THE FORMATIONS AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE AMERICAN IDENTITY: A CASE FOR CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

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Abstract

The present work studies the role of classical tradition in the formations and constructions of the American Identity. The first part of this thesis aims to outline the processes of formation and the consequences of the conditions prevalent in the American Continent. In the second part, it is observed that during the period of American Revolution, the allusions and references to the classical antiquity are numerous. This observation necessitated a methodical study, in which the role of these allusions and references were studied in order to understand their influences, if any, on the processes of construction of the American Identity.

The methods used for the analysis of construction and formation are based on the methodology of the study of nationalism. In this methodology the works of the ideologues are studied, and their key propositions are analyzed for their relevance to the criteria established by the studies of nationalism.

Through this study it has been found that some of the features of the allusions and references to the classical antiquty have indeed conformed to the characteristics of a nationalistic movement. The political discourses, personalities and myths of the ancient Greek and Roman states have been presented in the revolutionary period as viable models with which the ideal American identity could be formed. The significance of the classical texts had been maintained in the American revolutionary period as a linkage to the source of 'European civilization'. The construction of American identity on the idea of a civilization, therefore has been made the basis of nationalism in America.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1

Introduction

Hans Kohn begins his treatise of the American Nationalism with the following statement: "This book makes no attempt to present a history of American nationalism, either in a narrative form or in a discussion of all its aspects. … The present book is only an essay, and a first essay, to discuss some of the chief problems inherent in the very complex phenomenon of American nationalism."[1] This present work is also a limited inquiry into this "very complex phenomenon," which aims to present some of the factors contributing to its formation and construction. It will treat its subject matter in greater detail than some of the other, and perhaps more significant factors.

What I wish to present with this work is the way in which the classics had partially effected the formations, and more importantly the way they had been used in the constructions of the American identity in the American revolutionary period. The idea for the present study had originated from the evidence of 'curious' interest exhibited by the American Revolutionaries on the classical tradition. Not only the quantity of written material on the subject, but also the seriousness with which the classical tradition had been used, made the American divulgence appear 'curious,' and interesting.

This curiousness had been addressed in many works by both the classicists and the political historians of the United States of America. A proper acknowledgement of these works will be made presently, but one crucial aspect which had not been investigated to its fullest extent must be addressed here. The scope of these works on the American usage of classical tradition did not in general involve a critical approach to the Construction of the American Identity; and the present work intends to address this subject.

[1] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," ix

The ultimate form of the American civic identity must be investigated as the product of the processes of formation and construction. The formative elements are defined here as the particular influences that have been acting on this populace unconsciously as a consequence of their heritage and circumstances of their geography. The constructive elements, on the other hand, are held to be the conscious attempts to mould the colonists into a coherent and cohesive body of people for the purposes of producing a unified identity.

The revolutionary enthusiasm found among the colonists throughout their revolt, and preceding it, can be observed according to these formulae. Indeed, studied with the nuances of a constructed national consciousness in mind, the logic and actions of the American Revolution become an interesting study of nationalism. That is the niche that this present work aims to address.

True to our observation above, the present work begins with a discussion on the formations of the American identity. In order to do so, a chapter is dedicated to the characteristics of the Englishmen, who had founded and constituted a large portion of the populations of the colonies constituting the United States as their ultimate form. Accordingly, the rise and characteristics of English nationalism, which had constructed the notion of 'God's Englishmen,' became the subject matter of the first chapter.

The hypothesis forwarded in this chapter is that an English nation was formed with the elevation in status of what had previously been recognized as 'rabble.' The political ambitions of the newly crowned House of Tudor had been instrumental in the creation of this identity of 'English People'. The special circumstances of the rule of Henry VIII - who had worked to solidify his claim on the crown as well as the basis of his authority by elevating 'new' educated men from the gentry to the positions of power - were largely responsible for the character of the nascent English nationalism.

The politicization of the masses under the rule of King Henry VIII had been intensified by the nature and order of succession from this king ultimately to Queen Elizabeth. The latter, whose rule had been contested to begin with, redoubled the efforts of her father in an effort to endow English Protestantism with a richer tradition. As English Protestantism was growing in legitimacy, it was also becoming more entrenched and politicized as a consequence of the Roman Catholic reaction to it. This conflict would prove essential for the nature of the American colonies, since it would be some of the most politicized of the Englishmen that would 'remove' across the ocean to found new societies. This sense that they "were the chosen people of God, that he had guided them through the wilderness and made of them a great people was indeed an intoxicating idea," Paul A. Varg finds, "but it is an idea not uncommon in the history of nationalism."[2]

Cutting the explanation at this point, however, would be cutting it short. What we here term as the formative influences do explain, to some degree, the revolt of the colonies, but not the actual end result. Influenced solely from this single source of ideas, the American War of Independence would perhaps be termed as the second British Civil War, by its historians, or an "Atlantic Civil War."[3] For it can be argued that no alternative to the already present identity would be felt necessary for the victorious colonists. If they had been influenced by precisely the same identity and ideal, they would perhaps fashion themselves to be a new Cromwellian Army bent on reforming the constitution to fit the circumstances of the Empire. No lengthy counter-factual analysis is necessary, fortunately, for the revolutionary leaders did not shy away from articulating their realities and ideals.

From these records the modern student may find that the discussion of the conflict and the preparation for its aftermath contained more than just their British heritage. It is widely accepted, on the other hand, that the American Revolution was a creature also of the Enlightenment. If the necessities of the Revolution had been borne

[2] Paul A. Varg , "*The Advent of Nationalism, 1758-1776*," in "*American Quarterly*," Vol.16, No.2 (1964)
[3] J.G.A. Pocock, "*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,*" 467

out of the nature of English heritage, they had been articulated and refined by the intellectual output of European Enlightenment. From its conception to its fulfillment in the form of the Constitution of the United States, the American Revolution benefited from the acumen of European *philosophes* to help bolster their claim for independence.

Another influential discourse to affect the succeeding generations of colonists had been another European intellectual import; the discourse of classical republicanism. The concepts of mixed government, a virtuous body of citizens, and the rule by a Prince had come into existence in the Italian city-states from fourteenth century onwards. Though the humanist authors of Italian Renaissance had also been directly influential in America, a more direct passage of this discourse had arrived from England. Classical Republicanism had been popularized in England both by the efforts of the seventeenth century *intelligentsia* and the political atmosphere of the Civil War that encouraged its growth. Although it was generally formulated as an opposition thought, and therefore of relatively marginal influence in England, classical republicanism in New World found an environment in which it could prosper. The conditions of European colonialism in America made it possible for the new colonist to become landowners; thus also made the notions of landed and virtuous citizenry all the more alluring to the Americans.

What is crucial, and more interesting, for the intents and purposes of the present work, however is that its Enlightenment and Republicanism were not the full extent of European intellectual imports to the New World. Not only had the political and philosophical acumen of Europe had been ransacked for all of its "useful knowledge," but also its very roots. For in their indulgence into the stores of European intellectual armory, the revolutionary leaders had also enriched their case for legitimacy by implementing what they perceived to be the source of the Western Civilization, its history.

This was the one crucial concept in the intellectual scene of the struggle for launching an independent and thoroughly Western enterprise in the New World.

Evoking the authority, the precedent and the richness of its history allowed the revolutionaries to lay claim to the heritage of Europe's Civilization itself; thus fashioning themselves to be 'worthy equals' to the 'civilized world'.

The majority of all that has been committed to writing by the revolutionary generation of Americans had depicted the American citizens as free men; that is to say men, whose freedom was a natural consequence of their being *civilized* and W*estern*. And more importantly the profusion of political essays and other types of politically charged literary output of the revolution can be attributed to this will to legitimize their revolution in the familiar terms of European identity.

To this conscious effort of the Revolutionary Leaders, then, we will be referring to as the construction of American Identity. And the classical antiquity is the particular history with which to test this thesis. Thus in the Fourth Chapter called the "Constructions of the American Identity," I aim to present that the Americans had utilized the histories of a variety of different polities and periods in their formulation of both their case for independence and the construction of their *unique* identity. For this purpose the American Revolutionaries had selected what they thought to be useful historical precedents from a pool of asserted Western traditions.

While using Civilization as the basis for their identity, the American Revolutionaries had also identified the "Others" for their identity in accordance with a dichotomy of civilized and barbarous conducts. These "Others" substantiated both in the form of historical cases of maltreatment of liberties, and also as the original Amerindian peoples of the New World ever present on their 'frontiers.' Therefore, their identity was also constructed in negation of 'tyranny' and 'barbarianism.'

From the viewpoint of the present work then, the American Revolutionaries are cast from the mold of radical Englishmen and continental Europeans, who had left the Old World for an opportunity to fashion a better-suited polity for themselves. Owing to this heritage, they flourished in the New World enjoying a higher degree of liberty. The

histories and tradition of classical antiquity, among others, was an element in the construction of their identity in their endeavor to be an independent and united people.

