelia and Arria – who had made personal sacrifices, often with their lives, for the republican cause. In the plays Warren was able to play out the role of a good Stoic wife that she seemed unable to do in real life. In *The Sack of Rome* (1790) Lucretia is raped by a tyrannical emperor and commits suicide, which inspires a political revolution. Warren clearly based this on the story as told by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, where in 510BCE a Roman matron named Lucretia was raped by the King's son and she committed suicide after disclosing the rape to her family and asking for revenge to be enacted.<sup>983</sup> In Roman historical tradition, the incident prompted a revolution that overthrew the monarchy and established the beginning of the Republican period. In Warren's play while one Roman matron, similar to Marcia the Younger, sends away her beloved to fight the republican cause against the tyranny of the monarch, other Roman matrons attempt suicide rather than survive under tyranny or to emulate their husbands murdered in the cause for liberty. Likewise, in *The Ladies of Castille* (1790) Warren contrasts two women: one, the lesser Christian patriot, who commits suicide, while the true heroine of the play, Maria, resists the temptation to succumb to suicide. Maria's husband is killed and she wants to die bravely with him declaring: 'I can as bravely die/As e'er a Grecian, or a Roman dame/And smile at Portia's celebrated feat,/who drew her blood to worm a secret out'.<sup>984</sup> Maria, however, decides to live to raise her young boy. By the time the *Ladies of Castille* was published Warren had abandoned her pen names and pseudonyms, previously being published as 'A Lady from Massachusetts' or 'A Columbian Patriot', and instead produced an edition of plays and poetry and later her *History* under her own name. Mercy had come into her own as a political commentator of the era and did not need a pseudonym to justify her political involvement.

Adams and Warren knew that they were usual amongst their contemporaries, especially prior to the war. Warren wrote to Hannah Winthrop expressing her belief that women should be engaged in political discussions and areas of the contemporary circumstances: 'I should not have touched on this subject [of the war] had you not thereto tho' I think it of too interesting a nature for even females to be wholly inattentive, when nothing less lies at stake than that liberty for which our fathers

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<sup>983</sup> Livy, *Ad Urbe Condita*, 1.57-60. Dionysius, *Roman Antiquities*, IV.64-85.

<sup>984</sup> Mercy Otis Warren, *The Ladies of Castille*, IV.v.

bled, and for which our sons must fall a sacrifice unless some happy expedient destroys the machinations of those who wish ill to this people'.<sup>985</sup> One of Warren's friends, Hannah Lincoln, wrote to her seeking her advice on whether ladies should address themselves to politics, as her own husband disapproved. Warren responded that a women's interest in politics was justifiable in terms of their right to free speech and self-expression. She wrote: 'I know not why any gentlemen of your acquaintance should caution you not to enter any particular subject when we meet. I should have a very ill opinion of myself, if any variation of sentiment with regard to political matters, should lessen my esteem for the disinterested, undesigning and upright heart; and it would argue great want of candour to think that there was not many such (more especially among our own sex) who yet judge very differently with regard to the calamities of our unhappy country...though every mind of the least sensibility must be greatly affected with the present distress; and even a female pen might be excused for touching on the important subject; yet I will not undertake to give a full answer to the queries proposed by my friend; for as the wisest among the other sex are much divided in opinion, it might be justly be deemed impertinent or rather sanguine for me to decide'.<sup>986</sup> Warren believed that although men and women reacted differently to the political situation both were accurate responses and enabled women to take political positions. She counselled Lincoln to resist her husband's constraints on her political discussions and to partake in informed political discussions with both men and women outside of the family in order for her to derive a political opinion, while assuring her that such an undertaking would not be a threat to family politics.

#### *Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop*

Another of Mercy Otis Warren's correspondents was her childhood friend Hannah Winthrop. Hannah was the wife of John Winthrop, the renowned professor of natural philosophy and mathematics at Harvard, whom she had married after his first wife died leaving four young children. Her marriage to such an educated man put Hannah in a position unique to most women in the eighteenth century: she

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<sup>985</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, March 1774, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>986</sup> Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Lincoln, June 12, 1774 Warren-Adams Papers 1767-1822, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Special Colls. Warren-Adams or P-164 (microfilm), one reel.

reminded Mercy that the family desk was ‘generally adorned with a Variety or Authors’ dealing with history, literature, theology, and natural history.<sup>987</sup> Likewise, Hannah’s reading indicates a scope of intellectual life equal to that of her husband’s. Like Mercy, Hannah learnt from a young age to deal with difficult circumstances in life with a stoic manner. On February 28, 1752 Winthrop wrote to Warren about the death of her father: ‘Sometimes I am ready to say: why was this my life for misery made: but I recall shall I complain. No be still every tumultuous thought it is infinite wisdom he who is excellent in all his ways his works is Perfect. I must, I will, Submit. I will endeavour to Learn the most useful lessons from this Dispensation. O the Vanity the Uncertainty of every thing beneath the sun I will endeavour after a more enduring Portion than any thing transitory: for when a few more wearisome months a past I shall also go the way whence I shall not Return in the meantime. I will Maintain the sincerest affections to the Memory of My Dear Deceased and the Most inviolable friendships to his surviving friends’.<sup>988</sup>

During the war, Warren and Winthrop corresponded regularly since Hannah, in Cambridge, was able to keep Mercy, in Plymouth, well informed of the developments in town. At the outset of the hostilities the two corresponded under the classical pseudonyms Honoria, famous for her love and help of Attila the Hun, and Philomela, remembered for being raped and mutilated by her sister’s husband but transformed into a nightingale for her endurance.<sup>989</sup> It could be supposed that Philomena was apparently bestowed upon Mercy for her powers of song rather than any reference to violence. As events became more momentous they dropped the fanciful appellations, perhaps because they did not supply the deeper political meaning that was needed to express their role in the hostilities. Nevertheless, their correspondence shows that both Winthrop and Warren still engaged with republican ideals of patriotic duty and sacrifice for the country.

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<sup>987</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, January 9, 1778, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>988</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, February 28, 1752, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>989</sup> Olympiodorus, fragment 34, Trans. C.D. Gordon, *Age of Attila: Fifth Century Byzantium and the Barbarians* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1966), p.43. For Philomela see: Virgil, *Eclogues*, 6.78-82; Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, VI.422-674; Pausanias, Description of Greece 1.41.8; Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca*, 3.14.

Hannah's 'son the Librarian', James Winthrop, fought in the war as a 'Zealous Volunteer'.<sup>990</sup> In 1778 Hannah wrote to Mercy about the war effort: 'We have lately seen vast numbers of men hieing away for a field of battle hurrying thither with the most Sanguine expectations but the great Mover of Universal Nature has seen fit by the operation of His Stormy winds to check our fond imaginations and we daily have the Mortification of seeing the men return without the Palm of Victory'.<sup>991</sup> Hannah's sentiments of desiring warfare and being embarrassed at the lack of victories are reminiscent of the Spartan war cry that Plutarch reports mothers shouted to their departing sons: 'come back with your shield - or on it'.<sup>992</sup> Mothers whose sons died in battle openly rejoiced, mothers whose sons survived hung their heads in shame.

