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The Streets of Philadelphia: Crowds, Congress, and the Political Culture of Revolution, 1774–1783

THE DYNAMIC INTERRELATIONSHIP between the Continental Congress and the city of Philadelphia has been largely overlooked in the historiography of the American Revolution. Historians of Congress have focused primarily on that institution's internal politics, particularly the formation and relative influence of parties, the exercise of legislative and executive power, and the impact of formal procedural requirements and structural constraints.[1] Historians of revolutionary

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[1] See, for example, H. James Henderson, *Party Politics in the Continental Congress* (New York, 1974); Jack N. Rakove, *The Beginnings of National Politics: An Interpretive History of the Continental Congress* (New York, 1979); Jerrilyn Greene Marston, *King and Congress: The Transfer of Political Legitimacy, 1774–1776* (Princeton, NJ, 1987); Calvin Jillson and Rick K. Wilson, *Congressional Dynamics: Structure, Coordination, and Choice in the First American Congress, 1774–1789* (Stanford, CA, 1994). See also, Derek H. Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress, 1774–1789: Contributions to Original Intent* (New York, 2000).

Philadelphia, on the other hand, have directed our attention to local phenomena such as the radicalization of the laboring poor, the decline of the colonial assembly and the rise of a new administration, and the deep ideological, religious, and racial and ethnic differences that rent the city's heterogeneous population during the war.[2] Falling between these historiographic cracks have been the many rich social and cultural exchanges that transpired between Congress and its host city.

The people of Philadelphia did not elect the Continental Congress, yet Congress's resolutions and proceedings profoundly affected their lives. In 1774, Congress's adoption of the Articles of Association generated a frenzy of committee activity and dramatically reshaped the city's economy. Two years later, the Congress's declaration that to support an administration under the British Crown was "irreconcileable to reason and good Conscience" prompted Pennsylvanians at last to scrap their old government and form a new constitution.[3] In 1777, Congress antagonized Philadelphia Quakers by urging the arrest of several prominent members of that sect who were believed to be "inimical to the Cause of America."[4] Throughout the late 1770s and early 1780s, congressional fiscal policy contributed to a rapid rise in the cost of food, goods, and services throughout the city. Congressional fast days, commemoration services, and public celebrations all shaped Philadelphia's civic culture, and even more mundane aspects of daily life yielded to congressional influence, as for instance during the First Continental Congress, when Philadelphia doctors ceased smallpox inoculations for fear of infecting

[2] The historiography of revolutionary Philadelphia is too vast to summarize in a single footnote. A short list of monographs on that subject includes Robert Levere Brunhouse, *The Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania, 1776–1790* (Philadelphia, 1942); Carl Bridenbaugh, *Cities in Revolt: Urban Life in America, 1743–1776* (New York, 1955); David Hawke, *In the Midst of a Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1961); Charles S. Olton, *Artisans for Independence: Philadelphia Mechanics and the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY, 1975); Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York, 1976); Richard Alan Ryerson, *The Revolution Is Now Begun: The Radical Committees of Philadelphia, 1765–1776* (Philadelphia, 1978); Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: The Northern Seaports and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1986); Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986); and Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the "Lower Sort" during the American Revolution, 1775–1783* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987).

[3] Worthington Chauncey Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789* (Washington, DC, 1904–37), 4:357–58.

[4] See Robert F. Oaks, "Philadelphians in Exile: The Problem of Loyalty During the American Revolution," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 96 (1972): 298–325.

visiting delegates.[5]

Just as the Continental Congress exerted sway over Philadelphia, so too did the city and its inhabitants influence Congress. As the primary seat of government from 1774 to 1783, the city of Philadelphia determined how congressmen would work and live. The Carpenters' Company of Philadelphia offered the first Congress a suitable meeting hall. The Library Company of Philadelphia ensured that Congress was well stocked with political tracts and treatises on international law. Philadelphia's extensive medical community edified members of Congress with hospital tours and anatomy lectures, and waited on delegates in times of illness. Ministers from all the city's congregations tended to the congressmen's spiritual needs. The city's private homes, taverns, and boarding houses quartered these statesmen, and working Philadelphians kept them fed, clothed, shod, shaved, and transported about town.

Philadelphia did more than simply host the Continental Congress. It also served as the foremost vantage point from which congressmen could behold the progress of war. In an era when communications were delayed, distorted, or disrupted altogether, news from home could be difficult for out-of-town delegates to come by. By contrast, members of Congress could observe the drilling of militiamen on the State House lawn; they could witness the impact of boycott and blockade at the farmers' stalls on Market Street; and they could gauge the wartime demand for firewood in Philadelphia's once-verdant orchards. As a city divided not only by class, ethnicity, race, and religious denomination, but also by pacifism and political allegiances, as a city occupied by British soldiers and later reclaimed by American forces, as a city transformed by war, Philadelphia was a unique microcosm in which congressmen could watch the Revolution unfold.

The activities of Philadelphia crowds, that is, the people "out of doors," offered Congress a particularly vivid expression of popular sentiment, the sort that could not be read in political pamphlets or newspapers. In the decade preceding the Revolutionary War, financial distress and the politics of resistance to imperial taxation together began to politicize Philadelphia's working poor. Billy G. Smith has demonstrated that after the French and Indian War many of the Delaware Valley's economic sectors contracted, while heavy immigration crowded the labor pool,

[5] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Sept. 7, 1774.

causing a decline in real wages.[6] During the Townshend Act resistance campaigns, Philadelphia's artisans and mechanics perceived that their economic concerns diverged from those of the city's traders, and they began to organize, electing a committee and devising their own platforms and slates.[7] This heightened political awareness and participation, coupled with economic hardship, also stimulated activity out of doors. The late 1760s and early 1770s witnessed a marked increase in crowd behavior—ranging from tarring-and-featherings to house assaults to street protests—as Philadelphia townspeople endeavored to resist customs enforcement and compel compliance with their nonimportation boycotts.

Historians have carefully analyzed the interaction among Philadelphia crowds and the local political institutions that emerged during the city's revolutionary and constitutional crises. Richard Ryerson has investigated the interaction between crowds and the Whig committees that formed in the tumultuous two years prior to the Declaration of Independence. His research demonstrates that committees and crowds shared a resistance-minded political ideology; they both resented British tyranny and sought to restore American rights through the cessation of trade.[8] Similarly, Steven Rosswurm has explored the connection between crowds and the Philadelphia militia, particularly the Committee of Privates. Rosswurm argues that this committee, though comprised largely of professionals and skilled laborers, had "organic ties to Philadelphia's lower sort" and was tied by "bonds of commonality" to the urban poor. Perhaps for this reason, Philadelphia's revolutionary crowds almost invariably included martial elements, be they soldiers parading in protest or simply fifers and drummers playing a march.[9] Read together, Ryerson's and Rosswurm's histories triangulate the exertion and expression of political authority among crowds, committees, and soldiers.

This essay throws Congress into the mix, examining three instances of crowd behavior in revolutionary Philadelphia: a threatened razing of the City Tavern in 1775, a saturnalian parade on the Fourth of July, 1778, and the hanging of two effigies in 1780. Each of these occurrences is shrouded

[6] Billy G. Smith, "The Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians, 1750 to 1800," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 38 (1981): passim, esp. 189.

[7] Charles S. Olton, "Philadelphia's Mechanics in the First Decade of Revolution 1765–1775," *Journal of American History* 59 (1972): 321–22; Foner, *Tom Paine*, 61–62; Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 40–41.

[8] Ryerson, *Revolution Is Now Begun*, esp. 131–33.

[9] Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, passim, quoted at 69.

in its own unique mysteries. Why did a ball hosted in honor of Martha Washington create a public uproar? Toward what end did a crowd outfit a servant woman in a massive wig and hoist her through the streets on Independence Day? Why did townsfolk cart effigies of Benedict Arnold twice in a forty-eight-hour period? Contextualizing these episodes within the social and political development of revolutionary Philadelphia helps to answer these questions, making apparent each event's latent meanings and significance.

A careful reading of these three moments also reveals a vibrant interplay between the delegates who gathered in the State House and the people who gathered in Philadelphia's streets. Crowd activity, be it violence or street theater, did more than just allow townsfolk to vent frustrations and energies. At a time when traditional political and legal institutions had begun to collapse, crowd activity provided a medium for the articulation and negotiation of community values and ideologies. It enabled working Philadelphians to express political opinion to a Congress they had not elected but that wielded considerable sway over their lives.

No single or simple pattern emerges: at times, Philadelphia crowds acted in opposition to Congress and its measures; at others, these crowds acted in support of or at least in congruence with Congress.[10] What does

[10] My purpose here is not to determine whether these crowds were internally motivated or whether they gathered at the behest of community leaders. Little evidence exists to answer precisely such questions of agency, and what evidence does exist points in multiple directions: a wide range of persons joined crowds for an equally wide range of reasons. Further, such a framework would tend to establish a dichotomy of crowds and leaders that, for Philadelphia at least, might very well be false. For more on the history of American crowds, see generally, Edmund S. Morgan and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1953); Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., "Political Mobs and the American Revolution, 1765–1776," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 99 (1955): 244–50; Gordon S. Wood, "A Note on Mobs in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 23 (1966): 635–42; Richard Maxwell Brown, "Violence and the American Revolution," in *Essays on the American Revolution*, ed. Stephen G. Kurtz and James H. Hutson (Chapel Hill, NC, 1973), 81–120; James Barton Hunt, "The Crowd and the American Revolution: A Study of Urban Political Violence in Boston and Philadelphia, 1773–1776" (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1973); Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765–1776* (New York, 1974); Dirk Hoerder, *Crowd Action in Revolutionary Massachusetts, 1765–1780* (New York, 1977); Alfred F. Young, "George Robert Twelves Hewes (1742–1840): A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 38 (1981): 561–623; *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston, 1999); and "English Plebian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism," in *The Origins of Anglo-American Radicalism*, ed. Margaret Jacob and James Jacob (London, 1984), 185–212; Paul A. Gilje, *The Road to Mobocracy: Popular Disorder in New York City, 1763–1834* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), and *Rioting in America* (Bloomington, IN, 1996); Barbara Clark Smith, "Food Rioters and the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 51 (1994): 3–38; and Jesse

become clear, however, is that, in a city wrenched by civil war, the people out of doors evoked both the threat of violence and the symbolic power of folk ritual to police their society.[11] Much of Philadelphians' crowd behavior was dedicated to regulating a moral economy.[12] Like all wars, the Revolution created opportunity for some and misfortune for others. Through crowd behavior, the laboring poor fought for economic justice. They insisted that their "betters," including members of Congress and the Philadelphia gentry alike, share in the sacrifices of war. Crowd behavior also became a means by which townspeople patrolled the boundaries of class, gender, race, and political allegiance in a time of extraordinary social conflict. The American Revolution was a civil war, but it was also a culture war, waged over social privilege, sumptuary aesthetics, gender roles, and public morality. The streets of Philadelphia were its battlegrounds.

House Razing: Martha Washington's Ball

The first incident for consideration is a house razing that never happened.