1.1 Literature Discussion

"Eighteenth-century America was a cultural province of Europe, especially of England."[4] This sentence is not a unique statement in the historiography of the American Revolution, nor does it possess a central place in the discussion of that particular era. It may even be termed as bland; a straightforward, descriptive argument. Moreover it is a generic sentence that could have been written by any historian in the past two centuries. However, it is ultimately central to the investigation of the political climate during the American Revolution.

In a sentence such as this, the historians of different orientation would accentuate different words to bring forth what they think to be the important theme. The period could be investigated politically, culturally or in terms of its intellectual habitat in a comparative way; the continuation or separation of the political thoughts from England to the Continent could be interpreted, or the attention could be directed to the *Englishness* of the American colonists. The examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

Some of the historiography on the prevalent ideologies of the Revolution focuses on the *Englishness* of the act, connecting the latter event with the turmoil in the 17th century Britain and the political literature it prompted. Most noteworthy among these works are those undertaken by Bernard Bailyn in his massive *Pamphlets of the American Revolution* (1965) and its relatively succinct theoretical framework *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (1967). The former work contains the pamphlets, essays and the miscellaneous comments published during the Revolutionary period. This continues to be a popular source for historians studying this period. The "Ideological Origins," moreover is among the most influential books on this subject.

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[4] D. H. Meyer, "*The Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*," American Quarterly,Vol.28, No.2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (Summer, 1976)

Although the combined effort in these two works remain monumental, their shortcomings become ever more apparent with the introduction of further research in the field. One of the main criticisms to be leveled against this work is that the author self-declaredly deemphasizes European origins of the ideologies that had shaped the nature of the Revolution. Instead Bailyn finds the Revolutionary leaders to be "active politicians, merchants, lawyers, plantation owners, and preachers," detached from the philosophical discourses of Europe. Moreover, the author claims that the 'Spokesmen of the Revolution' would have been surprised to be associated with the European *philosophes* and on the other hand he portrays them as avid readers of the said Enlightenment personae.[5] Portraying the Founders outside the sphere of Enlightenment influence grants them with auras of practical statesmen of the best traditions; self-made law-givers such as Salon, Lycurgus or Cincinatus.

Even the discussion of the English heritage of the colonists suffers from ambiguous and celebratory remarks. Although his argument essentially brings to the fore this ideological 'inheritance' of the colonies, which necessitated the response of Revolution to the stimuli of corruption, it is at places hard to fathom the precise nature of this heritage from his text. The dynamics of the English politics, which would eventually shape the political outlook of the 'pilgrims,' is a subject on which the author divulges very little. The text overwhelms the reader with the normative statements on the importance of liberty and dangers of contagion, without ever establishing the *origins* of the ideology that brought about these views. Consider the following passage:

> *Somehow*, through great historic struggles, these social forces had been brought into the English government in a *perfect* balance, and it was this that accounted, it was believed, for *the political stability* that nation enjoyed. The constitutional *miracle* the colonists felt they shared, for they too lived within the jurisdiction of the British government. But they lived also within their own immediate governments, and therein lay a problem that many had recognized from the earliest years but that

[5] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," consider the difference of opinion between the "Preface to the Enlarged Edition" and the subject matter of "Sources and Traditions," especially pp. vi.& 23

> became acute only after 1763 when the foundations of government in America came under intense scrutiny.[6]

None of the claims that have been marked here in italics seem to be appropriate for a work, which has been launched to investigate the ideological origins of an event with many interesting tenets. Especially considering that this work has been honored with a Pulitzer Prize.[7]

Bernard Bailyn also goes to considerable lengths to avoid a coherent discussion of Classical Republicanism. Classical Republicanism is one of the most obviously influential political philosophies that can be found in the ideological arsenal of the revolutionary generation. The definition of the crisis with Britain, the rights of colonies ancient and modern, the politically sound method of government are some of the topics that have been discussed by the revolutionaries in the political discourse of Classical Republicanism. The quotation reproduced above, in the opinion of the present student, is the result of such avoidance; without a thorough discussion of the English 17th century and its turmoil the political and intellectual history of this period brings forth, in Bailyn's narrative, *perfect* balance through, not struggle but, *political stability*, which *somehow* spawns a considerable migration of English subjects, who are endowed with the memory of *miraculous* constitution they have left in England.

In short, without the necessary ingredients of the English and the European schools of thought, the treatment of the American ideological background becomes a narrative of ambiguous happenstances. That does not mean the entire text is avoidable. Although Bailyn does not seem to be fulfilling the obligations of the title of his work and present the origins in their entirety, *The Ideological Origins* does present an erudite account of what it seeks to divulge. For the purposes of the present work, the value of Bailyn's monograph is in its keen understanding of the circumstances of the early American colonies, and what the author defines as the English tradition of liberty.

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[6] Ibid., 274 (My emphasis)

[7] Bernard Bailyn had been the recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*" in 1968.

The above treatment of Bernard Bailyn's 'Ideological Origins' may seem extreme in the scope of a work such as the present one, but the criticism leveled against this book can be reproduced for virtually the entirety of this particular genre of histories the American Revolution. Therefore it stands as an example, albeit a negative one, of the literature of the intellectual histories of the Revolution.

Bailyn's work had been furthered and elaborated by his student Gordon S. Wood in *The Creation of the American Republic* (1969) and *The Radicalism of the American Republic* (1991). Considering the 'generic' sentence quoted above, Wood's works observe the American Revolution in a wider scope. His works offer a much more sober analysis of the structure of the American mind leading to and during the American Revolution. His works include studies of the political upheavals of sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in England, the subsequent formation and idealization of the English Constitution. Thus fulfilling some of the arguments left incomplete by his mentor, Gordon S. Wood also tackles the subject matter of Republicanism. Indeed, the narrative of republicanism seems to act as the main vein of argument in his works, followed chronologically from the English Constitution to the American Declaration of Independence. The narrative follows republican minds, of first the English and then the Americans, as they interpreted their history as the endless struggle between virtue and corruption; all the positive aspects being a form of the former and all that does not bode well associated with the latter.

Even though Wood's works can also be criticized for their celebratory attitude towards history, they do a more thorough job in illuminating the various aspects of the ideology that produced the Republic. More importantly still for our purposes, the author introduces the prevalent culture of classics through this discussion of republicanism. Whereas Bailyn had dismissed the use of classics in America as mere "window dressing,"[8] Wood observes the implications of classical teaching in the works of the

[8] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," 24

revolutionaries. According to wood "classicism was not only a scholarly ornament for educated Americans; it helped to shape their vales and their ideals of behavior."[9]

Wood's discussion of republicanism in America is even more accentuated in his *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. In this work the author deemphasizes the 'republican nature of English Constitution,' and classifies the American Revolution as an act of expelling monarchy. In doing so, he downplays the significance attributed to the English Constitution as the freest and most perfect of all, and studies the revolutionary intellectual output through an Enlightenment lens. This entails a problem of consistency between his earlier chapters and the later ones. In the opening chapters of the work Wood discusses the rise of republicanism in England, and its special place among the constitutions of comparable Western states. His later chapters, on the other hand, portray the Revolution as a social event, overthrowing one set of social conditions (of monarchy) for the new and enlightened republican model. The narrative thus takes the form of a quintessential act of European Enlightenment, based on the works of continental *philosophes*, against conditions of despotism prevalent in the continent, and *not* as a special case of English constitutionalism.[10] To be precise, the author seems to be replacing the conditions in the colonies with the conditions in Europe, against which the European philosophes had protested, thus putting European arguments in the American Revolutionary mouths.

Virtually the entire historiographical literature of the American Revolution includes the role of classical republicanism; and most of the debate in the subject can be observed through the significance attached to this political discourse by various authors. One of the most elaborate studies of classical republicanism has been undertaken by J. G. A. Pocock in his *The Machiavellian Moment* (1975). Considering the generic statement above, Pocock can be said to observe the intellectual climate prevalent in the Colonies as a part of the cultural part and parcel of Europe.

[9] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 49
[10] Ibid., the chapter relevant for this discussion is "Enlightenment," esp. 191

More so in Pocock's work than any other, classical republicanism is used as the main vein of historical investigation in a procession of different time-frames and different locales. Pocock's investigation begins with the emergence and rise of humanist thought in the Italian city-states as a part of the greater scenery of Renaissance. He outlines the manner in which a greater significance was discovered in the classical texts than the ecclesiastical discipline had found before. He problematizes the appearance, and reappearance in many different settings, of a uniquely republican crisis, when the republic discovers its own vulnerability and inevitability of corruption.[11]

Machiavellian Moment follows the discourse of virtue and corruption from the Italian city-states to England in the writings of Harrington, Milton and the other radical writers of the 17th century, and ultimately across the Atlantic to the colonies on the verge of independence. With each different setting the author investigates the different conditions with which the ideas of classical republicanism were analyzed, how its language was utilized and how the language of politics had been affected by dynamics of the new settings.

"We can only imperfectly reconstruct the thought or feeling of the men of 1776,"[12] Phillip Detweiler observes, but this caveat does not stop Pocock from trying. The main problem with this methodology is that it undertakes a task of studying the impact of the classical teachings on the contemporary minds, thus *knowing* the minds behind the texts, a task hardly appropriate for the facilities of history. Moreover, the very concepts which the reader is forced to follow from one era to another become increasingly esoteric in each new setting.