Hannah had rarely been optimistic about the course of the war, writing to Mercy in 1773 'I very much Fear whether the last Noble exertion of those truly Patriotic spirits who have formed a newly established correspondence will meet with the desired success'.<sup>993</sup> In 1775, Hannah echoed John Adams' sentiment that Boston must suffer martyrdom, by writing to Mercy that 'the neighbourhood of Boston must certainly suffer the cruel ravages of tyrannical power animated by an inherent Principle of revenge, love of domination, and gratification of unbounded ambition'.<sup>994</sup> Like Adams, Winthrop did not see an optimistic end to the conflict at that point in time. The following year, Winthrop again claimed that 'much blood must be shed, that many widow'd and orphaned ones be left as monuments of that persecuting Barbarity of British tyranny'.<sup>995</sup> Winthrop, however, saw the necessity and glory to be found in sacrificing one's life for the patriot cause, writing to Mercy in 1776; 'Reason and religion congratulate the dead/And crown their tomb triumphant. Death their victory/It binds in Chains the raging ills of life'.<sup>996</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>990</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, August 29, 1778, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>991</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, 1788, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>992</sup> Plutarch, *Morals*, 235A.

<sup>993</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, 1773, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>994</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, January 3, 1775, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>995</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, May, 1775, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>996</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, Concord, January 29th, 1776, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel. Hannah was particularly descriptive in her letters. Another from 1774 says: 'The

Winthrop found the war distressing, remarking in 1777: 'My heart shivers at the Crimson current flowing from American bleeding veins. O the slaughter, 500 at a meal. How shall we ever make an adequate satisfaction to those Heroes who willingly open their Bosoms to the Pointed Bayonet and offer them selves victims for American Freedom?'<sup>997</sup>

### Conclusions

Usage of the Roman matron analogies lasted well into the war, testifying to the importance of neoclassical self-fashioning to women as a means of participating in the political sphere. When a colonial lady named Mrs. Caldwell was killed by a British marksman in 1780, the *New Jersey Gazette* hoped that this murder would ignite the flames of American patriotism the way that 'Lucretia's misfortune' had resulted in the Roman Republic or Virginia's murder had occasioned the expulsion of the tyrannical decemvirs. The use of Lucretia at this point in the war indicates a change in female neoclassical self-fashioning. Although Lucretia died, her suicide resulted in the establishment of the Roman Republic, thus rendering her death beneficial rather than simply being a symbol of fatalistic acceptance of tyranny.

The Roman matron image allowed colonial women to imagine themselves as political entities and actively participate in republican political life. By engaging with female worthies of the past, American women linked themselves to a long history of female patriotism and heroism, and saw themselves as active participants in the momentous events of history. Women in the wartime period became more politically active than they had ever previously been and were at times seen as a political entity in their own right. More importantly, however, the Roman matron identities that colonial women adopted were those Roman heroines who had demonstrated exemplary courage and virtue, and often radical devotion to republican values.

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Day is Dark, Darkness that is sensibly felt by every one who seriously considers Consequences that may follow one wrong step. Firey trials and rivers of blood are Scenes too horrid and terrible to be ruminated on by the humanising Souls of Americans and be unappal'd by the dreadful Prospect. The Iron hearted Tools of despotism and tyrannic Fury can sport themselves in the more than internal Consolation of hanging and stringing up and by Flower degrees bringing on excruciating Famine and death on thousands of their innocent Fellow Creatures without the least Commiseration. O what a pitch of wickedness and barbarity are mankind capable of when divested of Divine Grace!' Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, October 2, 1774, Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

<sup>997</sup> Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, October 22, 1777 Correspondence with Mercy Otis Warren, 1752-1789, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. Ms. N-28 or P-794 (microfilm), one reel.

Repeatedly colonial women were presented with examples of Roman matrons who had committed suicide in a pursuit to secure liberty or their virtue. They were encouraged to admire these women from antiquity who had preferred death to living under a tyrannical regime. The colonists not only digested these stories of classical suicide through their reading but actively engaged with the narratives and venerated the suicides by adopting some of the most radical examples as pseudonyms. This was a daring and radical move by the colonial women, as they chose highly-political and unconventional examples of women from antiquity to emulate, such as Portia, Marcia, and Sophronia. While their husbands played out the Cato narrative in political debate or on the battlefield, colonial women were able to signify themselves as equally devoted to liberty and stoical in their resolve through adopted and acting out classical pseudonyms. The female colonists' replacement of Cato with classical role models who offered an equally pessimistic outlook indicates a society-wide and deep identification with the hopeless situation that the Romans found themselves in at the fall of the Republic. Again the colonists are presented not as 'revolutionaries' but as desperately making a last standing for republican liberty.

## Epilogue:

### Cato to Cincinnatus

See the great soul of Cato firmly bent,  
Fix'd as the fates of liberty intent,  
Whose soul fear'd not to anticipate her doom;  
He pierc'd his breast, and fell with falling Rome.

See bolder Brutus, whose unnerving sword,  
Pierc'd his best friend and Rome's usurping lord;  
Who freed his country from great Caesar's chain,  
And check'd Rome's tryant's too ambitious reign.

See Cincinnatus on his seanty farm,  
Scorning the ease of glor's splendid charm:  
When Rome implor'd, the storm of war he rul'd;  
He brav'd the field, the haughty foes he soil'd:  
Disdaining pomp with godlike virtue fir'd  
The godlike victor to his plough retir'd.<sup>998</sup>

Cato was the most popular and admired Roman hero of the pre and early wartime period. From the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 onwards there was barely a figure from antiquity that was more frequently referenced in orations, newspapers, pamphlets, and personal correspondence. Cato was everywhere in the literature because he spoke to the American colonists' concerns about the encroachment of tyranny by the British government and they identified with the position in which Cato found himself at the fall of the Roman Republic. Through donning the toga of Cato the colonists explored ideas on how to stoically meet the demands of the war and saw how to retain their virtue and secure their liberty whilst their own world was deteriorating into despotism. Cato became the byword for martyrdom and served the colonists as a model worthy of emulation. Through their identification with Cato, the

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<sup>998</sup> Jonathan Meigs, *A Poem Spoken in the Chapel of Yale-College – March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1784*, (New Haven: Meigs, Bowen, and Dana, 1784), p.7, Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 18608.

colonists' framed their resistance to Britain as a choice between living under tyranny or a virtuous death. Cato did not offer the colonists a precedent for a triumphal struggle towards liberty; on the contrary, Cato dictated that the only route to liberty was not through revolution but death. Unaware that they were fighting what would be later termed a 'revolution', the colonists saw the war as a last stand against tyranny, rather than a fight inevitably leading to greater liberty. Cato was the role model for such a fatalistic undertaking.

Part way through the war, however, another Roman began to replace Cato as the ideal representation of liberty and virtue. Coinciding with the French entering the war on the American side in 1778, references to the Roman hero Cincinnatus began to increasingly appear in the colonial literature. It was no coincidence that Cincinnatus became the preferred republican hero at the point in the war when the colonists' struggles were greatly alleviated by support from the French and a victory in the war became a real possibility. The rise of Cincinnatus as the preferred American model of virtue was representational of a greater shift in the American psyche. If Cato was the perfect role model during the uncertainty of the Stamp Act Crisis and early years of the war, Cincinnatus spoke to particular concerns that became relevant as their fortune in the war changed; namely how to transition from wartime to peace, and how to achieve this while avoiding the concentration of political and military power into the hands of a single person or section of society. Cincinnatus also represented demobilisation, subordination to civil power, and the moral superiority and virtuous simplicity of those who toiled the earth; values which became important to the colonists once they realised victory in the war was actually possible. As such, there was a decline in the popularity of Cato as a role model and the use of Catonian rhetoric. Cato was no longer relevant to the colonial mindset, and the colonists needed to fashion another neoclassical identity. American neoclassical self-fashioning no longer revolved around the suicidal hero, but rather colonists began to identify the leaders of the patriot movement with the pastoral and agrarian Roman hero Cincinnatus.