Late in the afternoon of November 24, 1775, the radical Philadelphia committeeman Christopher Marshall strode up the lawn of the State House, where the Continental Congress was then sitting, and anxiously entreated the doorman to summon Massachusetts delegate Samuel Adams out of session. Marshall, a prosperous, retired druggist who had been disowned by the Quaker meeting for his increasingly vigorous participation in the resistance movement, had befriended Adams that summer; he regularly dined with the New England delegates and they occasionally passed time in "free conversation" at the coffeehouse. On this day, however, Marshall came to Adams with distressing news: several townsfolk were planning to riot that very evening. The cause of this commotion was Martha Washington, who had stopped over in Philadelphia en route to visit General Washington at his camp near

Lemisch, *Jack Tar vs. John Bull: The Role of New York's Seamen in Precipitating the Revolution* (New York, 1997).

[11] On the power of folk ritual, see Roger D. Abrahams, "Introduction: A Folklore Perspective," in *Riot and Revelry in Early America*, ed. William Pencak, Matthew Dennis, and Simon P. Newman (University Park, PA, 2002), 21–37; and, generally, Robert Blair St. George, *Conversing by Signs: Poetics of Implication in Colonial New England Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1998).

[12] For the role of crowds in the establishment and enforcement of a moral economy, see generally, E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (New York, 1991), and Adrian Randall and Andrew Charlesworth, eds., *Moral Economy and Popular Protest: Crowds, Conflicts and Authority* (New York, 2000).

Boston. Her journey was intended to dispel British rumors that she had abandoned her rebel husband. In part for this reason, and in part as a tribute to the commander's and her patriotic sacrifices, Lady Washington was greatly hailed and fêted along her journey. Upon arriving at the Schuylkill River, she had been greeted by the Second Battalion, commanded by Colonel Daniel Roberdeau, and escorted into the city under the arms of light infantry and horse. Several of her friends in Philadelphia, perhaps including the Virginia congressmen and their wives, had also organized a grand ball in her honor, to be held at the City Tavern. It was this ball that now brought Christopher Marshall to Congress's door. As he explained to Samuel Adams, several threats had been "thrown out." Apparently, the people of Philadelphia felt that the planned ball would violate the Congress's own Articles of Association, which expressly prohibited "every species of extravagance and dissipation," including "expensive diversions and entertainments." As Marshall had heard it, "if the ball assembled this night, as it was proposed . . . the New Tavern would cut but a poor figure to-morrow morning." By intervening to stop the affair, Marshall implored, Adams might save the City Tavern and avert a "commotion" that would be "very disagreeable at this melancholy time."[13]

The Continental Congress had first published the Articles of Association one year earlier, in October 1774. This agreement, which members of Congress entered on behalf of the "inhabitants of the several colonies," provided the blueprint for an extensive trade boycott designed to pressure Parliament into repealing the dread Intolerable Acts. Culminating more than a decade of economic resistance, the association bound adherents both from the importation of British goods and from the exportation of American goods to Britain or the West Indies. The association transformed Philadelphia, redirecting the economic energies of its inhabitants. Vendors pledged not to raise prices on their wares. Butchers promised to abstain from slaughtering sheep. Some four hundred women took employment as spinners with the United Company of Philadelphia for Promoting American Manufactures. Throughout the city, cottage industries sprung up for the production of glass, carpets,

[13] See Christopher Marshall's diary entries for Nov. 21 and 24, 1775, in *Passages from the Diary of Christopher Marshall*, ed. William Duane (Philadelphia, 1849), n.p.; for Martha Washington's journey, see J. Thomas Scharf and Thompson Westcott, *A History of Philadelphia, 1609–1884* (Philadelphia, 1884), 1:304.

spermaceti, "American porter," and saltpeter.[14] The association also greatly accelerated the democratization of politics that had begun during the Townshend crisis of the previous decade. In November, Philadelphians elected a large and remarkably heterogeneous committee to enforce the trade boycott. As Richard Ryerson has observed, this committee "gave every occupational group and every class above the level of unskilled laborer," as well as most religious denominations and representatives of the city's German minority, "a direct and significant voice in political affairs for the first time in Philadelphia's history."[15]

To further ensure success for its nonimportation campaign, Congress built into the association a nonconsumption agreement, which called upon Americans to abstain from the purchase or use of boycotted goods. Nonconsumption served multiple patriot aims: it reaffirmed Christian and republican virtue; it promoted the arts and manufactures in anticipation of war; and it contributed to an incipient sense of American economic independence, thus planting a seed of national identity. Perhaps most significantly, the association popularized the resistance movement, enabling every colonist with a penny to pinch to participate in the American cause.[16] The association created a groundswell in popular politics that would reach its fullest force in the summer of 1775, after the battles of Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill.[17] More than a month before the Second Continental Congress resolved to put the colonies "into a state of defense," nearly eight thousand Philadelphians turned out in arms to protect "their Property, Liberty, and lives." The city's battalions drew heavily from the working poor; their ranks were filled with craftsmen and laborers, many of whom had been put out of work by the cessation of trade. These militiamen quickly became politically self-aware, demanding not only that they receive pay for their training, but also that the burdens of war be equitably distributed through compulsory militia service.[18]

[14] Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:293–95. Saltpeter was used for making gunpowder, in preparation for the coming possibility of war.

[15] Ryerson, *Revolution Is Now Begun*, 96.

[16] For more on the history of prerevolutionary trade boycotts and their social and cultural implications, see T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York, 2004).

[17] See Charles Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1979), chap. 1.

[18] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Apr. 26, 1775, quoted in Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 49. On the demands of the Philadelphia militiamen, see Rosswurm, 49ff.

By the time that Christopher Marshall knocked on the State House door, then, Philadelphia had undergone a considerable social and political metamorphosis. Not only had townsfolk become more political, but traditional governmental institutions had begun to falter. John Penn and his council, though eager to effect a reconciliation between the colonies and Britain, recognized that they had little power to do so. In the assembly, those representatives who opposed Congress could not muster the votes to derail its measures. Many of the colonies' executive and legislative responsibilities, as well as Philadelphia's municipal government, had fallen upon an extralegal committee of safety. The collapse of Pennsylvania's old administration, together with the social and economic dislocations brought on by war, created a vacuum of authority that drew the people out of doors to the fore of city politics.[19]

On some level, Samuel Adams must have been deeply gratified to hear of the public's vigilance. Back in Boston, Adams had for decades decried his neighbors' obsession with luxury and material goods, which he believed would corrupt the citizenry and leave it vulnerable to tyranny.[20] In 1774, Adams and likeminded delegates convinced the First Continental Congress to augment the trade boycott with a series of behavioral proscriptions aimed at promoting public virtue. These proscriptions, drawn up in the eighth article of the association, prohibited "expensive diversions and entertainments," and further "discountenance[d] and discourage[d]" the theater, horse racing, games, cock fighting, lavish mourning attire, and the giving of gloves and scarves at funerals. Adams expected that Article 8 would foster morality, industry, and sobriety. By abstaining from idle and debauching amusements, Americans would win approbation for their resistance movement both at home and in Europe. By forsaking material pleasures, they could more easily adhere to the mandates of nonconsumption. Their pursuit of diligence and industry would help prepare the country in the eventuality of war. In short, virtuous living would beget a virtuous people. Rebuking the suggestion that

[19] This is not to suggest that Philadelphia's working poor uniformly supported either the resistance movement or Congress. As Eric Foner has observed, the roll of Philadelphia loyalists included laborers such as "blacksmiths, tailors, coopers, shipwrights and hatters." Foner, *Tom Paine*, 61.

[20] For Samuel Adams's early career and his campaign against luxury, see generally, John C. Miller, *Sam Adams: Pioneer in Propaganda* (Boston, 1936); Pauline Maier, *The Old Revolutionaries: Political Lives in the Age of Samuel Adams* (New York, 1980); William M. Fowler Jr., *Samuel Adams: Radical Puritan* (New York, 1997); and Benjamin H. Irvin, *Samuel Adams: Son of Liberty, Father of Revolution* (New York, 2002).

Americans would suffer under the Articles, Adams's Massachusetts colleague Robert Treat Paine proclaimed, "They will Suffer themselves to grow Rich by a Disuse of the fopperies & Superfluities. . . . They will Suffer themselves to grow wise & virtuous & healthy by a disuse of the Intoxicating Poisons & needless Luxuries."[21]

Unlike nonimportation, nonexportation, and nonconsumption, however, the association's behavioral proscriptions had little direct relation to the Atlantic trade or economic resistance to Britain. Many of the banned activities—such as horse racing, cockfighting, and the theater—were tremendously popular in 1774. Few of these activities were considered unpatriotic, particularly outside of New England. By calling a halt to favorite pastimes that bore little implication for imperial relations, Congress demanded from Americans a high degree of personal restraint. To coax public cooperation with this demand, members of Congress conspicuously modeled their compliance with the association. In December 1774, for instance, Thomas Jefferson, who would join Congress the following spring, penned a letter explaining that though he had ordered the sash windows he now daily expected from London before Congress had established the association, he would gladly surrender them to the committee, lest his business give "a handle for traducing our measures." The following May, delegates from New Jersey and Georgia arrived at Congress donning patriotic homespun suits. In October, after the death of past congressional president Peyton Randolph, delegates agreed to attend his funeral wearing black crape armbands, the mourning wear officially sanctioned by the Articles of Association. And, about the same time Samuel Adams was consulting with Christopher Marshall on the State House lawn, his cousin John was writing Mercy Otis Warren to proclaim how greatly he disdained popular diversions such as "Balls, Assemblies, Concerts, Cards, Horses, [and] Dogs."[22]

The people out of doors acquiesced to considerable impositions on their consumption and leisure. Perhaps no single individual embodied the

[21] Robert Treat Paine's Notes for a Speech in Congress, Oct. 5, 1774, in *Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774–1789*, ed. Paul H. Smith (Washington, DC, 1976–), 1:148. For more on these behavioral proscriptions, see generally, Ann Fairfax Withington, *Toward a More Perfect Union: Virtue and the Formation of American Republics* (New York, 1991).

