

# THE LOOK OF REVOLUTION: PRESENTATION AND REPRESENTATION IN THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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Some years ago, in presenting a modern edition of Foxe's *Acts and Monuments of Matters most special and memorable happenings in the Church, Especially in the Realm of England*, G.A. Williamson declared

The purpose of the book is unmistakable: [Foxe] the historiographer... wrote it to make his fellow countrymen aware of the history of their country from early times to their own day...; Foxe the prophet wrote it to warn them of the peril in which they stood, in the event of a not improbable reversion to the conditions of the previous reign; Foxe the preacher wrote it to hold up before their eyes the glorious martyrs as shining examples for them to follow if ever the call should come...<sup>1</sup>.

Many of these «monuments», that is «records» in the fuller sense of exemplars as well as written account, regard the transfiguration of simple language and simple, middling, lives, invested by grand events. The force of the work for its contemporary readers lay, perhaps, in this placing in history as prime actors of ordinary men and women.

Let me begin then with just such «monuments», declarations – or presentations – regarding the ordinary person as a self-conscious agent of history, a maker of the republican polity. I am not talking about private effects, of civic reliques carrying the past physically into our material present, proving at once that real bodies lived that past and that of us shall remain for posterity «a rag, a bone and a hank of hair». I am talking about a bid for historic presence, the ambition to be historiographer, prophet and preacher, albeit on a much tinier scale. It is as much the scale, I think, as the modest materiality of these monuments that makes them invisible to most professional history even when it takes note of them as curiosities<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> G.A. Williamson, edited and abridged by, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, Secker and Warburg, London, 1965.

<sup>2</sup> The vitality of such elusive monuments is testified by occasional bits of information which turn up in the context of non-scholarly reconstructions of the past. One example (which finds echo in an American episode, cited below) is offered by *Time* (1 May 1989) where, in an article on the bicentennial of the French Revolution, *Time* cites Jacques Tournier, a descendant of a water carrier guillotined in 1793 in Lyons, who avoids the spot where the event took place because his grandmother refused to walk past it and he carries on the

Certainly, at Concord and Lexington stand statues of a « minuteman », monument in the traditional sense, rhetoric presentation of official posterity's idea of the common man; an institutional interpretation of the approved American sans-culotte who abandoned his plow in the furrow and returned to take it up again, eschewing all public honor, and all public power. Entering history as number only to withdraw from it, leaving it in the hands of his betters to form institutionally and to govern at will.

The very constitution and cultivation of this reassuring image of a modest, tame though brave, people reveals the revolutionary nature of popular presence in the formative period of the American polity. Indeed, we are here at the kernel of the entire question: the American war *was* indeed primarily a people's war, a militia war, citizen's war. It was above all fought – North, Center and South – by men who were self-equipped, largely unpaid, underfed and most often ill-clothed and barefooted. The Continentals were a small part of the troops in the field and they too were revolutionary troops in that, during the whole eight years of war, the legitimacy of the state which called them to arms, ordered them to battle and punished them if they disobeyed, depended upon their will to consider it so. The option of a change of sides was always open, as Benedict Arnold most illustriously showed. Of this fundamental hard fact both leaders and troops were aware. The consciousness of one's self as a political agent, a citizen, as « freeman » in a sense which dissolves economic criteria is structural to the entire period after 1765 and, once the war begins, the admitted context of any exercise of power<sup>3</sup>.

What were the views of ordinary citizens as to the look of revolution? What monuments did they set up and to what end? Ensign Ebenezer Avery, wounded at New London, Connecticut, in 1781 when, with Benedict Arnold commanding, the British massacred most of the survivors surrendering Fort Griswold<sup>4</sup>, making of it « one of the bloodiest encounters of the Revolution, in proportion to the numbers engaged »<sup>5</sup>, was dragged from a capsized wagon carrying prisoners to a ship, brought to his own, partially burned,

practise « out of respect for my ancestors »; Jacques Delmas, a lawyer from Reims, had instead an ancestor among those who stormed the Bastille and recalls it every time he passes the place where it once stood. An interestingly illustrious example of this sort of monument-making is afforded by the poet Wordsworth who tells us in the *Prelude* that he was impelled to gather some dust from the spot where the Bastille had stood; but he also observes that, although he carried it away, he did not feel as moved as he thought he ought.

<sup>3</sup> This may be seen, for example, in the conciliating and cautious tone of Washington and Sullivan's daily orders at Cambridge as they are carefully registered in Sergeant Jonathan Burton's *Diary and Orderly Book, while in service in the army on Winter Hill, December 10, 1775 - January 26, 1776* (Concord, N.H. 1885; available in microfiche, university microfilm) where the same « recommendations » are repeatedly and patiently reformulated in a manner that is unimaginable in any regular army.

<sup>4</sup> See, *The Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun, of the capture of Fort Griswold, the Massacre that followed, and the burning of New London, Conn., September 6, 1781. With the narratives of Rufus Avery and Stephen Hempstead, eye witnesses*, New London, 1840 (reprint, N.Y. 1911 and Arno, N.Y., 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Donald Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence. Military attitudes, policies, and practice, 1763-1789*, Macmillan, New York, 1971.

house and laid on the floor with others. Avery never removed the blood-stains from the floorboards and, dying in 1828, enjoined his family not to efface them; in 1881, they were still untouched<sup>6</sup>.

Colonel William Prescott, commanding the American forces at Bunker Hill, whose family had been in the Bay Colony since 1640<sup>7</sup>, during the battle, which occurred on a very hot day, stripped off his coat and fought in a red banyan, a garment intended for the boudoir, attracting the eye of Gage viewing the battle through a glass and of the officer directing fire from the British vessels. The remains of the garment, slashed by sword thrusts and tattered with age, was in his house in Pepperell, Massachusetts in 1897 when his grandniece, who had known him personally, still lived at 104.

In Hollis, New Hampshire, the Nevens brothers were at work with a crowbar on the afternoon of the 19th of April 1775, loosening a boulder to build a wall. It was partially raised when they saw a messenger riding towards them at full speed. Placing a smaller stone as a wedge to hold the larger in position, they heard the messenger tell his news of the battle at Lexington and Concord. Leaving the stone in the roadway as it was, they took up their guns and equipment from their near-by house and joined their company. One brother died at Bunker Hill, another died in the New York campaign the following year; the third volunteered for the expedition to Canada and was never heard from again. The stone remained where they had left it until the 1890's, when it was moved to the town Common and located to point in the direction of march of the 92 minutemen who left for Lexington on the 19th of April.

In Billerica, Massachusetts, Sarah Manning stayed up the night to prepare baked beans and rye bread for a company of New Hampshire soldiers encamped on their way to the siege of Boston. The wooden shovel on which the balls of dough had been put into the brick oven was still preserved and shown by the family in 1900<sup>8</sup>.

That such monuments are to be read in the same spirit as that inspiring Foxe, finds confirmation in what John Colburn of Hollis, 96, told Abram English Brown in 1896:

While driving the oxen to plough the fields yonder, father used to tell me of his and his neighbors' experience in camp and battle; and especially on or near the 19th of April would rehearse the whole story, becoming so interested at times that he would stop the team in order to better illustrate positions. He and mother would devote whole winter evenings to talks about those days. It was a delight to us children... Mother, who was a Hardy... could help along the stories; for her folks were in it as well as the Colburns. With a good blazing fire on the hearth, and a plenty of four-foot wood at hand to replenish it, a dish of good apples, some

<sup>6</sup> *The Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun...*, op. cit., note.

<sup>7</sup> The first Prescott, John, brought with him a coat of mailed armor, which he wore when facing indians in skirmishes. Abram English Brown, *Beside Old Hearthstones*, Lee & Shepard, Boston, 1897.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, op. cit.

butternuts, and a mug of cider, what cared we for the driving snow? We drew up to the fire in a group, some on the settle and some in the chimney-corner... To make it more vivid, father would pause at times, and say, « Now imagine that north-east blast against the windows to be a volley of bullets from the redcoats »; at which we would hide the closer behind the high back of the settle, or snuggle more securely in the arms that were ever ready for some of us. My father was too young to have any part in the town meetings just before the war; but he knew what was going on, and was anxious to be in the company when they were drilling for an emergency.

On November 7th (1774) the people took action at the polls, and chose three of their leading men to represent them in the County Congress on the following day at Amherst. They made record as follows: « We, the inhabitants of the town of Hollis, having taken into our most serious consideration the precarious and most alarming affairs of our land at the present day<sup>9</sup>; do formally enter into the following resolutions; – That we will at all times endeavor to maintain our liberty and privileges, both civil and sacred, even at the risque of our lives and fortunes, and will not only disapprove, but wholly despise all such persons as we have just and solid reason to think even wish us in any measure to be deprived of them...<sup>10</sup>.

