

Staging Gender:
Masculinity, Politics, and the Passions in the Pamphlet Plays of the American Revolution

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ABSTRACT

Tyler L. Will: “Staging Gender: Masculinity, Politics, and the Passions in the Pamphlet Plays of the American Revolution”
(Under the direction of John Wood Sweet)

Whig and Tory authors made wide use of farces, tragedies, and dramatic dialogues in the print conflict that surrounded the American independence movement. Beyond familiar disputes over taxation, parliamentary representation, and government corruption, playwrights on both sides demonstrated concerns about the private character, virtue, and emotional life of leading political figures and common men. By analyzing the recurring motifs and subtexts of representative plays, I argue that a major flash point concerned the proper roles of emotion and reason in male action. Wartime controversies touched off a broad cultural debate about the dangers of unregulated passions, the importance of reason and virtue, and the role that emotion and self-control ought to play in public politics. Attending to these distinctions promises to revise historical appreciation of the American Revolution—if it was a contest of political or social ideals, it was also a revolution of sentiment and evolving conceptions of masculinity.

S.D.G.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As the American colonies edged toward a declaration of independence in the summer of 1776, Philadelphia's John Leacock became a playwright. In *The Fall of British Tyranny*, the prosperous goldsmith turned Son of Liberty offered a biting satire of British rule and a firm statement for revolution, exhorting colonists from the opening page to "wish, talk, fight, write, and die----for Liberty."¹ Leacock's principal villain was Lord Paramount, a telling sobriquet for Scotland's Lord Bute, erstwhile prime minister of Britain and a man reviled in the colonies as a corrupt opportunist. Under the playwright's pen, Bute's venality and corruption took center stage. The minister confessed the true source of his power, "the shaking of the treasury keys," and his willingness to trample on "charters, magna Chartas, bills of rights, acts of assembly, [and] resolves of congresses" to suppress dissent.² Far from a virtuous minister of the kingdom, Lord Paramount revealed himself thoroughly taken with his own desires for "ambition," "honor," and "power." If this politically charged play made anything clear, it was that polemicists of

¹ [John Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny: or, American Liberty Triumphant* (Philadelphia: Styner and Cist, 1776), iv. Leacock's authorship of *The Fall of British Tyranny* has been disputed. Philadelphia records from the period list several city residents with the initials J. Leacock. For this controversy, see Norman Philbrick, *Trumpets Sounding: Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1972), 41-2. For a defense of Leacock's identity and authorship as presented here, see Carla Mulford Micklus, "John Leacock's *A New Song, on the Repeal of the Stamp Act*," *Early American Literature* 15, no. 2 (1980): 188-193; and Francis James Dallet, Jr., "John Leacock and the Fall of British Tyranny," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 78, no. 4 (1954): 456-75. Leacock's authorship of several other dramatic accounts of events during the Revolution seems to make his authorship all but certain. See Carla Mulford, ed., *John Leacock's The First Book of the American Chronicles of the times, 1774-1775* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 1987).

² [Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, 7. For an example of similar propaganda directed against Lord Bute, see John Allen's *The American Alarm, or the Bostonian Plea, for the Rights and Liberties, of the People* (Boston: D. Kneeland and N. Davis, 1773).

the American Revolution drew few distinctions between controversial politics and the men behind them. Bute's private character and sentiments moved readily, even imperceptibly, into the realm of his public statesmanship—gender, emotion, and politics were intertwined.

With his chronicle play, Leacock joined the war of words raging as Anglo-colonial relations continued to sour in the aftermath of Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. Since colonial discontent had first erupted into protest a decade before with the passage of the Stamp Act, both Whig and Tory sympathizers had aired and sharpened their grievances through a free and active press.³ Partisan newspapers and printers churned out a torrent of words—in pamphlets, broadsides, poems, and, of course, plays—that fed a growing public appetite for political literature and commentary. Many of these tracts and screeds stand out as milestones in the American drive toward independence. Thomas Paine's epochal *Common Sense*, for instance, appeared only months before Leacock's play, quickly becoming the definitive statement for political separation. Though Tory authors awoke relatively late to the possibilities of polemical writing, they, too, produced a spate of partisan works. By the end of the conflict, nearly every Whig call for *Common Sense* in colonial politics could be met with Tory appeals to *Plain Truth*.⁴ When *The Fall of British Tyranny* appeared in Philadelphia, it joined this increasingly tense print dialogue surrounding independence.

³ For the Stamp Act and the colonial press see Edmund Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (1953; repr., Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 75-91; also see Peter David Garner Thomas, *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution, 1763-1767* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

⁴ For a discussion of the provenance of *Plain Truth* and its relationship to Tory war propaganda, see Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), 303, 249-340.

While part of this swelling tide of print, theatrical works such as Leacock's piece contributed to one of the Revolutionary era's most distinctive and culturally rich currents of political writing: the propaganda play.⁵ From 1770-1790, nearly fifteen such pieces emerged from print shops in major colonial cities. Many were crudely written, often lacking the unity or sophistication of true drama, and few were ever staged. In fact, the Revolution had all but closed the curtain on public theatre in the colonies. In 1774, the Continental Congress, citing republican virtue and thrift, had banned "every species of extravagance and dissipation" and with them the "exhibition of shows, plays, and other expensive diversions and entertainments."⁶ Despite such proscriptions, political enthusiasm did occasionally overflow to the stage. British troops in occupied cities performed plays for audiences of loyalists, and General Washington's men famously staged a production of Joseph Addison's republican tragedy, *Cato*, against the backdrop of Valley Forge.⁷ In 1781, chaplain Claude Robin toured the American colonies with French forces where he reported that Harvard students, too, indulged in a variety of

⁵ I follow convention here in referring to the political dramas of the Revolutionary period as "propaganda plays." They have been also been identified, according to the method of their distribution, as "pamphlet plays." I use both without distinction.

⁶ *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774-1789* (Washington: U.S. Government Print Office, 1904-1937), 12: 1001-2. For regulation of colonial theater, see George B. Bryan, *American Theatrical Regulation, 1607-1900: Conspectus and Texts* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1993). Bryan reproduces laws from throughout the colonies to show a longstanding cultural bias against the theatre and those employed as actors or actresses. See pp. 31-2 for the provisions of the First Continental Congress.

⁷ Many studies explore British military theatre. See, for example, Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22-9, 85-132. British forces staged performances in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Savannah. For a survey of the influence of *Cato* in colonial theatre, see Frederic M. Litto, "Addison's *Cato* in the Colonies," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (1966): 431-49. Litto argues that the strong Republican themes and *Cato*'s eventual suicide in the play provided a model of self-sacrificial patriotism that was deeply appealing to Whig activists. For colonial performances of *Cato* see Jason Shaffer, "'Great Cato's Descendents': A Genealogy of Performance," *Theatre Survey* 44, no. 1 (2003): 5-28. For the Valley Forge performance of *Cato* and the creation of national identity, see Randall Fuller, "Theaters of the American Revolution: The Valley Forge 'Cato' and the Meschianza in their Transcultural Contexts," *Early American Literature* 34, no. 2 (1999): 126-46.

patriotic plays: “Their subject is always national,” the cleric observed “such as the burning of Charles-Town, the capture of Burgoyne, the betrayal of Arnold.”⁸ Yet for most citizens, it remained far more likely to encounter theatrical works in newspapers, pamphlets, or circulars than in public performance. Advertisements for *The Fall of British Tyranny*, for example, appeared in a variety of colonial newspapers, and the play quickly ran to multiple printings in Boston, Philadelphia, and Providence.⁹ Even if denied the stage, then, the characters of propaganda plays could mount memorable performances for or against the Revolution for a popular readership.

Though relatively small in terms of representative works, the genre of the propaganda play was a house of many rooms and literary styles.¹⁰ Playwrights penned works ranging from the simple Tory piece *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse* (1774) to the elegiac, Whig tragedy *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777). Propaganda plays provided readers, and the rare audience, with a variety of presentations—many risible, some tragic, all vivid and connected to real events and people. Indeed, the chief virtue of the genre was its “immediacy” and its journalistic style.¹¹ Political playwrights wrote to comment on events from the siege of Boston to the

⁸ M. l’Abbé Robin, *Nouveau Voyage dans l’Amérique Septentrionale en l’Année 1781; et Campagne de l’Armée de M. Le Comte Rochambeau* (Philadelphie et Paris: Chez Moutard, 1782), 24: “le sujet en est toujours national: tel que l’incendie de Charles-Town, la prise de Burgoyne, la trahison d’Arnold.”

⁹ See *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, 24 July 1776. See also *The New England Chronicle*, 22 August 1776; *The Providence Gazette, and Country Journal*, 31 August 1776; *Freeman’s Journal* (Portsmouth, NH), 5 October 1776.

¹⁰ Like many forms of political writing employed in American Revolution, the pamphlet or propaganda play developed from earlier styles and forms used in the English Civil War. See S.J. Wiseman, “Pamphlet Plays in the Civil War News Market: Genre, Politics, and ‘Context,’” in *News, Newspapers, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Joad Raymond (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 66-83.

¹¹ Philbrick, *Trumpets Sounding*, 2. Philbrick’s introduction in this volume remains an indispensable survey of the style and form of the propaganda play in the colonies.

failed rebel campaign in Canada as they happened and to present the heroes and villains of colonial politics as they emerged. This emphasis on individual actors and occurrences distinguished the propaganda play from other forms of protest literature. While many Whig and Tory pamphleteers sought to persuade by explicit argument and invocations of political theory, playwrights worked with “broad strokes of caricature,” using farce and other devices to put political differences in high relief.¹² For this reason, the genre offers a promising forum in which to examine Whig and Tory self-presentations and understandings of the other within their historical moment.

What propaganda plays presented were not only the policy issues that divided Whigs and Tories but also both shared and contested understandings of how men ought to act in the public sphere. American historical memory has tended to recall the Revolution chiefly as an act of protest in response to grievances over taxation, trade regulation, and restrictions against trans-Appalachian settlement. Propaganda playwrights did, of course, weigh in on such matters of high politics, but they added much in the telling that points the way to new understandings of the revolutionary conflict. Just as John Leacock’s *The Fall of British Tyranny* took steady aim at Lord Bute’s desires and virtues, Whig and Tory playwrights consistently made individual men objects of praise or targets of criticism. By impugning or celebrating the character, virtues, and emotional qualities of men in the public sphere, propagandists politicized personal masculinity in new and surprising ways, aggressively blurring the line between “the protected private character of

¹² Philbrick, *Trumpets Sounding*, 3.

a public figure and his unprotected public actions.”¹³ If, as a generation of Progressive historians first observed, the American Revolution ultimately developed into a colonial bid for home rule, the period’s propaganda plays suggest that it also touched off a broader cultural conflict about what *sort* of men should rule at home or within the empire.¹⁴

By examining the genre of the propaganda play, I aim to reveal how propagandists presented critiques that were at once political *and* profoundly gendered.¹⁵ I first explore the intersection of masculinity and politics in Tory plays. Tory writers frequently cast their political opponents as rash and intemperate revolutionaries. To the Tory mind, Whig leaders acted not from reasoned grievances but from a foolhardy commitment to reckless passion. By depicting Whig men as fundamentally passionate rather than rational, Tory authors problematized the role of emotion in public politics and questioned the ability of their opponents to serve as self-governing statesmen. I then explore examples of martyrdom in Whig propaganda plays to understand how pro-

¹³ Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, & the Culture of Performance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 124.