[22] Thomas Jefferson to Archibald Cary and Benjamin Harrison, Monticello, Dec. 9, 1774, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd et al. (Princeton, NJ, 1950–), 1:154–55. For congressmen in homespun, Congress's mourning of Peyton Randolph, and Adams to Warren, see Richard Smith's diary, Sept. 15, 1775; John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, Oct. 24, 1775; and Adams to Mercy Warren, Philadelphia, Nov. 25, 1775, *Letters of Delegates*, 2:17, 232, 387.

spirit of forbearance more than the radical organizer Timothy Matlack. Though infamously poor, having been disowned by the Quakers for not paying his debts, and disdained by some for consorting with African Americans, Matlack enjoyed considerable cachet as the city's preeminent cockfight promoter.[23] The association put him out of business (though he quickly found a place in political affairs). Like Matlack, the people of Philadelphia were asked to refrain from such festivities. Shortly after the publication of Congress's Articles, the mayor and council of Philadelphia prevailed upon the colonial assembly to ban the city's biannual fairs, which, they claimed, exposed local youth to drinking, gaming, "vicious servants and negroes."[24] Members of Congress were greatly encouraged by Philadelphians' ready adherence to the Articles, but some delegates feared that popular enthusiasm might soon run thin. John Adams believed that Americans had "Virtue enough to be mere Husbandmen, Mechanicks & Soldiers," at least for the moment. The question for him was, "How long . . . will their virtue last?"[25]

Adams might have done well to ask this question of himself and his fellow delegates, for the Continental Congress generated considerable fanfare and pomp. In the fall of 1774, the Pennsylvania Assembly and local "gentlemen" welcomed delegates with costly entertainments at the State House and the City Tavern. Philadelphia elites opened their homes—floors scrubbed and silver polished—to regale the colonies' preeminent statesmen with sumptuous feasts. Even at the Second Continental Congress, after the association had gone into effect and war had cast a solemn hue over their proceedings, delegates could not help but draw attention to themselves. For every congressman who wore homespun, another dressed in silk.[26]

Despite the congressmen's public and private demonstrations of conformity with the association, the laboring classes of Philadelphia began to suspect that their "betters" might be getting the best of them. Shortly after the association appeared in 1774, loyalist newspaperman James Rivington published a ballad entitled "The Poor Man's Advice to

[23] Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 37–38.

[24] Foner, *Tom Paine*, 50, and Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 37. The city fair typically took place in May and November, which, perhaps not coincidentally, was the exact moment that Philadelphians protested the ball for Martha Washington.

[25] John Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, Oct. 19, 1775, *Letters of Delegates*, 2:206.

[26] *Boston Evening Post*, Sept. 26, 1774; Robert Treat Paine's diary, Philadelphia, Sept. 16, 1774; John Adams's diary, Philadelphia, Sept. 22 and Oct. 20, 1774, *Letters of Delegates*, 1:75, 90, 221.

His Poor Neighbours." The author remained anonymous, and his or her social rank is unclear, but in this song the "Poor Man" raised objections to the association that were founded on issues of class and equity. The lyrics read, in part,

> [The congressmen will] ride in coach and chariot fine,
> And go to ball, and play,
> When we've not wherewithal to dine,
> Though we work hard all day.
> . . . . . .
> Rare sons of freedom, this Congress!
> So just as they think right,
> We are to eat,—drink,—frolick,—dress;
> Pray masters, may we S——e.[27]

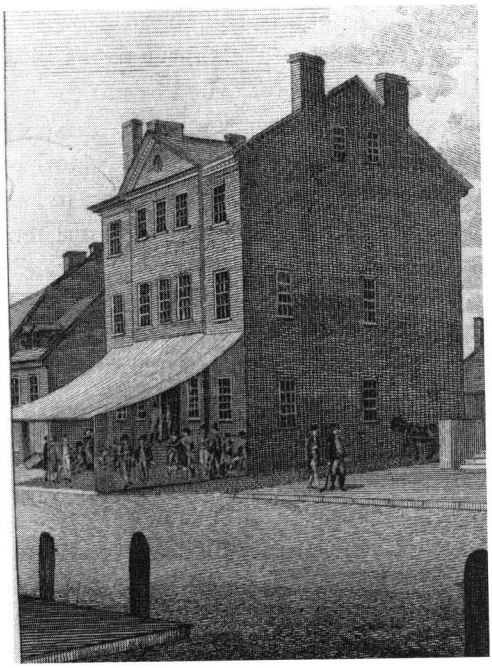
Though published in New York, the Poor Man's "Advice" struck a chord in Pennsylvania. Many militia members believed that the colony's wealthy and/or Quaker citizens were unfairly ducking military service, and class tensions began to percolate. Writing to the Pennsylvania Assembly on behalf of the Chester County Committee of Inspection and Observation, Anthony Wayne lamented, "The burthen of the [military] Association falls chiefly on the poor and middling sorts of the inhabitants—whilst the more opulent are, for the most part, exempt."[28] The "threats thrown out" against the City Tavern suggest that Philadelphia's working people would no longer stand idly by while local elites, and even members of Congress, flaunted the association.

Marshall and Adams had good reason to take these threats seriously. Earlier that fall, an incensed Philadelphia crowd—said to consist of militiamen, "lads," "hearty jolly tars," and "market people"—had attacked the home of John Kearsley, "a violent enemy of the cause," breaking windows, doors, and furniture with stones and brickbats.[29] Adams, of course, also remembered the Stamp Act crowds of August 1765, which tore Massachusetts lieutenant governor Thomas Hutchinson's house to the ground and ransacked the homes and offices of three other admiralty and

[27] *The Poor Man's Advice to His Poor Neighbours: A Ballad, to the Tune of Chevy–Chace* (New York, 1774), in *Early American Imprints*, ser. 1 (New York, 1985), no. 13551.

[28] Quoted in Hawke, *In the Midst of a Revolution*, 148.

[29] Peter Force, comp., *American Archives*, ser. 4 (Washington, DC, 1837–53), 3:170–76; Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 46–48; Ryerson, *Revolution Is Now Begun*, 131–32.



The City Tavern, from detail of engraving by William Birch of the Second Bank of Pennylvania, plate 27 of *Birch's Views of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1800). Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

customs officers. Robert Blair St. George has illustrated that house assaults such as these were not merely acts "of frenzied vandalism," but rather "performed different kinds of cultural work on a variety of symbolic levels." For some participants, the house assault expressed a moral judgment: the victim had behaved in a depraved or licentious manner. For others, the house assault articulated both a social impulse, the leveling of wealth and distinction, as well as a related, communitarian concern that the residents of the house had taken unfair advantage of their wealth, had bent the rules to the detriment of their neighbors.[30]

The City Tavern, by these criteria, was an easy and obvious target. As the site of the proposed ball, it bore the taint of the well-heeled who, though professing patriotism, circumvented the association and indulged in genteel entertainment even as laboring people suffered without daily necessities. More generally, the City Tavern structurally embodied the social authority of Philadelphia elites. Built in 1772–73 for the substan-

[30] St. George, *Conversing by Signs*, 293–94.

tial sum of three thousand pounds, the tavern was financed by the subscriptions of fifty-two of the city's leading citizens as well as a sizeable loan by John Penn. Finished and furnished to suit the most proper tastes, the tavern was designed in mimicry of the finest establishments of London. On his arrival in Philadelphia, John Adams proclaimed it the "most genteel" tavern in America. By threatening to raze this structure, the people of Philadelphia signaled not only their insistence that the association be equitably enforced but also, more profoundly, their growing impatience with the city's hierarchical social order.[31]

Marshall and Adams could afford neither the black mark on Congress and its association nor the deep tear in Philadelphia's social fabric. They moved quickly to stop the ball. After leaving Adams, Marshall proceeded to Philosophical Hall, where a specially convened meeting of the Committee of Inspection and Observation debated the "propriety" of the event. The committee concluded, "after due and mature consideration," that the evening's ball should be cancelled and no other balls organized "while these troublesome times continued." The committee then appointed several members to present their apologies to Lady Washington and beg her cooperation. Adams, meanwhile, appealed to John Hancock, president of Congress, to exert his sway against the ball. By these actions, Marshall and Adams managed to avert the potential disaster, but not without political fallout. Later that evening, Benjamin Harrison, a Virginia delegate and friend of the Washington family, stopped at Samuel Adams's lodgings to "rebuke" him for preventing the ball, "which he declared was legal, just and laudable."[32] To an extent, Harrison may have been right. David Shields has pointed out that state balls were common affairs in colonial America.[33] In the years that followed, some delegates came to believe that Congress needed to establish an impressive and august political culture in order to win the respect of both American and European audiences. For now, the people of Philadelphia had flexed their muscle to enforce the association among political leaders and ordinary folk alike.

[31] On the City Tavern, see Peter Thompson, *Rum Punch and Revolution: Taverngoing and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1999), 149–50; John Adams's diary, Aug. 29, 1774, *Letters of Delegates*, 1:3.

[32] Duane, ed., *Passages from the Diary of Christopher Marshall*, Nov. 24, 1775.

[33] David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997), 145–46.

Saturnalia: Continella, or the Duchess of Independence

The second incident for consideration is a saturnalian display involving several Whigs and one very big wig.

In mid-June 1778 word reached York that General Henry Clinton had at last evacuated Philadelphia, whereupon the Continental Congress began devising ceremonials for its return to the city. Members of Congress were as eager to reassert their social and cultural authority over Philadelphia as their political authority. Having twice now fled in the face of the enemy, Congress had lost considerable credibility. Worse still, for the past nine months, while Congress sat in "the most inhospitable scandalous place," the British officer corps besieged Philadelphia with gaiety, high living, and ostentation.[34] The upcoming Fourth of July provided a choice opportunity for Congress to celebrate the American cause with and for the people of Philadelphia, while simultaneously exemplifying the virtue and simplicity of a republican administration. On June 24, Congress appointed a three-man committee "to take proper measures for a public celebration of the anniversary of independence." When that anniversary arrived, however, Philadelphia's patriot crowd settled upon decidedly *improper* measures for its own celebration. In so doing, the crowd endeavored not only to reclaim the city from the British, but also to restore a gender order that Howe's occupation had undone.

Much had changed in Philadelphia since the abortive City Tavern incident. In the fall of 1776, the state's constitutional convention produced an extraordinarily democratic frame of government, doing away with property-holding requirements for public officials and expanding the vote to all adult male taxpayers.[35] Dreading this radical frame of government, many former leading citizens refused to take office, accept military commissions, or practice law under the new constitution. Before this constitutional crisis could reach full pitch, however, Pennsylvanians were confronted by another, more alarming emergency: war had come to the Delaware Valley. For more than a year, Sir William Howe pursued Washington's army through the New Jersey countryside. In the late fall of 1776, Howe pressed as far as Trenton, forcing Washington to retreat

[34] For the unflattering description of York, see Cornelius Harnett to William Wilkinson, York, Dec. 28, 1777, *Letters of Delegates*, 8:490.

[35] For a more critical perspective on Pennsylvania's constitution, see William Pencak, "The Promise of Revolution: 1750–1800," in *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth*, ed. Randall M. Miller and William Pencak (University Park, PA, 2002), 123.

across the Delaware and spurring a massive exodus of those Philadelphians, Congress included, who did not welcome the imminent arrival of British troops. Washington's Christmas raid on Trenton proved Congress's flight premature, but the following summer Howe returned with fifteen thousand troops, defeated American forces at Brandywine, and ultimately took Philadelphia in September 1777.[36]

Howe's purpose was not to destroy the American capital, but rather to occupy it gently enough to win the esteem and political support of fence-sitting Quakers and lukewarm rebels. In an effort to maintain order and restore business, Howe appointed Philadelphia-native Joseph Galloway superintendent general of the city. Merchants and storekeepers, many of whom followed Howe into Philadelphia, were encouraged to open shop, and fortifications along the Delaware were destroyed for the sake of river commerce.[37] Howe and his officers also endeavored to revive the city's sporting and social life. As if to purposefully flout the Articles of Association, British soldiers organized cockfights, horse races, and cricket matches. Under the direction of Major John André, the Southwark Theatre reopened, featuring a new play almost every Monday night.[38] On Thursday nights, the officer corps hosted balls at the City Tavern, the popularity of which reveals how far the association had fallen. The young socialite Rebecca Franks, delighting in the gaiety and amusement she found in Howe's Philadelphia, half-heartedly complained, "I've been but three nights alone since we mov't to town." Franks wrote her friend Mary Paca, wife of the Maryland congressional delegate William Paca, and with no apparent sense of impropriety urged her to visit British Philadelphia. "Oh, how I wish Mr. Paca would let you come in for a week or two!" Franks declared. "You'd have an opportunity of rakeing as much as you chose, at Plays, Balls, Concerts or Assemblies."[39]

[36] See generally, Stephen R. Taaffe, *The Philadelphia Campaign, 1777–1778* (Lawrence, KS, 2003).