Mr. Colburn concludes his memories with a description of Bunker Hill, where in his youth he visited the earthworks thrown up in 1775:

They had not yet begun to talk of a monument, and everything was in a very rough condition. I walked over that redoubt, and identified the locations just as my father had described them to me, where he, with so many Hollis men, faced the enemy in the heat of the battle, where a number of them gave their lives<sup>11</sup>.

The first point of some importance is the clear intent to transmit history to posterity as lived experience which involves individuals in a biological line. The centrality of the body is inescapable, and it is the body as an instrument of work; muscles that lift stones, hands that shape loaves of bread, limbs that bleed (and the blood is perceived first of all as *liquid*, for Rufus Avery, writing of the massacre at New London, speaks of gunpowder which does not ignite and explode because the terrain is too wet being soaked in blood; Rathbun, writing in old age of the same event, goes so far as to say that one of the dying deliberately moves so that this blood, as it flows, will extinguish the burning trail of powder left by the British to fire the fort)<sup>12</sup>. Bodies that sweat and are *allowed* to sweat: Prescott has a banyan,

<sup>9</sup> They are referring to the episode of the confiscation of the powder supplies in Cambridge, which had just given rise to a spontaneous mobilization throughout the colony.

<sup>10</sup> Brown, op. cit.

<sup>11</sup> The cornerstone for the battle monument was laid in 1825; prior to that date King Solomon's Lodge of the Freemasons in Charlestown had erected a stone in 1794 commemorating the memory of Gen. Joseph Warren. Since Colburn was 96 when interviewed by Brown, he probably walked the lines just before 1820.

<sup>12</sup> See, *The Narrative of Jonathan Rathbun...*, op. cit. Declares Rathbun: « Stillman Hotman, who lay not far distant, wounded by three strokes of the bayonet in his body, proposed to a wounded man near him to crawl to this line and saturate the powder with their blood, and thus save the magazine and fort, and perhaps the lives of some of their comrades...

but many narrations of the day speak of fighting in shirt sleeves. The declared presence of the vulnerable, « personal », body differentiates the colonials on Bunker Hill from the regulars, encased in uniforms, depersonalized, though dying every bit as singly as those they attack<sup>13</sup>.

Thus the presentation chosen, in the events, repropounded over time – made monument – is revolutionary in its visible refusal of prevailing codes, moving, certainly, from a citation of that « plain style » so closely associated with early English puritanism and its exponents and fundamental to the formation of New England civic usage, but wholly secularized and embodied.

At this point, I wish to consider an episode of the time, the first overt embodiment of colonial citizens as Americans. A very famous incident and one which, because of its nature as declaration of separation and identification of the body politic, was immediately recognized as a moment of great importance. I am talking about the Boston Tea Party.

This event took place in an urban setting and involved all strata of the population. What is interesting for us is not who organized the event – élite leaders or « people » – but the general consensus as to its « look ». It was neither a group of « loyal Englishmen » nor a « mob » which boarded the ship, took the tea in charge, opened the casks and emptied the contents into the harbor, but a body politic, a citizenry in arms carrying out an operation in an orderly manner under collective responsibility, though functional « leaders » were in evidence. So much emerges from the various reports, contemporary and subsequent<sup>14</sup>, where secrecy as to the names of participants is largely maintained well beyond the moment when revelation might be dangerous.

This body is not a traditional « crowd », for it is not asking for a return to violated norms – it is not acting in the English tradition, however construed – nor is it a spontaneous mob with sectoral grievances (even in the limited sense in which the people involved in the « massacre » three years earlier had been). It is a republican and American militia enforcing the will of an assembly; what happened at Boston differed in this from what happened at Philadelphia and elsewhere. And it chooses to declare this new nature by its presentation: immediately after the fact, the body was in fact described

He alone succeeded in reaching the line, where he was found dead lying on the powder which was completely wet with his blood ». Avery affirms that the powder scattered around the magazine during the battle would itself have fired the fort « had not the ground and everything been wet with human blood ».

<sup>13</sup> See, on the theme of social perception of the body, Pierre Bourdieu, « Observations préliminaires sur la perception sociale du corps », *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, n. 14, 1977, where the implications are examined in a depth we cannot here do more than suggest.

<sup>14</sup> See John Andrews' letter to William Barrell (18 Dec., 1773), Massachusetts Historical Society, *Proceedings*, VIII, 1866, under the title « Letters of John Andrew, Esq., of Boston, 1772-1776 », edited by Winthrop Sarent; Alfred Young, « George Robert Twelves Hewes: A Boston Shoemaker and the Memory of the American Revolution », *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol. 38, Oct. 1981; Benjamin Wood Labaree, *The Boston Tea Party*, Oxford, N.Y., 1964.

as made-up like Indians; as members of the Naragansett tribe; as Mohawks. It would have been enough to wear the anonymous clothes of the working poor (Hewes remembers many decades later a lace ruffle showing at a wrist), to blacken the faces, to disguise the voices with rough speech. Masquerading as Indians is therefore *choice* and it is *political* choice as presentation which makes evident two realities and not two viewpoints: « us » and « them ».

The episode is at once political action and political theater representing the republic to itself and to an audience external to the theatrical space which is the entire city<sup>15</sup>. It is more than probable that various elements combine in the collective representation of this masque. One important element is certainly the popular tradition of comic or grotesque enactment<sup>16</sup>, particularly apt for processions – and the march to the wharf has something of the procession, for bystanders join along –; the aura of « rough play », recurrent in war diaries and later memoirs, which has to do with physical energy and the centrality of the body among those who earn their living with their hands. Another, the more ironic humor in « re-reading » the presentation which had dominated the symbolic figural reference to the continent since discovery, on the one hand, and recent « enlightened » scientific denigration of it, on the other.

From the late 1500s through the end of the revolution, the American continent is conventionally depicted as an Indian, usually of heroic, humanistic, conception, on virtually all European-made maps and descriptive geographic texts<sup>17</sup>. During the war itself, the idea of the « rebels » (or « patriots ») as Indians would dominate European satirical cartoons, though, to my knowledge, it does not appear in America itself. At the same time, the American Indian and, by extension, the continent which had produced him, was very often presented in 18th century Europe as sexually weak and intellectually limited, uncreative, incapable of that elaboration of behavior and institutions which spelled civilization<sup>18</sup>. By choosing to present the body politic as a « tribe » (or « nation ») of Indians, Boston presented itself, in all ranks of its society, as not English but American, and presented America

<sup>15</sup> I am indebted to Luigi Allegri (University of Parma), who kindly lent me the manuscript of the paper « Lo spettacolo a Parma alla corte dei Borbone » (delivered at the conference *Parma, I Borboni, l'Europa; Riformismo politico e modelli culturali*, 15-17 Sept., 1988, Parma), for a series of very useful concepts for the study of political spectacles utilizing urban space. See also Luigi Allegri, Renato di Benedetto, *La Parma in festa. Spettacolarità e teatro nel Ducato di Parma nel Settecento*, Mucchi, Modena, 1987; also, Allegri, « La città vestita. Macro e microfestività di apparato nella Parma del '700 ». *Storia Urbana*, n. 34, 1986.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Pope's Day.

<sup>17</sup> See for example, the collection held by the Carter Brown Library in Providence, Rhode Island (recently displayed in New York in a show entitled *Encountering the New World, 1943-1800*; IBM Gallery of Science and Art, Feb. 16-April 9, 1988).

<sup>18</sup> This view of Enlightenment thinkers and scientific theorists is discussed in so far as regards the development of modern racism in Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*, North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1968; Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* are a vibrant rebuttal aimed precisely at that enlightened world and its encyclopedists.

as at once in a state of nature vis à vis the order of English institutions and English authority and constituted as a republic, organized by « native » criteria. Though they are « taking the law into their own hands », what is lacking in the Bostonian representation – as it is essentially in the European iconography – is the sense of the Indian nation as dangerous and savage: it had been a hundred years since the defeat of King Philip had reduced the Indians in the Bay Colony to a trophy to be placed on the colony's official seal (though it is worth noting that *that* 1676 Indian it not at all « classic » or humanistic, but rough and dangerous). One might say that the Boston « Mohawks » were incarnating their *totem*, the emblem of their difference and self-sufficiency, the otherness of their history as compared to English history<sup>19</sup>. Yet the unitary self-recognition in the « look » veiled a differentiated understanding of its content in terms of the structuring and exercise of power of which all participants were aware and whose open expression was differed to a later date when the question with England should have been resolved.