¹⁴ Progressive historian Carl Lotus Becker first proposed this understanding of home rule at stake in the Revolution, *The History of Political Parties in the Province of New York, 1760–1776* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1909; reprint 1968), 22.

¹⁵ Despite their wide circulation during the Revolution, propaganda plays remain largely overshadowed by other forms of protest literature. For general treatments of propaganda plays in the context of wider revolutionary print culture, see S.E. Wilmer, *Theatre, Society and the Nation: Staging American Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 34–52; Jared Brown, *The Theatre in America during the Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 11–21; Arthur Hobson Quinn, *A History of The American Drama From the Beginning to the Civil War* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1951), 33–60; Walter J. Meserve, *An Emerging Entertainment the Drama of the American People to 1828* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), 60–91. Few scholars have attempted the kind of genre study proposed here. A notable exception to this remains John J. Teunissen’s study of “blockheadism” See John J. Teunissen, “Blockheadism and the Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution,” *Early American Literature* 7, no. 2 (1972): 148–62. Perhaps the most recent work with propaganda or pamphlet plays to attempt the kind of broader reading I propose is Jason Shaffer’s examination of British theatre conventions in American pamphlet plays, *Performing Patriotism: National Identity in the Colonial and Revolutionary Theater* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), chapter 5. Some scholars examine plays individually. For a recent example, see John Wood Sweet, *Bodies Politic: Negotiating Race in the American North, 1730–1830* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 185–95.

Revolution writers sought to reconcile emotion and self-restraint in politics. By emphasizing the importance of manly virtues and principles in those who sacrificed their lives, Whig authors presented male passion as reasoned and noble. Finally, I explore the politics of affect in descriptions of men's relationships with the family and their social dependents. Tory and Whig authors frequently portrayed the revolutionary contest as a struggle between parents and children. Moreover, implicating men's commitment to their dependents became a common and emotionally charged means of critiquing male political sympathies. These gendered dimensions of propaganda plays suggest that beyond the more celebrated understanding of the American Revolution as an ideological, commercial, or social contest lay broader debates about masculinity, virtue, and emotion.

CHAPTER 2: REVOLUTIONARY MEN AND INTEMPERATE MASCULINITY

In a short dialogue between two characters, John Leacock's *The Fall of British Tyranny* (1776) captured an essential difference in common perceptions of Whig and Tory men. As British troops occupy Boston and begin working to fortify the city, two residents—known only by their political affinities as “Whig” and “Tory”—convene in a town meeting where they survey the developments and discuss the meaning of the occupation for the colonies. For Whig, the appearance of British troops on Boston Neck suggests an ill design to “cut off communication between the town and country, making prisoners of us all by degrees.” He urges that action, even military action, be taken to liberate the city, asking his Tory interlocutor “can men of spirit bear forever with such usage?”¹⁶ Rather than commit himself to the uncertainties of revolution, his Tory acquaintance responds dismissively. “I avoid everything that has the appearance of rashness.” From a budding revolutionary, there could be only one reply: “you would avoid and discourage everything that has the appearance of patriotism, you mean.”¹⁷

A principal concern of propaganda playwrights was the temperament of their subjects. As Leacock's dialogue on the streets of Boston suggested, the differences between Whig and Tory men went beyond the particular flashpoints of taxation or imperial government to touch on the style of politics and the personal dispositions of its

¹⁶ [Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, 25

¹⁷ [Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, 26.

male architects. For Whig, and the tens of thousands he represented, men of “spirit,” “enthusiasm” or “zeal” were the soul of patriotism. Leacock accurately interpreted Tory authors when he suggested that many viewed support for the Revolution as sign of rashness or intemperance. At issue in these diverging understandings of male involvement in the Revolution was the role of emotion and reason in public politics. For their part, Tory pamphleteers, and even a few conservative Whig writers, saw passion and emotional exuberance as a baleful influence on the reason and order of society. Passion, as they understood it, made men irrational, dissolute, and ill suited to the affairs of state.¹⁸ Through the medium of the propaganda play, critical observers of the Revolution thus politicized the private world of male sentiment and made the regulation of personal emotion and behavior objects of wider scrutiny and debate.

For Tory observers, there was little doubt that the men wrapped up in the American Revolution had surrendered their better judgment to reckless emotions. Whig leaders may have couched their grievances in rational terms, based on appeals to constitutional principles or natural rights, but the foundation of revolutionary protest remained an “epidemical frenzy” which had infected men from Maine to Georgia.¹⁹ Jonathan Sewall, colonial Tory and author of the piece *A Cure for the Spleen* (1775), for example, set out to diagnose and treat this Whig distemper in its earliest stages. His

¹⁸ For a representative treatment of the negative connotations of the “passions” in the eighteenth century, see Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 23-4. Eustace’s is among the only complete works to address the social issues raised by public emotion. She argues convincingly that the public understanding of “passion” changed over the eighteenth-century, gradually overcoming the stigma that emotional displays were unrefined and associated with a lack of gentility.

¹⁹ Jonathan Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen or Amusement for a Winter’s Evening; Being the Substance of a Conversation on the Times, over a Friendly Tankard and Pipe. Taken in Short Hand by Sir Roger De Coverly* (Boston: James Rivington, 1775), 6.

extended dialogue set in a Virginia tavern presents the journey of two men, Trim and Puff, from revolutionary sympathy to reasoned loyalism. The names of these two stock characters themselves offered a thinly veiled critique of the sort of men taken by revolution. The Tory author punned with “Trim,” applying the name to the town barber who had tacked with public opinion to promote independence only for “the innocent purpose of supporting the credit of [his] shop.”²⁰ Puff, a delegate of the Continental Congress, has all the zeal and dogmatism of a recent convert to revolution. When this town demagogue and congressional patriot engage Anglican parson Sharp in conversation, readers learn first hand that it is hollow emotion that sustains Whig politics.

The rhetorical strategy of *A Cure for the Spleen* would have made for tedious reading, but it keenly expresses how Tories perceived the differences between their own politics and the fanaticism attributed to Whig men. The piece reads like a latter-day Socratic dialogue in which Sharp draws out the errors and inconsistencies of Whig thought by probing questions and argument. Trim and Puff take turns raising common objections against British rule running the gamut from accusations of a “corrupt ministry” in Britain to fears that the colonies had been forced to cede their “charter rights and privileges.”²¹ Against each objection, Sharp builds his case with the acuity implied by his name, often drawing on legal principles and the history of the British Empire from the English Civil War. The parson weighs each potential building block for revolution with calm deliberation, revealing that with careful scrutiny one argument after another “must

²⁰ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 5.

²¹ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 7.

fall to the ground.”²² As Trim and Puff face the demolition of their political ideology, Sewall’s message to readers becomes increasingly clear. Despite the pretense of principles and reasoned politics, the American Revolution was riotous emotion in disguise. Every feeble and increasingly exasperated argument raised by the pair reinforces this view of the Revolution as emotional rather than rational. Indeed, Sharp’s summary statement presents the colonial unrest as an “infatuation” in which “people seem to be rushing into open rebellion.”²³

Sewall was not content to let this essential charge against Whig men remain largely implicit, and by the end of the dialogue Sharp renders the strongest denunciations of the colonial revolt in terms of disordered emotions. He hypothesizes that a moment’s reflection is all that ought to be needed to convince any revolutionary of his folly. The parson imagines the repentance that colonial men will feel when they realize they had let heated emotion get the better of them: “What have I done, foolish man that I was . . . now that my passions are cooled, and reason, alas! Too late, has resumed her seat,” he exclaims “all those imaginary grievances disappear.”²⁴ Sharp’s indictment places in full view what Tories saw as the common fault of revolutionary men—a failure of self-mastery and an inability to control one’s emotions. The wise observer goes on to explain how powerful the effects of this surrender of reason could be. “Rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft,” he opines “for in both cases, the minds of men are entirely actuated by such a

²² Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 15.

²³ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 14.

²⁴ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 26.

spirit, as renders them proper *demoniacs*.”²⁵ Restated, elaborated, and refined, this accusation of intemperance and irrationality marked Tory critiques of Whig revolutionaries as indictments of masculine self-control as well as politics. To be sure, Tory authors did frequently address the issues of taxation, corruption, and natural rights, but a substantial part of their remonstrations remained grounded in this fear of unregulated emotion.

Tory pamphleteers also frequently traded on the broader cultural meanings and associations of intemperance to tie male revolutionaries to forms of figurative and literal drunkenness. Written to capitalize on the recent collapse of the Continental Army on Long Island, *The Battle of Brooklyn* (1777) contained perhaps the most caustic portrayals of individual Whig leaders anywhere in print. Its author, an anonymous “Officer in *New-York*,” laid the blame for the rebel defeat squarely at the feet of the Continental Army’s dissolute and feckless leaders. One of the farce’s principal targets was Gen. William Alexander, the self-styled “Earl of Stirling.” Stirling proves himself a drunken fool from the very first scene. Rising from his bed at noon, the general complains of a splitting headache. His servant, a closeted loyalist suggestively named King, reminds his master “you drank a *flinkabus* enough last night, to split the head of an Indian!”²⁶ Rather than attending to war preparations or preparing for a council on strategy, Stirling looks first to satisfy his own desire for drink. Before going about his day, he dispatches King with instructions to “go to the Commissary of Rum, and get my canteens filled.”²⁷ Stirling’s

²⁵ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 27.

²⁶ *The Battle of Brooklyn, a Farce of Two Acts* (New York: Printed for J. Rivington, 1777), 4.

²⁷ *The Battle of Brooklyn*, 5.

ineptitude and passion for alcohol soon have a marked effect on the battle for Brooklyn Heights. When Continental sentries spot an advancing column of British troops, the general blunders, dismissing all news of the advance and encouraging his scouts instead to “take a whistle from my canteens.”²⁸ The Tory author must have hoped that even the most unperceptive of readers would have seen that far from being led by men of substance and probity, the Revolution was in the hands of dissolute leaders ill equipped to govern even themselves.