[37] Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:365–70; John M. Coleman, "Joseph Galloway and the British Occupation of Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 30 (1963): 272–300.

[38] See Darlene Emmert Fisher, "Social Life in Philadelphia during the British Occupation," *Pennsylvania History* 37 (1970): 237–60; Judith Van Buskirk, "They Didn't Join the Band: Disaffected Women in Revolutionary Philadelphia," *Pennsylvania History* 62 (1995): 306–29; Nicholas B. Wainwright, ed., "'A Diary of Trifling Occurrences': Philadelphia, 1776–1778," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 82 (1958): 411–65; John W. Jackson, *With the British Army in Philadelphia, 1777–1778* (San Rafael, CA, 1979).

[39] Rebecca Franks, "A Letter of Miss Rebecca Franks," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 16 (1892): 216–18, quoted in Fisher, "Social Life in Philadelphia," 246–47; Jared A.

Of all the opportunities for "rakeing" in occupied Philadelphia, none surpassed in extravagance the infamous Meschianza of May 1778. Hosted by British officers and organized by Major André as a farewell party for General Howe, the Meschianza was reported to have cost more than three thousand guineas. In preparation for the night's festivities, André paid particular attention to his female invitees. The women dressed as Turkish maidens and were divided into two orders, the Blended Rose and the Burning Mountain. André, trained as an artist, drew a sketch illustrating just how the Meschianza ladies should appear. Their costume consisted of a silk polonaise, open in the front, adorned with bespangled sash, stockings, and veil, and trimmed in the color of their order. They wore their hair in high turbans, arranged by "Ladies Hair-Dressers" who had recently established themselves in the city, to conceal gifts for their suitors. At the appointed hour on the evening of the eighteenth, these Philadelphia "Turks" stepped into decorated barges and floated down the Delaware, accompanied by music and cannonade, to the country estate of Joseph Wharton. There the women were met by British officers, mounted and richly caparisoned in the mode of medieval knights and also ordered as the Rose and the Mountain. After escorting their ladies to nearby pavilions, these knights returned to the field, exchanged boasts of their respective ladies' many virtues, and finally prepared to joust for their ladies' honor. After four rounds, the master of ceremonies proclaimed a draw: all the ladies had been nobly avenged. The women and their escorts then joined for dinner and an exorbitant ball that lasted nearly until sunrise.[40]

By presenting the women of Philadelphia as fair maidens, and the British officers as gallant knights, the Meschianza recast the occupation of Philadelphia as a noble defense of female virtue. The lived experiences of the city's women, however, suggest that gender relations during the occupation were more complex, and less heroic, than the Meschianza suggested. Certainly, some women enjoyed the social, and sexual, opportunities the occupation afforded. Rebecca Franks, for instance, seemed to thrive on the attention of British officers. She reported that there was "No

Brown, "Plays and Amusements Offered for and by the American Military during the Revolutionary War," *Theatre Research International* 4 (1978): 12–23.

[40] Fisher, "Social Life in Philadelphia," 251–52. See also, Charles C. Norris Jr., "*The Mischianza of 1778": An Address Delivered to the Members of the Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, March 11, 1743* (Philadelphia, 1943), 1–16; and John André, "Particulars of the Mischianza in America," *Gentleman's Magazine* 48 (1778): 353–57.

loss for partners" at these balls: "even I am engaged to seven different gentlemen for you must know 'tis a fixed rule never to dance but two dances with the same person." For others, the occupation was a period marked by fear and vulnerability. Several months earlier, in anticipation of Howe's invasion, a large percentage of Philadelphia men had fled the city, either to fight with the army or militia or to escape political arrest. Of necessity, these male refugees often left behind their families, such that Howe arrived to discover a city inhabited disproportionately by women. According to British census takers, Philadelphia women outnumbered men by 30 percent.[41] As with many wars, the Revolution put civilian women into close and extraordinary interaction with often hostile armies; in the absence of fathers, husbands, and sons, the city's women were forced to fend for themselves. Women with rooms to spare, such as the wealthy Quaker Elizabeth Drinker, were made to quarter British officers. Propertied women had to stave off American and British soldiers who came to their homes, at best to requisition blankets, at worst to loot for pelf. Looming over such confrontations was the specter of rape. Drinker, who had been left alone with six children when Congress exiled her husband to Virginia, agreed to house a Major Crammond only reluctantly, after he suggested the next officer to come along might be less mannered than he. Drinker also recorded watching helplessly as a British officer, "thief like," carried off her servant girl. Even when physical violence was not an issue, officers' and soldiers' sexuality still posed a threat. Male sexual desire might be imposed by false promises, no less than by force. Sarah Logan Fisher was troubled by "Very bad accounts of the licentiousness of the English officers in deluding young girls."[42]

On the eve of the British evacuation, the Meschianza told a different story about gender relations in occupied Philadelphia. Eliding the genuine experiences of sexual anxiety and confrontation that marked the winter of 1778, the jousting tournament instead re-envisioned the occupation as a male conquest fantasy in which noble British officers captured the hearts and hands of Philadelphia's ladies. Both as enacted on the mock-Arthurian stage at the Wharton estate, and as represented to Londoners later that summer in a *Gentleman's Magazine* article written by John

[41] The city population was 10,331 males and 13,403 females. Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:367.

[42] Fisher, "Social Life in Philadelphia," 239, 243–44, 246. See also, Van Buskirk, "They Didn't Join the Band," passim; Wainwright, ed., "Diary of Trifling Occurrences,'" passim; Elaine Forman Crane, ed., *The Diary of Elizabeth Drinker* (Boston, 1991), 1:266.

A Meschianza lady, her escort, and a slave, as sketched by Major John André. Courtesy of Cliveden, a property of the National Trust for Historic Preservation in the United States.

André, the Meschianza joust supplanted "Very bad accounts" of a dissolute and rapacious army with a quaint, Camelot narrative of chivalric masculinity. The Meschianza also affirmed imperial British conceptions of colonial American inferiority. By portraying British officers as knights who had crusaded to a faraway land to rescue distressed damsels, the Meschianza trafficked in ethnicized and racialized discourses of imperial subjugation. The Meschianza's fantastical political geography conflated the New World with the Muslim world, imputing to the British North American colonies all the heathenism and sexual licentiousness that early modern Europeans perceived in the Ottoman Empire, North Africa, and the Mediterranean. Even as the officers' knightly heraldry betokened their familial honor and Christian virtue, the ladies' Turkish costumes betokened their colonial exoticism and sexual allure. Tellingly, the only other Meschianza-goers to don Turkish dress were the slaves who served

dinner.[43]

Many prominent Whig men felt stung by the attention Philadelphia women paid to British officers. Overlooking the sexual apprehensions and trauma suffered by much of the occupied city's female population, they instead noted the betrayal of women who consorted with the enemy. Former congressman and New Jersey governor William Livingston balked at the Philadelphia "flirts," whose behavior he found both socially and politically scandalous, and he warned his daughter not to imitate "the dress of their heads or . . . the still more Tory feelings of their hearts." Anthony Wayne responded to the Meschianza like a jilted lover. After the American victory at Monmouth, General Wayne gloated, "Tell those Philadelphia ladies who attended Howe's assemblies and *levées* that the heavenly, sweet, pretty red-coats, the accomplished gentlemen of the guards and grenadiers . . . the knights of the *Blended Rose* and of the *Burning Mount* have resigned their laurels to rebel officers." Wayne's embittered retort suggests that the women of Philadelphia, particularly socialite ladies, obtained a measure of social power during the occupation. As if courted by two beaux, these women were free to bestow their fascination and romantic attention upon whomever pleased them most. They became the arbiters of masculine virtue and prowess, and by embracing British officers, these women embarrassed exiled Whigs, including members of Congress. In retaliation, army officers such as Wayne, and members of Congress, too, determined to withdraw their affections. In August, when the French minister Conrad Gérard—who arrived in Philadelphia shortly after Congress returned from York—proposed to throw a ball, several delegates urged him to refrain. As Gérard reported, "They wanted to draw an absolute line of separation between Whigs and

[43] André, "Particulars of the Mischianza in America," 353–57. On representations of Islam and the Middle East in modern European and American discourses, see generally, James R. Lewis, "Savages of the Seas: Barbary Captivity Tales and Images of Muslims in the Early Republic," *Journal of American Culture* 13, no. 2 (1990): 75–84; Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776–1815* (New York, 1995); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1978); Malini Johar Schueller, *U.S. Orientalisms: Race, Nation, and Gender in Literature, 1790–1890* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1998); Kamil Aydin, *Images of Turkey in Western Literature* (Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, 1999); Marwan Obeidat and Ibrahim Mumayiz, "Anglo-American Literary Sources on the Muslim Orient: The Roots and the Reiterations," *Journal of American Studies of Turkey* 13 (2001): 47–72; Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500–1800* (New York, 2003); and Anne G. Myles, "Slaves in Algiers, Captives in Iraq: The Strange Career of the Barbary Captivity Narrative," *Common-place* 5 (Oct. 2004), http://www.common-place.org.

Tories, especially among the ladies."[44] Congress's conscious decision to shun loyalist women—even to the point of dictating the French foreign minister's social agenda—is indicative of the extent to which the British occupation was experienced as a gendered phenomenon. By socially rebuffing women perceived to have betrayed the American cause, local Whigs, Continental army officers, and congressional delegates all reasserted their masculine authority over Philadelphia.

Members of Congress likewise determined to reestablish the austere mode of living that Howe's army had undone. The Fourth of July provided an occasion for Congress to model republican simplicity and restraint in its public festivities. In the morning, military governor Benedict Arnold organized a parade replete with the emblems of independence: liberty caps and the new United States flag.[45] In the afternoon, Congress's steering committee hosted an unassuming afternoon banquet at the City Tavern, inviting "the principal civil and military officers and strangers in town." The afternoon's highlights included a large baked pudding, patriotically decorated, and music performed by a small band. After dinner, congressional president Henry Laurens led his guests in a round of thirteen toasts, punctuated by cannon fire. Later that evening, the congressmen gathered again for a cold collation, followed by a display of fireworks for the people of Philadelphia.[46] This modest affair represented a slight scaling back from the previous year's Fourth of July celebration, which had featured a flotilla of river boats and ships displaying their colors and a musical ensemble comprised exclusively of Hessian prisoners of war.[47]

In part, the humbleness of the postoccupation Fourth of July reflected both the desperate material circumstances of wartime Philadelphia and the reduced political stature of a Congress that had twice now fled the

[44] On the social power of women in Philadelphia during and after the occupation, see Susan E. Klepp, "Rough Music on Independence Day: Philadelphia, 1778," in *Riot and Revelry in Early America*, ed. Pencak, Dennis, and Newman, 156–76, esp. 159. For the outcry against Philadelphia women who socialized with British officers, including Livingston's and Wayne's, see Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 2:899–901. For Gérard's statement, see John Durand, trans., *New Materials for the History of the American Revolution* (New York, 1889), 166.