But this presentation of America as « Indian » is also adopted, once advanced, by other areas with a vastly different tone. Here, for example, is the report of the passage at Lancaster, Pennsylvania, of Cresap's company of riflemen on their way to the siege of Boston from the Virginia backcountry:

one hundred and thirty active, brave young fellows, many of whom have been in the late expedition under Lord Dunmore, against the Indians. They bear in their bodies visible marks of their prowess, and show scars and wounds which would do honor to Homer's *Iliad*... These men have been bred in the woods to hardships and dangers from their infancy. They appear as if they were entirely unacquainted with... fear. With their rifles in their hands, they assume a kind of omnipotence over their enemies... there was not one who could not plug nineteen bullets out of twenty, as they termed it, within an inch of the head of a tenpenny nail... At night a great fire was kindled around a pole planted in the Court House Square, where the company, with the captain at their head, all naked to the waist, and painted like savages (except the captain, who was in an Indian shirt) indulged a vast concourse of people with a perfect exhibition of a war-dance, and all the manoeuvres of Indians, holding council, going to war, circumventing their enemies by defiles, ambuscades, attacking, scalping, & c.<sup>20</sup>

Political spectacle indeed, with a transformation of established public space (Court House Square) that is « nocturnal » – ephemeral – but revolutionary. This is an adoption of the « qualities of the continent » as viewed from the backcountry – and Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is the territory of the

<sup>19</sup> This autochthonous genealogy had already been blocked-in by John Adams in 1765 in the four articles in the *Boston Gazette* later published as *A Dissertation on the Feudal and the Canon Law*, which Adams himself later said might equally have been entitled *Forefathers' Rock*. Samuel Hopkins had also taken up a similar genealogy in *The Rights of the Colonies Examined*.

<sup>20</sup> *Pennsylvania Journal*, August 23; the article is dated August 7. In Frank Moore, compiler, *The Diary of the American Revolution* (1860), abridged edition, edited by J.A. Scott, Washington Square, New York, 1968.

Paxton boys – and it represents « us » as both dangerous and fierce. As Beowulf derives his « virtù » from « his » monster Grendel, and defines it in terms of physical force, stamina and fighting expertise, so the riflemen define themselves and so present the republic<sup>21</sup>.

What we have here are appropriations of existing symbols from « high culture » by various groups within « low » or « popular » culture. Though the alliance of the major Indian nations with the British after the Declaration of Independence makes this a less « available » « look » once the republic has been officially separated and constituted, it continues to reappear from time to time and does so with conscious intent to call into play the fears and psychological connotations assigned by Enlightenment views on savages as, for example, when Washington recommends terroristic recourse to « war-cries » by attacking continental troops operating in the Pennsylvania woods under Morgan<sup>22</sup>.

And here we may discern in Washington acknowledgement of another spontaneous, popular presentation of the republic: one which might be termed « the cry of self-identification ». A close relative of the recommended war-whoop, it makes its appearance in various accounts of skirmishes and battles in the Southern campaign and seems to be a precursor of what will later be called the « rebel yell ». It is, however, identified by those who voice it – men from « across the mountains » – as the cry of « the blue hen's chicks ». A contemporary chronicle of the battle of King's Mountain – ordered and carried out by militia which chose its own commander and followed its own criteria though with some formal show of respect for higher military authority<sup>23</sup> (and, at least briefly, gave way to reprisal, desecrating Ferguson's body and killing some of the disarmed prisoners) – presents a Tory who will not believe that colonial militia have defeated Colonel Ferguson's disciplined troops; the patriots reply « But we were all of us blue hen's chickens ». And the dialogue continues between two British officers:

*First Officer:* Some of them were South Carolina and Georgia Refugees, some from Virginia, some from the head of the Yadkin, some from the head of Catawba, some from over the Mountains, and some from everywhere else. They met at Gilbert Town, about 2000 desperadoes on horseback, calling themselves blue hen's chickens – started in pursuit of Ferguson, leaving as many footmen to follow. They overtook Col. Ferguson at a place called King's Mountain; there they killed Col. Ferguson after surrounding his army...

(...)

Whereupon David Knox jumped on a pile of firewood in the street, slapped his hands and thighs, and crowed like a cock, exclaiming « Day is at hand! »<sup>24</sup>.

Even more explicit, a description of another episode:

<sup>21</sup> See Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan, Revolutionary Rifleman*, North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1961.

<sup>22</sup> Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, VIII, in Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan*, cit.

<sup>23</sup> See Hank Messick, *King's Mountain*, Little, Brown, Boston, 1976.

<sup>24</sup> Captain David Vance, *Narrative of the Battle of Kings Mountain*, Schenck, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1891.



We were the bravest of the brave; we were a formidable set of blue hen's chickens of the game blood, of indomitable courage, and strangers to fear. We were well provided with sticks; we made the egg shells – British and Tory skulls – fly, like onion peelings on a windy day; the blue cocks flapped their wings and crowed – « we are all for Liberty these times! »; and all was over; our equals were scarce, and our superiors hard to find<sup>25</sup>.

Again the element of rough humor, the centrality of a physical sense of self. But, as well, an element of self-valorization, the demand for a recognition of individualization based on the physical capacity to deal with an elemental, « primitive », natural reality: a reformulation of the Indian image into that of the native who is *more* dangerous than the Indian and finds that this is at once his title to consideration and that it is humorous it should be so.

What is being declared is « my rights as a citizen depend on the fact that I am the only figure dangerous enough to guarantee the territory to the republic »<sup>26</sup>. Not by chance, the backwoodsman is not only deprecated as « uncivilized » – worse for the 18th century than the Indian inasmuch as he has « relapsed » from civilization into a spurious state of nature<sup>27</sup> – and feared as ungovernable but, once the new state is constituted, essential to the security and development of the republic<sup>28</sup>.

We have here then two revolutionary presentations, one urban and Northern, the other rural and Southern/Western, which are at once different and analogous in that they emanate from those who constitute « the people at large ». They allow us to observe that the presence of « levelling ten-

<sup>25</sup> Robert Henry, *Narrative of the Battle of Cowan's Ford*, Schenck, Greensboro, North Carolina, 1891. See also Richard Dorson, *American Folklore*, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1959, who derives later comic figures featured in Southern and Western literature from the blue hen's chicks.

<sup>26</sup> Among many examples of this sort, see the description of the episode at the widow Brink's on the Delaware, where Indians, Tories, women, negroes and Captain Shimer in only his shirt, with axe and rifle, jumping in and out of windows, fight all night and the Captain, having paused to put on breeches and shoes, completes his « unparalleled bravery » by chasing the assailants alone crying « Rush on, my brave boys, we'll surround them! » *New Jersey Journal*, May 16, 1781, in Moore, op. cit.

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, J. Hector St. Jean de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782) where this fear is openly expressed and the possibility of sliding back from civilization presented as all too easy and « attractive ». An opposite view is expressed in Brackenridge's *Modern Chivalry* (Vol. III, 1793) where the narrator encounters a man in skins in the forest and discovers him to be an aristocratic refugee from France who converses of philosophy (Hafner, New York and London, 1976).

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, the harshness of George Rogers Clark on the march to Kaskaskia and in the capture of Vincennes; letter of Clark to George Mason and reports to Governor Patrick Henry (Clark Papers, Illinois State Historical Library Collections), in Henry Steele Commager and Richard B. Morris, *The Spirit of Seventy-Six*, Harper Row, bicentennial edition, New York, 1975. The immediate reaction to « regulatory activities » against the excise on whiskey – Washington himself road at the head of 15,000 troops (as many as had been engaged in the revolution) – demonstrates the preoccupation with frontier loyalty; and the real or imagined plotting with Spain soon after also indicates its fundamental relationship to the republic itself.

encies » was universal, and not merely a trait typical of the New England tradition in local government or the religious heritage from Congregationalism. Examination of the siege of Boston, where New England militia and Southern/Western riflemen were both present – and meeting for the first time – shows that the differences in style and usage were not so fundamental as the similarity in self-concept and presentation<sup>29</sup>.

Bunker Hill was fought in shirt-sleeves, as if the men had been out « mowing hay »; before Washington arrived to take command, when the troops were all New Englanders, General Ward ordered all those on guard duty to wear breeches, stockings and shoes: the American farmer and artisan was also a sans-culotte lacking the formal knee-britches, and evidently feeling it no loss in decorum to be without them. Thus « the people » embodied in armies was visibly another state.

This did not necessarily mean that all of the implications were conscious; but it is certainly true that those without a proper uniform knew very well that a regular – traditional – army wore uniform. British troops were there to show it. It does not even mean that they would not have worn a uniform, had it been provided: many of them subsequently did so and, indeed, desired the coats promised with enlistment: after all, clothing was precious and war is hard on it. Whether they thought that a uniform would make them – and their republic – more decorous or not is a question which probably cannot be answered: certainly their staff officers thought so, especially if they were or aspired to be gentlemen<sup>30</sup>. What is certainly true is that the lack of uniformity of dress, the widely « private » nature of costume (and of arms, since many or most brought their own) made for a specific consciousness of one's self as a participant in war. It made the choice of participation more evidently just that.