#### New Epilogue to *Cato*

The new spirit of optimism and the evolution of colonial neoclassical identification from the suicidal Cato to the victorious Cincinnatus can be best seen in the new

epilogue to Addison's *Cato* that was written by Jonathan Sewall and premiered at the Bow Street Theatre in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, sometime in 1778.<sup>999</sup> Other epilogues to *Cato* had likewise helped shaped the play to contemporary politics. In 1735, following the production of *Cato* in Charleston, an anonymous American author penned a new epilogue that lamented Cato's suicide, preferring that he should have lived and 'by superior Virtue awed the Throne'.<sup>1000</sup> The author argued that such resistance might have affected a 'restoration', which the author compares to the Restoration of Charles II.<sup>1001</sup> The author posits that had Cato lived then 'Rome's old genius might/Have humbled Caesar, and usurp'd her Right:/But oh! Her Generals and her Consuls were no more/And Caesar triumphed with a Conqueror's Power'.<sup>1002</sup> While the epilogue strains the limit of the analogy by equating the Restoration to a hypothetical deposition of Caesar, especially since it was written seventy-five years after Charles II ascended to the throne, it does show the politically mouldable nature of *Cato*. It was no coincidence though that as political tensions rose between the colonies and Britain this epilogue was replaced with the politically innocuous original written by Dr Garth. Samuel Garth, a Whig sympathiser, had been the writer of the original epilogue to Addison's tragedy. His epilogue was a bawdy commentary on women, full of innuendo. The colonists clearly preferred Dr Garth's coarse but inoffensive writings to the anonymous epilogue that questioned the dogged devotion for liberty that Cato displayed. For the 1778 occasion, Sewall, a Portsmouth resident, wrote a *New Epilogue to Cato, Spoken at a Late Performance of That Tragedy*, which replaced the standard Dr. Garth epilogue.<sup>1003</sup> The *New Epilogue* was reprinted in a handful of New England newspapers and replaced Dr Garth's original conclusion to the play in new printings of the play done in Portsmouth in 1778 and Providence in

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<sup>999</sup> No firm date for the Bow Street Theatre production of *Cato* can be established, but since it criticises the France's delay in entering the war it took place before the Valley Forge production of *Cato* by Washington. The pamphlet containing the *New Epilogue to Cato* is housed at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts. The pamphlet contains no news after 1776 and thus the society have assigned it the date of 1777. See John C. Shields, *American Aeneas: Classical Origins of the American Self*, (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 2001), p.192.

<sup>1000</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, September 5, 1743, quoted in Jason Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary American Theatre*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), p.44.

<sup>1001</sup> *South Carolina Gazette*, September 5, 1743, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.44.

<sup>1002</sup> The epilogue continues: 'Hence was the Patriot's Breast with Glory fired,/And Liberty, and he at once expired'. *South Carolina Gazette*, September 5, 1743, quoted in Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.44.

<sup>1003</sup> Jonathan Mitchell Sewall is not to be confused with the English patriot by the same name.

1779.<sup>1004</sup> The literary historian John Shields has speculated that this American *Epilogue* was performed many times throughout the war.<sup>1005</sup> Sewall's *New Epilogue* shows the changing interpretation of the Addisonian classic and the new American acculturation of the play. It is an important source for understanding the changing American mindset during the war, and for seeing how their use of *Cato* and classical self-fashioning evolved. Sewall's epilogue was eventually replaced with the Dr Garth original, with publications of the play to that affect beginning to appear around 1800.<sup>1006</sup>

Sewall's *New Epilogue* began with the standard American colonial interpretation of *Cato*. He established that 'all periods and all climes' have been marked with a succession of battles between 'heroic fortitude' or 'patriotic truth' with 'tyrannic rage' and 'boundless ambition'.<sup>1007</sup> While the colonies are cast as the virtuous Rome, 'what now gleams with dawning ray, at home,/Once blaz'd...at Rome', Sewall names Britain as the tyrant: 'Did Caesar, drunk with power and madly brave/Insatiate burn, his country to enslave?'<sup>1008</sup> Sewall thus established the two protagonists of the *New Epilogue* and bound together America's fate with that of Rome. To explain the war as a re-enactment of Rome's history, Sewall then undertook an extensive coupling of Roman and American heroes together. Sewall writes: 'for a Cato' America has 'arm'd a Washington'; 'in [General Nathaniel] Green...we see... Lucius, Juba, Cato, shine in thee'; 'Like Pompey, Warren fell in martial pride'; '[Major General Richard] Montgomery like Scipio died'; '[General Benedict] Arnold...a second Hannibal'; 'Marcus blazes forth in [General John]

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<sup>1004</sup> Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.63. Later editions of Addison's *Cato*, specifically 1779, 1782, 1787, and 1793, published in the American colonies had one further alteration. Alexander Pope's original 'Prologue' written for the play's premiere had the line 'And calls forth Roman drops from British eyes'. Alexander Pope, *Prologue to Cato*, 519. All editions that replaced Garth's 'Epilogue' with Sewall's replaced this line with 'And calls forth Roman Drops from Freeman's Eyes' and dropped the last ten lines of Pope's 'Prologue' beginning with 'Britain's attend...'. Alexander Pope, *Prologue to Cato*, 519, 520.

<sup>1005</sup> Shields has suggested that it may even have been performed for Washington at the Valley Forge staging of the play, but since there is no firm date for the Portsmouth production it cannot be concluded that there was enough time between its original debut and the Valley Forge staging for the *Epilogue* to have circulated throughout the colonies. Furthermore, we only have one source that mentions the production of *Cato* at Valley Forge, so it is difficult to interpret that much from the letter. Shields, *American Aeneas*, p.192.

<sup>1006</sup> Joseph Addison, *Cato: a tragedy, in five acts*, (New-York: D. Longworth, at the Dramatic Repository, Shakespeare-Gallery, 1806), Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. 9803 Shaw/Shoemaker fiche. This edition of the play had the Dr Garth epilogue.

<sup>1007</sup> Jonathan Mitchell-Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato, Spoken at a Late Performance of That Tragedy*, (n.p. 1777), Early American Imprints, Series 1, no. 43372, 1-3.

<sup>1008</sup> Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato*, 11-12.

Sullivan'; and 'we've had out Decius'.<sup>1009</sup> The length to which Sewall goes to establish the relationship between America and the Roman Republic is indicative of how the colonists viewed themselves at this time: Washington was their Cato and the American patriots were a continuation of the Roman pantheon of heroes who had died rather than suffer the usurpation of tyranny. Sewall used the same language that had been in the literature from the Stamp Act Crisis; that of casting Britain as the tyrannical Caesar and the colonists as the virtuous republican heroes. In doing so, Sewall seemed ready to draw the same conclusion that had been expounded since the Stamp Act Crisis; that if liberty were not obtainable, then death was a far preferable option.