[45] Klepp, "Rough Music on Independence Day," 159.

[46] For descriptions of the 1778 Fourth of July celebration, see the diary of William Ellery and the July 6, 1778, supplement to the *Pennsylvania Packet*, quoted in *Letters of Delegates*, 10:221–22 n. 1.

[47] For descriptions of the 1777 Fourth of July celebration, see John Adams to Abigail Adams 2d, Philadelphia, July 5, 1777; Thomas Burke to Richard Caswell, Philadelphia, July 5, 1777; William Williams to Jonathan Trumbull Sr., Philadelphia, July 5, 1777, *Letters of Delegates*, 7:293–95, 303; *New York (Poughkeepsie) Journal*, July 21, 1777.

city. Yet in part still, the Congress's simple banquet represented a conspicuous return to the plain-style aesthetic of the association. Since the threatened razing of the City Tavern three years earlier, Congress had purposefully tailored its public commemorations and festivities in accordance with the sacrifice it had demanded of the American people. Upon returning to Philadelphia, delegates such as Samuel Adams renewed their insistence upon ceremonies that conformed to "true republican Principles."[48] Viewed in this light, the Congress's Fourth of July celebration is perhaps best understood as a rebuke of the monarchical extravagance and dissipation that had marked all of the British occupation, most especially Howe's Meschianza. Rhode Island delegate William Ellery relished as victory the Fourth of July festivities falling so close on the heels of the Meschianza: "These, but a few years since, colonies of Britain, are now free, sovereign and independent States, and now celebrate the anniversary of their Independence in the very city where but a day or two before Genl Howe exhibited his ridiculous [*champêtre*]!"[49]

Whigs in the streets also wished to celebrate independence and to put their stamp on what had been Howe's city. Later the same day, after the Congress's official banquet had concluded, a crowd of patriots arose to take another, more dramatic swipe at both the ostentation of Howe's regime and the perfidy of Philadelphia's ladies. The details of this episode, as preserved in the diaries and correspondence of only a few contemporaries, are somewhat ambiguous, but it is clear that the crowd directed its enmity literally at the heads of women who sympathized, and socialized, with the British. The crowd—described by contemporaries variously as "the Whigs of the City," "the Citizens," "the mob," and "the vulgar"—dressed "a Woman of the Town"—also reported to be "a strumpet" and "an old Negro Wench"—in "the most Extravagant high head Dress that Could be got."[50] Estimated to be "about three feet high and of proportionable width, with a profusion of curls," this headdress parodied a "Monstrous" fashion that had been introduced by the newcomer "Ladies Hair-Dressers" and popularized by "the Mistresses & Wh——s of the

[48] Samuel Adams to James Warren, Philadelphia, July 15, 1778, *Letters of Delegates*, 10:280.

[49] Quoted in *Letters of Delegates*, 10:221–22. A *fête champêtre* is a country or garden party.

[50] Recounting the event more than a month later, Josiah Bartlett wrote that "Gentlemen" were responsible for dressing the woman in the wig and that the "mob" paraded her through town. See note 51 below. As Susan E. Klepp has argued, the drummer in the crowd suggests militia participation and the complexity of the paraded woman's headdress suggests that the event was staged, rather than spontaneous. Klepp, "Rough Music on Independence Day," 160.

Brittish officers."[51]

As Susan E. Klepp has recently demonstrated, this incident drew heavily from early modern customs of rough music.[52] The crowd paraded the laughably coifed woman through a city filled with onlookers, while drummers beat a march. However, unlike most traditional episodes of skimmington or charivari in which rough music was played, the woman paraded in this instance was not the principal object of the crowd's contempt; the purpose of this folk procession was not to ostracize or shame her for transgressions against community mores.[53] Rather, through mock exaltation of this street heroine, the crowd expressed derision for the outlandish fashions of loyalist women and, as Klepp has revealed, for the men who failed to restrain them. In this regard, the parade blended elements of rough music with another folk tradition: saturnalia. Saturnalia drew symbolic power through carnivalesque inversion: the low was made high, by which the high was brought low.[54] Philadelphians had a history of utilizing saturnalia both to condemn audacious fashions and establish sumptuary mores; nineteenth-century annalist John F. Watson chronicled an occasion in which a crowd paraded the local hangman's wife in a voguish "trollopee" dress.[55] Similarly, in the present case, the crowd employed the

[51] Most of the details of the episode come from the diary of William Ellery, quoted in *Letters of Delegates*, 10:221–22, and from Richard Henry Lee to Francis Lightfoot Lee, Philadelphia, July 5, 1778; Josiah Bartlett to Mary Bartlett, Philadelphia, Aug. 24, 1778, *Letters of Delegates*, 10:223–224, 496–97. See also Theodore G. Tappert and John W. Doberstein, eds. and trans., *The Journals of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg* (Philadelphia, 1942–1958), 3:171–72.

[52] Klepp, "Rough Music on Independence Day," 156–76. Susan Klepp offers a vivid and insightful analysis of this episode and its implications for gender, fashion, and politics in postoccupation Philadelphia. In particular, Klepp identifies "respectable love" and companionate marriage among the crowd's latent agenda. See also, Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750–1800* (Boston, 1980), 352 n. 48; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1980), 44; and Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class*, 154.

[53] Certainly, the crowd held the paraded woman in disdain. Indeed, the parade's success as saturnalian expression depended upon her social marginality relative to the elite women whose hairstyle she mimicked. And as Susan Klepp has observed, the public's desultory attitude toward the paraded woman became apparent in subsequent narratives of the event. But on this day the crowd's scorn was directed at loyalist women's fashion. For more on skimmington and charivari, see *Riot and Revelry*, ed. Pencak, Dennis, and Newman, passim.

[54] For more on saturnalia, see Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Reasons of Misrule: Youth Groups and Charivaris in Sixteenth–Century France," *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 41–75; Peter Shaw, "Fathers, Sons, and the Ambiguities of Revolution in 'My Kinsman, Major Molineux,'" *New England Quarterly* 49 (1976): 559–76, as well as *American Patriots and the Rituals of Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1981), passim.

[55] John F. Watson, *Annals of Philadelphia and Pennsylvania*, rev. ed. (Philadelphia, 1900), 1:184.

most debased member of society, the black servant woman, to lampoon the most esteemed, the genteel lady. In so doing, the crowd subjected both working-class and elite women to its cultural authority.[56] By displaying this character on the Fourth of July, the crowd wove that very subjugation into a metanarrative of American independence.

The city's women, however, refused to fall casualty to postoccupation gender warfare and employed numerous strategies to ease the sting of the Whig pasquinade. Elizabeth Drinker, who like many Quakers disdained the British army's social extravagance, distanced herself from the objects of Whig parody by confiding to her diary that ornate headdresses were a "very foolish fashion." Rebecca Franks, upon observing that the overly coifed street heroine's feet were bare, offered a pointed repartee that recalled the dire conditions of Washington's army at Valley Forge: "Though the style of her head is British, her shoes and stockings are in the genuine Continental fashion." Still another "Tory" lady, Rebecca Moore Smith, took a different tack by participating in the farce, albeit from a distance. Smith "christened" the comical street heroine "Continella, or the Dutchess of Independence," and even "prayed for a pin from her head by way of relic." Joining in the satire, even at the risk of self-deprecation, Smith adopted for herself the subjective position of her would-be Whig satirists. By naming Continella, and by ridiculing that figure's significance for American independence, Smith laid bare the many patriarchal insecurities underlying the whole peculiar episode.[57]

The parade of the bewigged "strumpet" was thus layered with many meanings. The crowd's actions functioned as a critique of fashion, of women's roles, of polite society, and of political allegiance. The people in the streets endeavored to reclaim Philadelphia as a Whig cultural space, much as Congress had through its modest independence banquet. They also sought to reconquer Philadelphia women from the Meschianza "knights." Many members of Congress endorsed the crowd's agenda. One

[56] Susan Klepp suggests that the paraded woman was not black, but was rather represented as black in accounts written well after the event. Klepp attributes this "invented" blackness to wealthier Philadelphians who sought to diffuse the power of this episode by sexually and racially degrading its central figure. If, on the other hand, as Josiah Bartlett first recorded in August 1778, the heroine of this street theater was a "Negro," this episode might well be understood for its racial, no less than its gendered, implications. See Klepp, "Rough Music on Independence Day," 169.

[57] Crane, ed., *Diary of Elizabeth Drinker*, 1:314. Franks is quoted in Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 2:900. Smith's participation is recorded in Richard Henry Lee to Francis Lightfoot Lee, note 51 above. By dubbing Continella, the "Dutchess of Independence," Smith might even have been jabbing at the want of a real American aristocracy.

day after the appearance of Continella, Richard Henry Lee pronounced that the "droll" figure had "lessened some heads already," and would likely "bring the rest within the bounds of reason." "The Tory women," Lee declared, "are very much mortified." Josiah Bartlett of New Hampshire concurred, expressing his hope that "Ladies heads will soon be of a proper size & in proportion to the other parts of their Bodies."[58] By deviating spectacularly from conventional coiffure, and by drawing attention to the wearer, "Enormous High head Dresses" operated as a culturally transgressive force. As such, this episode bears witness to the extraordinary mobilizing power of fashion in eighteenth-century America.[59]

Yet, Lee's and Bartlett's statements suggest that more was at stake than simply the height of women's wigs. The "top-gallant-royal commode," as the vogue was dubbed by congressional president Henry Laurens, had come to be associated, in the minds of patriot detractors, with Tory women, which is to say, with treacherous femininity. For Whig leaders, both in and out of Congress, abandoning the city and its womenfolk to Howe's army had been an emasculating experience, a retreat that smacked of timidity and impotence. Women who consorted with British officers, tendering esteem and devotion to the enemy, effected a sort of symbolic cuckolding of the male patriots who had briefly governed Philadelphia in the early phase of the war. In so doing, these women—however so unrepresentative of gender relations during Howe's tenure—exercised considerable sway in the cultural politics of the occupied city. They had overstepped their place, usurping the prerogative of Whig men. Tall headdresses, as the preeminent, perhaps even gawdy, signifier of these women's social status, embodied both their presumptuousness and their faithlessness. By ridiculing this fashion, the crowd put such women back in their proper realm. As Lee's and Bartlett's rhetoric reveals, that realm

[58] See the letters of Richard Henry Lee and Josiah Bartlett, note 51 above; Henry Laurens to the *Pennsylvania Packet*, Philadelphia, Oct. 3, 1778, *Letters of Delegates*, 11:15.