Pocock begins his narrative of republicanism with the contemplative mindset of the medieval thinker, to the emergence of the understanding of non-cyclic time, to the rediscovery of secular/civic identity, and finally to the age when the Western thought

[11] J. G. A. Pocock, "*Machiavellian Moment*," Introduction, esp. Vii, Viii
[12] Philip F. Detweiler, "*The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years*," in *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 19 No. 4 (Oct, 1962)

was on the verge of giving birth to the idea of nation. Despite the author's best efforts, and they are considerable, his readers can scarcely join the author in seeing the world in the eyes of the contemporaries.

Most important works for our purposes are those investigations directed at the function of the classics in the intellectual environment of the revolutionary generation. These works concentrate on the *culture* - if we are to put this genre of histories in relation to our generic sentence above - that bred the particular type of ideologues who led and shaped the Revolution. The literature undertaking this aspect of the Revolution is characteristically thorough as well as erudite. Indeed, the subject matter had been studied by both the political historians of the United States and the classicists from the same country. The general effect of this literature is an appreciation of the founders' sense of history, painstakingly catalogued by modern historians.

Carl J. Richard's *The Founders and the Classics* (1994) stands out as a comprehensive collection of sources, in which many aspects of classical references are catalogued. Although the narrative does not divulge into a detailed discussion of the Founders' ideological mindset, it presents a variety of ways the classics exerted a formative influence upon them. The author finds that through classics the Founders have gained access to "intellectual tools," which in turn affected their ideological orientation.[13]

Richard M. Gummere's *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (1963), takes a similar approach to the classical sources. According to Gummere, the revolutionary generation took a fresh approach to the classical authors, discarding what they saw to be superfluous and keeping whatever bits they found favorable to their cause.

Gummere also provides the most comprehensive rebuttal to those authors who dismiss the significance of the classics in colonial America. Gummere accordingly

[13] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 7

traces the use of classical references in America from the foundation of the colonies onwards. According to Gummere, associating the pioneers with the mythical Greek Argonauts, or referring to the New World as *New Atlantis* or *Meta Incognita* were not uncommon practices.[14]

Meyer Reinhold's focus in his *Classica Americana* (1984) is different from all other authors quoted hence. He tackles the subject matter from the viewpoint of a classicist and identifies different degrees attention paid to the classics, in different stages of American history. The revolutionary period, according to Reinhold, belongs to a larger era of "political adaptation" of the classics.[15] Reinhold's interest lies in a historiographical analysis of the American interest in the classics. Thus, his methodology entails the posing and answering of the questions "… how the classics functioned in early America, how Americans used, even misused and abused antiquity."[16]

Susan Ford Wiltshire's *Greece, Rome and the Bill of Rights* (1992), and Forrest McDonald's *Novus Ordo Seclorum* (1985) are also among the most influential works in this brand of history of the American Revolution. The common concentration of these works is on the investigation of the classical influences upon the American Constitution. This interest breeds a different sort of historical investigation altogether. Wiltshire, for instance begins tracing the ancient origins of 'Western Law' from the tradition of Stoics onwards, and finds the culmination of this tradition in the United States Constitution. Therefore these works can be regarded as treatises in diffusion of the classical philosophy onto the texts of American jurisprudence.

Though, admittedly, they do not set out to make a critical analysis of the factors that contributed to the American identity, one may expect to find some discussion of 'construction' in a literature dealing with the *rise* of a nation. This absence, at times, leaves many of the important propositions unpursued. Whether their authors are

[14] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," pp. 20-23
[15] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 18
[16] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 19

exulting or defending the accomplishments of their *forefathers*, a prevalent sense of awe is nearly always present. Therefore, many of these works have an undertone of celebration; in fact the bicentennial celebrations of the Declaration of Independence accommodate a significant portion of these historical works.

This observation is not intended as a mere complaint or sneer to undervalue the whole literature as a body of laudatory history-writing out of nationalistic sentiments. After all, a certain amount of reverence is to be expected from a literature concerning itself with the foundation of a nation. What is obstructed by this kind of historiography, however, is the ability to appreciate the factors that have contributed to the formation, and efforts expended towards the construction of the American identity during the establishment of this nation's statehood. Despite compiling extensive catalogues of ideas, or formulating detailed analyses, celebrating historians often look no further than the greatness of the Founders to explain the design of their product.

This part of the historiography dealing with the ideological and political aspects of the revolution seems to have outlined only the formative influences acting upon the emerging independent colonies. Moreover, virtually no effort has been made to identify these formative elements as such. The arguments almost always associate the characteristics of the end-product with the natural progression of the American identity; i.e. a grandness of the founders begetting grandness of the nation.

As E. J. Hobsbawm maintains, "no serious historian of nations and nationalism can be a committed political nationalist," and the histories of American independence is especially susceptible for this kind of vulnerability.[17] Moreover, the reader must keep in mind Anthony D. Smith's caveat: "nothing could really be more misleading than nationalism's own reading of the nation, because it reverses the real causal chain and makes false or assumptions."[18]

[17] E. J. Hobsbawm, "*Nations and Nationalism since 1780,*" 12
[18] Anthony D. Smith, "*The Antiquity of Nations*," 35

Though not utilized as much as it needed to be in the present work, another field of American history, critical studies, is remedial for this above mentioned shortcomings. The field of critical American studies can be characterized as an undertaking to revise some of the issues of historiography dealing with American Culture, which had suffered from overly sympathetic outlooks of authors towards its foundation and development. With such orientation, these revisions initially target the least acceptable judgments made upon the acts of 'settlement' on the American continents. Featuring prominently among these revisions is the role of Amerindians (a problematic term in itself) in the construction of the proper – that is to say of European descent - American identity. Therefore these works of revision take on the essential responsibility of rehabilitating American History by rehashing unacceptable parts of it.

However there seems to be a slight omission in the approach of this enterprise. Since it is also burdened with the responsibility of analyzing the constructions of the American identity, perhaps it needs to concern itself not only with the mistakes of the past historiography but also with the process of actual construction of the American Identity. With all the criticism of the previous works on the subject, the 'new school' has at its disposal mainly the negative aspects of this process of construction. Whereas the European imperialism and subsequent American imperialism undertaken on the New World features prominently in these discussions, some of *constructive* aspects of this identity building process are at times left uninvestigated. The enterprise of investigating the construction of the American identity has not come to its own, that is to say it has not cast an analytical eye towards the more *positive aspects* of this process.

Another category of works used in the present study can be categorized as broad discussions of nationalist movements in general and American nationalism in particular. Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1992) is a study on the genesis and the various forms of the nationalistic movements. This, along with Hans Kohn's *The Age of Nationalism* (1962), *The Idea of Nationalism* (1944), and *American Nationalism* (1957) has been useful in investigating what I have termed as *positive aspects*. Though Kohn's works have undoubtedly been dated in the historiography of

nationalisms, their 'optimistic' outlook had still some relevance when utilized with the background of more recent analyses of nationalism in mind.

Still another note must be made on the primary sources used in the present work. It is to the penchant for articulation and record-keeping that we owe the abundance material dating from the American Revolution. This abundance in the written material kept, catalogued and printed from the eighteenth century onwards may be attributed to the attention paid by the revolutionary generation towards their public personae. Whatever their intent may have been, the historian of this era has thousands of pages of material at her/his disposal. Given plentitude, it must be made clear that the primary sources used in this work mostly consist of the *popular* passages frequently used in the histories of the American Revolution.

These speeches, pamphlets and memoirs serve to demonstrate different aspects of the characters of the American revolutionaries.' While the pamphlets and speeches can be considered as part of the national identity construction process, the memoirs and letters can be viewed to be more sincere manifestations of their authors.

Chapter 2

The Formation of the American Identity: The Preconditions of the American Nationalism

Any discussion pertaining to the construction of a new national identity must necessarily analyze the formative influences acting upon its inquiry. The latter can be likened to the building blocks of an edifice, whose characteristics ultimately determine the shape, size and color of the said edifice.

The edifice of American Identity is of a particularly motley design. The building blocks in the American case had been shaped out of various materiel and were put together in an interesting fashion. Yet, it clearly reflects the characteristics of its basic building blocks.

The building of identities is the subject matter of studies of comparative nationalisms, and these studies have established the criteria for such an analysis. Nationalism studies emphasize the establishment of any new national consciousness in several processes, which are observed to be acting simultaneously on any given population. These processes include the introduction of new concepts into the political discourse; new ideas through which the earlier debates are rehashed. This new political discourse brings along new criteria that allows the nascent nationalists to view their history with different and sometimes revolutionary sentiments. A different method of historical interpretation allows them to formulate new grievances, or revise the earlier ones from the perspective of new norms.