What might otherwise have passed for a single accusation of drunkenness, however, also functioned as a general denunciation of the irrationality of Whig men in the Revolution. The author of *The Battle of Brooklyn* (1777) employed the device of the wise servant, a common dramatic convention, to inject his own commentary into the farce. As King fetches rum for Stirling, the servant addresses the audience *solus* and clearly parallels Stirling’s intemperance with a larger intoxication then overcoming the colonies. “If [Stirling] has credit enough with the Commissary, to get his canteens filled,” King remarks bitterly “he will belch it out of his stomach in the damn’dest lies, that ever disqualified a man for the character of a Gentleman.” Despite Stirling’s many moral failings and his hollow political rhetoric, King reveals that the Revolution has empowered such men, adding “and yet, Parson M’Worther, bellows from his pulpit, that this most *ignobleman*, is a chosen vessel to execute the Lord’s work---Ill-fated country! when will this delusion end?”²⁹ The author of this farcical piece did not have to look to the ideology of Boston’s leading Whigs to denounce the Revolution. By erecting an

²⁸ *The Battle of Brooklyn*, 19.

²⁹ *The Battle of Brooklyn*, 5.

image of Stirling and those who supported him as driven by their passions and incapable of self-government or sound judgment, he found a ready target in the male leaders of the independence movement. Gendered slights against a single man could thus take on potent political meanings.

This dual use of drunkenness to signify both literal inebriation and the figurative irrationality of the Revolution emerged as a consistent theme in Tory pamphlet plays. *A Dialogue Between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse, On His Return from the Grand Continental Congress* (1774), published pseudonymously by a colonial Tory “Mary V.V.,” skillfully developed a rumor of drunkenness into a suggestive commentary on the general intemperance of colonial revolt. The dialogue includes only two characters, pro-Revolution “Husband” and loyalist “Wife.” When pressed to defend his support of the Suffolk Resolves adopted by the Continental Congress, the husband points unwittingly to the delegates’ inebriation.³⁰ The Congress may have been more discerning, he confides, but “Nice Discussions, a wise Man will ever decline, When his Head and his Heart are oe’r heated with Wine.” He admits that in their enlivened and intemperate state, the delegates had acted rashly and without reason, explaining “Men who drunk are all Heroes, all prudent, all gallant/Stark fools, become sages, rank cowards, grow valiant.”³¹ The author of this dialogue drew here upon a popular rumor that delegates of the Congress had voted on the Resolves while many were drunk on Madeira. Even if

³⁰ Passed by the Massachusetts Assembly on September 9, 1774 under the leadership of Joseph Warren, the Suffolk Resolves denounced the Parliament’s coercive acts and called for colonial assemblies to raise militia units and to begin levying their own taxes independent of Parliament. The First Continental Congress approved the Resolves on September 17, 1774. See, for example, William L. Hallahan, *The Day the American Revolution Began: 19 April 1775* (New York: William and Morrow, 2000) 135-7.

³¹ Mary V.V., *A Dialogue, Between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse, On His Return from the Grand Continental Congress* (New York: James Rivington, 1774), 5.

unsubstantiated, this accusation suggested much about Tory views of the men spearheading the Revolution. Whig men were weak willed, intemperate, and, above all, unable to master their own desires and emotions to exercise reason in the world of politics.

This sparing dialogue continues on, demonstrating that the faults identified in one congressional delegate were the faults of all men ready to rush to revolution. When the husband continues to express confidence in the men of the Congress despite his wife's admonitions, readers see the author move from drunkenness as a literal inebriation to a broader and more figurative loss of reason. He attempts to dismiss his spouse's objections and assert his own, superior comprehension of politics, urging her to "Mind thy Household-Affairs, teach thy children to read / And never dear with politics trouble thy head." She responds in a revealing way, accusing her husband of being intoxicated with his own political delusions:

Good Lord! how magnanimous!
I fear Child thou'rt drunk,
Dost thou think thyself, Deary, a *Cromwel*, or *Monk*?
Dost thou think that wise Nature meant thy shallow Pate,
To digest the important Affairs of State?
Thou born! thou! the Machine of an Empire to wield?
Art thou wise in Debate? Shouldn't feel bold in the Field?
If thou's't Wisdom to manage Tobacco and Slave
It's as much as God ever design'd thee to have.³²

When this dialogue is generalized from a wife's harangue against her husband to Tory views of Whig men, it is evident that the issues of reason and self-control were among the most divisive in the cultural conflict between the two groups. The Tory author's obvious assaults on the reason of Whig men were inseparable from the more foundational

³² Mary V.V. *A Dialogue*, 7.

problem of masculine self-control. By depicting Whig agitators as drunken fools, Tory propagandists undermined public acceptance of the reasonableness of the revolutionary cause. Whether intoxicated by wine or the heady doctrines of revolution, Whig men did not seem to know their own appropriate limits; they emerged from Tory literature as irrational and prone to dangerous excesses in politics.

While Tory authors were understandably the most eager to critique male revolutionaries, even some moderate Whig authors identified male intemperance as a troubling development in colonial politics. Robert Munford's *The Patriots* (1778), for example, is unique among pamphlet plays for its generally evenhanded criticism of what the author saw as the zealotry of radical Whigs. Set in Virginia, Munford's play offered a cautionary tale of what could happen when emotional fervor overcame political moderation. The target of the play was Virginia's Committee of Observation and its anti-Tory witch-hunts that divided families and pitted neighbors against each other.³³ When Meanwell and Trueman find themselves falsely accused of Toryism, the two men realize that revolutionary fervor had supplanted the rule of law and reason. Meanwell owes his precarious position to a "violent patriot" suspicious of his political principles. Such men had been overcome by their emotional commitments. "What a pity it is that all heads are not capable of receiving the benign influence of the principles of liberty," he laments

³³ For Munford's connection to the Committee on Observation, see Norman Philbrick, "Introduction to *The Patriots*," in Norman Philbrick, ed., *Trumpets Sounding: Propaganda plays of the American Revolution* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), 260. For the connection between drama and Revolutionary committees of safety, see Jeffrey H. Richards, *Drama, Theatre, and Identity in The American New Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 105-123.

“some are too weak to bear it, and become thoroughly intoxicated.”³⁴ Munford’s suggestion that political zeal was intoxicating invoked the familiar language of intemperance to express fears that men in Virginia had lost control over their emotions and surrendered their reason. Much like Tory authors, his most salient concern was not the ideology of Whig or Tory politics but rather the consequences of male temperament in the public sphere.

Unlike his Tory counterparts, however, Munford was not opposed to the Revolution, merely its excesses. *The Patriots* offered not only a critique of male intemperance, for it also presented a positive view of how men ought to conduct themselves in politics. Meanwell and Trueman go on to discuss how patriotism and self-possession could co-exist in the same man. Indeed, both men see themselves as committed revolutionaries in their own right, as one explains “the cause of my country appears as dear to me as those who most passionately declaim on the subject.” What separated the radical Whig from less vehement supporters of independence, then, were not differences in political principles but their diverging comportments in the political arena. The two men agree that “real patriots are mild, and secretly anxious for their country, but modest in expressions of zeal.”³⁵ Munford likely captured the sentiments of many Whigs eager to combat perceived abuses of colonial liberties but wary of imprudent men acting in the name of revolution. Perhaps more fully than even Tory critics, *The Patriots* revealed that emotion, masculinity, and politics were intertwined and

³⁴ Robert Munford, *The Patriots. A Comedy in Five Acts* (Petersburg: Publisher Unknown, 1798), reprinted in Norman Philbrick, ed., *Trumpets Sounding: Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution* (New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1972), 268.

³⁵ Munford, *The Patriots*, 268.

that the substance of the Revolution often proved inseparable from the dispositions of the men who shaped it.

The cultural force of such critiques against intemperance, in all its forms, drew upon widespread assumptions of male rationality and self-autonomy. While scholars continue to debate the meaning and periodization of terms such as the “Enlightenment,” the eighteenth-century was unquestionably an age of reason, and men of this period were a product of their time. Conduct manuals, religious tracts, and popular literature presented views of men whose power in society began first and foremost with self-mastery. Disordered or overly emotional behavior transgressed appropriate norms of masculinity and resembled what men expected of women not political leaders in society. The wider acceptance of male emotion and sentimentalism in the public sphere lay yet in the future and developed only slowly through the nineteenth century. The commitment to reason and self-possession assumed to guide individual men also shaped broader views of the Revolution itself. Numerous historians have emphasized that Enlightenment rationality played a formative role in framing colonial grievances and protests against Britain. The charge that Whig revolutionaries were intemperate simultaneously impugned their social performances of manhood and struck at the some of the deepest aspirations of revolutionaries to order and reason.³⁶

³⁶ For gender and emotional regulation in the latter eighteenth century, see C. Dallet Hemphill “Class, Gender, and the Regulation of Emotional Expression in Revolutionary-Era Conduct Literature,” in Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis, eds. *An Emotional History of the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 33-51. John F. Kasson’s study of urban gentility and etiquette suggests that this cultural and gendered interest in emotional regulation continued on with alterations throughout the nineteenth century, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), 148-150. Kasson’s chapter 5 “Emotional Control” explores regulation of many types of emotion more broadly. E. Anthony Rotundo argues that “passionate” masculinity developed alongside mid-nineteenth-century interests in the male body, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution Era to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 222-5. Essays by Glenn Hendler, P.

In a period which thus prized rationality and self-governance as distinguishing marks of manhood, intemperance became more than a personal failing—it was potentially emasculating. The effeminizing tendencies of the passions became one subtext of Tory pamphlet plays. In few instances did authors draw out the implications of Whig men’s lack of emotional control in such explicit ways, but there remained telling suggestions. *A Dialogue Between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse* (1774), for example, used the simple interchange between a husband and wife to suggest a disturbing gender reversal in politics. The dialogue went so far as to suggest that women might, in fact, be better suited to politics and leadership in the public sphere than Whig men. Turning the prevailing associations of reason and masculinity on their head had the none-too-subtle effect of portraying revolutionary men as all but women, “a universally understood insult throughout the early modern Atlantic world.”³⁷

The Tory author develops this gender reversal through suggestive ironies in the dialogue. After the husband’s incriminating revelations of drunkenness at the Congress, readers associate the passions squarely with the Whig men he represents. When he

Gabrielle Foreman, and Cassandra Cleghorn place the social acceptance of sentimental masculinity in the temperance, abolition, and chivalric literature movements from the Early Republic and later, see Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler, eds., *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), each of these essays appears in Part II, “Public Sentiment.” The association between women and disorder and irrationality was a longstanding feature of male European thought. See Natalie Zemon Davis “Women on Top,” in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France: Eight Essays by Natalie Zemon Davis* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 124-6. For the importance of Enlightenment rationality in the creation of the American Republic, see Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 26-30; Gary Wills differs with Bailyn regarding the specific philosophical sources which shaped the founding but nonetheless sees Enlightenment rationality as a key ingredient in revolutionary politics, *Inventing America: Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1978).