[59] Kate Haulman has discussed this episode and its implications for the "high roll" hairstyle in "A Short History of the High Roll," *Common-place*, 2 (Oct. 2001), http://www.common-place.org. For fashion and politics, see generally, Karin Calvert, "The Function of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, VA, 1994), 252–84; Linda Baumgarten, *What Clothes Reveal: The Language of Clothing in Colonial and Federal America* (Williamsburg, VA, and New Haven, CT, 2002); Catherine Anna Haulman, "The Empire's New Clothes: The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century British America" (PhD diss., Cornell University, 2002); Michael Zakim, *Ready-Made Democracy: A History of Men's Dress in the American Republic, 1760–1860* (Chicago, 2003); and Linzy Brekke, "The Scourge of Fashion: Clothing and Cultural Anxiety in the Economy of the New Nation, 1783–1800" (PhD diss., Harvard University, forthcoming).

was characterized by diminutiveness and restraint; it was a realm in which women's "heads" were "lessened" in accordance with the masculinist dictates of "reason" and "proportion."

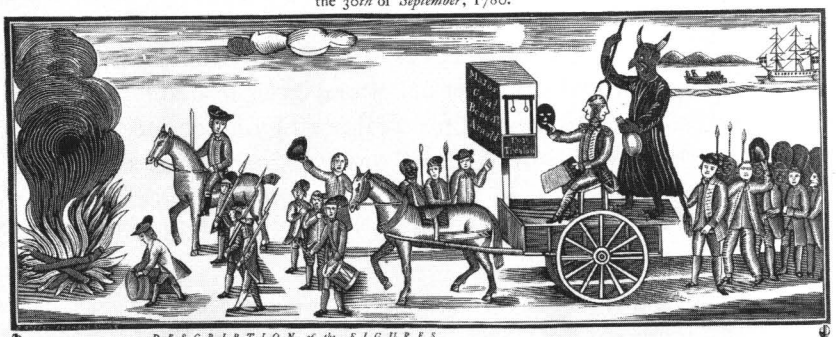
Effigy: The Art of Treason

The third and final incident for consideration is an effigy parade that took place twice.

News of Benedict Arnold's treason reached Philadelphia on Wednesday, September 27, 1780. The following evening, a crowd of Philadelphia townspeople constructed an illuminated papier-mâché effigy of the traitorous general, paraded him through the streets, and finally hanged him on a gallows. Charles Willson Peale, a leading Philadelphia radical, felt the occasion demanded more. Over the next two days, Peale—sometimes remembered as the "artist of the Revolution"—designed and supervised the construction of a far more elaborate likeness.[60] Peale first crafted a life-sized representation of Arnold, featuring two, Janus-like faces that turned continuously. Peale dressed his Arnold in military uniform, seated him in a cart ("emblematical of his usual position on account of his wounded leg"), and placed in the general's right hand a mask and in his left a letter from Beelzebub. Taking his inspiration from New England's Pope Day processions, Peale then constructed a mannequin of the devil—which one observer later described as "surely the most grotesque figure I ever beheld"—to seduce Arnold with a purse of gold and goad him with a pitchfork. Finally, at the head of the cart, Peale hung a lantern bearing a lengthy inscription that decried Arnold's "HIGH TREASON" and gave thanks for the "interposition of bounteous Providence" by which his plot was discovered. Peale finished his handiwork on Saturday, September 30, and that evening Arnold was for the second time paraded in Philadelphia. A line of Continental officers, a guard of the city militia whose members all carried candles in the end of their muskets, and "Sundry Gentlemen" escorted Arnold and the devil, while a band of drums and fifes played the rogue's march. According to the *Pennsylvania Packet*, "a numerous concourse" of people followed, and "after expressing their abhorrence of the Treason and the Traitor, committed him to the flames, and left both the effigy and the original to sink

[60] Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:392; Lillian B. Miller, ed., *The Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale and His Family* (New Haven, CT, 1983), 1:352–55.

A REPRESENTATION of the FIGURES exhibited and paraded through the Streets of PHILADELPHIA, on *Saturday*, the *30th* of *September*, 1780.



DESCRIPTION *of the* FIGURES.

A STAGE raised on the body of a cart, on which was an effigy of General ARNOLD sitting; this was dressed in regimentals, had two faces, emblematical of his traitorous conduct, a mask in his left hand, and a letter in his right from Belzebub, telling him that he had done all the mischief he could do, and now he must hang himself.

At the back of the General was a figure of the Devil, dressed in black robes, shaking a purse of money at the general's left ear, and in his right hand a pitch-fork, ready to drive him into hell as the reward due for the many crimes which the chief of gold had made him commit.

In the front of the stage and before General Arnold, was placed a large lanthorn of transparent paper, with the consequences of his crimes thus delineated, *i. e.* on one part, General Arnold on his knees before the Devil, who is pulling him into the flames—a label from the General's mouth with these words, "My dear Sir, I have served you faithfully;" to which the Devil replies, "And I'll reward you." On another side, two ropes from a gallows, inscribed, "The Traitors reward." And on the front of the lanthorn was wrote the following; "MAJOR GENERAL BENEDICT ARNOLD, late COMMANDER of the FORT WEST-POINT. THE CRIME OF THIS MAN IS HIGH TREASON. "He has deserted the important post WEST-POINT, on Hudson's River, committed to his charge by His Excellency the Commander in Chief, and is gone off to the enemy at New-York.

"His designs to have given up this fortress to our enemies, has been discovered by the goodness of the Omnipotent Creator, who has not only prevented his carrying it into execution, but has thrown into our hands ANDRE, the Adjutant-General of their army, who was detected in the character of a spy.

"The treachery of this ungrateful General is held up to public view, for the expedition of infantry; and to proclaim with joyful acclamations, another instance of the interposition of bountious Providence.

"The effigy of this ingrate is therefore hanged (for want of his body) as a Traitor to his native country, and a Betrayer of the laws of honour."

The procession began about four o'clock, in the following order:

Several Gentlemen mounted on horse-back.
A fine of Continental Officers.
Sundry Gentlemen in a line.
A guard of the City Infantry.
Just before the cart, drums and fifes playing the Rogues March.
Guards on each side.

The procession was attended with a numerous concourse of people, who after expressing their abhorrence of the Treason and the Traitor, committed him to the flames, and left both the effigy and the original to sink into ashes and oblivion.

'TWAS *Arnold's* vow for *Harry* fought,
Arnold ne'er enter'd in his thought,
How ends the bargain? let us see,
The fort is safe, as safe can be,
His favourite *per force* mull die,
His view's laid bare to ev'ry eye;
His money's gone—and lo! he gains
One scoundrel more for all his pains.
ANDRE was *gen'rous*, *true*, and *brave*,
And in his room, he buys a knave
'Tis sure ordain'd, that *Arnold* cheats
All those, of course, with whom he treats.
Now let the *Devil* suspects a bite
Or *Arnold* cheats him of his right.

Mothers shall fill their children, and say—Arnold!—
Arnold shall be the bug-bear of their sons.
Arnold!—vile, treacherous, and leagued with Satan.

A Representation of the Figures Exhibited and Paraded through the Streets of Philadelphia, on Saturday, the 30th of September 1780 (Philadelphia, 1780). Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

into ashes and oblivion."[61]

It was natural that Philadelphians should ceremoniously exhibit their animosity toward Arnold, the former military governor of their city who had since treacherously bargained with the British for the surrender of West Point. Treason had plagued the American cause since 1775; it was a particularly vexing problem in Philadelphia, where pacifist and loyalist sentiment remained strong throughout the war, and where Lord Howe had hoisted the Union Flag for many months. As the highest ranking American, military or civil, to cross the lines, Benedict Arnold epitomized the faithlessness of those who had gone before; his arrest afforded Philadelphia patriots an occasion to vent long-simmering animosities. Yet, Peale's determination to improve upon the townspeople's effigy, that

[61] Miller, ed., *Selected Papers of Charles Willson Peale*, 1:352–55; *Pennsylvania Packet*, Oct. 3, 1780; Anna Wharton Morris, contrib., "Journal of Samuel Rowland Fisher, of Philadelphia, 1779–1781," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 41 (1917): 275–333, quoted at 314; Martha Bland to St. George Tucker, Oct. 8, 1780, Tucker-Coleman Papers, Swem Library, College of William and Mary. For another instance of Peale using his art to moralize against worldly desire and greed, see David Steinberg, "Acquisition, Interrupted: Charles Willson Peale's *Stewart Children* and the Labor of Conscience," *Common–place* 4 (Apr. 2004), http://www.common-place.org.

is, the perceived necessity of carting Arnold *twice*, hints toward a much deeper political and social agenda. Viewed within the context of Philadelphia politics in the late 1770s, the second Arnold parade can be seen to have operated on a number of cultural levels related to, but distinct from, the condemnation of a traitor. Peale's effigy functioned simultaneously as an expression of personal ill will toward Arnold, as yet another salvo in an ongoing jurisdictional conflict between Pennsylvania and the Continental Congress, and as a last gasp of Philadelphia's floundering radical order.

Two years earlier, in the spring of 1778, even as Howe's officers were making arrangements for their fanciful Meschianza, Benedict Arnold visited General Washington and his troops at Valley Forge. Arnold, still severely hobbled by the leg wound he received at Saratoga, arrived at camp at the very height of his popularity and Washington quickly honored him with an appointment as military governor of Philadelphia, pending the British evacuation. On June 19, one day after Clinton's forces withdrew, Arnold entered the city, escorted by a regiment of Massachusetts troops. There he received a hero's welcome, particularly among triumphant Whigs eager to reassert their presence in Philadelphia. James Duane of New York quipped that the city's ladies were as fascinated with—perhaps as titillated by—Arnold's injured leg as *Tristram Shandy*'s Widow Wadman had been with Uncle Toby's injured groin.[62]

Philadelphia's love affair with Arnold did not last long. As both the Continental Congress and the Pennsylvania government attempted to reestablish their authority in Philadelphia, a conflict quickly arose pitting Arnold against Charles Willson Peale. After the British evacuation, Pennsylvania's Supreme Executive Council deputized Peale to confiscate the property and effects of loyalists who fled with the British army. Meanwhile, General Washington, acting on instructions from Congress, issued a conflicting order to Arnold, that he prevent the removal or sale "of any goods, wares, or merchandise" in the city. Arnold initially threatened to bar citizens, Peale included, from returning until all such items could be secure. Only after Peale protested at Washington's headquarters did Arnold relent, but the antagonism did not cease. Washington further ordered Arnold to "give security to individuals of every class and description," that is, to protect loyalist citizens from Whigs bent on vengeance. When Peale attempted to evict Grace Growden Galloway from her

[62] James Duane to Philip Schuyler, Philadelphia, Jan. 3, 1779, *Letters of Delegates*, 11:405.

home, Arnold ordered a guard to protect her.[63]