It is safe to say that the conditions prevalent in the New World were much different than the European nationalists faced during their own periods of ‘awakening’. It has often been observed that, to begin with, there had been no customary ruling class

rooted and entrenched in the society, nor were there a typical 'third estate' to be found in the colonies.[19] Therefore, the New World did not suffer from class of domestic 'unprincipled courtiers,'[20] nor did it have to contend with a disenfranchised landless mass with revolutionary sentiments. What some of the revolutionary leaders have diagnosed to be corruption in the European countries was not present in their own lands. Thomas Jefferson had confidently observed that "While we shall see multiplied instances of Europeans going to live in America, I will venture to say, no man now living will ever see an instance of an American removing to settle in Europe, and continuing there." It was every American's "interest to preserve, uninfected by contagion, those peculiarities in their governments and manners, to which they are indebted for those blessings."[21]

The American political realities were not only distinguished by absence of conditions such as these, but some characteristics of the residents of the American continent were also in force. The people were inherently political; their very act of migrating to the New Continent had been a political act in essence. The 'immigrants' constituted a portion of the English people who were not willing to compromise their beliefs and identities. They had chosen exile rather than conforming to the realities 'alien' to them implemented as a result of the fickleness of the contemporary politics. The resulting communities established by the colonists in different times and out of different circumstances, were miniature states with a variety of political positions, each jealously guarding its liberties.

Another aspect of the unusual circumstances of the American experience had been the way in which Enlightenment had been experienced. The ease with which Enlightenment thought infused into a society, conscious and alert about its rights and liberties should not be surprising. As D. H. Meyer observes, the "Enlightenment was

[19] Bernard Bailyn provides data for the situation in England "Between 20 percent and 25 percent of England's land was owned by 400 great landlords (…) More than 80 percent of this land was worked by tenants." *The Great Republic*, 116
[20] John P Foley ed. "*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*," under "*Courtier*"
[21] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to Colonel Monroe*," Jun. 17 1785, in John P Foley ed. "*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*," under "*Patriotism*"

nowhere a more public event than in America."[22] Its most celebrated document, the Declaration of Independence, is almost completely a manifestation of the Enlightenment Ideals[23], with as little concessions as can be expected.

The most interesting characteristic, for the present study's intents, is the unusual receptiveness evidenced, and in part caused, by all of these factors, which allowed for a variety of ideas to contribute in the formation of the American identity. In order to launch an intelligible discussion of these ideas' importance we must first define the parameters of our analysis.

2.1 On Nationalism

Perhaps the best way to launch a discussion of nationalism is making the following claim: "Nations are not as old as history."[24] With this simple proposition there arises a demand to know the origin of this phenomenon as precisely as possible; followed closely by the investigation of the *a priori* conditions and the reasons for their demise.

According to Benedict Anderson, the rise of nationalism was necessitated by the fall of the preceding legitimate way of linking "fraternity, power and time meaningfully together." The forces facilitating this linkage before the rise of nations and nationalism had been identified as "fundamental cultural conceptions [of] great antiquity" exercising an "axiomatic grip on men's minds." The first among these had been the fall of Latin as the "privileged access to an ontological truth." The second had been the abandoning of the idea of divine monarchy as "persons apart from other human beings (…) who ruled by some of the cosmological dispensation." And lastly the emergence of

[22] D. H. Meyer – "*The Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*" American Quarterly, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Summer 1976)
[23] Peter Gay observes that the philosophy of enlightenment had been in the process of leaving behind such notions as "nature's god" or "self-evident truths," and moving towards a language of utilitarianism (see Peter Gay – "*Enlightenment Thought and the American Revolution*" in "The Role of Ideology in the American Revolution" ed. John R. Howe, jr. Nevertheless, the language of the Declaration of Independence arguably represented the most successfully popularized notions of the Enlightenment.
[24] E. J. Hobsbawm, "*Nations and Nationalism since 1780,*" 3

linear history divorced from its cosmological significances.[25] A breakthrough hailed as "the period of periods, the absolute moment, as Hegel called it, when history becomes conscious of itself and peoples are no longer held in thrall by their pasts but are free to set their own courses."[26]

The circumstances of the actual emergence of the new ideas had occurred differently in different regions. In the case of England, the unique political dynamics of the island had particularly interesting results. Liah Greenfeld traces the roots of this "first nation" by investigating the etymology of 'the people". In the political use of this word, she finds a gradual increase in appreciation and importance. Before it had become the sole legitimate political agent in "We the People" of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, and before it had "…acquired the meaning of the bearer of sovereignty, the basis of political solidarity, and the supreme object of loyalty," it was a pejorative term synonymous to "rabble."[27]

This gradual elevation in political significance, according to Greenfeld, had taken place originally in England. The author observes that a "semantic transformation" marked the process through which "God's Firstborn" had come into being. The political struggle of the Tudor King Henry VIII with the Papacy had comprised setting in which the said transformations took shape. A new identity for the population had become possible in the dynamics of this setting of contemporary English politics.

Succinctly put, the new line of Tudors, emerging victorious from the 'War of the Roses,' needed political and financial support of the general populace and their political class. The legitimacy of the new line of kings established by Henry VII had not been without contest by the time-honored 'ancient' aristocracy. The purge of the uncooperative elements in the traditional aristocracy and its replacement with a kind of "squirocracy of new men of merit and virtue" had won for the Monarch a new and solid

[25] Benedict Anderson, "*Imagined Communities*," 40
[26] Harvey C. Mansfield, "*Bruni and Machiavelli on Civic Humanism*," in James Hankins ed. "*Renaissance Civic Humanism*," 225
[27] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" 6

stronghold on the loose political ground of England. These newly elevated educated strata of gentlemen, in turn, had become the originators and disseminators of the new English identity.[28] The transformation of the people into the nation[29] was a process, begun thus by elimination of Papal proxies, their replacement with this squirocracy dependent on the crown, and especially centralization of all the medieval reciprocal duties and rights in the person of the Monarch.

The break with Rome, in the reign of Henry VIII, and the English Reformation had sparked, sustained and strengthened the English national consciousness. The ideas from the Old Testament in the English Bible, which may be considered the first national historical narrative, provided a discourse for its readers that they used to analyze their political realities. Also with the introduction and eventual dissemination of the Protestant notion that all Christians were priests, bode well with the new breed of Englishmen as they were settling ever more comfortably into their role as a nation. In essence, notions of Chosen People in the Old Testament formed the backbone of a powerful idea around which the identity of Englishness eventually enclosed. In this context, it is an interesting detail that the English Old Testament translations included the word 'nation' more often than the continental translations did.[30]

This process came to fruition only when the newly introduced ideas took hold in the imaginations of the general populace. This was accomplished in part by the typical spread of literacy and the introduction of printing press facilitated by the Reformation movements; a development of considerable importance since the "spread of particular vernaculars [served] as instruments of administrative centralization by certain well-positioned would-be absolutist monarchs.[31]"

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[28] Hans Kohn, "*The Genesis and Character of English* Nationalism," in "*Journal of the History of Ideas*," Vol. 1 No. 1, (1940); Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" Chapter Ch. 1, especially section *The New Aristocracy, the New Monarchy, and the Protestant Reformation*

[29] This transformation is another important aspect of Greenfeld's analysis, in which the author observes the elevation of the "rabble" to the ranks of politically enfranchised strata of "nation".

[30] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" especially section titled *The English Bible and the Bloody Regiment of Queen Mary, and the Burning Matter of Dignity.*

[31] Benedict Anderson, "*Imagined Communities*," pp.40-43

Through the process of standardization of the vernaculars into the 'national' language, the people "gradually became aware of hundreds and thousands, even millions, of people in their particular language field, and at the same time that only those hundreds of thousands, or millions, so belonged." And consequently, "these fellow-readers, to whom they were connected through print, formed, in their secular, particular, visible invisibility, the embryo of nationally-imagined community."[32] This spread of the national language, in the case of England, had accomplished not only this solidarity among the people, but also by acting harmoniously with the image of 'God's Englishmen' it reinforced it with religious connotations.[33]

The process of nationalism also sparked a keen interest in history; this was an interest stemmed from two needs. The first was the necessity of finding useful precedents for strengthening the case of the King, who had required the added spiritual authority traditionally reserved for the Holy See onto his own secular power. To this end Henry VIII "… inaugurated the study of 'English antiquities' and helped to cultivate what was to become a continuous preoccupation of the century …" The abolition of the Papal authority in England necessitated an effort to popularize the outlook of the Crown. The new educated gentry in the House of Commons, as well as those who had been elevated to the ranks of the aristocracy presiding in the House of Lords, were instrumental in this intellectual effort. These histories, along with the popularized vernacular bibles, would turn out to be "…an important factor in shaping of the national identity."[34] The Renaissance attention to classics, in the form of translated texts, had also secured access to England. Subsequently, the English nationalism branded the very act of translating these classical authors as acts of patriotism.[35]

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[32] Ibid., 47
[33] For further analysis of "God's Englishmen" see J. G. A. Pocock, "*The Machiavellian Moment*" section *The Problem of English Machiavellianism*, 424; Liah Greenfeld, ibid., section title *England as God's Peculiar People, and the Token of His Love*
[34] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" 51
[35] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 31

With the birth, rise, and eventual predominance of the new ideas, for the English citizens the traditional society ceased to be the sole mode of conceiving their realities. The dynamic nature of the British politics was further rejuvenated by this infusion of new ideas and modes of organization. To be sure, the rise of gentry to the position of royal counselor was not the formation of a 'common weal', but a *corpus* with the prince as head. England came to possess an intensive organization of national consultation; the 'squire' counselors were men educated in humanism.[36]

This was an important episode in European history; when the source of authority was sought for the first time, not through the ecclesiastical studies or in the acts of the ancients, but in the history of a given population. While the intellectual effort of Middle Ages had busied itself with the former, and the Renaissance had unearthed the lessons of the latter, with the Modern Era history writing took on an important task in the formation of modern identities.[37] This preoccupation of the 'nation-builders' with history would yield striking results for Americans.