³⁷ Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 3. Little argues persuasively that a desire to uphold views of male competence in war and politics was common not only to Euroamericans but also to Native Americans. Suggesting that women might be better in discharging the duties of leadership in either of these domains has been a near transhistorical affront to male honor.

falsely accuses his well-reasoning wife of being overly emotional, the lines have the opposite effect. “Consider, my Dear, you’re a Woman of Fashion,” he patronizes her “’Tis really indecent to be in such Passion.”³⁸ The author relies on a sense of dramatic irony, trusting that readers can appreciate that the truly passion-governed character in the dialogue is the delusional and intemperate husband. In another instance, the husband ends up praising his wife’s superior fitness for politics through a case of failed sarcasm. “You’re so patient, so cool, so monstrous eloquent,” he chides “next Congress, my Empress, shall be made President.” The mere suggestion of patience and a “cool” composure in politics stand out sharply from the rash and “overheated” men of the Congress. No longer able to tolerate her husband’s ineptitude, the wife declares boldly “Wou’d! instead of Delegates they’d sent Delegates Wives; / Heavens! We cou’dn’t have bungled it so for our Lives!”³⁹ Beneath its playful, sparring tone, this dialogue issued a pointed challenge to the Whig men it caricatured. The Tory author intimated that male leadership in politics rested on particular understandings of appropriate and temperate masculinity that Whig revolutionaries had failed to uphold. When men ceased to act like men, they risked losing not only the respect of their wives but also their assumed right to govern the wider body politic.⁴⁰

³⁸ [Mary V.V.], *A Dialogue*, 7.

³⁹ [Mary V.V.], *A Dialogue*, 8.

⁴⁰ The literature on male familial control, patriarchy, and politics is vast. For male governance of households, see Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4-5. A standard treatment of patriarchy and its intersections with the public sphere remains Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 239. My understanding of personal male behavior and its impact on public perception also draws on recent work with defamation cases. See, for example, Cornelia Dayton Hughes, *Women Before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 295-96; Kirsten Fischer, *Suspect Relations: Sex, Race, and Resistance in Colonial North Carolina* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), chapter 4. Lisa

Whig playwrights and authors increasingly recognized this perception that male revolutionaries were in thrall to dangerous emotions. Authors otherwise unabashed by the emotions of war still showed concern that readers might mistake the righteous passions of revolution for senseless fervor. A freely adapted version of Mercy Otis Warren's *The Adulateur* (1773), a mordant piece targeting Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson, nonetheless paused to combat the image of the Whig as frenzied revolutionary. When British soldiers kill an innocent youth at the onset of the play, Portius pledges revenge, confessing "Ten thousand boisterous passions glow within me And call for blood." In the face of this call for reprisal, however, Brutus—a stand in for leading Boston patriot James Otis—urges restraint. "Let reason calm thy passions," he counsels, explaining that the situation "demands A *cool, sedate* and yet *determin'd* Spirit."⁴¹ With Brutus as her mouthpiece, Warren goes on to expose the reckless patriot as so much Tory fiction. He accuses "the foes of freedom" of misrepresenting Whig men: "they wish to see us act up to the character, they have long painted. Headstrong---

Wilson provides a useful and concise summary of recent trends in the scholarship on patriarchy and politics, *The Heart of a Man: The Domestic Life of Men in Colonial New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 2-3.

⁴¹ [Mercy Otis Warren], *The Adulateur. A Tragedy, As it is now acted in Upper Servia* (Boston: "Printed and sold at the New Printing Office, Near Concert Hall, 1773), 11. Warren's initial publication of *The Adulateur* appeared serially in the *Massachusetts Spy* on 26 March 1772 and 23 April 1772. The unwanted collaborator added a substantial number of scenes and published the play as a pamphlet the following year. Citations are to the pamphlet edition of 1773. Warren herself viewed the additions as a "plagiarism" and disavowed any association with the pamphlet, Jeffrey H. Richards, *Mercy Otis Warren*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), 86. For a discussion of the textual variations between the two editions see Shaffer, "Making an Excellent Die," 7-8; Benjamin Franklin V., introduction to Benjamin Franklin V., ed., *The Plays and Poems of Mercy Otis Warren* (Delmar: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints), viii. For a discussion of Warren's career as a dramatist, see Cheryl Z. Oreovicz, "Heroic Drama from an Uncertain Age: The Plays of Mercy Warren," in *Early American Literature and Culture: Essays Honoring Harrison T. Meserole*, ed. Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 192-207.

rebellious---factionous---uncontroul'd."⁴² In the end, such composure averts rash action, and Warren makes the case that Whig men were both temperate and "cool." While Whig propagandists were certainly proud of the passion for liberty that burned in their breasts, then, they took care that this passion did not appear burn too hotly.

For many authors, the most pressing realities of the American Revolution were not military or even strictly political. The pamphlet plays of the revolutionary era show that perhaps the principal concern for Tories in the colonies was living amidst a population increasingly ruled not by law and authority but by popular fervor. The Tory critiques of male intemperance presented here reveal that many judged the revolution by its effects on the behavior of the men in their communities. Tory authors feared that many had taken to rebellion "with a blind, enthusiastic zeal" that if allowed to spread would harm all in society.⁴³ As they saw it, the important matters of government could not be left to men who could not govern their own passions. While Whig protestors may have inveighed bitterly against British "slavery," Tory playwrights and dramatic authors pointed out, in often surprising ways, that enslavement to one's emotions and irrational prejudices was far worse. The unknown author of *The Battle of Brooklyn* (1777) concluded the piece with a prayer that might well have been heard from the lips of Tories throughout the colonies: "And O! almighty disposer of human events, open the eyes of my deluded fellow-subjects, in this once, happy country: encourage them to a free

⁴² *The Adulateur*, 12.

⁴³ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 28.

exercise of that reason, which is the portion of every individual, that each my judge for himself: then peace and order, will smile triumphant.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ *The Battle Brooklyn*, 28.

CHAPTER 3: MARTYRDOM, PRINCIPLE, AND THE PATRIOTISM OF PASSION

For many pro-Revolution authors, an emotional liberation was an inevitable element of securing political independence. While a few moderate writers sought to distance themselves from supposedly intemperate or emasculating emotion, the greater part of Whig authors embraced passion for the Revolution as a positive good. Despite passing worries that some sympathizers might become “overheated,” Whig playwrights continued to celebrate the “ardor” or “enthusiasm” that brought men to armed resistance. The place of emotion in the political sphere remained an open and disputed question, with revolutionary passion praised in one camp and accused of inviting irrationality in the other. The figure of the martyr cultivated by Whig pamphleteers provides subtle clues about the fault lines that divided praiseworthy passions from more problematic or unsettling forms of emotion. In their depictions of martyrdom, Whig authors revealed that zeal became appropriate if constrained by virtue or principle. Acting sacrificially for justice or liberty elevated—even sacralized—passion as both a masculine and a political virtue. This assumption that principle tempered and ennobled passion sustained much pro-Revolution literature, allowing Whig authors to urge their readers in the same sentence, “Be your hearts warm---but let your hands be pure.”⁴⁵

Whig portrayals of martyrdom further suggest new ways to understand the complex relationship between reason and affect in the male preserve of eighteenth-

⁴⁵ [Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, vi.

century politics. On the one hand, the literary cult of martyrs seems to highlight an apparent paradox. Hard pressed to emphasize the reasonability of their protests against the crown, Whig authors also faced the need to excite and direct public sentiment toward the tumult, and inevitable excesses, of revolution. These countervailing imperatives would appear to have made the task of the Whig propagandist a fundamentally inconsistent one. Yet as Nicole Eustace and other scholars have begun to reveal, this view of the oppositional or “dueling nature of reason and emotion” is perhaps more fiction than fact.⁴⁶ Emotion and reason often coursed alongside one another, intersected, and blurred together in the rhetoric of revolution. The martyr represents one particularly instructive point of intersection. While risking death might have seemed a reckless if noble display of passion, Whig propagandists cast such deaths as the ultimate acts of self-control. Because of their abiding commitments to principle, Whig martyrs became examples of deliberate and composed “sacrifices upon the altar of liberty.”⁴⁷ Male political actors, then, might have aspired to emotional zeal and reasoned self-restraint without fear of inconsistency.

From the very first casualties of the Anglo-American conflict, Whig propagandists were quick to recruit and shape the memory of fallen colonists as martyrs in a larger patriotic struggle. Many of the scenes that depicted such early deaths sought little more than the pathetic effect aroused by the death of countrymen. In the middle of his chronicle play *The Fall of British Tyranny* (1776), for example, John Leacock

⁴⁶ Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 3. This section also draws on Eustace’s discussion of “spirit” and its tempering influence on the passions. See chapter 9.

⁴⁷ Thomas Paine, *A Dialogue between the Ghost of General Montgomery, Just Arrived from the Elysian Fields; and an American Delegate in a Wood Near Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Printed, and Sold by R. Bell, in Third-Street, 1776), 15.

employed an extended pastoral allegory meant to illustrate both the injustice and human cost of British aggressions at Lexington and Concord. Two shepherds, Roger and Dick, discuss the savage attacks of “a herd of ravenous British wolves” on the peaceful flocks outside the two Massachusetts’ towns.⁴⁸ As Roger recalls, the British advance through Lexington occasioned one of the earliest atrocities of the American Revolution. When several militiamen fled Lexington green to seek shelter in the nearby meeting house, Roger reports that from the wolves “the very houses of God were no longer a sanctuary; many they tore to pieces, and some at the very foot of the altar.”⁴⁹ Having defiled the sanctuary of a church, the British advanced to Concord where they “proceeded to devour everything that lay in their way” before finally repulsed by a group of men “armed with revenge.”⁵⁰ The martyrdom presented in such scenes emphasized collective victimization rather than personal sacrifice. Readers were made to contemplate, as broad groups, innocent and suffering colonists, their British oppressors, and the seemingly stark moral contrasts between them.