The flap with Peale augured larger controversies to come. In October, Arnold infringed upon Pennsylvania authority and violated an explicit congressional order by directing his aide to issue suspected loyalist Hannah Levy a pass to British New York. About the same time, Arnold embroiled himself in an admiralty case that hinged on the sticky matter of Congress's authority over Pennsylvania.[64] Both matters highlighted a developing jurisdictional tension between Congress and the state, but Arnold's difficulties did not result simply from a contest over authority between the two administrations. Local officials came increasingly to suspect that Arnold was abusing his position for personal emolument. It was widely "alledged and believed" that Arnold "made considerable purchases for his own benefit" during the period in which he had closed Philadelphia's stores and shops.[65] In October 1778, Arnold further fueled these suspicions by commissioning army wagons to retrieve a cargo of his privately owned goods from New Jersey, in flagrant contradiction of a Pennsylvania council resolve.[66]

Arnold's conduct smacked of venality and aligned him, in the opinion of his detractors, with those who sought to make money even at the expense of the commonweal. Confirming this opinion was his haughty and extravagant manner of living, which affronted both the moral economy and the communal sensibilities of local patriots. Shortly after arriving in Philadelphia, Arnold took residence in the former Penn mansion, where General Howe had lived during the occupation, leaving city folk to wonder whether they had traded one bon vivant for another. Arnold hired a number of servants, traveled about town in a lavish chariot, and hosted extravagant parties. At a time when Pennsylvania radicals were bent on eradicating loyalists from their society, Arnold was hosting, as council president Joseph Reed exasperatedly proclaimed, "not only Tory ladies but the wives and daughters of persons proscribed by the state and

[63] James Thomas Flexner, *The Traitor and the Spy: Benedict Arnold and John André* (New York, 1953), 222–25. See also, Ray Thompson, *Benedict Arnold in Philadelphia* (Fort Washington, PA, 1975).

[64] John Jay to Joseph Reed, Philadelphia, Jan. 27, 1779, *Letters of Delegates*, 11:524 n. 2; Scharf and Westcott, *History of Philadelphia*, 1:388ff; Flexner, *Traitor and the Spy*, 238; Committee on Appeals Decree, Philadelphia, Dec. 15, 1778, *Letters of Delegates*, 11:342 n. 1.

[65] Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, "In Council" (Philadelphia, 1779), broadside in *Early American Imprints*, ser. 1, no. 16439.

[66] Flexner, *Traitor and the Spy*, 230.

now with the enemy in New York." By late fall it was apparent that Arnold was courting one such woman, Margaret Shippen. No less galling, Arnold earned a reputation for mistreating the militiamen under his command, including the son of radical organizer and council secretary Timothy Matlack, who was made to fetch a barber for Arnold's aide.[67] By January 1779, the Pennsylvania leaders had lost patience with the commandant; on the twenty-sixth of that month, council president Joseph Reed lodged a formal complaint with Congress, and in early February the council took its grievances to the public, printing eight allegations against Arnold for distribution as a handbill and publishing them as well in the *Pennsylvania Packet*.[68] Arnold likewise turned up the heat, demanding a congressional investigation or court martial to clear his name.

Arnold had by this time lost much of his luster in the eyes of Congress. His disregard of the congressional order against passes to New York was a minor peccadillo, easily enough forgiven, but more problematic was Arnold's high living. He had even suffered American officers to sponsor theatrical productions, as had the British army, prompting more austere republicans in Congress to once again push for an injunction against such plays and their "fatal tendency to divert the minds of the people."[69] Still, Congress was reluctant to prosecute Arnold. An investigation would divert congressional energy from more pressing business. The mere prospect of such an inquest had already dredged up old, petty grievances between Pennsylvania officials and members of Congress and resulted in a series of indignant exchanges within the State House, where council and Congress both sat.[70] Finally, many congressmen shared New York delegate Francis Lewis's fear that high-running animosities between Arnold and the council would catalyze the formation of "parties in the Congress" and "injure the public Weal." Already entangled in a protracted, factional dispute between French commissioners Silas Deane and Arthur Lee, members of Congress winced at the prospect of further acrimony. For weeks Congress dragged its feet in the matter, and only at the insistence of an embittered Pennsylvania council did members at last order

[67] Flexner, *Traitor and the Spy*, 228–39; Reed quoted at 233.

[68] Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, "In Council"; Daniel Roberdeau to Timothy Matlack, Feb. 6, 1779, *Letters of Delegates*, 12:26.

[69] Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 12:1018.

[70] For a catalogue of such grievances, see Henry Laurens' Notes of Debate, Mar. 26, 1779, *Letters of Delegates*, 12:249 n. 1.

Washington to court martial Arnold on a number of charges.[71]

Arnold's court martial would not be adjudicated for almost a year. In the interim, the Supreme Executive Council faced a growing economic crisis resulting from stupendous wartime inflation. Through 1779–80, the council and other backers of the Pennsylvania constitution championed a moral economy that attributed runaway prices to unscrupulous merchants who speculated or monopolized goods. Ultimately, however, the council's failure to curb inflation or fix prices would undermine both the administration's credibility and the public's faith in the moral economy. This political development coincided with the discovery of Arnold's treason, and, as with Peale's personal grudges and the discord between Pennsylvania and Congress, the collapse of the radical order became a subtext of Arnold's effigy parade.

For more than two years Philadelphians had suffered as the prices of goods and foodstuffs rose dramatically, if unevenly.[72] In January 1779, frustration turned to violence when a large crowd of sailors rioted in demand of higher pay and only dispersed after General Arnold dispatched troops.[73] Political leaders were quick to place blame for the state's financial emergency. Most Republicans, moderates such as Robert Morris, Benjamin Rush, and James Wilson who opposed Pennsylvania's liberal constitution, insisted that inflation resulted from the deluge of paper money pouring forth from congressional and state government presses. Constitutionalists, on the other hand, whose ranks included men such as Thomas Paine, James Cannon, Charles Willson Peale, and Timothy Matlack, instead pointed to the avarice of wealthy merchants.[74] Through the spring, the Constitutionalists, who controlled the assembly and executive council, touted a moral economy and implemented policies aimed at stemming inflation. Shortly after the sailors' riot, the council

[71] Francis Lewis to George Clinton, Philadelphia, Mar. 8, 1779, *Letters of Delegates*, 12:163. H. James Henderson has demonstrated that Arnold's case divided Congress into camps very similar to those created by the Deane-Lee controversy. Henderson, *Party Politics in the Continental Congress*, 165–66, 188, 234.

[72] See Foner, *Tom Paine*, 161. See also, Smith, "Material Lives of Laboring Philadelphians," passim; and Doerflinger, *Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise*, passim.

[73] George Winthrop Geib, "A History of Philadelphia, 1776–1789" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1969), 96–97.

[74] For radical republicans' distrust of men whose fortunes were based on highly fungible liquid assets and credit, see Toby L. Ditz, "Shipwrecked; or, Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia," *Journal of American History* 81 (1994): 57–58.

issued a ban on engrossing and forestalling. In April, the assembly empowered local justices to fix bread prices as well. In May, a mass meeting of Philadelphians appointed a committee to regulate prices and to investigate the business dealings of Robert Morris, who was suspected of selling flour above established prices to the French navy.[75]

Though some tradesmen opposed price controls and balked at what they perceived to be the undervaluation of their goods, many of the city's poor continued to lay blame for their economic woes at the feet of merchants and traders. Like the nonimportation and nonconsumption campaigns of the late 1760s and early 1770s, price control could only succeed if all members of the community adhered to the established price structure.[76] Now, as during those earlier trade boycotts, the people out of doors resorted to ostracization and the threat of violence to coerce compliance. Hostilities erupted in October 1779 when a crowd of militiamen who supported price controls clashed with Republican opponents holed up in the home of James Wilson. In the ensuing melee, which came to be known as the Fort Wilson Riot, several persons were wounded and at least one killed before the city cavalry arrived to disperse the crowd. Congressman Henry Laurens, fearing that a revolution would break out within the Revolution, bewailed, "We are at this moment on a precipice and what I have long dreaded and often intimated to my friends, seems to be breaking forth—a convulsion among the people."[77]

This convulsive moment was a poor time for Benedict Arnold to rekindle his feud with Pennsylvania authorities, but he did. Arnold had earned public scorn by living extravagantly in a period of want, by abusing his office for profit, and by ordering soldiers to break up price-control demonstrations on at least two occasions. In the aftermath of the Fort Wilson clash, as protestors gathered at the courthouse and jail in support of imprisoned militiamen, a "Mob of Lawless Ruffians" assaulted Arnold in the streets. On October 6, Arnold demanded that Congress appoint him a guard, claiming there was "no protection to be expected from the Authority of the State for an honest man." Congress by this time had

[75] Geib, "History of Philadelphia," 97–98, 116; John K. Alexander, "The Fort Wilson Incident of 1779: A Case Study of the Revolutionary Crowd," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser. 31 (1974): 597.

[76] On the continuities between nonimportation campaigns and the price-control movement, see Richard Buel Jr., "The Committee Movement of 1779 and the Formation of Public Authority in Revolutionary America," in *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology*, ed. James A. Henretta, Michael Kammen, and Stanley N. Katz (New York, 1991), 151–69.

[77] Quoted in Alexander, "Fort Wilson Incident," 589.

grown weary of Arnold's beef with local officials and rejected his request, scolding him for insulting Pennsylvania authorities and referring him, half-mockingly, to the Supreme Executive Council.[78]

In the wake of the Fort Wilson unrest, Constitutionalists again carried the assembly in the October elections, but they struggled mightily in coming months to ameliorate Pennsylvania's financial crisis. In the spring of 1780, a voluntary subscription fund devised by Thomas Paine to help defray the costs of war collapsed for lack of subscribers. About the same time, price-control advocates called for a convention of delegates from New England and the middle states to fix prices on commodities, but this plan also proved abortive as representatives from New York and Virginia failed to attend. In March, the Continental Congress conceded the futility of its monetary policy and devalued the dollar, soon forcing Pennsylvania authorities to rescind continental currency as legal tender. Increasingly, Philadelphia's laboring poor came to realize that the Constitutionalists' price-control measures had failed to rein in inflation. Through the spring and summer of 1780, Constitutionalists in the Pennsylvania assembly and council increasingly endorsed Republican fiscal policies, authorizing the export of flour and permitting practices formerly denounced as monopolistic. In May, the Constitutionalists attempted to divert popular attention from the collapse of price control and win public support by launching a desperate campaign against Tories. By summer's end it was apparent that the party had lost its sense of purpose. Republicans, who had been a minority party since the ratification of the Pennsylvania constitution, cautiously hoped for a strong showing in the October elections.[79]

Less than two weeks before the polls opened, news of Benedict Arnold's treason reached Philadelphia. In Congress, the response was measured. Several months earlier, Arnold had been convicted at court martial on two counts: permitting entry of a vessel having sailed from an enemy port and "imprudent[ly] and improper[ly]" requesting public wagons for private use.[80] At the time of Arnold's conviction, Congress not only affirmed the court's finding, it also ordered fifty copies printed and

[78] Samuel Huntington to Benedict Arnold, Philadelphia, Oct. 6, 1779, *Letters of Delegates*, 14:35 n. 1.