While a continental army in uniform is immediately desired and quickly constituted once the Continental Congress adopts the Boston siege, during the entire war the militia remains a fundamental part of the armies campaigning, for « look » and number, and this makes of the war a revolution and visibly so whatever institutional arrangements ensue.

The paintings of the surrender at Yorktown show all actors wearing spanking clean uniforms, the Americans not less than the French or British. This is official presentation and it takes the grandiloquent mode – just as republican America will henceforth be depicted as a classic figure<sup>31</sup>. The

<sup>29</sup> See Loretta Valtz Mannucci, « Uomini e gentiluomini all'assedio di Boston », *Comunità*, n. 188, 1986.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Burton, *op. cit.* So much is uniformity seen as desirable that Washington, who has already prescribed a traditional uniform for his troops, and posted recruiting broadsides showing uniforms, appeals to the Continental Congress for at least « 10,000 hunting-shirts » which would give the army in front of Boston a « look » of compact body, though, as he could not mistake, an openly revolutionary one.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, the material collected in Donald Cresswell, *The American Revolution in Drawings and Prints. A Checklist of 1765-1790 Graphics at the Library of Congress*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1975.

consecrated presentation of the victory of the republic must fulfill high culture's codes. Yet the militia had been active in the siege and was present at the surrender. Dr. James Thatcher writes:

At about twelve o'clock, the combined army was arranged and drawn up in two lines extending more than a mile in length. The Americans were drawn up in a line on the right side of the road, and the French occupied the left... The French troops, in complete uniform, displayed a martial and noble appearance... The Americans, though not all in uniform, nor their dress so neat, yet exhibited an erect, soldierly air, and every countenance beamed with satisfaction and joy. The concourse of spectators from the country was prodigious, in point of numbers was probably equal to the military, but universal silence and order prevailed.

(...)

The royal troops, while marching through the line formed by the allied army, exhibited a decent and neat appearance, as respects arms and clothing, for their commander opened his store and directed every soldier to be furnished with a new suit complete, prior to the capitulation. But in their line of march we remarked a disorderly and unsoldierly conduct...<sup>32</sup>

Official history transfigures the scene and, in so doing, makes a political statement, presents a state which means to fit in among other states, declaring that a republic is something whose referants are classic (cultured) and whose voice grammatical<sup>33</sup>.

The entire question of the appearance and structure of the army is then a key one for the presentation and the representation of the state. Washington was singularly, one might say precociously, aware of what this meant for a revolutionary and republican polity; the French experience would bear it out. The traditional army is the embodiment of the state, the representation of its power; and the uniformity of dress and arms, the order and discipline of movement, the absorption of the individual in the numeric, serial, role of digit in a unit of preconstituted size, all serve to underline and reinforce the army's nature as an instrument of an integral political will situated elsewhere. The blue hen's chicks are the embodiment of the citizen/soldier; the representation of the power of a democratic republic. Implicit in that embodiment is a concept of the republic as environment, the physical reality of landscape, « America » as an image before the inner eye of some specific valley, river, field, town. « America » in the existential sense makes – « embodies » – citizen/soldiers, militia, just as the state embodies an army. The very concept of militia gives preeminence to the private nature of the single soldier as consenting householder<sup>34</sup>; the concept of army makes of the single soldier a designated cog of a human machine.

<sup>32</sup> James Thacher, *A Military Journal During the American Revolutionary War, from 1775-1783, etc.*, Cotton & Barnard, Boston, 1823.

<sup>33</sup> See Washington's exchange of letters with Cornwallis, in Commage and Morris, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> And this remains so despite the possibility of purchasing a substitute. It is, indeed, the basis for soldier « revolt » – as in the case of the Pennsylvania troops in 1781 (though it regarded continental troops). Higginbotham (*The War...*, *op. cit.*) calls the episode « unique »

Washington's problem in creating an army is thus very large indeed. While not historically without precedent, since the English revolution had had to deal with the nature of a republican army, it is wholly new in its material terms, for the militia was the predominant military force within American colonial experience; the « army » was, by definition, English, and colonials integrated into it in any way were made aware of their difference by systematic inferiorization of their rank. Further, he must endeavor to create an army recognizable as such by the English and subsequently by other established states on which the Congress called for recognition and aid, superimposing traditional patterns on a pre-existing military force in which elements of spontaneity were fundamental.

It is, indeed, revolutionary from the viewpoint of tradition to present the necessarily republican rebels gathered before Boston as an army (that is, as an embodied state). Washington's awareness of the uncertain nature of the venture rings through all of his daily orders in Cambridge; he cannot really « order » but must recommend, incite, persuade. His authority may stem formally from the Continental Congress, but it lives effectively through the will to legitimate by obeying of the troops themselves<sup>35</sup>. So Washington's command of the American forces in 1775 is revolutionary and consciously so and remains revolutionary to Yorktown, as the inclusion of the militia in the parade ranks indicates.

Once affirmed the existence of a state in 1776, though that state is a republican confederation, it is again revolutionary to recover in the context of authority/order, the traits of the democratic republic enacted by the militia. Thus, it is revolutionary in a gentleman, as Washington certainly is, to use the characteristics of democratic republicanism symbolically to confirm the deep fears of the English by suggesting the use of the war-whoop (America = wilds = savages = degeneration of the inhabitants and failure of civilization); and it is a sign of the revolutionary strength of that democratic republicanism that he makes the attempt to bend it to serve a necessarily republican state (for example, by suggesting to Congress the provision of 10,000 hunting shirts for the besiegers of Boston, as a mode of putting them « in uniform », making them certainly « look like » an army from the point of view of order, but an army wholly *sui generis*, « new » among nations).

It is time now to turn our attention more specifically from the aspect of presentation – the static « look » offered to the eye of the observer viewing

and says it « could only have occurred in a country where many of the men were soldier-citizens ». Or, see the letter addressed by a group of Pennsylvania officers to Gen. Greene in late March 1782 protesting a change in command, in *The Journal of William Feltman of the First Pennsylvania Regiment, from May 25, 1781 to April 25, 1782, etc.*, Pennsylvania Historical Society Collections, Vol. I, 1853 (available in microfiche, University microfilms). The same profile emerges from Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country, and Class; The Philadelphia Militia and the « Lower Sort » during the American Revolution*, Rutgers, New Brunswick, 1987.

<sup>35</sup> The same situation arises in Paris in 1789-90, and especially afterwards, in the army. See Alan Forrest, *Déserteurs et Insoumis sous la Révolution et l'Empire*, Perrin, Paris, 1988.

the scene – to representation, that is the moving scene, the republic as enactment. Representation has been fundamentally linked to presentation for all regimes in history; what is presented as power in image, mental or pictorial, is represented in military parades, processions, rites, ceremonies<sup>36</sup>. Traditional official celebration, whether civil or religious, or both, is fundamentally circular: power celebrating itself to itself, among itself; reconfirming its integral otherness before the eyes of its people, whose role is to admire, internalize and mirror back established hierarchies<sup>37</sup>. In this model a form of organized reversal is often developed in which lower orders temporarily assume the parts assigned power; but this type of representation – Saturnalia, Carnival, Pope Day – is actually a reenforcement of separation and power structuring, since it occurs at set dates and intervals and is at least tolerated, sometimes directly provided for, by governing élites, thus flowing back into « normalcy » with the effect of renewed legitimization<sup>38</sup>.

The celebrations organized by British troops in Philadelphia for the departure of General Sir William Howe are of this traditional official sort, but so too is the *feu de joie* which celebrates at Valley Forge the French Alliance<sup>39</sup>, and the coreography of the surrender at Yorktown (which followed the scheme the British had imposed on Lincoln at Charleston in 1780), though the second and third instances include the lower orders and the third, indeed, operates, as we have seen, an innovation which reveals a « revolutionary » change has occurred (and been « normalized »). In the *feu de joie*, a standard military figure of the time, the lower orders are included as number and sequence, moving parts of a well-ordered machinery which is meant to be the embodiment of power. The French Alliance is celebrated in fact in the very moment in which Washington makes the maximum effort at regularizing his army through formal drill so that it may appear (present the state) as worthy of respect to both British and French military eyes<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, David Nicholls, «The Theatre of Martyrdom in the French Reformation», *Past and Present*, no. 121, November, 1988; Daniel Arass, *La ghigliottina e l'immaginario del Terrore*, Xenia, Milano, 1988, and the already cited Allegri; as well as, of course, the more usual studies on festivals (Ozouf, *La Roi Ladurie*, etc.). Or, see the descriptions of Elizabeth I's court dining at Greenwich in 1598 in Paul Henzner, *Travels in England*, trans. R. Bentley (1757), London, 1865.