Before launching on the discussion of this preoccupation with history, which is the subject matter of the subsequent chapters, a more detailed analysis of the English politics is necessary; the latter is, incidentally, the environment which bred the peculiar character of the colonists.

2.2 The British Heritage of the Colonists

In order to have some understanding of the politically active citizenry, who eventually made their way to the New World, we must first get a glimpse of the nature of this 'activity.' In England, the territorial and jurisdictional monarchy included possessors of rights, and possessor of authority. The ascending and descending forms of rights and authority were not by themselves factors enough to make the English active

[36] J. G. A. Pocock, "*Machiavellian Moment,*" chapter "*The Problem of English Machiavellianism*"
[37] Benedict Anderson emphasizes that "medieval Christian mind had no conception of history as an endless chain of cause and effect or of radical separations between past and present" in "*Imagined Communities,*" 29

citizens. However, a further mechanism was added to the mix with the advent of English Protestantism, which encouraged the Englishman to see himself as a part of the nation. Moreover, this nation, as its nationalism fashioned it, was 'God's England' populated by 'true-believers.'

Beginning by the late sixteenth century then, it was such Englishmen who were crossing the Atlantic with various motives and out of differing necessities. The motives for the entrepreneurs of the Elizabethan era to settle and/or make commercial headways in the New World had been typical of the prevalent 'spirit of adventurism.' There was 'free' land to be tiled, for the more ordinary, and fortunes to be made for the more audacious. The former set of entrepreneurs set out to escape from the status of tenancy experienced by majority of the English people. These conditions had been the dominant realities of the structure of English society and the organization of its politics.[38]

Even for the commercially oriented among them, as Liah Greenfeld remarks, the "practices of removal" were acknowledged as "acts of true English patriotism."[39] By 'removing', the colonists were presented to be freeing up land at home, which suffered from

> such pressing and oppressing in town and country, about farms, trades, traffick, &c.; so as a man can hardly any where set up trade, but he hall pull own tow of his neighbors, … but seeing there is a spacious land, the way to which is through the sea, we will end this difference in a day.[40]

Julia G. Ebel finds that in the Elizabethan reign, the Queen's patronage had produced nationalistic exuberance, which "was the result of a purposeful effort, initiated by Elizabeth herself." This systematical effort to endow England "with the accoutrements of culture and the ideological equipment," which was the part and parcel of this culture, served to bolster the self-definition and self-preservation of the country. Moreover, ideological drive towards stabilization and cohesion was a necessary "part of

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[38] Bernard Bailyn, "*Shaping the Republic*," 116, in Bernard Bailyn, Robert Dalek, David Brion Davis, David Herbert Donald, John L. Thomas, Gordon S. Wood, "The Great Republic"
[39] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" 404
[40] Cushman, "*Reasons and Considerations Touching the Lawfulness of Removing out of England into the Parts of America,*" pp. 33-36, quoted from Liah Greenfeld pp. 404 - 405

the massive intellectual reconstruction" for countering the "ideological upheavals that had afflicted England under the three previous monarchs."[41]

This Elizabethan patronage had at its employ "men of didactic inclination or skill: historians, theologians, geographers, classical scholars, translators." Ebel's analysis deals principally with the work of the latter. Through the work of the translators, she investigates the "concerns and manifest attitudes which are paradigmatic for their period." According to Ebel their work had entailed "transmuting the achievement of one culture into another," while at the same time introducing the nuances of this 'new culture' into the English language. Her verdict on the value of these efforts is interesting:

> In their translations the translators portray themselves as the catalysts who are transforming Greek and Latin culture - which in the sixteenth century was both international and linguistically aristocratic - into a uniquely English and available substance.[42]

In terms of the histories written, one of the most famous outputs among this of cultural and ideological effort - which had indeed been even comparable to the Bible in terms of its popularity- was John Foxe's Book of Martyrs. The grievances of the 'persecuted' were presented with the appropriation of the contemporary political discourse to the past; a characteristic of nationalist historiography that would become perpetual part of it. This notion of God's chosen people became increasingly legitimate throughout the long reign of Elizabeth I. These sentiments were consequently reinforced by the success of the English in the Elizabeth's reign.[43]

Following the reign of the 'Virgin Queen,' the main reasons for removing across the ocean became more political in nature. The eventual reversals to the religious liberty enjoyed and gradually taken for granted by the English, caused them unease. Although the main difference of opinion can be summarized to be the structuring and

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[41] Julia G. Ebel, "*Translation and Cultural Nationalism in the Reign of Elizabeth*" in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 30, No.4 (1969)
[42] Ibid.
[43] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" 61

authority of the Church, the religious grievances could hardly be separated from the political ones at this stage of English political evolution. As Bernard Bailyn notes, the Puritan heritage of the colonists "emerges from [their] political literature as a major source of ideas and attitudes of the Revolutionary generation." What the author refers to as the "New England Puritanism" would partake in the political and social theories during the revolution.[44]

Indeed, even in the mid-sixteenth century with the rule of Mary Tudor, when the 'squire' courtiers of Henry VIII had fallen out of favor with the crown, the "heretic hunt" undertaken by the Queen strengthened the resolve of the Protestants in the country. While the rising gentry became more entrenched, a politically active and articulate group of exiles made their way to the Continent.[45] The exiled English 'intelligentsia,' had retorted with a significant output of reactionary literature. As in the case of John Foxe's Book of Martyrs, the most influential among these had been the historical accounts that presented these events as royal violation into the 'true Christianity' of the English people.[46]

The effort the reverse of some of the religious liberties in England redoubled under the reign of another catholic monarch, King James I. These reversals led to the estrangement of a considerable portion of the population as a consequence. The number of the dissidents was not as important a factor as their commitment to the 'true religion;' this religion had come to be associated with being English. The ensuing English Civil War was instigated mostly by this dissatisfaction, which also forced some of the Puritans to leave for the American Continent. Edmund Burke had reflected upon this emigration in the time of revolutionary crisis, when he complained to his fellow Englishmen that the "colonists emigrated from [them], when this part of [their] character," which showed a keen love of freedom was its "predominating feature."[47]

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[44] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," 32
[45] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" especially section titled *The English Bible and the Bloody Regiment of Queen Mary, and the Burning Matter of Dignity.*
[46] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" especially section titled *England as God's Peculiar People, and the Token of His Love*
[47] Edmund Burke, "*On Conciliation with America*," 1775 www.gutenberg.org ebook #5655

'New England' was perceived to be a country of opportunity, both for the readily available arable land and for the religious liberty to be found on political *tabula rasa* it offered. "The Puritans could find here," Hans Kohn remarks, "the Promised Land for the unfolding of the true laws of God, for the reenactment of the Old Testament history."[48] Greenfeld finds the fleeing Puritans to be immigrants, who had moved too far away from their homeland to make their return after Cromwell's victory a practical affair.[49]

The crucial aspect of the 'removal' was this nuance of English national identity enveloped within the religious distinctiveness. The ones that have crossed the Atlantic considered themselves the more attuned to the values of *Englishness*, than those who have stayed home and compromised. In the eighteenth century, when the "dusk of religious modes of thought" coincided with the "dawn of the age of nationalism" the identities were adjusting accordingly.[50] But, the importance placed upon the religious liberties would not be less jealously guarded when they were secularized to become 'natural liberties'. "It was this coupling of a sense of identity with the British nation with a distinct consciousness of differentness" remarks Max Savelle,

> that characterized the 'British' nationalism of the colonial Americans. (…) This consciousness of being a different sort of Briton living in a different 'country' was apparently a strong germinal factor in the origin, and later, the emergence of a self-conscious American nationalism[51]

Because they had not compromised on their liberties and because they had done a service to England by establishing commercial outposts on American soil, the colonists considered themselves to be the best Britons. They had worked towards the realization the ideal conditions in their colonies, which were being fought for at home.