[79] Geib, "History of Philadelphia," 128, 146–47; Foner, *Tom Paine*, 178–80; Brunhouse, *Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, 89–90.

[80] *Proceedings of a General Court Martial . . .* (Philadelphia, 1780), 55, in *Early American Imprints*, ser. 1, no. 17047.

circulated at the public expense. By publicizing this verdict, Congress mollified Pennsylvania officials who brought charges against Arnold, without greatly embarrassing the general or the American cause. After all, the court martial recommended that Arnold be punished by nothing more than a reprimand from General Washington, a mere slap on the wrist for the hero of Saratoga. Now matters were different: Arnold's disloyalty had been exposed. To celebrate his capture was to acknowledge a deeply embarrassing betrayal by a high-ranking officer. Instead, Congress quietly directed the Board of War to erase Arnold's name from the register of United States army officers. Beyond this, Congress took little official notice of Arnold's treason.[81]

Out in the streets, the people of Philadelphia made much greater ado. The journal of Quaker Samuel Rowland Fisher describes the first parading of Arnold most fully: "Last Evening we were alarmed with the noise of Drums & Fifes & much shouting by the Mob in the Street. . . . This morning we're informed the Mob had an Effigy of Arnold hanging on a Gallows, the Body of which was made of paper hollow & illuminated & an inscription in large letters thereon, which they conveyed thro' many parts of the City."[82] This apparently spontaneous event suggests that many townspeople and militiamen harbored a genuine enmity toward their former commandant, either for his abuse of office, for his treason, or for both.

Charles Willson Peale's determination to parade Arnold in effigy a *second* time suggests that he and fellow Constitutionalists not only shared the crowd's animus for Arnold, but also saw in his treason an opportunity to promote agendas both personal and widely political. For Peale, designing a humiliating effigy of the man who had once wronged him must have savored of comeuppance. For councilmen who had pressed charges against Arnold before a disinclined Congress, the parade served as a double-edged commentary: On the one hand, it provided a cathartic moment in which patriots in and out of Congress could unite in detestation of the villainous traitor. On the other, Arnold's treachery clearly vindicated those members of the executive council who had long, unavailingly decried his faithlessness; the second parade afforded an opportunity

[81] Ford et al., eds., *Journals of the Continental Congress*, 18:899.

[82] Morris, contrib., "Journal of Samuel Rowland Fisher," 311–14. Fisher's descriptions of the two Arnold parades is ironic in its detail, because Fisher was imprisoned at the time. Fisher was able to hear the crowd in the streets, and it appears that descriptions of the parades were conveyed to him by visitors.

for self-congratulations and thinly veiled gloating.

Beneath the radicals' glee, however, was an element of despair. The second Arnold parade also, and perhaps most significantly, functioned as a last-ditch bid for popular support by Pennsylvania's flailing Constitutionalist party. On the eve of the annual election, radical leaders saw an opportunity to once again trumpet the moral economy that had underscored their failed price-control efforts. Arnold had long embodied the avarice of forestallers and monopolizers; he now too stood for the untrustworthiness of those "Tories," "Suspicious Characters," and other public enemies against whom Constitutionalists had recently launched a crusade. Immediately after word broke of Arnold's plot to sell West Point, the executive council ordered a search of his papers and effects. Within the week, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported evidence of "such a scene of baseness and prostitution of office and character, as it is hoped this new world cannot parallel." Local authorities seized Arnold's estate as well as his ornate chariot and ordered his Tory wife to leave Pennsylvania. To symbolize Arnold's depravity and greed, Peale included three significant elements not to be found in the first parade: the Devil, the mask, and the purse. Contemporary observers fixated on the purse. The *Gazette* explained it was a "thirst for gold" that inspired Arnold's crimes. New Jersey congressman William Churchill Houston speculated that Arnold turned coat in hope of securing "Money from the Enemy." "His dissipated and expensive Course of Living in this City," Houston wrote, "has so involved and impoverished him that money was probably become very necessary to him."[83]

Writing in his journal, Samuel Fischer explained that the second Arnold parade "appear'd not as a frolick of the lowest sort of people but as the Act of some of the present Rulers here. . . . They think [Arnold's treason] a matter of consequence to them . . . it chafes them much."[84] Arnold's treason chafed Pennsylvania authorities because their warnings against him had gone unheeded. Demonizing the general now served as a means of venting their frustrations. Appropriating a popular mode of expression, the parade and effigy, enabled Peale and fellow radicals to speak in the compelling vernacular of folk ritual. It also provided a medium through which they could appeal to a significant portion of the voting

[83] *Pennsylvania Gazette*, Oct. 4, 1780; William Churchill Houston to William Livingston, Philadelphia, Sept. 27, 1780, *Letters of Delegates*, 16:114–15.

[84] Morris, contrib., "Journal of Samuel Rowland Fisher," 314.

population. Congressman Benjamin Huntington described the crowd that witnessed the second parade as "the Greatest Concourse of People I ever Saw"; William Churchill Houston estimated that "thousands of Spectatours" bore witness to the event.[85] Given Pennsylvania's liberal polling requirements—all taxpaying males over twenty-one could cast a ballot—it is likely that a large number of parade spectators were eligible to vote in the upcoming election. In the end, however, trumpeting Arnold's greed and celebrating a moral economy of virtue and self-sacrifice were not sufficient to sustain the Constitutionalists' grip on Pennsylvania politics. Less than two weeks after Peale re-paraded Arnold, Pennsylvania voters turned Constitutionalist incumbents out of office in favor of fiscal conservatives such as Robert Morris; in Philadelphia, an erstwhile radical stronghold, Republicans enjoyed a three-to-one margin of victory. Not for four more years would the Constitutionalists mount a significant challenge to the Republican administration.[86]

The relationship between Congress and crowds did not end with the parading of the Arnold effigies. In June 1783, a crowd of army veterans and troops rallying around the State House in demand of back pay provided congressional leaders a pretext to abandon Philadelphia as their host city, a course that decentralists in Congress had recently been advocating. Though these soldiers directed their protest not at Congress, but rather at the Supreme Executive Council of Pennsylvania, as Kenneth R. Bowling has adroitly demonstrated, and though the soldiers at length dispersed without causing significant harm to persons or property, members of Congress professed their outrage.[87] Delaware delegate Eleazer McComb condemned Pennsylvania's "scandalous neglect" of its duty to Congress. President Elias Boudinot further censured city officials, who, to their "everlasting reproach," made no offers to relieve Congress from the "humiliating and dishonorable situation." Declaring that the "dignity and authority of the United States would be constantly exposed to a repetition of insult" so long as it continued to sit in Philadelphia,

[85] Benjamin Huntington to Oliver Ellsworth, Philadelphia, Oct. 2, 1780; William Churchill Houston to William Livingston, Philadelphia, Oct. 2, 1780, *Letters of Delegates*, 16:128, 129.

[86] Brunhouse, *Counter-Revolution in Pennsylvania*, 89–90, 164.

[87] Kenneth R. Bowling, "New Light on the Philadelphia Mutiny of 1783: Federal-State Confrontation at the Close of the War for Independence," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (1977): 419–50.

Boudinot adjourned Congress to the safer climes of Princeton.[88] Only three months later, Congress began to contemplate the establishment of a permanent residence, and the fear of crowd uprisings was one of several factors prompting consensus that Congress should be vested with exclusive jurisdiction over its district. Though some decentralists such as David Howell of Rhode Island grumbled that "Tyrants make a small circle about them[selves] for their own Security," the idea of exclusive jurisdiction garnered broad support and was ultimately codified in Article 1, Section 8 of the Constitution. The United States Congress would possess the power to subdue crowds, if needed.[89]

In Philadelphia, crowds continued to play an active role in the articulation of community moral and political sensibilities well into the early republic. Susan Davis has demonstrated that though official parades and civic celebrations channeled much popular political energy and opinion into lawful and restrained conduct, street theater remained a lively tradition. Rough music, burlesque, effigies, and mummery were but a few of the rituals deployed in the streets, particularly on the Fourth of July. Such activity enabled individuals and groups to both challenge and reinforce the authority of nation and state, and to define their place within them.[90]

These nineteenth-century crowds were carrying on and transforming a tradition of popular behavior that had reached its fullest expression during the revolutionary period. The three episodes studied here point toward a fluid, but rich relationship between the politicians who gathered in the State House and the people who gathered in the streets. At different times and in pursuit of a shifting social and political agenda, crowds in revolutionary Philadelphia acted both against and in accord with the Continental Congress. By threatening to tear down the City Tavern in 1774, townsfolk endeavored, successfully, to bring Congress's quasi-official social events into conformity with the behavioral proscriptions of

[88] Eleazer McComb to Nicholas Van Dyke, Princeton, June 27, 1783; Elias Boudinot to William Livingston, Philadelphia, June 23, 1783; Elias Boudinot's Proclamation, June 24, 1783, *Letters of Delegates*, 20:357–58, 360–61, 371–72.

[89] David Howell to Nicholas Brown, Philadelphia, Sept. 25, 1783, *Letters of Delegates*, 20:705–07.

[90] Susan Davis, *Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia* (Philadelphia, 1986), esp. chap. 4. See also, Simon P. Newman, *Parades and the Politics of the Streets: Festive Culture in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia, 1997); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst, MA, 1997); and David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fêtes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997).

the association. By carting "Continella" through Philadelphia streets on July 4, 1778, Whiggish townspeople strove, much as Congress itself strove, to reclaim their recently occupied city as a cultural space, to ridicule those who had supported the British army, and to reassert their authority over presumptuous and faithless women. By parading Arnold in effigy in 1780, Philadelphians condemned his treason, celebrated his capture, and rejoiced in the downfall of their oppressive and usurious former commander. By improving on this effigy, Constitutionalist leaders further rebuffed Congress for its reticence in prosecuting Arnold, reaffirmed the moral economy of virtue and fair dealing in the face of rampant inflation, and bid futilely for votes on the eve of local elections.

No doubt, these episodes bore even more cultural meanings and implications than those discovered here. A variety of people participated in Philadelphia's revolutionary-era crowds, in a variety of ways, for a variety of reasons. Yet these moments readily demonstrate that, after old systems of government began to fail, before new systems achieved full functionality and legitimacy, folk culture, in the form of ritualized violence and street theater, provided a crucial means by which the people of Philadelphia shaped their society. The people of that city conjured house razing, saturnalia, and effigies—age-old customs that lingered in collective memory—in order to define and express community mores and boundaries.[91] These events further sound out the fault lines that underlay Philadelphia society and the pressure civil war exerted upon them. The Revolution created fissures both in Philadelphia's class structure and in its gender and racial order. It also put new stresses upon individuals' political allegiance to the state and country. When such strains became too great, Philadelphia's streets began to rumble.

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[91] On the transmission of such customs from Europe to America, see Young, "English Plebian Culture and Eighteenth-Century American Radicalism," 185–212.