<sup>37</sup> See again Allegri, op. cit. and, in this volume, the essay by Olivier Le Cour Grandmaison where the entry of a new King into Paris is described.

<sup>38</sup> See the writing of Monique Ozouf and *La Roi Ladurie*; see also, Loretta Valt Mannucci, *Le radici ideologiche degli Stati Uniti*, Milella, Lecce, 1981 where these manifestations are discussed in the context of Boston crowds during the 1765-1775 decade.

<sup>39</sup> Of the celebration organized for Howe we have a detailed description by Major John André, who helped stage it. It includes a tournament of knights disputing the comparative beauty of two groups of demoiselles – all in costume – and two arches; a ballroom draped in silk and « heightened by 85 mirrors ». The triumphal arch was also illuminated, and presented transparencies of Fame « spangled with stars » and from her trumpet, in letters of light, « Tes Lauriers sont immortels ». The shell and « flaming heart on the wings sent forth Chinese fountains » (*Annual Register for 1778*, in Commager and Morris, op. cit.). For the *feu de joie*, see Thacher, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> That this was « necessary » – and that what traditional order was finally imposed did not suffice to impress French professional military leaders – may be seen in *La Fayette's*

That moment, 1778-79, is the high tide of the revolutionary attempt at presenting an insurrectional militia and a rebel army constituted by a self-appointed intercolonial body (the Continental Congress being still without a formal instrument of confederation) as the embodiment of – ?what? surely not « a State », perhaps « a nation »; necessarily « a republic », whatever that might mean. The subordination and uniformity, the hierarchy and the lack of autonomous « self » that make an army are here *requested* of a citizenry since they cannot be imposed upon it unless it will; the fact that it does will, in the physical conditions of Valley Forge, is indeed proof enough of politicization and revolutionary resolve to justify the subsequent reification of the moment as national myth despite the more difficult conditions of other war winters.

Yorktown comes after the Southern Campaign; after the deployment of French forces on sea and land has clearly show the substantively different nature of professional European military forces and republican American forces. Placing the militia in the line at the surrender transforms the ceremony so basically that subsequent pictorial representation must refuse it if it wishes to present the scene as the victory of States in conflict, a moment of the glory of power. This places us squarely before the question of symbolism. The official artist adopts such symbols as are appropriate; he does so because power and its élites consistently adopt symbols *as* symbols: Washington, in drawing up the militia and the tattered continentals « as they are » at Yorktown, in obliging the British to surrender to Lincoln, though he is less « gentlemanly », deliberately symbolizes the autonomous personality of the republic as over against the European monarchic State (including that of his French allies; as president, though himself very traditional, he will not withdraw the American ambassador when Louis XVI is beheaded by the judgement of an elective assembly). This is a political choice which passes beyond the stance taken at Valley Forge and implies acceptance of the presence of democratic elements in republicanism, elements which are, by this gesture, aligned and brought to support of a state that is thereby something new. The refusal of Cornwallis to personally consign his sword reflects his immediate perception of the symbolization: he will admit to having been defeated by a republic, but not accept its right to the ceremonies of gentlemanly « honor ».

At the same time, it is important to see clearly that spontaneous popular celebrative behavior – as distinct from such codified occasions as have already been mentioned above – also took shape during the revolutionary period. Such celebrations are, like the behavior of Boston crowds in the immediate

repeated attempts to explain the essentially political nature of military operations in the revolutionary American context to ministers, generals, admirals. In this regard, see Lloyd S. Kramer, « America's Lafayette and Lafayette's America: A European and the American Revolution », *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. XXXVIII, no. 1, April 1981. This very impossibility of comprehension testifies the revolutionary nature of the human situation and, consequently, willy-nilly, of the military commanders operating in it.

pre-war period, direct and material. This is not to say that popular behavior in the American revolutionary setting is lacking in conceptual referents (political orientations as to the exercise of power and the role of the freeman or citizen). It is to say that groups of citizens acting spontaneously cannot organize themselves as embodiment of the State representing power to itself and before its subjects, but must organize themselves as democratic republic: must make a historical « new », though starting with elements which are part of the past. This means that in a real sense there is no center and no periphery, no actors and no public in their ceremoniality, but all present are both actor and public. It is the event in its dynamic entirety which symbolizes the abstract body public. There is thus not only a consciously revolutionary representation of the new collective identity being institutionalized in a governable form throughout the revolutionary period by leaders with apprehensions of democracy as well as great political realism, but a rather different spontaneous and self-governing representation.

It is in the celebrations for the ratification of the Constitution of 1787 that we can perhaps most see the entire range of both types of representation, from the most traditional and conservative to the most spontaneous forms and, in the great, culminating federal processions, a momentary, though locally varied, fusion of them all in a sort of ephemeral « prodigy ».

The first celebration of which record remains, occurred on 13 Dec., 1787, in Philadelphia, where a hastily convoked convention had just ratified the federal constitution with a 2 to 1 vote after acrimonious debate and concomitant violence in the Western part of the state<sup>41</sup>. It consisted in a procession of officials from convention to the courthouse hard at hand, where the Act of Ratification was read publicly by the clerk; an artillery salute and a peal of bells from Christ Church followed<sup>42</sup>: a wholly formal rite in which power

<sup>41</sup> Among the most vigorous critics of the Constitution was William Findley, who would be one of the leaders of the whiskey insurrection in 1794. Interestingly enough, Findley and Rush channeled their disagreement over the constitution proposed through the metaphor of the « house », of which it would be, said federalists, the roof; Findley saw it as the house itself and said that before dwelling in it, each state should examine the parts to see if they were « fitting » and combined well, rejecting « everything that is useless and rotten » (In McMaster and Stone, *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, 1787-1788* (1888), cited in David Freeman Hawke, *Benjamin Rush, Revolutionary Gadfly*, Bobbs-Merrill, New York, 1971). In the Philadelphia Federal Procession, Hopkinson would adopt the figure and call it « The NEW ROOF, or GRAND FEDERAL EDIFICE ». Thirteen columns supported a dome surmounted by a cupola on which stood the figure of plenty « bearing a cornucopia and other emblems of her character ». Around the pedestal of the edifice, the words: « In union the fabric stands firm » (*Account of the Grand Federal Procession; Philadelphia, 1788*, ed. Whitfield Bell, Old South Association, Boston, 1962). Hopkinson's approach is at once more abstract and « distanced » with its classic references in the architecture and the symbolic figure, and more limited: the theme is union and the subjects are « the states »: that is, everything is legal construct and no « people » inhabit the edifice. Findley's figure is of a « real » edifice whose « floors » are trod by citizens and whose « walls » must protect them from the weather: the word « rotten » implies wood, the material of « homes », not marble, the material of « seats of power ». Hopkinson shows a structure to admire; Findley presents a structure any citizen is competent to judge and alter.

<sup>42</sup> See, Whitfield J. Bell, Jr., « The Federal Processions of 1788 », *The New York Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. XLVI, Jan., 1962.

speaks to power and announces its pleasure in its acts; state, church and authorities completing legal procedures. The populace may watch the theater of power, but it has no active role to play; it is informed indirectly and relegated to the role of audience. There is not even the aesthetic/didactic involvement in an ideal symbolic image of the republic Peale had attempted with his triumphal peace arch of 1783 and was to repropose with transparencies of Washington in Annapolis in the Spring of 1788 (Peale would, in fact, find little interest in the Pennsylvania governing élites for his intuition of a technique for the creation of active popular consensus around an abstract « high » symbology of republicanism apt to produce austere and governable citizen virtue, though similar aesthetic/didactic techniques would flower in political spectacles and ephemeral apparatus from 1789 in France)<sup>43</sup>. The instinctive mode adopted by these officials for representing the republic showed it to be, in their intimate view, an arrangement which distanced the people from acts of sovereignty. It cannot surprise, therefore, to find Pennsylvania anti-federalists rapidly collecting 5,000 signatures on a popular petition for a new state convention and invoking a Bill of Rights: the containment of the democratic view of republicanism officialdom feared required political approaches, not legal mechanisms structuring institutional power alone.

If orderly government was not to be « democratic » – and the élites which had won ratification certainly did not wish it to be so – and if spectacles à la Peale were rejected, what techniques for establishing national solidarity, for legitimizing *their* republic as *the* republic were open to the federalist élites? A first indication came from Boston. The Massachusetts ratifying convention, unlike that of Pennsylvania, was large – 355 delegates – and it met under the still vivid impression of Shays' rebellion. In addition, unlike Pennsylvania and Philadelphia, many leading members of the Massachusetts élites were anti-federalist, including important figures in Boston itself as different as Hancock, Gerry and Samuel Adams. Too, Boston's pre-war patriotic leadership had not suffered from the internal lacerations which had tormented Philadelphia's; the town meeting tradition had better prepared them for the exigencies of consensus and majority politics in a non-deferential political setting. Boston leaders were as attuned to Boston artisans as they were fearful of and unable to manage Western farmers; the reciprocity between leaders and governed prompted artisans, « mechanicks » and shipwrights to meet at the Green Dragon Tavern and delegate Paul Revere<sup>44</sup> to inform Samuel Adams that they were all federal.