Halfway through the *New Epilogue*, however, Sewall changed tone and hinted at the idea of America as being a latter-day fulfilment of what the Roman Republic could have been had it not been for Caesar. Sewall expressed this by importing the American heroes into the Utican landscape: 'when Rome received her last decisive blow,/ Had'st Thou, immortal [General Horatio] Gates! /...Been Caesar's foe/ All-perfect discipline had check't his sway'.<sup>1010</sup> His fantasy of American heroes' probable achievements in the ancient world continues: 'In Caesar's days, had such a daring mind [as Benedict Arnold's], with Washington's serenity been join'd,/The tyrant had bled – the great Cato liv'd,/ And Rome, in all her majesty, survived!'<sup>1011</sup> Like the Catonian rhetoric previously employed in the cause, Sewall entreats the patriots to 'Rise then, my countrymen! For fight prepare,/Gird your swords, and fearless rush to war!/For your griev'd country nobly dare to die,/And empty all your veins for Liberty'.<sup>1012</sup> However, he then promises an American victory in the war and foreshadows the colonies' future expansion across the whole continent: 'No pent-up Utica contracts your pow'rs/But the whole boundless continent is yours!'<sup>1013</sup> Like many American patriots before him, Sewall initially encouraged the colonists to embrace death as a path to liberty, but instead of promising that death ensured liberty, Sewall believed that a glorious republic was within reach of the patriots.

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<sup>1009</sup> Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato*, 26-58. Arnold defected to the British side in 1780. When Sewall reprinted the *Epilogue* in 1801 he kept the line celebrating Arnold but abbreviated his full name, referring to him simply as A\*\*. Jonathan Mitchell Sewall, *Miscellaneous Poems, with Several Specimens from the Author's Manuscript Version of the Poems of Ossian*, (Portsmouth: William Treadwell, 1801), pp.109-110.

<sup>1010</sup> Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato*, 48-51.

<sup>1011</sup> Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato*, 59-62.

<sup>1012</sup> Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato*, 79-82.

<sup>1013</sup> Sewall, *New Epilogue to Cato*, 83-84.

Sewall recast America from being Utica to envisioning a glorious future for the country whereby it would surpass the Roman Republic in terms of virtue, power, and liberty. By imagining an optimistic future for America, the suicidal Catonian death to preserve one's virtue was no longer relevant, and the colonists needed a new Roman hero to reflect this new found optimism. A 1777 version of the epilogue, printed for broad circulation, contained a rousing five-line conclusion obviously designed to encourage enlistment for the securement of this potential republic: 'Rouse up, for shame! Your Brethren slain in War,/Or groaning now in ignominious bondage,/Point at their wounds, and chains and cry aloud/to Battle! Washington impatient mourns/His scanty legions, and demands your aid!'<sup>1014</sup>

Sewall's interpretation of Addison's *Cato* stood in complete contrast to the way in which the play was used in political rhetoric and viewed in the public conscience from the Stamp Act Crisis onwards. Sewall recast America from being the Utica of Cato's final scene to envisioning the newly independent America as the fulfilment of the Roman Republic. Death was no longer portrayed in the Catonian fashion of preserving one's virtue, but was aimed towards securing the real and actualised liberty through independence of the American colonies from Britain. Sewall was not promoting Cato's suicide as the best means of dealing with the situation with Britain, but, instead, gave the colonists hope that they could achieve and surpass the virtue and success of the Roman Republic. As Margaret Malamud has argued, the Epilogue 'makes clear what was at stake...Sewall's epilogue links the fight for liberty with conquest and expansion. Imitation of the Roman Republican heroes would result in a virtuous and healthy polity stretching across "the whole boundless continent", whereas following the example of Julius Caesar would corrupt the moral and political state of the young nation'.<sup>1015</sup> Sewall's reinterpretation of the play was part of a larger shift in the wartime rhetoric that began to occur around this period. It was from this period onwards that there was a shift in political rhetoric of one from purely oppositional language to a vision of republican fulfilment.

The shift away from oppositional language in the war was also underscored by another production in 1778 in Portsmouth where Sewall wrote an epilogue to

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<sup>1014</sup> *New Epilogue*, quoted in Shields, *American Aeneas*, p.192.

<sup>1015</sup> Margaret Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America*, (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p.12.

Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*.<sup>1016</sup> Sewall, who had previously praised the Catonian sacrifices of Washington in his epilogue to *Cato*, instead in the epilogue to *Coriolanus* painted America as faction-ridden and in need of a strong, charismatic leader.<sup>1017</sup> Coriolanus was a Roman, who had led a successful war against Roman enemies called the Volsci. He was later found guilty of misappropriating public funds and banished, leading him to declare war on his own Republic, feeling betrayed and believing them to be ungrateful of his previous military success.<sup>1018</sup> Coriolanus, therefore, represented the idea that leadership could be taken up by either a patriot or a tyrant, and for either good or damaging purposes. Sewall then warned the audience to 'learn hence, my countrymen! Rome's guilt to shun;/For honor, justice, gratitude, be known. Nor let your unrewarded sons complain/They wield the sword, and fight, and bleed in vain./Lest tempted like this Roman, they rebel,/And 'gainst their country turn th' unshallow'd steel'.<sup>1019</sup> Sewall's warning that America could produce an imperious Coriolanus had ominous implication for the future of America. The optimism for America in the war, coupled with an evident concern about the potential for oligarchies and factions to develop in the future transition from war to peace, meant that there was the space for a new political role model and the need for Roman self-fashioning to evolve. Since Washington wielded the military power of America, which he could potentially have converted into a dictatorship at the conclusion of the war, it became important to focus neoclassical imaging on him. From this period onwards references to Cato the Younger declined and he was replaced with the Roman figure of Cincinnatus.

### Cincinnatus

The story of Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519 BC – 430 BCE) comes from the early days of the Roman Republic, only fifty years after the expulsion of Rome's last king. Cincinnatus was a Roman politician, who was regarded by the Romans as one of the

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<sup>1016</sup> The production may have been James Thomson's adaptation of Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. The only other known production of *Coriolanus* in the colonies was Thomson's version. Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.64.

<sup>1017</sup> Jonathan Sewall, 'Epilogue to *Coriolanus*', in *Miscellaneous Poems: With Several Specimens from the Author's Manuscript Version of the Poems of Ossian*, (Portsmouth: William Treadwell, & Company, 1801), pp.123-125. For more on this epilogue of *Coriolanus* see Shaffer, *Performing Patriotism*, p.64.

<sup>1018</sup> See Plutarch *Life of Coriolanus*, 20-22.