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[48] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 10
[49] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" 407
[50] Benedict Anderson, "*Imagined Communities*," 19
[51] Max Savelle, "*Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution*," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 4, (1962)

Alexis de Tocqueville's account of the foundation of the colonies on the American shore ideally presents this:

> The English who emigrated three hundred years ago to found a democratic commonwealth on the shores of the New world had all learned to take part in public affair in their mother country, … they were conversant with trial by jury; they were accustomed to liberty of speech and of the press, to personal freedom, to the notion of rights and the practice of asserting them. They carried with them to America these free institutions and manly customs, and these institutions preserved them against the encroachments of the state. Thus among the Americans as among the British it is freedom that is old; equality is of comparatively modern date.[52]

2.3 The Colonial Experience

The conditions of the New World would be instrumental in the formation of the American Identity. The heritage of ideals, which the colonists had carried with them from England, would be wrought by the different realities of the New World as opposed to the Old. As George Mason had declared to The Committee of Merchants in London, "In crossing the Atlantic," the colonists had "only changed their climate, not [their] minds, natures or dispositions."[53] The eventual characteristics of the citizens of this country would be the result of the interplay between these two factors.

The Colonists had been a part of a society where the complexities of the customary and unwritten constitution had rendered any attempt at remedy the dichotomy between the new identities and the old realities all but impossible.[54] By departing from this irremediable regime, they presented themselves with an opportunity of bringing about a different set of realities. With a modest amount of leeway one may suggest that the American colonists had been among that part of the English, who had

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[52] Alexis de Tocqueville, "*Of Certain in Peculiar and Accidental Causes which either Lead a People to Complete the Centralization of Government or Divert them from it,*" in "*Democracy in America*," quoted in Hans Kohn, "*The Age of Nationalism*," 41

[53] K. M. Rowland, "*The Life of George Mason,*" quoted in Richard M. Gummere, *"The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," 2

[54] Thomas Paine, "*Common Sense*," www.gutenberg.org ebook #147

embraced the identity of *the people* in the sense that Liah Greenfeld has proposed; that is to say their self-image was that of an politically empowered class, which was no longer suited for the role of the 'rabble.'[55]

Some of the 'miseries' from which the colonists escaped were "the great imposing institutions – the state, the church, the regulated economy, the social structures that gave power to a hereditary aristocracy." But the political experience of the immigrants and their ancestors, especially those endowed by a memory of the English Civil War was capable of seeing these conditions as "artifacts, things that men and women themselves had created."[56] This feeling of self-conscious attitude to ones status may have been responsible for the more mobile and less aristocratic society that was in place in varying degrees in American States.[57]

Hans Kohn remarks that among the Puritans in the New England colonies, "the bold concepts of Milton and Cromwell, rejected or attenuated in the eighteenth century England, lived on."[58] Bernard Bailyn finds this vein of political memory to be among the most important factors to shape the minds of the Americans during the Revolution. According to Bailyn, the principle source of ideas that all other political ideas would coalesce around would be the "unique ideological strain," which laid "in the radical social and political thought in the English Civil War and of the Commonwealth period." The radical Whig ideology of the "country" politicians and authors, such as Milton and Harrington, would deliver some of the crucial aspects of the American revolutionary thought.[59] "New England," observes Richard Gummere, "born in an atmosphere of independence and Puritan reform, was ever watchful to prevent any worldly interference with the Wilderness Zion."[60]

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[55] See above comment by Liah Greenfeld in pg. 2
[56] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," 149
[57] D. H. Meyer, "*The Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*" in "*American Quarterly*," Vol. 28, No. 2, (1976)
[58] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism,*" 9
[59] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," pp. 32 & 46
[60] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," 37

Within the time-span of about three generations, the colonists became almost a different *species* of English altogether as they had "… gradually acquired a sense of themselves as a separate people … in character and culture." Their image, and in some cases their self-image, as rustic and unsophisticated people did not offer a complete picture of their reality. Their ultimate identity, as it appears in the revolutionary period, would be shaped through a "blending of several intellectual traditions and influences," which included "the ideas and attitudes of the eighteenth century Europe's most enlightened thinkers" as well as the English identity wrought by American conditions and ideals.[61]

Not only had the enlightenment philosophy transformed the religious liberties into natural liberties, it had also helped facilitate the universalization of the rights of English. The English historical tradition as well as political and legal experience had "fused" only in America with the "rational philosophy" of Enlightenment. "For what had been until then in England and in Anglo-America the historical birthright of Englishmen," Hans Kohn observes, "became in America under the influence of eighteenth century ideas, the natural right of man, a universal message, the birthright of mankind."[62]

In his analysis of the ideological reasons behind the American grievances, which ultimately led to their revolution, Gordon S. Wood finds that "there was little evidence of those social conditions we often associate with revolution (…) no mass poverty, no seething social discontent, no grinding oppression." The degree of prosperity enjoyed by propertied Americans had been greater than anywhere else in the world; which is why, according to Wood, people felt themselves "capable of ordering their own reality."[63] John Adams remarks upon this situation when he observes:

> Our merchants are opulent, and our yeomanry in easier circumstances than the noblesse of some states. Population is so rapid as to double the

[61] Bernard Bailyn, "*Shaping the Republic*," in Bernard Bailyn, Robert Dalek, David Brion Davis, David Herbert Donald, John L. Thomas, Gordon S. Wood, "*The Great Republic,*" 147
[62] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism,*" 9
[63] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 169

> number of inhabitants in the short period of twenty-five years. Cities are springing up in the depths of the wilderness. Schools, colleges, and even universities are interspersed through the Continent ; our country abounds with foreign refinements, and flows with exotic luxuries. These are infallible marks not only of opulence but of freedom.[64]

These conditions have been lost on neither the British observers nor the colonists. Adam Smith had once speculated on the future need to move the seat of the Empire to its most resourceful and vigorous part, namely America. In 1776 amidst the crisis, he had not only believed the colonies should be represented in the parliament, but he also predicted that their representatives must become more numerous than their English counterparts in the next century. An American, Daniel Leonard, found it natural that at a certain time in future the seat of the empire would move altogether on the American continent.[65]

Whereas they had left behind the social and political circumstances there, the colonists brought along an 'English Brand' of Western Civilization to their new homes. Here they would experiment with the new ideas brought up in Europe. These ideas included "…a large portion of the Western culture, from Aristotle to Moliere, from Cicero to "Philoleutherus Lipsiensis", from Vergil to Shakespeare, Ramus, Pufendorf, Swift and Rousseau." By the time of the Revolution, there was a clear tendency of the revolutionaries for displaying 'authorities' to strengthen their arguments, of which they found plenty.[66]

2.4 Republicanism

A tenet of European influence of singular importance to infringe upon the colonists had been classical republicanism. As political philosophy it had entered the European thought with the revival of the classics in the Renaissance period. As a political discourse, it had been borrowed by the Italian humanists from the great

[64] John Adams, "*Address To the Inhabitants of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*," March 20 1775, in "*Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays Published In the Years of 1774 – 1775*," 139
[65] Quoted in Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 12
[66] Bernard Bailyn, ibid., 23

authorities of ancient Greece and Roman Republic. Medieval philosophy had already been acquainted with Aristotle's natural philosophy, as much as it was compatible with the theology of Christianity. Renaissance, on the other hand, had been marked with an interest that went beyond the theological implications of classics, during which the Europeans took an active interest in the secular and political philosophy of the past.

The classical authors that would become the most prominent to shape the political philosophy of republicanism were ultimately Aristotle, Polybius, and Cicero. On the whole, the amalgam of the classical republican tradition came to be summarized as the mixed government theory, consisting of the democratic element of the 'people,' the aristocratic element of the 'senate,' and the executive power of 'consul.' The strength of the *mixture* would originate from an interplay that can loosely be defined as the checks and balances between the democratic, aristocratic, and the monarchic elements.

Some of the key ideas that would be the hallmarks of the republican tradition had been citizenship, virtue and deference. These ideas had been conceptualized in a system of morals or a code of ethics, which constituted a very definite political ideology that affected the public as well as private lives of citizens. Divergence from the ethical code meant corruption, perhaps a more forceful element in the republican thought than the idealism of virtuousness. This moral code required all citizens to own land in order for them to have tangible responsibility towards the polity. Moreover, the relationships among the citizenry in general and more importantly the relationship between the 'Many' and the 'Few' had been idealized. For the former relationship simple equality was of the uttermost importance. The dynamics that shaped the latter relationship were based on qualitative equality; this meant a deferential relationship, in which the 'Many' would actively participate as the legislative body actively approving or disapproving the notions decided by the Few.

From Florence onwards, history of republicanism had been a history of experimentation. For our purposes, the 'experiment' as it happened in England is

important. For after the establishment of the first colonies, as I have tried to outline above, the succeeding waves of Englishmen came across the Atlantic carrying the contemporary sentiments of the British political discourses.

A much too succinct history of the British experiment consisted of a commonwealth that had been first introduced in England between 1649 and 1653 proceeding the fall of the last Stuart king James I. The Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell after the dissolution of the parliament followed the brief period of parliamentary regime and illustrated the vulnerability of republicanism, shaping the further course of its formulation.

Given the presence of a traditional form of governmental system there, the British version of republican theory took the form of the bicameral houses of representatives and the king as the executive element. In this system, the House of Commons was associated with the democratic element; House of Lords with the aristocratic, and the king with the natural monarchical authority. At the heart of the British problem, on the other hand, laid the 'quarrel with the ancients.'[67] The incompatibility of modern realities with the ancient principles was caused by the ever increasing activity of commerce and the imperial aspirations.