A similar tone prevailed in an unknown author’s adaptation of Mercy Otis Warren’s *The Adulateur* (1773). In a scene noticeably more militant than Warren’s original, the unwanted collaborator describes the events surrounding the death of a young Bostonian.⁵¹ When crowds went “thoughtless of harm to see [the] pageantry” of a local

⁴⁸ [John Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, 31.

⁴⁹ [Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, 33. This claim of British atrocity at Lexington cannot be corroborated by independent sources, and the rumor that British soldiers pursued colonists into the town church does not appear to be widely circulated. For a brief discussion of this scene in *The Fall of British Tyranny*, see Philbrick, *Trumpets Sounding*, 51.

⁵⁰ [Leacock], *The Fall of British Tyranny*, 34.

⁵¹ For the disputed provenance and printing history of *The Adulateur*, see note 41 above.

celebration, patriot Cassius explains, they met instead a British-led massacre.⁵² The unprovoked violence left “One youth,” described only as an “unhappy victim,” dead before his time.⁵³ A group of male observers then speaks only generally of British oppression, and readers learn little about the hapless martyr or the moment of his death. As with Leacock’s allegory, this relatively flat and unsophisticated portrayal of martyrdom aimed principally at stirring hatred of the British and galvanizing support for revolution. The author focused little on the deceased and much more on the reactions of a grieving public. These scenes offered only fragmentary signs that the youth’s death ought to have spurred Whig men on to a similar—if more deliberate—sacrifice. Brutus explains briefly that such oppression demands a manly response, inquiring, “Are we men? And stand we still and bear it? Where’s our sense?”⁵⁴ Such glimpses at the connections between martyrdom and manly passion, however, remained overshadowed by the raw scandal and pathos of innocent death.

While every Whig remembrance of casualties aimed similarly to excite public sympathy, several authors limned the deaths of particular soldiers in ways that made the principled emotions of *willing* martyrs an exemplar for all men. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, a Maryland schoolmaster and onetime seminarian, fast became the bard of American martyrdom, and his dramas captured the deeds *and* sentiments of the Revolution’s most notable martyr heroes. The first military engagements between British regulars and colonial troops form the substance of Brackenridge’s brace of tragedies.

⁵² *The Adulateur*, 10.

⁵³ *The Adulateur*, 11.

⁵⁴ *The Adulateur*, 11.

Dedicated expressly to the “Honour of some brave men, who have fallen in the Cause of Liberty,” *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776) memorialized the death of the Boston physician-cum-general Joseph Warren.⁵⁵ Even more tellingly, *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777) used an example of martyrdom on the Plains of Abraham outside Quebec, site of the famous British engagement against the French in the Seven Years’ War, to resuscitate the public image of the botched invasion of British Canada.⁵⁶ Viewed collectively, Brackenridge’s dramas reveal the complex and frequently overlapping relationships among manly self-sacrifice, principle, and passion through accounts of individual men meeting death.

From the onset of *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776), the author forges a close connection between principles and heightened emotion. The piece’s prologue, for example, offers a moving celebration of wartime sacrifice that keenly expresses the intersection of virtue and zeal:

This mighty Era big with dead alarms,
 Aloud calls each American to arms.
 Let ev’ry Breast with martial ardor glow,
 Nor dread to meet the proud usurping foe.
 What tho our bodies feel an earthly chain,
 Still the free soul, unblemished and serene

⁵⁵ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill. A Dramatic Piece, of Five Acts, in Heroic Measure* (Philadelphia: Printed and Sold by Robert Bell in Third Street, 1776), b.

⁵⁶ For General Montgomery as a representative of Revolution-era martyr literature, see Ginger Strand, “The Many Deaths of General Montgomery: Audiences and Pamphlet Plays of the Revolution,” *American Literary History* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 1-20. For discussions of virtuous deaths and martyrdom propaganda plays more broadly, see Jason Shaffer, “Making an ‘Excellent Die’: Death, Mourning, and Patriotism in the Propaganda Plays of the American Revolution,” *Early American Literature* 41, no. 1 (2006): 2-28. While Shaffer deals with several of the same scenes presented above, his emphasis remains on the historical allusions and martyr lineages that tied the sacrifice of Revolutionary generals to a broader classical tradition of literary martyrdom. The particular significance of Gen. Wolfe’s victory on Plains of Abraham and its associations with wartime masculinity are ably described by Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 205-7. For the larger political and military significance of the siege of Québec, see Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Year’s War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 344-68.

Enjoys a mental LIBERTY,---a charm,
Beyond the power of fate itself to harm.

What is particularly striking about this prefatory material is the way in which Brackenridge establishes abstract virtues as the basis for male activity and commitments in war. The speaker of the prologue, an unnamed Lieutenant Colonel in the Continental Army, continues, revealing that the martial contest of war was also a clash of the heart and of principle. “Let virtue fire us to the martial deed; / We fight to conquer and we dare to bleed,” he explains “Be this our comfort in the storm of war---/Who fights, to take our liberty away, Dead-hearted fights, and falls an easy prey.”⁵⁷ Beyond the tidy, self-gratulatory moral contrasts of Brackenridge’s prologue is a clear assumption that masculine involvement in war was inseparable from emotions and the virtues that inspired them. Under this view, the Revolution was not simply an experiment in political ideologies but also a testing of men’s inner states and emotions. The subtle subtext that suffused Brackenridge’s play from this opening address suggested that righteous passion was itself a powerful weapon that could sustain American colonists through the war.

After several short opening acts which establish the main narrative action of the play—the occupation of Bunker Hill by colonial militias and subsequent clashes with British forces—the author turns to the martyrdom of General Joseph Warren. Unlike many other dramatic works from the period, Brackenridge grants his hero an onstage death. Readers approach this scene with the general already struck by the fatal shot. Recognizing that his death is approaching, Warren soliloquizes on the meaning of his sacrifice. His oration is wide-ranging, and this scene has furnished historians and literary scholars with numerous tropes for analysis. Some scholars have focused notably on the

⁵⁷ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, prologue.

general's invocation of a martyr lineage reaching back to republican Rome or on how such accounts of his death shaped later public memory of the Revolution.⁵⁸ The scene, however, also tied together strands of emotion and principle in a manner that made Warren's martyrdom an act of virtuous self-control and a telling defense of male commitment to the Revolution.

Punctuating Warren's forty-seven line address is both a recognition of the personal cost of his sacrifice and an overriding sense of calling to a larger purpose. By acknowledging the personal and familial pain to be caused by his impending death, Warren's soliloquy suggests that the true revolutionary martyr was far from rash or unreflective in his support for revolution. The general urges his hearers "Weep not your Gen'ral, who is snatch'd this day, / From the embraces of a family, / Five virgin daughters young, and unendow'd, / Now with the foe left alone and fatherless." Despite this personal tragedy for Warren and his family, the general remains willing to play his part for liberty. He tells his men that instead of grieving, they ought to "rejoyce--- / For now I go to mingle with the dead." This rendition of Warren's sacrifice aimed to inspire the living with the deeds of the dead and to encourage men to commit body and soul to the Revolution. Indeed, the scene closes with an unambiguous call to action: "Fight on my countryman, be FREE, be FREE."⁵⁹ Brackenridge's portrayal of martyrdom, however,

⁵⁸ For Brackenridge's interaction with the long historical tradition of martyrs from Rome to seventeenth-century Britain, see Jason Shaffer, "Making 'an Excellent Die,'" 15-16. The republican ideology of Whig leaders and authors made classical references to martyrs particularly relevant and hard to resist. Warren's death speech, for example, makes a reference to Brutus. Another ubiquitous figure remained Cato, popularized by Joseph Addison's tragedy. For the influence of Cato in colonial performance and drama, see Shaffer, "Great Cato's Descendants." For a capable study of martyrdom and public memory, see Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). Purcell analyzes Warren's death on pp. 11-15.

⁵⁹ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 29.

also worked to defend Warren's temperament and emotional state as much as his military service. Few men could have—or would have—hoped to die on a stage as significant as Bunker Hill. The tone of the play revealed instead that *all* men could profit from Warren's example by cultivating a similar and deeply emotional commitment to revolutionary principles.

Through a rhetorical strategy already common in other forms of political literature, Brackenridge leaned further on a providential understanding of sacrifice to ennoble Warren's martyrdom and passion. Part of climatic scene has the general lingering in a state between life and death, able to glimpse and pronounce heaven's blessing for the Revolution. Warren's vision of heaven results not in a universal message for all in the colonies but in a pointed appeal to American men and their emotions. He reports that he sees clearly the ghosts of "Brutus, Hampden, [and] Sidney," martyr heroes from classical antiquity and the period of the English Civil War "where they walk serene, by crystal currents, on the vale of heaven." This "Illustrious group" of martyrs, Warren explains, had come "to beckon" him into the beyond where he would be received as a hero who had sacrificed for principle. As the general succumbs to his wounds, he goes to join these "first born of true fame."⁶⁰

Brackenridge's opening of heaven to General Warren, offered a complex appeal to emotion and masculinity. At its most basic level, the scene heartened readers with a sense of divine approbation for the colonies' resistance to Britain. The appearance of angelic martyrs suggested unambiguously that Whig colonists fought on the side of history and of God. That Algernon Sydney and John Hampden, heroes of Britain's own

⁶⁰ Hugh Henry-Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 29.

seventeenth-century revolution, received Warren's soul encouraged colonists to see themselves engaged in a timeless and sacred struggle to promote liberty. In this regard, Warren's vision fulfilled an earlier pronouncement by General Gardiner that "The word is LIBERTY, / And Heaven Smile on us, in so just a cause."⁶¹ If Warren's near theophany allowed readers to anchor the revolution in principle, it also urged men to embrace their duty with distinctly masculine emotions. Warren reports, for example, that the afterlife is filled with "the murmur of tight-brac'd drum, / With finely varied fifes to martial airs, / Wind up the spirit to the mighty proof / Of siege and battle, and attempt in arms."⁶² These latter references to the emotions of war reveal the direct connection made by pro-Revolution authors between principles and passion. Warren's vision of heaven proved useful not only for tying Whig protest to a broader history of ideas but also for inspiring action and generating an emotional commitment to those ideas that was both logical and noble.

By creatively interpreting the conscience of British General Thomas Gage, Warren's chief opponent, Brackenridge further underscored that the character of wartime emotions stemmed directly from the quality of the principles men served. In contrast to the equanimity of the liberty-loving Warren, Gage knows only guilt. He had first resolved to let civilians leave Boston before the fighting but later reneged and began to blockade the city's perimeter, leaving him wracked with "inward gnawing, and remorse

⁶¹ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 24. For the importance of Algernon Sydney in colonial American thought and the popularity of his writings, see, for example, Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 34-5. Sydney's political ideology and its connections to classical republicanism made him a venerable figure on both sides of the Atlantic.