<sup>1019</sup> There was a footnote after 'your unrewarded sons', which read 'general discontent prevailed in the American army, when this was written and spoken'. Sewall, 'Epilogue to *Coriolanus*', pp.125.

heroes of early Rome and as a model of Roman virtue and simplicity. He achieved this reputation on account of twice being called to the dictatorship, the ultimate political and military office in Rome, but both times resigning from his position, holding onto his absolute authority not a moment longer than necessary. Cincinnatus first came to prominence in 460BCE when he was one of the two annually elected Roman consuls. During his consulship the Roman senate was preoccupied with a war against the Volsci, a neighbouring Italic people and one of Rome's most dangerous enemies. Two years later, in 458BCE, Cincinnatus was no longer consul but Rome was again at war, this time against the Aequi and the Sabines, two other Italic tribes constantly fighting for independence from Rome. In that year, one of the two Roman consuls was killed in battle, causing the Roman senate to panic and force the remaining consul to nominate a dictator to see Rome through this turbulent time. Horatius Pulvillus, the surviving consul, chose Cincinnatus, and a group of Senators were sent to inform Cincinnatus that he had been named dictator for the remainder of the year. Livy records the event:

The one hope of Rome, L. Quinctius, used to cultivate a four-acre field on the other side of the Tiber, just opposite the place where the dockyard and arsenal are now situated; it bears the name of the 'Quinctian Meadows'. There he was found by the deputation from the senate either digging out a ditch or ploughing, at all events, as is generally agreed, intent on his husbandry. After mutual salutations he was requested to put on his toga that he might hear the mandate of the senate, and they expressed the hope that it might turn out well for him and for the State. He asked them, in surprise, if all was well, and bade his wife, Racilia, bring him his toga quickly from the cottage. Wiping off the dust and perspiration, he put it on and came forward, on which the deputation saluted him as Dictator and congratulated him, invited him to the City and explained the state of apprehension in which the army were.<sup>1020</sup>

Livy reports that following his ascension to the dictatorship, Cincinnatus immediately assembled an army and led a victorious campaign against the Aequi. Afterwards, he disbanded the troops and resigned his dictatorship, contentedly returning to his farm and plough, a mere sixteen days after he had been nominated dictator.<sup>1021</sup> Cincinnatus came out of retirement for a second term as dictator in 439BCE to put down a potential conspiracy by Spurius Maelius, who allegedly planned to re-establish the monarchy at Rome and crown himself king. Cincinnatus

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<sup>1020</sup> Livy, *Ad Urbe Condita*, 3.26.

<sup>1021</sup> Livy, *Ad Urbe Condita*, 3.29.

again met the call of his country, quelled the insurrection, and promptly resigned his commission upon the safe deliverance of the republic, again pleased to return to his pastoral occupation.<sup>1022</sup>

Within his lifetime Cincinnatus became a legend to the Romans: twice granted supreme power but holding onto it not a day longer than absolutely necessary. He became universally admired for his voluntary act of relinquishing the most powerful office in Rome and his preference for a pastoral life over a position of wielding absolute power. In contrast, Julius Caesar was appointed dictator for a year and consequently effectively forced the Roman Senate to declare him dictator for another ten years. Caesar was unable to release the reins of power and brought the period of the Republic to a close, establishing a system that evolved into emperors ruling Rome. The story of Cincinnatus was preserved primarily in the books of Livy, whose account of Cincinnatus' career described him as a model of civic virtue, esteemed by both the Romans and subsequently throughout antiquity.<sup>1023</sup> After being recorded by Livy, Cincinnatus became a figure mentioned in literature from the Renaissance: Petrarch wrote a biography of Cincinnatus praising him for his voluntary poverty, he is also mentioned by both Dante in the *Divine Comedy* and Machiavelli in the *Discourses* where they again gave Cincinnatus as a magnanimous example of one spurning material wealth and embracing a rural and simplistic lifestyle.<sup>1024</sup> During the Enlightenment, the traditions and superstitions of the church began to be questioned. People looked for icons that could replace the churchly saints, but still embody similar ideals, and Cincinnatus perfectly filled this criterion.<sup>1025</sup> Thus, by the Revolutionary period the colonists would have accessed the legend of Cincinnatus through multiple mediums: Renaissance classics, such as Petrarch, Dante, and Machiavelli, the promotion of virtuous heathens as an alternative to traditional Christian models, and, finally, their private or college study of Livy. However, it was not so much Cincinnatus' historical importance, but rather his combination of virtues that made him useful to the American colonists. He represented the

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<sup>1022</sup> Livy, *Ad Urbe Condita*, 4.13.

<sup>1023</sup> Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, iii. 26-29.

<sup>1024</sup> Petrarch, *On Illustrious Men*, Book 1. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, Paradise – Canto 15. Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 3.25.

<sup>1025</sup> Garry Wills, *Cincinnatus: George Washington and the Enlightenment*, (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1984), p.23. One of the failings of Wills' book, however, is that he does not discuss where the American colonists read the story of Cincinnatus nor how the legend was mediated from antiquity to the eighteenth century.

republican ideals of civic humanism - virtuous, agrarian, and disinterested in power – and his frugality, patriotism, and military fortitude also helped him epitomise the integrity that could sustain a republic. As the historian Rollins wrote of Cincinnatus in his 1750 Roman history: ‘Happy times! Admirable simplicity! Poverty was not universally practised, but it was esteemed and honoured, and not considered as a disqualification for the highest dignities of the state. The conduct of Quinctius [Cincinnatus] during his Consulship...[shows] us what a noble nature, what constancy, and what greatness of soul, inhabited a poor wretched cottage’.<sup>1026</sup> For the American colonists, the republican simplicity of the American farmer provided a pointed contrast with the perceived luxury and decadence of the British Empire. However, it was mainly his surrender to civilian power and lack of personal ambition that made him particularly resonant with the American colonists and to the example of George Washington.

### Washington and Cincinnatus

The transference of favour from Cato to Cincinnatus can be clearly seen in the way that George Washington, the ‘American Cato’, became hailed as America’s ‘Cincinnatus’ in the later years of the war and early national period. Garry Wills has suggested that Parson Weems, Washington’s first biographer, was responsible for the moulding of Washington into the Cincinnatian image.<sup>1027</sup> The parallels between Cincinnatus and Washington were not lost on his contemporaries and Wills has named three particular events that shaped Washington’s Cincinnatian image. Firstly, called up from his retirement at Mount Vernon to lead the Continental Army, Washington dramatically resigned his commission and returned to his farm once the war had been won. Secondly, his return to preside over the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and his reconciliation of the possible illegality of the meeting with the legal results the convention hoped to achieve. Finally, Washington’s ascendancy to the Presidency in 1789 and relinquishment of power in 1796, establishing the two-term limit for the Presidential office, only fuelled the depiction of him as the Roman hero. Both military leaders were believed to have left their

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<sup>1026</sup> Charles Rollin, *The Roman History from the Foundation of Rome to the Battle of Actium: that is, to the end of the Commonwealth*. Translated from the French, Vol. 1 (London: John and Paul Knapton, at the Crown in Ludgate-Street, MDCCXXXIX. [1739]-50): 38.

<sup>1027</sup> Wills, *Cincinnatus*, pp.27-39.

pastoral lives as farmers to save their countries and to have surrendered their power to civil authorities content to return to their agrarian pursuits. Washington realised that his appeal lay not in his military victories, of which he had precious few, but in his republican virtue that would be revealed in a resignation from the highest office.

It is notable that the first of the three events Wills names dates from the period when Americans began to contemplate its transition from a state at war into a democratic nation. As such, analogies of Washington as Cincinnatus only began when an American victory in the war became a conceivable option, and there was an ideological vacuum which the image of Cincinnatus ideally filled. Washington could be cast as the glorious military hero resigning his powers and ensuring the establishment of democracy, rather than the virtuous patriot renouncing his life in the cause of liberty. While Wills wrote about the role Weems had in shaping the Cincinnatian image of Washington, he also believed that Washington not only took notice of the Cincinnatus analogy, but actively nurtured and promoted the identity. When Washington did resign as the illustrious commander of the Continental Army in 1783, he withdrew completely from public life, even going to the extreme of resigning from his local vestry.<sup>1028</sup> The following year, enjoying his retirement at Mount Vernon, Washington referred to himself as ‘a private citizen of America, on the banks of the Patowmac; where under my own Vine and my own Fig-tree, free from the bustle of a camp and the intrigues of a court...and with that serenity of mind, which the Soldier in his pursuit of glory, and the Statesman of fame, have not time to enjoy’.<sup>1029</sup> In emulating Cincinnatus, Washington allayed real fears that he might use his position as a successful general to retain power as a military dictator. In the process Washington illustrated that he placed public service above personal gain. Washington even benefitted from the fact that his name ‘George’ was derived from the Greek *georgos* meaning ‘farmer’.