Republicanism's relationship with commerce was, at the surface, insurmountable. And indeed in the classical version of the thought it would remain this way. Since the basic virtue of every republican citizen was ensured by his owning a piece of land, liquidation of this 'real' commodity into "coin or credit" led to a situation for the citizens in which "…the foundations of personality themselves appeared imaginary or at best consensual."[68] The implications of this analysis are even more fundamentally challenging to the republican thought. The landed man, ran the argument was the "…successor to the master of the classical *oikos*," a tradition in which this

[67] Bernard Bailyn, Robert Dallek, David Brion Davis, David Herbert Donald, John L. Thomas, Gordon S. Wood, "*The Great Republic: A History of the American People*," 129 (Chapter by Bernard Bailyn)
[68] J.G.A. Pocock, "*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,"* 464

landed man was permitted the leisure and autonomy necessary to consider what was good for him and the public. The man, who engaged in trade, on the other hand "…could discern only particular values – that of the commodity which was his, that of the commodity for which he exchanged it. His activity did not oblige or even permit him to contemplate the universal good as he acted upon it, and he consequently continued to lack classical rationality. It followed that he was not a conscious master of himself (…)"[69]

Another moral basis for the citizenship condition that defined the citizen according to ownership of land was to avoid the formation of a patron-client relationship, which would lead to the loss of the personal virtue of the citizen by subscribing his will to another. "The individual could exist," continues Pocock, "only at the fluctuating value imposed upon him by his fellows, and these evaluations, though constant and public, were too irrationally performed to be seen as acts of political decision or virtue."[70]

As Plato had Socrates warn his audience, luxury introduced corruption in the substantial form into the society.[71] The classical republican avoidance of excessive commerce was also shaped from their fear of corruptive elements of luxury. The classical texts were full of warnings against this, and the Renaissance tradition had its share of axioms against it.[72] The British republicans too had been self-conscious about their times and about luxury and wrote about the harms that luxury was bound to bring about.[73]

The way the English republicanism had viewed the serious incompatibilities such as these was a deliberate shift in the paradigm in their perception of parliamentary

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[69] Ibid. 465
[70] Ibid. 465
[71] Plato, Book IV, 422 A
[72] J.G.A. Pocock, "*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,"* pp. 135-137
[73] Ibid., 430-431, especially 492-493.; for the concern for luxury in the colonies also see Robert E. Shalhope, "*Toward a Republican Synthesis,*" in "*The William and Mary Quarterly*," 3rd Ser., Vol. 29, No.1 (1972)

monarchy. What had been identified by historians as the "Court" ideology was a series of observations which concluded that "… men were guided by interest and passion, that factions and parties were necessary rather than illegitimate, and that government must be carried on by a sovereign power, ultimately unchecked but capable of subdivision into self-balancing powers, which ruled men partly by direct authority, partly by appeal to those passions, and partly by conversion of those passions into perception of a common interest."[74]

The opposing ideology in the British system had been amply called the "Country" ideology, which was common among the nonconformists and republicans in the British political habitat. Among these can be counted a number of influential English theorists of republicanism including Algeron Sydney, James Harrington and John Milton. According to Gordon S. Wood, even onto the Glorious Revolution, during which the institution of monarchy was once again placed on firmer grounds, it was through the discourse of republicanism that the "British opposition writers invoked to judge the ragged world of eighteenth-century politics."[75] To people and authors of this persuasion Bernard Bailyn gives the most credit for shaping the political ideology of the American Revolution.[76]

Perhaps the most important and relevant one the European 'authorities' for the purposes of the revolutionary generation had been Baron de Montesquieu. Edwin A. Miles likens the significance of the French Philosophè's republicanism to the impact of Machiavelli on the English radical thinkers like James Harrington and Algeron Sydney. The appropriation of republicanism, an exclusively city-based political ideology, to a large and expanding nation had been found immensely relevant and practical for the colonists.[77]

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[74] Ibid. 424.
[75] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 103
[76] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution,"* 34
[77] Edwin A. Miles, "*The Young American Nation and the Classics*," in "*Journal of the History of Ideas*," Vol. 35, No. 2, (1974)

Pocock emphasizes the difference between the model conditions for classical republicanism in the New World as opposed to the difficulties caused by the sheer inertia of the Old. He argues that the latter had to endure an uneasy coexistence between the executive and representative branches, which brought about the necessity of "some measure of patronage." On the other hand, in America the 'Country' ideology could exist without a 'Court,' and it did not have to clash "…face to face with a modern government as a force [it] must and could find means of living with."[78]

2.5 The First Americans

The interplay between the inertia of the customary conditions and the dynamism of the novel ideas had helped shape every state over the course of the centuries, determining its ultimate political habitat. Hans Kohn observes that "Old Europe could not live up to the exalted hopes of the age." As a consequence of this discrepancy between the reality and the novel idea, "it found itself in a deep moral crisis and began to believe in its own decay;" while Americans were rejuvenated by the experience.[79] Given the particular character of the colonists, the conditions of their place of origin, and the conditions they were to implement in their new settlements, this interplay led to different results. "In Europe the philosophes fought against the vested interests … in America they *became* the vested interest;" Peter Gay affirms.[80] As Greenfeld observes, "in every case but British settlement in America, [the idea of the nation] was imported into social environments whose reality stood in flagrant contradiction to it. In the uneven battle between the nascent principle and long-established ways of life, it was the principle that had to adjust. But in America, to begin with, there was almost no social reality, other than the one the settlers brought with them in their own minds."[81]

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[78] J.G.A. Pocock, "*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,"* 509
[79] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 10
[80] Peter Gay, "*Enlightenment Thought and the American Revolution,*" in "*The Role of Ideology in the American Revolution*" ed. John R. Howe, jr., 45b
[81] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity,*" 402

One of the first instances one can observe the colonists taking advantage of these conditions is in the act of first colonial self-government agreement. Mayflower Compact, which was written out of the need of establishing a political organization in the newly colonized Virginia, was the first of such acts. Forty-one of the adult male passengers of the famous cargo vessel Mayflower agreed upon and underwrote the Compact. It was an agreement made in democratic spirit granting equality to the co-signers. It was created to ensure the colonists' right "to enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the *general good of the Colony*, unto which [they] promise[d] all due submission and obedience."[82]

The utterance of the King's name in the beginning and the end of this document does not strike one as anything more than an act of conforming to the necessary formalities in such agreements. Nothing else in the document suggests that the colonies are intending to prosecute by any law other than their own making.

Even this ceremonial lip service to the King would be dropped not twenty years later in 1639 with the formation of Fundamental Orders of Connecticut. Dissatisfied with the laws of Massachusetts Bay Colony, the colonists settled in the Connecticut Valley. With this charter, the towns of Hartford, Windsor and Wethersfield "proclaimed [their] independence [as a] colony and ignored the authority of King Charles I of England."[83] Alluding not to the King, but to the 'divine providence' the "pleasure" and the "word" of God, the colonists aimed to "maintain the peace and union," in "an orderly and decent government established according to God, to order an dispose of the affairs of the people at all seasons as occasion shall require …" More important still was their proactive attitude towards bringing forth these ideal conditions by associating and conjoining themselves "…to be as one public state or commonwealth; and do, for [themselves] and [their] successors and such as shall be adjoined to [them] at any time hereafter enter into combination and confederation

[82] "*The Mayflower Compact*," from "*Documentary History of the United States*," 2 (my emphasis)
[83] "*Documentary History of the United States*," 4

together, to maintain and preserve the liberty and purity of the gospel of [the] Lord Jesus …"[84]

This was one of the first instances, and surely not the last, when settlers of the new colonies dissatisfied with their present circumstances moved further away from their initial settlements on the Atlantic coast to found new states more accommodating for their liberties. But more important still, as evidenced by this declaration, was their tenacious desire to dictate their own realities according what they perceived to be the ideal conditions.