⁶² Hugh Henry-Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 29.

of thought.”⁶³ The general praises the colonial militias and “the valour of these men, fir’d with the zeal of fiercest liberty, [with] no fear of death.”⁶⁴ Brackenridge’s Gage recognizes that by contrast he has made himself only an instrument of oppression wielded by corrupt politicians. Though he resolves to serve the king and parliament dutifully, he can feel no passion for his cause. “Oh Bute, and Dartmouth knew ye what I feel,” he exclaims, “You sure would pity, an old drinking man, that has more heart-ake, than philosophy.”⁶⁵ With Gage as an imagined emotional counterpoint to Warren, Brackenridge intimates that emotion was its own weapon in war, able to decide a contest one way or the other. Moreover, a man’s ability to experience noble emotions was the very proof of the righteousness of his cause. Principle and passion were mutually reinforcing, and the just emotions experienced by those willing to be martyred emerged as a natural, perhaps ineluctable, part of revolution.

One year later, with wartime violence and enmity increasing, Brackenridge drew inspiration from another recent martyr for his *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777). The tone of this piece is noticeably more militant, and the moral contrasts between British and American forces even sharper. By 1777, frontier warfare in the colonial north pitted Continental soldiers against not only British regulars but also an increasing number of British allied Indians, whom Brackenridge denounces coldly as “Savages inspir’d with horrid passion, of inhuman war.”⁶⁶ The play opens with British forces quartered for the

⁶³ Hugh Henry-Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 17.

⁶⁴ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 11.

⁶⁵ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 20.

⁶⁶ Hugh Henry Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery, in Storming the City of Quebec, A Tragedy*, (Providence: J. Trumbull, 1777), reprinted in Philbrick, *Trumpets Sounding*, 229. The vehement

winter safely inside the walls of Quebec and General Montgomery and a collection of other officers looking on, planning an ill-fated attack on the city. Montgomery and his officers sense that their attempts to scale the city's walls are tactically risky and likely to end in defeat. Montgomery confides that he senses his own death is near, suggesting "I feel, / Within this hour, some knowledge of my end."⁶⁷ Despite these reservations, the group of officers commit themselves to an attack on the citadel, and Brackenridge follows these martyrs to their deaths. The author's opening address to his readers makes clear that *The Death of General Montgomery* ought to inspire particularly masculine emotions. "I meddle not with any of the effeminating passions" Brackenridge explains "but consecrate my muse to the great themes of patriotic virtue, bravery, and heroism."⁶⁸ For patriot authors, the only socially acceptable passions in war and politics were those tied to principles.

With Montgomery's prediction of his own death looming through the first half of the play, Brackenridge provides readers a rare chance to see how an idealized wartime hero might master his own emotions. Much like his description of Warren's death, the playwright provides a private scene in which Montgomery weighs the meaning of his own sacrifice. The general explains that though he does not fear death "it gives me pain.

/ When the soft passion, of my soul, flows out, / In sweet remembrance of Amanda's

distaste for Native American frontier warriors is ably explored in Peter Silver's *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008). Silver argues that popular literature and journalistic accounts of Indians and frontier atrocities worked to create a cultural stigma and a deeply emotional hatred of Indians that he calls "the anti-Indian sublime."

⁶⁷ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 230.

⁶⁸ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 224.

love.”⁶⁹ This revelation of the General’s love for his wife did not function solely to add depth to an otherwise flat character. It also introduces an emotional conflict that Brackenridge uses to underscore that commitment to revolution was not for the faint of heart. The remainder of Montgomery’s short meditation shows the general taking stock of the emotional and personal consequences of his death. In a direct address to his wife, Montgomery confides “Yes, sweet Amanda, soon disjoin’d in life. / And the connubial-cord, loos’d and off, / I must resign thee to the will of Heaven.” The general goes on to lament that he will never know “the child unborn, that in thy womb thou bears’t.” By showing readers that revolutionary heroes possessed all of the emotional entanglements of fathers, husbands, and neighbors, Brackenridge suggested powerfully that martyrs were brave and not reckless or foolhardy. If anything, men involved in the colonial struggle possessed an even greater degree of emotional self-control and fortitude, continually displayed in their willingness to suffer personal loss. General Montgomery has the presence of mind to contemplate his death before it became a reality. Like a man preparing his estate, he prays “To thee O God, / I leave my spouse, sweet children, and each friend, / that mourns behind.”⁷⁰

If Brackenridge’s idealized soldier displayed self-control and forethought, he also committed himself whole-heartedly to the emotions of war. Unlike Warren’s death in *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776), Montgomery receives no death scene that neatly reveals his love of principle. In fact, Montgomery’s death passes without substantial mention. Instead, readers continually encounter the general in the first several acts as he

⁶⁹ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 230.

⁷⁰ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 231.

steels himself for battle. While he and his subordinates survey the defenses around Quebec, Montgomery hints at the connection between principle and emotion observing that in the Revolution “now round each heart, fair freedom spreads her flame that glows and kindles at the voice of fame.”⁷¹ When the Continental soldiers learn that the attack on Quebec has lost the element of surprise and that British troops await their arrival, Montgomery critiques them for their loss of passion:

The post is ours; the second barrier storm'd;
But in our troops, why such a tardiness?
I must fall back, and with deep-piercing words
Prevent their ignominy. Gentlemen,
What means this phlegm, this cold and mildew damp,
Which turns the current of the life-warm blood
To winter's ice, and freezes up the tide
Of noble, bold, and manly resolution?⁷²

Through some of Montgomery's final words, Brackenridge revealed that if it was desirable for men to be cool headed in their approach to politics and revolution, they ought never to be cool hearted. The principles and virtues that inspired the Revolution—freedom, liberty, and self-government—could satisfy both the demands of reason and excite the deepest emotions of the male heart. *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777) thus demonstrated that participants of the war were simultaneously men of sentiment and self-restraint.

The prints that accompanied the published plays rendered visually many of the same themes from Brackenridge's print accounts. Both works contained copper engravings from the Philadelphia artist John Norman. The frontispiece of *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776) (fig. 1) depicts General Warren posed according to the caption of his

⁷¹ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 225.

⁷² Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 242-3.

death scene: “mortally wounded, falling on his right knee, covering his breast with his right hand, and supporting himself with his firelock in his left.”⁷³ Warren appears all the more noble in the image owing to the obvious contrast with the surrounding figures. The waistcoat, buckled shoes, and wig of the kneeling general stand out sharply from the crudely clad men behind him. The meaning of this contrast was subtle but significant. This gentleman revolutionary had eschewed the privileges of his rank to serve where the fighting was heaviest, and he died in the front ranks with common soldiers. While Warren had been shot through the head, the engraving and play placed the fatal wound in the heart, the seat of his great passion for liberty.⁷⁴ Clutching his breast, viewers are reminded that it had been his offended love of virtue that compelled him to fight and noble emotions, which had sustained him. The general appears gazing serenely toward the heavens where his heroic peers waited to receive him. Norman’s engraving thus worked to augment the sense of confidence, dignity, and self-possession with which Warren had supposedly met his end.

Brackenridge was not alone in interpreting the memory and emotions of martyred heroes. While *The Death of General Montgomery* (1777) remained the fullest literary presentation of the general’s heroic end, other dramatic authors returned to Montgomery’s example and martyrdom in their own works. Despite inevitable variations in style and purpose, scenes involving his martyrdom or memory cleaved to the focus on

⁷³ Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 28.

⁷⁴ For Warren and the historical memory of Bunker Hill, see Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 11-15.

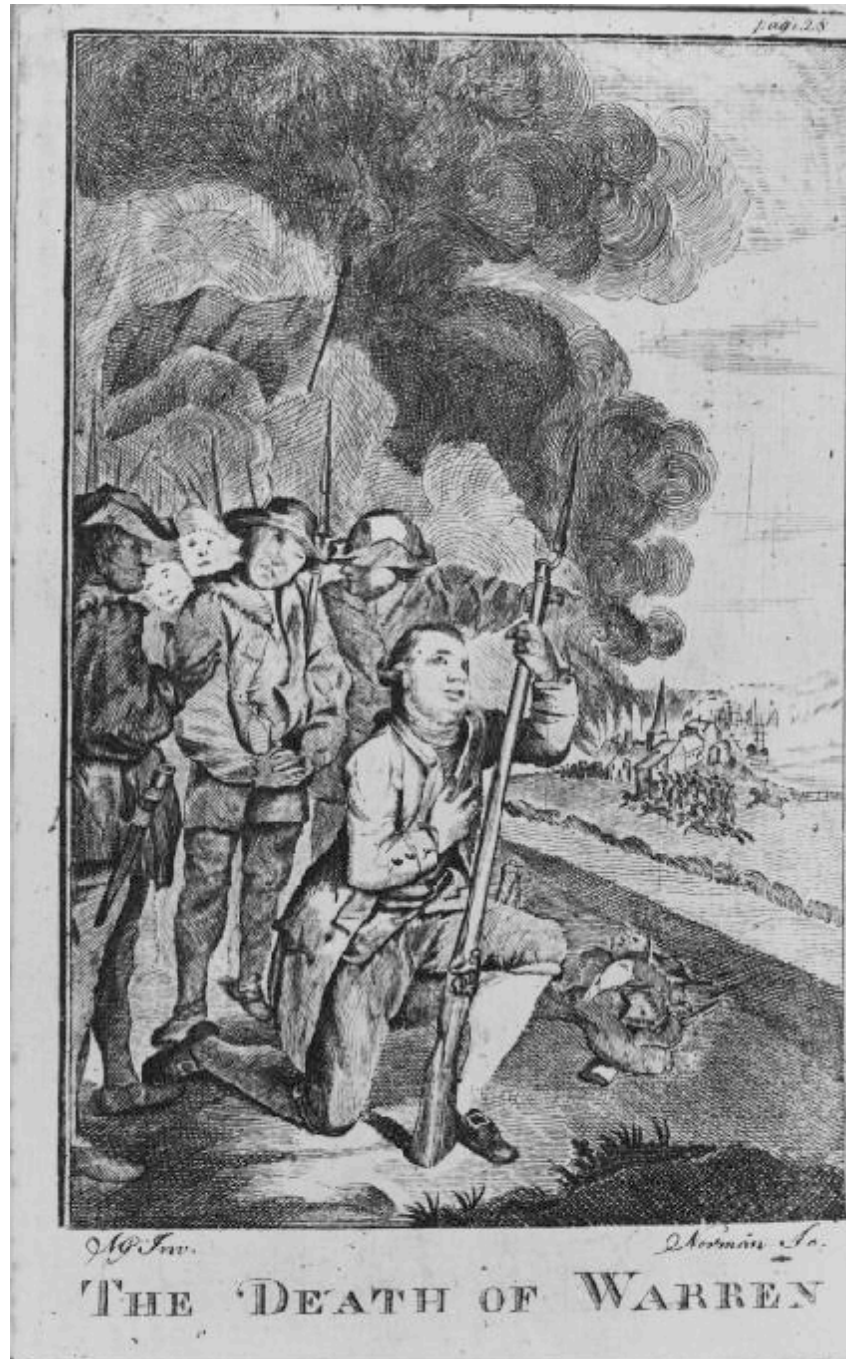


Figure 1. John Norman, *The Death of Warren*, Philadelphia, 1776. John Carter Brown Archive of Early American Images.