<sup>43</sup> See, Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution. Profiles of Early American Culture*, Norton, New York, 1979 for Peale's attempts and for those of William Dunlap in the realm of political, republican theater in the New York of the constitutional period. In France, David is the most eminent of those engaged in image politics, although iconographic activity was widespread. On the ephemeral apparatus of spectacular politics in the French context, Lynn Hunt has written in *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution*, University of California, Berkeley, 1984.

<sup>44</sup> The same tavern had been the place of meeting for at least a part of the « Indians » engaged in the « tea party » as a ballad of the time specified (*Gods' Life of Paul Revere*, cited in Commager and Morris, op. cit.).



On 6 Feb., 1788, the ratifying convention approved the adoption of the federal constitution with the narrow margin of 19 votes. During the afternoon and evening militia discharged cannon and church bells pealed. However, something further occurred. A committee of the same tradesmen who had previously gathered to express their opinion and to exercise political pressure, met and decided to hold a parade on the following morning, Friday, Feb. 8. All trade associations in Boston were notified, food was ordered, a line of march laid out; the 12 Boston delegates to the convention were each personally informed in writing – and the delegates replied pledging themselves to

promote a righteous administration of government, on which the liberty and welfare of our country, the advancement of arts and sciences, agriculture, manufactures and commerce so greatly depend <sup>45</sup>.

Thus, we have a revolutionary pattern of power, though it is derived from pre-existing mechanisms <sup>46</sup>. An elected body deliberates and its deliberations are accompanied not by a suspension of popular sovereignty but a continuation of sovereignty presented as « advice » (according to traditional practise, though the *locus* of formulation has shifted) <sup>47</sup>; when the elected body has deliberated, its act of power is celebrated by itself but – more importantly – by an act of spontaneous popular organization which reveals the conviction of those engaging in it that power has its seat in the people and, at the same time, its functional exercise rests in the people's chosen representatives (who are informed, but neither invited to participate, nor asked to « approve » the celebration); finally, the celebration is « out of doors » <sup>48</sup> and involves the entire civic space, where it is ordered to represent the republic to itself, while its elected political personnel – institutionalized power – look on.

<sup>45</sup> Bell, « The Federal Processions of 1788 », cit.

<sup>46</sup> The interaction between self-organizing crowds and patriot leadership in pre-war Boston has been examined by many authors in the last ten or fifteen years; though all do not, of course, agree as to the respective roles within the phenomena observed, all would certainly agree that mechanisms existed and were commonly codified. See the work of Young, Hoerder, Maier, Wood and my own assessment in the above cited works.

<sup>47</sup> At first, the formulations were the work of élite figures (Adams' famous « Braintree instruction », etc.); the war had shifted the formulation towards those directly involved.

<sup>48</sup> The concept of « out-of-doors », like that of its opposite « in-doors » is linked to the seat of power. Deliberations « in-doors » are those of constituted bodies and of the élite who sit in them; the people are « out-of-doors » when they are seen as unstructured mass. The image is that of « in the halls of power » and that of « mob in the streets ». In terms of « staging » the out-of-doors is available space, lightly structured and ready to be temporarily organized for ephemeral ritual activities. Often, governors set up stages or « rooms in open air » where they enact public ceremony and are watched by a public which is doubly « out-of-doors »: their essential character of « internal »/other group is thus doubly signified. Thus, the staging of the Boston parade is innovative and changes the terms in which subsequent celebrations can be organized by those « in-doors » or, to put it differently, conditions the structuring of outside, civic, space. It is « frightening » in that if the people are « out-of-doors », they are available space, lightly structured and ready to be temporarily organized for the purposes which interest the élites (and this is the traditional view): if they structure themselves, « out-of-doors » becomes a counterproposal to « in-doors », a « void » is « full ».

This kind of self-organization is historically so wholly new as to merit closer examination in its implication of what *federal* artisan citizens (as over against anti-federal rural citizens) thought the nascent republic to be. On the morning of the 8th a fair, cold day with snow on the ground, about 1,500 male citizens had gathered at Faneuil Hall, arriving singly and in groups. The mass turn-out included a body of farmers from the town of Roxbury which had been a key position in the siege; they, like most of the others who had forgone their daily occupations to parade, had brought the implements of their trade — a plow, oxen, horses. Agriculture, which appeared symbolically in high culture figurations of the republic, had spontaneously embodied and presented itself physically.

After two hours of « composition », arranged by the Committee, the procession moved from Faneuil Hall into the streets, led by 16 foresters swinging axes and scythes, at once illustrating their trade and « clearing the path » for the republic, which followed with at its head a band. The farmers preceded the artisans, acknowledging the numeric preponderance of the rural world in the self-perceived republic of the people. Each of the trades present carried its tools, some decorated with ribbons; the ropemakers, instead, wore a knot of hemp at their waists as a decoration, like a fob, or a sword and they too — who had been especially active in the crucial moments preceding the revolution — had engaged a band. The decoration of tools, like the transformation of the raw materials of labor into badges of status, are a spontaneous, good humored and democratic transposition of elements of the ceremonial dress of traditional authority and, especially, the gentleman's dress sword with its completing riband and tassels. For a republican ceremony, republican « arms », that is the tools of peaceful industry.

The identification of useful labor with republican power was further underlined by the presence of « works »; a model shipyard on a platform drawn by 13 horses where men worked on small boats as the procession circulated through the streets; a group of printers working at their types, composing as they went. Celebration of the institutionalization of the republic is thus the on-going representation of labor, through the entire urban space in a circular sweep which required five hours to complete and gathered, as it went, several times the number who had moved out originally from Faneuil Hall, counting about 4,000 when at last, as evening came on, it returned to its point of departure. Those who did not join in the line of march, lined the walks and windows along the way.

It is not too much to speak of a total mobilization of the population, given the size of the city, so that democratic republican space is seen to be *all* civic space, in which the role of actor and the role of observer are interpenetrated, so that the observer may, at will, become actor and even that part of the population which remains « indoors » (chiefly women and the aged, but also, in a sense, the élites) is at the window. The political sense of « in-doors » and « out-of-doors » has been reversed. The « perfect order and urbanity... dignity and solemnity » remarked upon, not without apprehension,

by one gentleman<sup>49</sup> included general silence on the part of those watching<sup>50</sup>.

The procession made, indeed, what we may call ritual pauses at way-stations on the circular route: it stopped at the house of each Boston delegate to the ratifying convention to cheer and salute, acknowledging the work of government and legitimizing it. That this was the felt sense of the occasion is indicated by the fact that the militia company drawn up at the State House, saluted the procession as it passed: institutionalized power paying honor to popular sovereignty, with the further point that the militia was not simply the « arm » of government, but the people embodied as power. So that it is the people embodied as power who salute the people as republic in act. A very powerful symbolization of the democratic republic indeed as the *Massachusetts Sentinel* of 10 Feb. would lucidly observe:

an exhibition to which America has never before witnessed an equal; and which has exceeded any thing of the kind Europe can boast of<sup>51</sup>.

Henry Jackson would go a step further in a letter to Henry Knox: « It is not in the power of Tongue or Pen to describe the sublimity and Grandeur of the Column »<sup>52</sup>.

If the « sublimity » may be found in the combination of mass and « joyful order »<sup>53</sup> over time, the « Grandeur » is probably embodied in the presence in the line of march of a fully rigged whaleboat complete with captain, officers and crew, decorated as a ship of the line, flying flags, drawn by 13 horses symbolizing the revolutionary states and carrying the name *Federal Constitution*. In the evening, after the procession, a long-boat with the name *Old Confederation* was drawn to the Common, where a jury of carpenters declared her bottom damaged, her timber and planks rotten, and forthwith condemned her as no longer able to take the sea. She was then burned to the cheers of a large group of citizens<sup>54</sup>.

<sup>49</sup> In Bell, « The Federal Processions of 1788 », cit.

<sup>50</sup> Perhaps élite observers are eager to note the dignified, « silent » composure of those participating and watching because it carries connotations of « worship », « respect », « ritual » which neutralize apprehensions as to the content the « voice of the people » might have should it be heard (descriptions of Parisian crowds will dwell on both their « roar » and « silences ». In any case, the same observation is recurrent as regards the other processions and historians have continued to note the phenomenon with much the same self-consolatory tone that Jackson and others adopted, marveling that the citizenry should have been orderly. It is interesting to note that the French consul in New York formulated the underlying fear openly, asking William Dunlap how, having brought all these people together to eat and drink, « you think to make them return without riots, intoxication and disorder? » To which Dunlap replied that when the feast was done, they would depart of their own will in an orderly way. Where, demanded the French minister, « are the soldiers that are to make them do this? » Replied Dunlap – who notes the episode in his diary – « They need no force to make them behave with propriety; they act as Freemen ». (William Dunlap, *Diary I*, N.Y. Historical Society Collections for 1929 LXII, in Bell, « The Federal Processions of 1788 », cit.)