Contemporaries repeatedly described Washington as ‘like’, ‘the modern’, the ‘second’, and ‘the American’ Cincinnatus.<sup>1030</sup> As early as 1780, when Pierre Etienne

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<sup>1028</sup> Carl Richard, *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts*, (Plymouth: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), p.126.

<sup>1029</sup> George Washington to Chevalier de Chastellux, February 1, 178, in *The Writings of George Washington, from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick. 39 vols. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931-1944), 27:314-315.

<sup>1030</sup> Washington was also sometimes referred to as ‘the American Fabius’. Fabius was a second century Roman politician and general, five times consul and twice dictator. Like Cincinnatus he readily laid down the power of the dictatorship to return to his private life. Alexander Hamilton identified Washington as Fabius, since, like the Roman, Washington had wisely avoided engaging the better-

Duponceau visited Washington at Mount Vernon, he wrote: ‘the most that can be said for it is that it is a modest habitation, quite in keeping with the idea we have of Cincinnatus and of those other great commanders of the Roman Republic’.<sup>1031</sup> Captain Josiah Dunham described in private correspondence how Washington ‘great, like Cincinnatus, returned to the plough’ and William Pierce from Georgia likewise said of the Constitutional Convention that Washington ‘like Cincinnatus...returned to his farm perfectly content with being only a plain citizen after enjoying the highest honor of the Confederacy, and now only seeks for the approbation of his countrymen by being virtuous and useful’.<sup>1032</sup> In 1981 Charles Henry Wharton wrote in *A Poetical Epistle to His Excellency George Washington*: ‘thus, when of old, from his paternal farm/Rome bade her rigid Cincinnatus arm; Th’ illustrious peasant rushes to the field, Soon are the haughty Volsii taught to yield...His country sav’d, the solemn triumph o’er, He tills his native acres as before’.<sup>1033</sup> When the war ended, Washington was elected as the first President of the Society of the Cincinnati, which was an organisation for military officers who served in the Revolutionary War.<sup>1034</sup> The society referenced Cincinnatus in both its name and Latin motto, ‘*omnia reliquit servare rem publicam*’.<sup>1035</sup> In 1788, on his fifty-sixth birthday, the citizens of Wilmington, Delaware, drank a toast to ‘Farmer Washington – may he like a second

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trained British enemy in the early part of the war, but, rather, waiting for a more opportune moment to commence an attack. Parson Weems, in his biography of Washington, who wrote the infamous account that started the mythical cherry tree story, had the same comparison declaring Washington as ‘prudent as Fabius’. While the story of Fabius included many aspects of military genius and victory, the Cincinnatian story had pastoral and agrarian overtones that better suited the ideology and circumstances of the American colonists. Richard, *Greeks and Romans Bearing Gifts*, p.127.

<sup>1031</sup> Pierre Etienne Duponceau quoted in Thomas Nelson Winter, ‘Cincinnatus and the Disbanding of Washington’s Army’, Faculty Publications, Classics and Religious Studies Department, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, 51:6 (April 1975).

<sup>1032</sup> William Pierce, quoted in W. Cleon Skousen, *The Making of America: The Substance and Meaning of the Constitution*, (C&J Investments, 1985), p.152.

<sup>1033</sup> Charles Henry Wharton, *A Poetical Epistle to His Excellency George Washington*, 1781, quoted in Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p.220.

<sup>1034</sup> On the Society of the Cincinnati, see Minor Myers, *Liberty Without Anarchy: A History of the Society of the Cincinnati* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2004).

<sup>1035</sup> Translation: ‘He relinquished everything to serve the Republic’. The Society was later heavily criticised because membership was hereditary, passing from father to son, and was reminiscent of the Old World aristocracy that the colonists had fought against in the war. Jefferson unsuccessfully attempted to convince Washington to distance himself from the Cincinnati, writing of the Society: ‘Their sight must be perfectly dazzled by the glittering of crowns & coronets’. Washington did however demand reforms of the society when popular fears of the organisation threatened to destroy the image associated with its name. Thomas Jefferson quoted in *General Washington’s Correspondence concerning the Society of the Cincinnati* ed. E. E. Hume (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1941): 384. Objections to the Society were first raised in a pamphlet by South Carolinian Judge Aedanus Burke in 1783; see “Cassius” [Aedanus Burke], *Observations on the Order of the Cincinnati* (Philadelphia, 1783).

Cincinnatus, be called from the plow to rule a great people'.<sup>1036</sup> The same year, after visiting Washington at his Mount Vernon Residence, the French traveller Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville wrote: 'You have often heard him compared to Cincinnatus... The comparison is doubtless just. The celebrated General is nothing more at present than a good farmer, constantly occupied in the care of his farm and the improvement of cultivation'.<sup>1037</sup> Praise came from both sides of the Atlantic, with Lord Byron concurring on the Cincinnatian analogy, writing of Washington in his 1814 *Ode to Napoleon*: 'The Cincinnatus of the West,/Whom Envy dared not hate,/Bequeathed the name of Washington,/To make man blush there was but one!'<sup>1038</sup> Even George the Third unintentionally agreed with the praise of Washington: unable to believe that any military leader would voluntarily surrender such power, the king scoffed that Washington 'will be the greatest man in the world' were he to resign his commission after the war.<sup>1039</sup> Carl Richard has commented that this remark betrays the English king's comprehension of the enormous emotional power that classical republican ideals wielded over the American colonial mind.<sup>1040</sup>

The image of Washington as Cincinnatus became increasingly diverse in genre, capturing the imagination of both foreign and domestic artists, and he was soon depicted as the great Roman in paintings and sculptures.<sup>1041</sup> In 1783 Charles Wilson Peale was commissioned to create in downtown Philadelphia a triumphal arch 'embellished with illuminated Paintings and suitable Inscriptions'.<sup>1042</sup> The arch, a traditional symbol of Roman Republican victory celebrating heroism and triumph in the public sphere, was covered in classical images and Latin inscriptions. Peale depicted Washington as Cincinnatus and had the line 'So HE who Rome's proud legions sway'd,/Return'd and sought his native shade'.<sup>1043</sup> The same year, American painter Joseph Wright created a bas-relief portrait, which currently hangs at Mount Vernon, of Washington in Roman dress with his head encircled with a laurel wreath.

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<sup>1036</sup> Fourth of July Toast, quoted in Carl Richard, *The Founders and the Classics: Greece, Rome, and the American Enlightenment*, (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p.71.

<sup>1037</sup> Jacques-Pierre Brissot de Warville, *New travels in the United States of America. Performed in 1788*, (Carlisle: Applewood Books, 1792), p.428.

<sup>1038</sup> *Ode to Napoleon*, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.71.

<sup>1039</sup> George III, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.71.

<sup>1040</sup> Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.71.

<sup>1041</sup> For a brief overview of the classical artistic representations of George Washington, see Malamud, *Ancient Rome and Modern America*, p.15.