both principle and passion. Even in 1776, with revolutionary exuberance arguably at its peak, Paine's dialogue suggested that Whig authors still were at pains to convince colonists undecided on the question of revolution by reasoned argument. Much as Jonathan Sewall's *A Cure for the Spleen* had presented the Tory cause in dialectic form, Paine's piece cast Montgomery's ghost in the role of a wise counselor to a delegate struggling to embrace independence. The delegate presents a series of objections against a final rupture from Britain, ranging from "the destructive consequences of war"⁷⁵ to the prospect of "domestic wars without end"⁷⁶ between liberated colonies. He urges that a peaceful reconciliation may yet be possible. Montgomery's ghost defuses each of these arguments and dismisses conciliatory thinking as a sign of "political superstition."⁷⁷ In a stark reversal of Tory accusations of intemperance, the general explains that the advocates of a continued union with Britain were "those men only who were under the influence of their passions and offices."⁷⁸ Through this otherworldly exchange between Montgomery's ghost and a congressional delegate, Paine drove home the point that revolution, and even more independence, were profoundly rational. Sound political reasoning itself left no middle course of accommodation with Britain available to thinking men.

What is more telling, however, is how the dialogue worked to vindicate the emotional enthusiasms of war. When the delegate persists in questioning the logic of independence, jumping from objection to objections, Montgomery reveals that reason and

⁷⁵ Paine, *A Dialogue*, 5.

⁷⁶ Paine, *A Dialogue*, 9.

⁷⁷ Paine, *A Dialogue*, 8.

⁷⁸ Paine, *A Dialogue*, 11.

self-restraint in politics had their limits. He explains that emotion, too, has its proper place in shaping political decisions toward revolution. “But I forbear to reason any further with you” the general exclaims, “your country teems with patriots—heroes—and legislators who are impatient to burst forth into light and importance.”⁷⁹ It is important that Montgomery’s dismissal of reason comes only at the end of long line of explicit political arguments against reconciliation. Paine suggested that the patriotic passions longing to burst forth were the culmination of principled reflection, both reasonable and, in a sense, beyond the need for reason. Tory authors had fundamentally misunderstood the nature of emotion in inspiring men to in the revolution. While passions frequently compelled men to do things that appeared at first sight irrational, such as marching into cannonade and musket fire, these passions were ultimately never dissonant with reason.

The literary construction of the martyrdom remains useful less for what it says about men’s experiences in war than for it reveals about men’s attitudes toward war. Hugh Henry Brackenridge and Thomas Paine’s highly stylized treatments of war heroes held out an image of a virtuous death that certainly no real man could realize in the heat of battle. No soldier fell making speeches, and once dead, no man returned to share his blessings for the Revolution. However, Whig authors suggested that every man could embody the sacrificial spirit, principles, and joy of a Warren or a Montgomery. The authors of pamphlet plays supporting the Revolution called all able-bodied men to think and feel along with these literary heroes. Contrary to the image created by Tory pamphleteers of Whig men as unstable and ill governed, Whig playwrights pointed to a

⁷⁹ Paine, *A Dialogue*, 15.

type or style of manhood in which reason and emotion each enjoyed their proper harmony. Tory attempts to reduce masculine categories to men of reason or men of blind sentiment, ignored what many authors saw as an abiding compatibility between self-restraint and emotion.

CHAPTER 4: FAMILY AND THE HEART OF AUTHORITY

While Whig and Tory authors made the regulation of individual emotions the subject of perhaps most heated debates, pamphlet dramatists of the revolutionary era also crafted critiques of their opponents that drew on understandings of male authority and affection within the family. Emotion and affect were useful not only for understanding personal behavior but for explaining men's social ties to parents, wives, and children. Tory authors, for example, cast the colonial revolt as a case of a child's rebellion against its parent. Using the metaphor of a family riven by conflict, authors on both sides sought to shape public understanding of meaning of the Revolution and the responsibilities of its male participants. In a similar way, the language and logic of emotion allowed polemicists to explore the consequences of male activity in the revolution on families, households, and dependents. Whig and Tory playwrights saw the domestic life of their opponents as another front on which to wage attacks against male character. In both cases, authors injected emotion into the realm of public politics and raised pointed questions about men's social duties and behaviors.

Some opponents of the Revolution drew on the language of familial affection to depict colonists seeking independence as rebellious children. Jonathan Sewall's *A Cure for the Spleen*, for example, urged that contrary to Whig fear mongering, the British government had only benevolent intentions for the colonies. When deacon Graveairs worries loudly that "all our charter rights and privileges are torn from us and we are made slaves," parson Sharp points to the benefits of empire. As he sees it, Britons had always

nurtured their colonial subjects “for whom they have ever discovered a parental fondness, and whose liberties and happiness are most intimately connected and interwoven with their own.”⁸⁰ Sharp observes that Britain had afforded privileges to the colonies without comparison anywhere in the empire. “Turn your eyes to your brother Englishmen in Great Britain,” he challenges, “and you will find you enjoy liberty, freedom, and ease in a degree . . . far superior to them.”⁸¹ Such descriptions of colonists as spoiled siblings and ungrateful children imagined the British Empire as an affectionate parent even as it rebuked those in rebellion for their hardness of heart. Sharp explains that the path to reconciliation involved a simple response to Britain’s affections, suggesting that colonists ought to exclaim “with the most grateful effusion of soul, . . . ‘we have a goodly heritage.’”⁸² For this Tory propagandist, it was convenient to envision the ties that bound the colonies to Britain in terms that were not only political but also emotional and familial.

Sewall’s dialogue developed this metaphor of filial union to biblical proportions, creating an extended parallel between Old Testament Jews and the transplanted Britons of the colonial wilderness. As Sharp continues to expound his defense of empire, the American colonies become a proverbial promised land: “Our king has planted us in a land flowing with milk and honey, and has driven out the Canaanites from before us, and left us no thorn in our side.” The parson argues that despite such manifold blessings, the “melancholy truth” of colonial politics is that many men had turned against the parent

⁸⁰ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 14.

⁸¹ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 9.

⁸² Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 9.

country. “Like the chosen people of old” he explains “we spurn at the hand that has raised us and hitherto sustained us.” This understanding of the revolution as a broken covenant between parents and children sought to create a more intimate picture of imperial government. The English monarch and his parliament were not distant rulers but an ever present and benevolent influence on the colonies. By invoking this picture of a figurative family, Tory authors such as Jonathan Sewall hoped to inspire not only loyalty but also an emotional commitment to British rule. Speaking pointedly to colonists through characters in the dialogue, Sewall sought to fire the “spark of gratitude in [their] bosom” and to preserve both the political and the affective bonds of the empire.⁸³

The appearance of this familial analogy in even Whig pamphlet plays suggests that Tory uses of such language were widespread and became a popular device for shaping public understanding of independence. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, no friend of British imperial rule, nonetheless provided a revealing scene that parroted—and even improved—the portrayal of the independence movement as a case of familial strife. Brackenridge’s *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill* (1776), intended primarily to valorize fallen patriots, also interpreted the politics of many leading British officials in the conflict. As General William Howe surveys the colonial troops amassed on Bunker Hill, he delivers a speech to the regulars waiting to begin an assault. The British commander casts the impending battle as an attempt to reinstate parental authority:

The day at length, propitious shews itself,
And full beams of majesty, the sun,
Hath bles’d, its fair nativity; when Heaven,
Brave soldiers, and the cause of kings

⁸³ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 9.

Calls on the spirit of your loyalty,
To chastise this rebellion, and tread down,
Such foul ingratitude—such monstrous shape,
Of horrid liberty, which spurns that love—
That fond maternal tenderness of soul,
Which on this dreary coast first planted them.⁸⁴

While the remainder of Brackenridge's piece pointed to the nobility of Howe's "rebels," this Whig invocation of a familial metaphor suggests much about popular views of revolution. Opponents of independence emphasized, in emotional terms, longstanding connections and dependence between Britain and the colonies. From the Tory perspective, the appropriate response to the "love" of the mother country was not "ingratitude" but obedience.

In fact, this metaphor of a broken family and unrequited affections carried implicit claims to authority and dependence that would not have been lost by male readers on either side of the conflict. If the colonists were children, then the rightful authority in the familial dispute of revolution lay with their parent overseas.⁸⁵ Sewall's analogy between Old Testament Jews and rebelling colonists, made it clear that authority was the principal issue at stake. The cardinal sin of the Jews and colonists was not

⁸⁴ Brackenridge, *The Battle of Bunkers-Hill*, 21.

⁸⁵ Numerous studies have explored paternalism and dependency in early American politics. For dependency and intergenerational relationships between men, see Joseph F. Ketts, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977). Ketts argues that male development in early America coincided with a movement from a state of social dependency to ultimate independence. See also, Toby Ditz, *Property and Kinship: Inheritance in Early Connecticut, 1750-1820* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986). Ditz shows how inheritance and familial politics were inseparable for relationships of dependency. For patriarchy in late eighteenth-century politics more broadly see, for example, Michael E. Kann, *A Republic of Men: The American Founders, Gendered Language, and Patriarchal Politics* (New York: New York University Press, 1998). The argument presented here has also been influenced by Sharon Block's analysis of rape metaphors in political literature of the Revolution, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), chapter 5. Like Block, I argue that the literary metaphors used to present war carry implicit meanings related to mastery and authority.

simply their ingratitude, but their attempt to live without their rightly established leaders. Speaking of the revolutionaries around him, Sewall observes “now we vauntingly and ungratefully say, who shall be Lord over us?”⁸⁶ By crafting an image of the British Empire as a parent or father figure to the colonies, Tory propagandists sought to exact both the affections and obedience of colonists. The message sent to Whig men promoting rebellion was that they were the rightful dependents of a patriarch who had continually supported and defended them. Under this view, the betrayal of parental affection was also a failure to honor the established authority of the empire. The wife of the Tory piece *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse* explains that the only path to reconciliation was to submit to this patriarchal authority: “Make your Peace: — Fear the King.”⁸⁷

Whig authors responded to this paternal, or broadly parental, claim in a variety of ways, seeking to attenuate the emotional connections at the heart of the family metaphor and to refashion themselves as faithful sons and inheritors of the true legacy of British freedom. Hugh Henry Brackenridge’s *The Death of General Montgomery* offered a complex response to the Tory union of affection and mastery. Several of the principal Whig characters in the piece reveal that affections between Britain and her colonies had been dangerously perverted. Before his fatal assault on Quebec, General Montgomery

⁸⁶ Sewall, *A Cure for the Spleen*, 9. The use of religious symbolism to express patriarchy drew on widespread assumptions that English fathers and husbands were spiritual masters of their dependents. Biblical figures such as Abraham represented a common ideal of patriarchy. See, for example, Little, *Abraham in Arms*, 1. For male spiritual authority and domestic politics more generally, see Wilson, *Ye Heart of a Man*, 115-39; Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: New American Library, 1977).