<sup>51</sup> *Massachusetts Centinel*, Feb. 9, 1788, in Bell, op. cit.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Jackson to Henry Knox, Boston, Feb. 10, 1788, Knox mss., Mass. Hist. Soc., cited in Bell, *The Federal Processions of 1788*, cit.

<sup>53</sup> Jackson to Knox, cit.

<sup>54</sup> Bell, op. cit. See also, J.H. Powell, « The Grand Federal Processions », in *General Washington and the Jack Ass*, Yoseloff, South Brunswick, 1969.

What we have here is not simply the materialization of a traditional literary *locus*, but something much more along the lines of allegory. The ship is at once symbolic locus *and* a real ship, which can be judged by physical criteria; its identity as symbol is ephemeral and transparent: it can immediately be turned back to its habitual daily use, or destroyed. The state/republic is thus not only an abstract concept, but exists as the « work of our hands » in a material dimension, where it is « available » to the judgement and the will of the common citizen. The « ship of state » as it appears here in the port of Boston amid the tradesmen and artisans who build, fit and sail boats, is a presentation far different from those we find in revolutionary Paris.

The ship will be taken up by virtually all important federal processions — which occur in port cities — indicating that it is immediately « recognized » by the common people as a significant statement. It will, however, be « elaborated » and « distanced » from them as the processions come to be organized by authorities and gentlemen; it will become something to look at, a spectacle offered to astound, the power of the people alienated from them and presented to their gaze: the Baltimore ship, built overnight at the commission of local merchants, named *Federalist*, was in a sense an embarrassment once the festivities were over, being seaworthy but not « useful »; since it could not be destroyed, given its wholly symbolic « life », it was in the end sailed down the Potomac and given as a gift to Washington. The New York ship, part of the last — and most conscious and politically « aimed » — procession of all, was with specific, open delimitation, named *Hamilton* and, after the close of the spectacle, exposed to the public, until time and weather destroyed it; a symbol whose existence was to be a symbol, ending in itself as spectacle in the tradition of gentlemanly baroque theater, full of « engines » to amuse and distract<sup>55</sup>.

The Boston ships, falling into two temporal moments, express as well two aspects of democratic republicanism — construction and destruction of government — and thus encompass total sovereignty to make and to terminate institutions, defining, however, this latter function as codified into a mode of rational evaluation of « sea-worthiness ». This second moment is, perhaps, not included in Jackson's impression of Grandeur, though it appears as a logical completion of the first moment. Indeed, the judging and the burning of the long-boat/Old Confederacy is a re-elaboration of traditional social *loci* like the bonfire, and it is also, more recently, linked to the demonstrative destruction of a British warship's long-boat during the pre-war period of confrontation. Finally, it is worth recalling that, during the early phases of the siege of Boston, a captured British boat had been manned and drawn on wheels in procession « under sail » through the positions of the long siege line from Charlestown to Roxbury, taking several days to complete its tour

<sup>55</sup> See the celebration for Howe, above, for example.

and being made to circle the church before coming to and « dropping anchor », while the artillerymen shot off a cannon « for the joy »<sup>56</sup>.

The episode was a spontaneous one, sustained over time and across space and appeared significant to those who viewed it, enough so that it appears in several soldier diaries. What that general significance might be among simple soldiers from New England, may be hypothesized taking into consideration the tradition of typological or figural interpretation in the area. The appropriation and materialization of a high culture emblem of state and church (that is of organized society) involved in the prolonged acting out of the sailing and anchoring of a boat out of its usual element, on land, testifies to a powerful, if submerged, semantic-field. The soldiers who sail along the siege line proclaim to themselves and their fellows the possession of the state and the competence to « govern the ship »; it is a self-celebration, a democratic republican affirmation, which is recognized in the joyful salute.

The « weight » of the ship as political discourse — which the « people » present in an allegoric mode and the élite in a symbolic mode — finds confirmation and, as well, acquires a national vitality in so far as regards the urban milieu, when we take note of a spontaneous episode which occurred « out-of-doors » in Philadelphia on the same evening in which officialdom registered and promulgated « indoors » its work of legal structuring. Some sailors and ship's carpenters drew a small boat through the streets, after fitting it with wheels, taking « soundings » as they went, in a sustained comic allegory on the ratifying vote — « three and twenty fathoms: foul bottom! », « six and forty fathoms: sound bottom, safe anchorage! »<sup>57</sup>. The people thus not only decide the proper milieu for the ship of state, allowing themselves to put wheels on it and sail it over land, but measure and judge the competency of the « officers » charting its route.

No federal procession subsequent to that organized in Boston by the artisans failed to include a ship. However the modality of that inclusion changed, changing the significance it carried. To see how this happened, we have first to complete the description of the Boston event which became the pattern-card to keep in view when organizing federal celebration, both for what it included and for what it omitted. Subsequent processions differ in who organizes; how the strong semantic elements maintained — like the ship — are interpreted; what is added; none thereafter is spontaneous in the way that this first procession is.

<sup>56</sup> This episode and its figural background in Massachusetts preaching are examined in Loretta Valtz Mannucci, « Uomini e gentiluomini all'assedio di Boston », op. cit.

<sup>57</sup> In Bell, op. cit. The only other dialogue which has survived regards the ship Hamilton in the New York procession (which still did not know whether New York ratification had been secured). On taking on a pilot, the following dialogue is said to have occurred: « *Pilot*: From whence come ye? *Capt.*: From the Old Constitution. *Pilot*: Where bound? *Capt.*: To the New Constitution. *Pilot*: Will you have a pilot? *Capt.*: Aye. *Pilot*: I'll board you on the star-board bow ». No indication of who the pilot might be is evident. (Sarah H.J. Simpson, « The Federal Procession in the City of New York », *The New York Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin*, Vol. IX, no. 2, July, 1925).

Opened, as we have seen, by « path-breakers », the order of march in Boston was closed by Captain Gray's Republican Volunteers, confirming its character of organized society in a sort of orthogenetic self-representation from the clearing of the wilderness to citizen republic derived from labor. When the circle encompassing actual civic space and popular history had been completed at Faneuil Hall (in itself a civic apparatus of composite and powerful evocative value as at once market where the daily life of commerce centers and site of popular political decision), the entire body of parading citizens found food and drink waiting:

some biscuit & cheese four qt. Casks of wine three barrels & two hogs of punch<sup>58</sup>.

A simple, republican, refreshment indeed — though some of those providing it were worried enough about the proclivities of « the people » to hedge the « participation » they had given. General Lincoln, who had repressed Shays' rebellion with wholehearted conviction, along with the description cited above, wrote Washington that

the moment they found that the people had drunk sufficiently means were taken to upset the two hogs punch this being done the company dispersed and the day ended most agreeably.

It was after this that the *Old Confederation* was judged and burned, in a completion of the allegory of the republic and popular sovereignty which illustrates the « other space » not occupied by the parade, though certainly not antithetical to it; the judgement and the burning took place on the Common, a conceptually more « open » civic place than Faneuil Hall. It was, as well, the only moment in which there was speech; we might almost define it as « closet theater » within the theatrical celebration which is the entire day, in that it is fixed in place (at the « empty » center of the city as myth — the « Common » —) and involves few actors communicating with a reduced audience and ending in a joint ritual act (the bonfire) of affirmative destruction. Finally it is an « out-of-doors » more « out-of-doors » than the square before Faneuil Hall and so a further revolutionary extension of the already revolutionary parade.

The Boston episode shows clearly all of the aspects of the revolutionary situation, from self-organization and its acceleration to the uncertain participation of the traditional élites, revolutionary per force as founders of a republic obtained through a popular war, yet hopeful of governing it with a popular participation that was consensual and decorative, rather than positive and critical.

Several things were absent in the Boston celebration. First of all constituted authority or élites parading as such; even the organizing Committee expressed no « marshals » and established no sections for the marchers,

<sup>58</sup> *American Museum*, III, 1788. For Lincoln's letter, Powell, op. cit.

though they did participate as a group riding in a sleigh just before Gray's Volunteers at the end of the parade. Secondly, there were no speeches. More important still, very little symbolism was present and what there was was clearly declared as « conceit » superimposed on elements of daily reality, readily dis-assembled and reappropriated to use. Lastly, the feast was unstructured or « anarchic » (even in the form of control exercised by the gentlemen who overturned the punch).