<sup>1042</sup> Quoted in Sarah Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p.64.

<sup>1043</sup> Kenneth Silverman, *Cultural History of the American Revolution: Painting, Music*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 425, 434.

The following year, 1784, John Trumbull displayed in London a painting entitled *The Deputation from the Senate Presenting to Cincinnatus the Command of the Roman Armies*. Trumbull's rendering of Cincinnatus was an unmistakable likeness of Washington. Debuting such a painting in London, rather than America, meant the message implicit in the work was clear: no British leader would have had the virtue to make such a disinterested gesture as Cincinnatus or Washington in resigning supreme military power and returning to their plough.<sup>1044</sup> In the same year the French sculpture, Jean-Antoine Houdon, began a depiction of Washington for the rotunda of the Virginia State Capitol.<sup>1045</sup> The marble sculpture had a life-size standing Washington, his right hand on a cane, his left arm resting on fasces, the Roman sign of power, on which is slung his cape and sword, and at the back is a plough. Although Washington, by request, was depicted in contemporary military uniform, not neoclassical attire popular with sculptures of the era, the mixture of civilian and military objects invokes the imagery and ideal of Cincinnatus. John J Barralet's 1799 engraving *George Washington's Resignation* showed Washington surrendering power to Columbia, while in the background oxen, a plough, and Mount Vernon awaited. After the war of 1812 the state of North Carolina commissioned Antonio Canova to create a statue of Washington to be displayed in their Capitol building. Canova depicted Washington in Roman military garb, with his sword laid down and his left hand clutching the Farewell Address. Both were symbols of his two great surrenders of power and, along with the Roman dress, invoked a likening of Washington to Cincinnatus. The statue had a brief existence: in the early morning of June 21, 1831, the State House burnt down leaving only a mound of ashes. For the centennial of Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1832, Horatio Greenough was commissioned to fashion a twelve-tonne marble statue of Washington originally for the United States Capitol Rotunda, but now housed in the National Museum of American History. The statue was based on Phidias's *Zeus*, but Greenough altered it to fit the Cincinnatian analogy. Washington, depicted in classical garb, has his right arm raised with the index finger pointing heavenward, while his left arm offers his sword with the handle pointing outwards. It is the sword,

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<sup>1044</sup> Holger Hoock, *Empires of the Imagination: Politics, War, and the Arts in the British World, 1750-1850*, (London: Profile Books, 2010), p.110.

<sup>1045</sup> It was installed in the Capitol in 1796. Chief Justice John Marshall said 'Nothing in bronze or stone could be a more perfect image than this statue of the living Washington'. Frances Davis Whittemore, *George Washington in Sculpture*, (Boston: Marshall Jones Company, 1933), p. 26.

with its hilt forward, that gives the statue its Cincinnatian style; it symbolises Washington turning over power to the people at the conclusion of the war. Unfortunately, the semi-naked statue of Washington offended Victorian sensibilities and drew harsh criticisms.<sup>1046</sup> Basing the sculpture on Zeus, the most powerful of the gods, may have been meant to show the magnanimity of Washington's actions - twice resigning from the most powerful position – but it also represented Washington as a king, the very thing the colonists had fought against and did not desired to replicate.

Washington's emulation of Cincinnatus spawned a generation of American leaders who ritualised their retreat to the countryside as a Cincinnatian performance.<sup>1047</sup> John Adams in 1776 expressed his desire to 'retreat like Cincinnatus...and farewell Politicks', and further commented that 'it seems the mode of becoming great is to retire'.<sup>1048</sup> Following the war, Adams was also compared to Cincinnatus amongst other great Romans. Brissot de Warville said on visiting Adams' farm:

he has, finally, returned to his retreat, in the midst of the applauses of his fellow-citizens, occupied in the cultivation of his farm, and forgetting what he was when he trampled on the pride of his king, who had put a price on his head and who was forced to receive him as the ambassador of a free country. Such were the generals and ambassadors of the best ages of Rome and Greece; such were Epaminondas, Cincinnatus, and Fabius.<sup>1049</sup>

Thomas Jefferson likewise expressed his virtuous and agrarian roots by idolising 'my family, my farm, and my books' and he spent his entire life constantly redesigning his remote Monticello estate.<sup>1050</sup> In 1809, when his second presidential term came to an end, he wrote 'never did a prisoner, released from his chains, feel such a relief as I

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<sup>1046</sup> When the statue was delivered to the United States Capitol for display it was immediately met with controversy; the half-naked Washington was offensive, even comical. It was removed and after several display locations is currently displayed at the National Museum of American History. Philip Hoose reportedly complained that 'Washington was too careful with his health to expose himself thus in a climate so uncertain as ours'. Philip Hoose, quoted in Howard Mumford Jones, *O Strange New World: American Culture: The Formative Years*, (New York: Viking Press, 1964), p.265. For more on the controversy of Greenough's sculpture see Alastair Blanshard, *Sex: Vice and Love from Antiquity to Modernity*, (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), pp.7-14.

<sup>1047</sup> Jones, *O Strange New World*, p.246.

<sup>1048</sup> John Adams to Abigail Adams, 14 January 1797, Adams Family Papers 1639-1899, Massachusetts Historical Society, Call No. P-54, reel 383.

<sup>1049</sup> Brissot de Warville, quoted in Richard, *Founders and the Classics*, p.68.

<sup>1050</sup> Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Auguste Adet, October 14, 1795, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, eds. Julian P. Boyd, Charles T. Cullen, John Catanzariti, Barbara B. Oberg, et al, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950-), 33 vols, 28:504.

shall on shaking off the shackles of power'.<sup>1051</sup> Jefferson retired to his rural estate and spent the remainder of his years there in 'stoic leisure'.<sup>1052</sup> Other colonial patriots were similarly preoccupied with their retirement from politics into a pastoral setting: John Jay, the first secretary of state and 'Cincinnatus of New York' prioritised Roman virtue in his retirement, while James Madison's retirement to the country estate of Montpelier closely resembled Washington's retreat to Mount Vernon and Jefferson's withdrawal to Monticello.<sup>1053</sup>

### Conclusions

The transition from Cato to Cincinnatus as the ideal model for neoclassical self-fashioning in the colonies was indicative of a greater shift in the American colonial mindset. The deployment of Cincinnatus reveals that the colonists felt there was a need for neoclassical self-fashioning, as it was through the donning of classical identities that they explored ideas about their circumstances and expressed their concerns. Since the French and Indian War, the colonists had viewed the world through the lens of Roman history; casting different actors in classical roles, and tying their own history to that of the Roman Republic. Cato had acted as a vehicle of neoclassical expression for the colonists since the Stamp Act Crisis in 1765, but as the colonists' circumstances and needs changed, so did their neoclassical identities. Cato had informed the colonial outlook for a very specific period of time when the colonists were fatalistically resigned to the continued encroachment of British tyranny. Coinciding with the French contemplating entering the war on the American side, Cincinnatus, the model of civic virtue and military victory, became the more popular Roman hero. Cato, a model of suicide and defeat, no longer resonated with the colonists and they sought to implement a new republican role model. With the implementation of the Cincinnatus narrative, the suicidal story of Cato needed to be re-branded. Sewall attempted to reinterpret the Cato narrative in his *New Epilogue to Cato* by recasting America as the fulfilment of the Roman Republic, rather than suffering an Utican end like Cato and the republican forces. Likewise, having Washington likened to Cato gave the colonists a leader representing death and

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<sup>1051</sup> Thomas Jefferson to P.S. Dupont de Nemours, March 2, 1809, quoted in quoted in Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.223.