⁸⁷ [Mary V.V.], *A Dialogue Between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse*, 14. For the obligations and expectations of eighteenth century fathers, see Wilson, 115-139. Wilson argues that both fathers and mothers were “mutually obligated” to children. Tenderness and nurture were to be met with obedience and service.

addresses his troops and explains that the conflict with Britain was truly a case of “unnatural strife” made necessary “where a mad mother, doth her children stab.”⁸⁸ The dedicatory poem that opened the play argued similarly that the filial bonds between Britain and the colonies could not persist as they had during the Seven Years’ War:

How chang’d the scene! no more with friendly hand
To aid thy pow’r, we leave our native land.
Burst are those ties, alas! and scatt’r’d wild,
That joined the parent to the faithful child
Fatal ambition, to each vice ally’d
Dire mischief’s progeny, the child of pride
These wars malign, from thy curst genius flow
Those fields of slaughter, and those scenes of woe.⁸⁹

By attacking the figurative parenting or nurture of the British Empire, Brackenridge undermined its claim to mastery over its colonial dependants. The image of the Empire stabbing her children or forsaking them for “fatal ambition” failed to uphold the obligations and stewardship expected of parents and patriarchs. Whig authors suggested in no uncertain terms, that Britain had not acted like a loving parent, and it could not expect the colonies to play the emasculating part of obedient children. Through the affective language of familial relationships, Whig and Tory authors thus made competing claims about the politics of male authority and submission.

If the idea of dependence to the British government of the late eighteenth century rankled Whig men and commentators, filial dedication to the nation’s larger history became a valuable form of protest. Whig playwrights imagined colonial revolutionaries as the true sons of British liberty. Brackenridge’s *The Death of General Montgomery*, for example, advanced the case of a son’s duty to his father as a reason to resist the crown.

⁸⁸ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 238.

⁸⁹ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 225.

As Whig officers prepare for the assault on Quebec, Captain John Macpherson recalls his “father’s parting words.” He explains that his father had served the empire faithfully in the Seven Years’ War, but that the British forces in Quebec belonged to an altogether different nation. “And in Britannia’s very cause I fought,” his father had said “Who would now stab me and drink from my veins, / the poor remainder of the blood I spilt.” Macpherson then recounts his father’s dying request: “Where you shall meet an Englishman, tell this, / And in his ear exclaim—ingratitude. / Exclaim—and with a filial piety, / Give, for your father, one life-severing blow.”⁹⁰ Such a scene tapped the wider historical memory of colonial service in imperial wars for the continent just as it staked a claim for the loyalty and duty of Whig men. Rendered in the terms of a masculine connection between a son and a father, the scene demonstrated a colonial commitment to the memory of the British Empire of 1763 and not the parliament of Lord North. This odd case of filial duty suggested that colonists had honored their commitments to their sovereign and that it was the parent and not the sons of the empire who had broken the imperial relationship. Macpherson and his father would serve an empire that fought against France but not one that warred against its own subjects.

The play’s veneration of General James Wolfe developed a similar sense of manly duty to the memory of an earlier British Empire. Throughout the early acts of the play, Wolfe becomes a frequent reference for Whig officers struck by the irony of their assault on Quebec. It had been General Wolfe who had besieged French-occupied citadel in 1759. His death in the battle for the city became a symbol of British resolve during the

⁹⁰ Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 234.

Seven Years' War.⁹¹ With colonists about to assault a British garrison behind the city walls, several characters sense that their loyalty is for a parent empire that no longer exists. At the narrative climax of the play, the ghost of General Wolfe appears over the body of the slain Montgomery and expresses solidarity with the colonial cause. The frontispiece of *The Death of General Montgomery* (fig. 2) made this scene perhaps the most memorable of the play. The present battle for Quebec, Wolfe explains, was not a noble one "with the rival Gaul" but one waged within:

Britain's self, Medea-like dispos'd
To tear her children, merciless of heart
False council'd King and venal Parliament!
Have I then fought, and was my life's blood shed,
To raise your power to this ambitious height,
Disdainful height, of framing laws to bind,
In cases whatsoever, free-born men,
Of the same lineage name and quality?⁹²

By identifying the colonial cause with an acknowledged British hero, Brackenridge stressed that colonial men had remained ever loyal to the memory of the true British Empire. Such a scene embraced the Tory call for affection while denying the claim to British mastery over the colonies. Male revolutionaries, Brackenridge implied, could still maintain the deepest affection for British ideals even if they could no longer honor or serve the imperial patriarch as dependents.

Whig and Tory authors also wielded the language of familial affections to portray different understandings of the consequences of war and revolution. Urging colonial men to consider the impact of their political choices on their dependents became a powerful rhetorical strategy that appealed to men's responsibilities as husbands and fathers. The

⁹¹ For the martyrdom and historical memory of Wolfe, see Purcell, *Sealed in Blood*, 21.

⁹² Brackenridge, *The Death of General Montgomery*, 246.

female author of the Tory piece *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse* (1774), for example, reminded Whig men that their rashness endangered more than themselves. When her husband dismisses her calls for caution, she urges him to consider her position as a wife. “Could I see you in Prison, or hang’d without Pain,” she demands “Then, pray, have not I reason enough to complain?”⁹³ She goes on to explain that her affection has the interest of her family in mind: “Twou’d soon break my Heart, tho’ we do now and then jar, / Were you ruind’d, or taken, or killed in War. / From the Love I bear you, and our dear Girls and Boys.”⁹⁴ The implicit critique of this Tory dialogue was not only that Whig men were intemperate and irrational but that they risked failing in their duties as fathers and husbands. Through the pseudonym Mary V.V., this author questioned Whig performances of masculinity not only as individuals but also in the social relationships with dependents.

Tory men, however, were no less immune to such attacks against their masculine competence as providers and patriarchs. Mercy Otis Warren’s *The Group*, a scathing indictment of the “swarm of court sycophants, hungry harpies, and unprincipled dangles” who had attached themselves to the British during the occupation of Boston, looked to the emotions and responsibilities of the family to denounce Tory men.⁹⁵ Warren’s biting farce depicted Tory men as more committed to the pursuit of high office and riches than their own families. In a moment of reflection, Simple, a single-minded social climber, confesses that his desire for wealth and placement has risked the welfare

⁹³ [Mary V.V.], *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse*, 9.

⁹⁴ [Mary V.V.], *A Dialogue between a Southern Delegate and His Spouse*, 10.

⁹⁵ Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group, a Farce: As lately Acted, and to be Re-Acted, to the Wonder of all superior Intelligences; Nigh Head Quarters, at Amboyne. in Two Acts* (Philadelphia: James Humphreys, 1775), A4.



Figure 2. John Norman, *The Death of General Montgomery*, The Library Company of Philadelphia.

of his family. “Poor Sylvie weeps, then—and urges my return / To rural peace and humble happiness, / As my ambition beggars all her babes.”⁹⁶ Beyond Warren’s obvious slight against the class pretensions of Tories, the author also accused loyalist men of willful negligence in their duties as husbands and fathers. While several Tory characters in the play experience some gnawing guilt over their desertion of their dependents and their betrayal of countrymen, Hateall remains prepared to neglect God, country, and his family in the name of mandamus Tory council in Boston: “I’ll not recede to save from swift perdition / My wife, my country, family or friends. / G---’s mandamus I more highly prize / Than all the mandates of th’ ethereal king.”⁹⁷ Warren’s depiction of Tory men abandoning their dependents in favor of personal advancement traded upon the familial affections of readers in much the same way as Tory critiques of the dangers of war. In each case, pamphlet dramatists invoked men’s affections and assumed duties to dependents to dissuade them from their political activities.

⁹⁶ Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group*, 6.

⁹⁷ Mercy Otis Warren, *The Group*, 9.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A REVOLUTION OF SENTIMENT

While propaganda playwrights were involved in the same war as all polemical writers of the American Revolution, their works suggest that they often chose to fight a different kind of battle. Many authors at the time, and countless scholars in the intervening generations, have depicted the Revolution as an ideological, social, or market driven conflict. Debates about which philosophical or political traditions sustained the “Spirit of 1776” or scholarly studies examining the extent of social and cultural change brought by the Revolution have proliferated and continue to draw a wide readership. Less studied in all of these developments has been the private and familial world of emotion that populated the pages of pamphlet plays. The evidence provided above suggests that if the American Revolution was a contest of political, social, or economic ideas, it was also a revolution of sentiment and evolving conceptions of masculinity.

For many of the authors explored above, the Revolution was not a struggle between a faceless “Britain” and its “colonies” but highly personalized conflict among men who sought to shape public understanding of politics by drawing attention to their differences. Whether Whigs or Tories, pamphlet playwrights made the character, virtues, and emotions of men the center of public discussion. Polemicists on both sides pointed to the faults and virtues of the Revolution by their effects on individuals. For Tory authors, the looming threat of Revolution was its tendency to produce a personal anarchy among men in the colonies. Tory observers used the language of the “passions” to make sense

of the excesses and lack of self-restraint showed by many male participants in the Revolution. In contrast, Whig authors celebrated the emotions of the war and the political enthusiasms that surrounded the independence movement. Passion for liberty became the guiding inspiration for many of the most courageous and self-possessed acts immortalized in print. Both Whig and Tory perspectives should urge scholars to revise their thinking about the Revolution. The pamphlet plays of the era demonstrate that the political was deeply personal and emotional and that the sentimental life and conduct of men on both sides of the Atlantic had the power to shape politics at the broadest level.

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