Subsequent processions, whether celebrating state ratification or the adoption itself, added all of them, transforming Boston's democratic republican theater into spectacle – « pageant », as later commentators accurately defined it. Organization originated at élite levels in Baltimore, Charleston, Philadelphia and New York where the most important processions were held, as well as in other, smaller, towns like New Haven<sup>59</sup> and Portsmouth. The structure of the procession now framed the working trades in authority and situated them in the context of a symbolic genealogy which was outside their experience: to the simple use of numbers was added classic apparatus which could not be reconverted to daily use since it rose and fulfilled itself at abstract cultural levels. Charleston organizers opened their procession with a band, followed by a battalion of artillery and the « Gentlemen planters »; they closed it with government officials (city, county and state) the parade marshal Captain Hamilton – a gentleman – and a company of fusiliers; the trades marched in the middle. Philadelphia's procession, the most painstakingly organized, opened with costumed axemen, lictors, antiquity's heralds of freedom (and a transfiguration of Boston's woodmen), followed by the first city troop of dragoons. But, in third place, a symbol had been introduced in the person of « John Nixon, Esquire, on horseback bearing the staff and cap of liberty; under the cap a white silk flag, with these words, "FOURTH OF JULY, 1776", in large gold letters »<sup>60</sup>. Nixon had read the Declaration of Independence from the platform of the State House twelve years earlier.

The Philadelphia procession thus sets the origins of the polity as at once in the mythic past and in a formal political – « legal » – act performed twelve years earlier. The liberty cap, which will take on such strong political tones in France within a year, is here a mere classic reference, the « head » which is supposed to wear it being « the colonies » « enslaved » and « freed » from

<sup>59</sup> Ezra Stiles specifically links the July 4th celebration of 1788 in New Haven (which combined the celebration of Independence Day and the accession of Virginia, news of which reached the town on the third) to the Boston model: « A Procession formed at the Long wharf of a Commixture of all Descriptions accord<sup>d</sup> to the Idea conceived at Boston at their Rejoycing last Winter. A Sower headed the Procession succeeded by 3 pair of Oxen & one hold<sup>d</sup> a Plow; then Reapers... then a Whale Boat manned & row<sup>d</sup> a federal Ship... The whole March was near one Mile & three Quarters. Entered the Meet<sup>g</sup> h. at Noon or XI.59. Exercises... XII.2. Salute by discharge of XIII Canon in 1 Park around Liberty Pole, the federal Flag flying... ». *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles*, ed. Franklin Bowditch Dexter, Vol. III, Jan. 1, 1782 - May 6, 1795, Scribner's, New York, 1901.

<sup>60</sup> This and subsequent description of the Philadelphia procession come from Francis Hopkinson, op. cit.

the tyrant king. The banner is silk and the lettering gold as befits « high » presentation: Thomas Waters Griffith will be obliged to take off a patriotic cockade in Paris only a few years later when the Marseilles troops passing in the street object to the fact that it is made of silk ribbons and therefore contradicts its overt republican message<sup>61</sup>. And, in fact, the great procession is not a celebration of the republic, but of « union »: something which engages on the one hand « the states » and, or the other, all of the factions which had riven Pennsylvania and this without giving any overt reading of the contents of the institutional solution which were the center of contention.

The great procession progressively distanced its symbols from real objects. After Nixon, came four pieces of artillery, then the « French Alliance »: the horse carrying the figure carrying the banner was the same Rochambeau had ridden at the siege of Yorktown. Next came a corps of light infantry with the standard of the first regiment; the « Definitive treaty of peace » followed born as a date upon a staff decorated « with olive and laurel » and carried by George Clymer, who had signed the Declaration of Independence. Next came: a flag bearing Washington's name and « the friend of his country » in silver letters; a troop of light dragoons; a herald with attending trumpet proclaiming a « NEW ÆRA » in a poem hanging with the pennant from his staff; next the « Convention of the States », also born by a gentleman; a band; and finally, as the culmination of this symbolic process, « The Constitution ».

The Constitution was a large eagle on which in robes of office the « Hon. Chief Justice M'Kean » and other members of the Pennsylvania high court supported a tall staff with a liberty cap, under which the *New Constitution*, framed and ornamented and under this the words « THE PEOPLE » in large gold letters. The eagle had 13 silver stars upon its breast and a shield with 13 red and white stripes. Benjamin Rush would comment in the *American Museum* that the eagle denoted « the elevation of the government and of law and justice above everything else in the United States ». It also denoted the impossibility for ordinary people, without a classic education, to do other than look up to the magistrates who would work the machinery and make an eagle into a republic. « Sublime objects and intense pleasure never fail of producing silence! » Rush observed; the contrast of the artisans who had also « elaborated » their presence is striking; so much so that it is what is later recalled and casts its aura of democratic republicanism over these other presences.

The artisans made and distributed objects; printed and cast abroad hand-bills. Their theatre was a representation within a spectacle so that Philadelphia accomplishes the « impossible »: a moment of simultaneous and double representation and presentation of the republic. The procession closed with the students of the various Philadelphia schools and the university, with master, tutors and professors, « A small flag borne before them, inscribed

<sup>61</sup> *My Scrap-Book of the French Revolution*, ed. E.W. Latimer, McClurg, Chicago, 1898.



“*The rising generation*” »: mythic origins, legal origins, an orderly future governed by an educated élite and peopled by a lettered, male white (preferably urban) citizenry. The proposal was an honest one, but it was not a democratic republican one. The feast which completed the celebration included the majority of Philadelphia’s population (and it is a culmination in which we may imagine women and children also participated) nicely kept the balance of unity between high and low, the « regularity and decorum far beyond all reasonable expectation », remarked upon by Hopkinson with revelatory surprise, the « *universal love and harmony* » of hearts « glowing with urbanity and rational joy » prevailed among the 17,000 gathered to eat on the lawns of William Hamilton’s country mansion. The food-laden tables had been set out under canvas canopies in a semi-circle with the ship Union anchored in the middle and real ships in the river firing salutes. James Wilson, member of the Constitutional Convention spoke on the educational aspects of « great political truths » and the future empire of the new country. To Boston’s bread and cheese were added beef and ham; beer, cider and porter were offered, but no punch; ten toasts were drunk, beginning with « The People of the United States » and ending with « The Whole Family of Mankind »<sup>62</sup>.

This ephemeral moment in which high and low representation appear together, is already absent in New York in late July where a federalist élite plans the procession as a political act to promote ratification in the state and, as well, to set the terms of governance. It is an interpretation of the relationships the new constitution embodies. Like Boston and Philadelphia, the route of march involves the entire civic space but it includes the feast, rather than concluding with it, so that there is no final free dispersal into individual, private citizens, but a « dismissal » of units. The procession opened with two horsemen with trumpets, followed by an artillery piece; the « first division » then opened with foresters « in their frocks » carrying axes and Columbus « in his ancient dress, on horseback »: Boston’s reference thus became mythic and wholly symbolic – as, given New York’s settlement, it needs must if it were to be « managed ». The procession closed with the Society of the Cincinnati, physicians and foreigners plus a piece of artillery: forfeiting a general statement on the future course of the republic unless one wants to read the deepest fears of antifederalists into this « tenth division »<sup>63</sup>. The feast, organized by L’Enfant – whose points of reference were not only classic but French – guaranteeing a double cultural remove from the common people – was wholly structured or « staged », with an invention of artificial space which made of this communal moment a theatrical machine in itself.

The pavilion – which also recalls mediaeval tournament pageantry in a « romantic » reading – had a central section where the authorities sat under a

<sup>62</sup> In Bell, op. cit.

<sup>63</sup> Richard Platt, « Order of the Federal Procession », *New York Journal and Daily Patriotic Register*, July 23, 1788.

dome topped by a figure of Fame with a trumpet proclaiming the New Era. In her left hand the standard of the United States and a roll of parchment with the words « Independence, French Alliance, Peace ». At her side an American Eagle with outstretched wings standing on a laurel crown. From this center – whose pillars bore the cyphers of the allied powers – a series of ten long tables formed a fan, each spoke of which was a ratifying state. There the people sat and music was disposed among the spokes but in such a way as not to obstruct the view of the President of the Congress seated at the center of the high table<sup>64</sup>. Though we know the people present drank – for some of the toasts are recorded – I have not been able to discover what they ate, a perhaps significant indication that what was being celebrated no longer had physical linkage to daily life and its pleasures: as a long religious tradition has show, ritual food consumption may be as symbolic as a single seed.

The last word here to Boston again, where the news of adoption was spontaneously celebrated by governor Hancock and his dinner guests in « ecstasy » and by the population which roamed the streets of the town carrying candles and torches, yelling, ringing bells sending up rockets and firing the militia cannon.

<sup>64</sup> In Sarah J. Simpson, *op. cit.*