<sup>1052</sup> Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, p.223.

<sup>1053</sup> Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United State*, (Detroit: Wayne University Press, 1984), p.161.

defeat, whereas Cincinnatus stood for victory and the establishment of a virtuous and prosperous republic. Comparing Washington to Cincinnatus also implied that he would eventually step down from power and allow the state to establish its own government. Cincinnatus reflected the colonists' ability to imagine their war, which was initially an imperial rebellion, as possibility leading to an embryonic state. The adoption of Cincinnatus reflected the changing needs of the colonists but indicates their continue reliance on the medium of antiquity to express themselves.

Cato had served the American colonists as the ideal model of virtuous defeat from the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765 until the mid-war years. This thesis has catalogued and analysed the plethora of references to Cato and found that the colonists were enamoured with the Cato narrative. The Americans saw in Cato a reflection of their own struggles with Britain and identified with the choice he had at the fall of the Roman Republic; that of living under tyranny or finding freedom in death. For the colonists, Cato's cries for liberty literally became their own protestations against the British. Like Cato, the colonists called for 'liberty or death' and while much scholarship has been devoted to the 'liberty' aspect of this sentiment, this thesis has looked at what the colonists meant in calling for 'death'. Rather than being a rhetorical flamboyance, there were genuine sentiments that lay behind their calls for 'death'. For the colonists, who were not assured of victory in the war, or aware that they were fighting what would later be called a 'revolution', Cato offered them a means to contemplate the corruption of the British Empire and see a virtuous solution to the conflict. Cato did not offer the colonists a present for revolutionary action; on the contrary, Cato gave the colonists a model of virtuous opposition through death. Rather than fighting a 'revolution', the colonists saw themselves as Cato-like figures making a final stand for liberty and maintaining their virtue in the process.

In order to understand the profound relationship which the colonists had with Cato and the genuine sentiments that lay behind their deployment of references to the republican role model, Chapter One looked at how the colonists were steeped in the classics. The eighteenth-century school system was primarily responsible for the colonists' classical education and the classics dominated the grammar school and college curricula. Colonists who did not attend college were exposed to the classics through their general reading and the almanacs that circulated in the period. The colonists' knowledge of the classics warned them of the precarious nature of liberty,

and left them well-versed in identifying potentially tyrannical situations. The classics informed the colonists' worldview, making them see contemporary events through the lens of antiquity, and gave them a common political language that they extensively drew upon during the war years. In short, there was nothing superficial about the colonists' classical learning, and the relationship they had with antiquity was all-encompassing and long-lived.

One particular exemplar from antiquity came to be of central importance to the colonists. The narrative of Cato the Younger came down to the Americans primarily through Plutarch's *Life of Cato* and Joseph Addison's *Cato: A Tragedy*. Chapter Two analysed Addison's *Cato* to see how the colonists interpreted the Cato narrative and how it informed the colonial mindset. The colonists identified with Cato's decision at Utica to free himself from a corrupt world and preserve his virtue through committing suicide. Just as Utica was Rome's last bastion of republican liberty, America saw itself as the remaining outpost of liberty that was being impinged upon by the tyranny of British governance. The Americans came to venerate the Cato and repeatedly published and praised his suicide at Utica as a model of virtue worthy of emulation. Cato became the byword for martyrdom and provided the colonists with an example of how to preserve their virtue from the corruption of Britain. They drew on the radical aspects of the Cato story, mirroring his calls for 'liberty or death' in their own struggles against Britain.

The colonists' relationship with Cato pervaded the literature, manifesting in different ways. Chapter Three traced the advent of the colonists' identification with Cato. In the wake of the French and Indian War, the American colonists participated in a transatlantic dialogue that envisaged the British Empire as the fulfilment of the Roman Empire, surpassing it in both virtuous and democratic governance. As America's relationship with Britain began to change, due to the implementation of taxes that the Americans perceived to be unconstitutional and a threat to their liberties, they turned to antiquity to express their concerns. The colonists initially drew upon various examples of classical and biblical tyranny to express how they felt about the mother country, but rapidly the narrative of Cato came to prominence in the literature. The colonists felt that Cato best represented the situation in which they found themselves and his failed plight against Caesar resonated with them. In choosing Cato as their role model, the colonists rallied the movement against Britain around a symbol of defeat. The colonial mindset, expressed through the colonists'

identification with Cato, revealed that the colonists did not view the war with Britain as a 'revolution' but saw themselves as partaking in a modern-day Catonian performance. The colonists saw themselves, like Cato at the fall of Rome, as preparing for a virtuous death.

Chapter Four saw how the Cato narrative played out in the political arena through specific instances of Catonian performance by various American patriots. It became a commonplace for patriots to invoke Cato in their orations and for their audiences to liken the orators to Cato. Some of the most famous colonists of the war deliberately posed as Cato in their orations, indicating that both the actor and his audience identified with and related to the Cato narrative. Chapter Five showed that female colonists undertook neoclassical performances of their own, but in a different arena. Just as the male colonists chose to emulate Cato, the female patriots subscribed to the same Catonian heroics by adopting as pseudonyms the names of Roman matrons who had committed suicide or made great personal sacrifices for the republic. Women chose to emulate Roman matrons who had committed suicide rather than live under tyranny or in a situation that compromised their virtue. Through the adoption of radical models of republican devotion, colonial women were able to express the same level of commitment to republican ideals that the men were able to freely show through their political or military service. The invocation of Cato by men and similar Roman matron models by women reveals a society-wide identification with the hopeless situation that the republican forces, headed by Cato, found themselves in at Utica, and their desire to not outlive liberty.

Cato spoke to a colonial populace resigned to British tyranny, but as the war continued and the prospect of victory because a possibility there needed to be another neoclassical entity that reflected their growing fortunes. The colonists' complete reliance on antiquity to inform their worldview and to express themselves was revealed in their decision to turn again to the classics to find a new role model. The colonists saw Cincinnatus as best representing the new situation in which they found themselves. Cincinnatus revealed the changing colonial attitudes towards the outcome of the war, but also showed their new fears about a peaceful transition from wartime to statehood, and their reliance on the classics to express these concerns.

In looking at the deployment of Catonian references in the late colonial literature, a different side to the generation that fought the last British civil war has been revealed. Current scholarship has assumed that the colonists looked to

antiquity in order to gain inspiration for a glorious future, and for models of successful republican governance. This thesis has challenged this assumption through examination of the colonists' identification with the Cato narrative. The colonial tendency to uphold Cato as a moral exemplar indicates that the colonists held a more pessimistic outlook than historians have previously envisioned. The figure of Cato hardly offered a precedent for a successful republic, but instead showed American colonists how to die with virtue in the face of tyranny. The colonists' admiration of Cato also presents us with an understanding of what was at stake for the colonists in their struggle with the British government that differs from the current historiographical tradition. Patriotic history has represented the colonists as revolutionaries, fighting a struggle for liberty. Their passion for Cato, however, shows us another side: namely, a fatalistic acceptance of defeat and continued British rule which could only be met virtuously through suicide. This is not a vision of 'revolutionaries', but suggests that the Americans saw themselves re-enacting Cato's last and fatal stand against tyranny.

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