This sense of conscious self-determination would be carried over all the way to the revolutionary period. One hundred and fifty years after the Mayflower Compact, a confident John Adams would ask,

> How few of the human race have ever enjoyed an opportunity of making an election of government, more than of air, soil, or climate, for themselves or their children! When, before the present epoch, had three millions of people full power and a fair opportunity to form and establish the wisest and happiest government that human wisdom can contrive?[85]

A jubilant Alexander Hamilton would celebrate the part played by "reflection and choice" in shaping the constitution of the American States, rather than the limiting factors of "accident and force."[86]

If a comprehensive framework of political ideas in the American Revolution can be established, it will contain all of these elements of English constitution, its history as well as Enlightenment abstractions and classical analogies. It is nevertheless not easily possible to identify each individual formative influence in the American revolutionary thought, as its leaders had "published, republished, read, cited, and even plagiarized" in

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[84] "*The Constitution of the Fundamental Orders*," from "*Documentary History of the United States*," 5
[85] John Adams, "*Thoughts on Government*," in *Charles Francis Adams ed. "Works of John Adams,*" Vol. 4, 200
[86] Alexander Hamilton, "*Federalist No. 1*" from www.gutenberg.org ebook #1404

order to present their case for a 'unique identity.' Gordon S. Wood's summary is agreeable as can be: "By drawing on the evidence of antiquity and their own English past as transmitted to them through the radical Whig tradition the colonists sought to formulate a science of politics and of history that would explain what was happening to England and to themselves."[87]

They would iron out the deficiencies of these ideas and try to perfect the new political language through which these ideas are discussed. The American colonists would also formulate an American brand of historical outlook. This outlook, in turn, would facilitate new lessons and new understanding of their relationship with England. According to Gordon S. Wood history "became a kind of laboratory in which autopsies of the dead republics would lead to a science of social sickness and health matching the science of the natural world."[88] The ancient republics, according to Stanley M. Burstein, were primarily valuable as laboratory specimens to be analyzed and dissected in the best tradition of enlightenment historiography in order to determine the problems that had to be faced and overcome in establishing a federal republic.[89]

They would revise their identity in relation to the Crown and the reciprocal bond of duties and rights. They would grow ever more confident of their language, as they became more confident with their education and self-worth. Their experience in the New World, according to Peter Gay, provided the Americans with a memory of practice analogous to how a laboratory serves for a physicist. The New World offered a laboratory, in which all this could be done without the traditional pressures of the Old. All these efforts and transformations have eventually led to the emergence of such notions as "natural rights, freedom to think and speak, justice for all, and even the 'experimental' testing of all theories in the laboratory of practical experience." These

[87] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 17
[88] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 52
[89] Stanley M. Burstein, "*The Classics and American Republic*," in "*The History Teacher*," Vol. 30, No. 1 (Nov., 1996)

notions "became not just the slogans of revolutionary dissent but all the first principles of American citizenship."[90]

[90] D. H. Meyer, "*The Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*," "*American Quarterly*," Vol. 28, No. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (Summer 1976)

Chapter 3

Education of the 'Founding Fathers'

The final formative factor to be discussed in the present work is the influence of the Revolutionary Leaders' education on the American Identity. The affect of this education clearly show on the intellectual makeup of the revolutionary generation, especially in their continued preoccupation with the classics.

This topic, however, must be studied as a special case because of the deliberate way in which the said education had been shaped. The schools in existence up to the revolutionary crisis, and the institutions of higher learning that had been founded in the colonies have all been formed with a particular idea in mind; introducing and cultivating civilization on its new frontier.

Any effort to formulate a specific way of education is clearly an endeavor of constructing the identity of future generations; and in a case such as the Revolutionary Americans', there is articulated intent to that effect. The argument for the constructive influence of classics is that the latter have helped shape the ideological composition of the revolutionary generation through the determined introduction of classical learning in educational agendas of the early colonies.

It is helpful to remember that the colonists had built 'from scratch' whatever places of education they chose to have. Following the act of setting up colonies in a conscious attempt to found new and better societies, this process of preparing the future generations in the image of their choosing is a natural development. That is not to say that the colonists had immediately established a centralized and structured education system; the schools, like the colonies, came into existence under different circumstances and with different intentions.

In their virtually complete freedom from an enforced tradition of education, the colonists had made the luxury of making some deliberate choices on the subjects to be offered in their schools, that is to say compliance to or rejection of the customary education in England in America must be acknowledged as a matter of choice. Gordon S. Wood finds that the founders of the emerging American nation were aware of their responsibility "for what they thought and believed and for what would be thought and believed in the future by those they often called the 'millions unborn.'"[91] It is therefore important to note that after the settlements had secured their means of survival and their religious necessities they had turned to the classics for education.

3.1 Constructive Features of Education: Replicating Civilization

Cotton Mather, perhaps the most prolific writer of the early colonial period, had drawn the attention of his audience towards their heritage:

> When the Reformation began in Europe an hundred and fourscore years ago, to Erect Schools everywhere was one principal concern of the Glorious and Heroic Reformers; and it was a common thing even for Little Villages of Twenty or Thirty Families, in the midst of all their Charges, and their Dangers, to maintain one of them.

Moreover, the colonists are charged with the duty of upholding their *raison d'etre* by maintaining the "Design of pursuing that Holy Reformation," on which their colonies had been planted. More interestingly, Mather's predominantly religious and political call for founding and maintaining educational facilities turns towards the ancients for comparison; "Would we Read," he exclaims, "in the ancient Histories, how zealous the more discreet Pagans were to maintain Schools among them; it might put us Christians to the Blush."[92]

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[91] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 190

[92] Cotton Mather, "*The Education of Children;*" Mather's text resumes with a detailed programme for a beneficial educational system; similarly in his "*A Bill for More General Diffusion of Knowledge*" Jefferson lays out a precise educational programme and doctrine.

Evidently, such calls were not gone unheeded by the administrations or the populace. In 1775, Samuel Adams would celebrate the establishment of such places of learning:

> Our Ancestors in the most early Times laid an excellent Foundation for the security of Liberty by setting up in a few years after their Arrival a publick Seminary of Learning; and by their Laws they obliged every Town consisting of a certain Number of Families to keep and maintain a Grammar School.[93]

"History shows," according to Richard M. Gummere, "that the buckskin-clad explorer or the tree-ringing farmer, after establishing himself in his new surrounding, turned back eastward for the materials of his education." This trend would continue as the settlements pushed further into the continent, where in Kentucky one of the first orders of business for the new settlement of Lexington was to obtain the 'standard classical authors.'[94] "For the early Americans," Meyer Reinhold holds, "the study of Greek and Latin literature was eminently practical as preparation for intelligent living."[95]

In accordance with the revolutionary sentiments of the seventeenth century, and the scientific enthusiasm of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, the colonists' inherited and exhibited "Puritan and Quaker insistence on the utilitarian value of knowledge," and the "emphasis on science and the social function of knowledge promoted by Bacon, Locke and the Royal Society" helped bolster the infusion of the classics.[96]

The introduction of the classical languages and histories in the private schools and ultimately into libraries and the public sphere was a result of this new scientific

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[93] Samuel Adams, "*Letter to James Warren*," Nov. 4 1775, from "*The Writings of Samuel Adams Vol. 3,*" 235
[94] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," 2
[95] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 32
[96] Ibid.

search for all things practical. Propelled by the Baconian quest for 'useful knowledge' history quickly became a part of the new scientific curiosity.

Meyer Reinhold demonstrates this enthusiasm in the petition of the citizens of New Amsterdam colony to instruct their children "in the most useful languages, the chief of which is Latin tongue."[97] For this purpose the colonists had also called for the foundation of libraries. The author also finds an "evolving focus of interest" in the collections of these libraries. Whereas the earlier collections had consisted of theological texts, the number of secular books had been on the rise during the mid-century.[98]

Apart from schools and libraries the popularity of the classics is also demonstrable in the personal records of the colonists. The almanacs that first began to appear in New England feature frequent allusions to the classical personae and draw their own conclusions from their stories. Ancient history was included along with works of astronomy by Kepler, Galileo and Copernicus. The editors of such almanacs, many of which Harvard graduates relayed the teachings and narratives of Ovid, Cato, Virgil, Cicero and Seneca.[99]

On the history of education in the colonies, Meyer Reinhold finds that by mid-eighteenth century "the original theological and religious focus in the study of the classics" had given way to a more secular focus.[100] This process is evidenced in the shifting interests in the classics; fascination for instance with Aristotle, had shifted from his metaphysical works to the political ones.[101]

The first institutions of higher learning in the colonies were established in Massachusetts Bay Colony, where as many as 130 graduates of Cambridge and Oxford

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[97] Daniel J. Pratt, "*Annals of Public Education in the State of New York, from 1626-1746*," quoted in Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 52
[98] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," pp. 28 - 30
[99] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," pp. 5-6
[100] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," pg. 26, also see Gummere pp. 3-4
[101] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," 3

had migrated by 1650. The Boston Latin School was founded in 1635, shortly followed by Harvard University in 1636. In late 18th century there were a total of nine colleges in the colonies.[102]

3.2 Formative Features of Education: Virgilian Farmers

Reinhold holds the classical teaching in America responsible for the emergence of an "unparalleled concentration of political giants in world history;" and that the classical education helped bring about this extraordinary feat through the practical value placed upon them.[103] Even though this proclamation is a little to enthusiastic for our purposes, it nevertheless seems to be the case that a group of revolutionaries, who were the recipients of an education largely consisting of the classical texts, would put their knowledge to use during their struggle for independence and national construction.

One of these *giants*, Thomas Jefferson, had penned the self-evaluation of his schooling in his memoirs. He reminisces on his elementary education at the English school, to which he attended from the age of five to nine; and from then on to a Latin school where he was taught the "rudiments of Latin and Greek languages," as well as French. At the death of his father, Jefferson continued on with the Reverend Maury,[104] whom he calls "a correct classical scholar." In the spring of 1760, he "went to William and Mary college where [he] continued two years." It was my great good fortune," recollects Jefferson, "and what probably fixed the destinies of my life …"[105]

Thomas Jefferson's experience of education is typical among the 'Founding Fathers,' many of whom had begun their classical training by the age of eight "under

[102] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 26
[103] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 24
[104] "A descendant of French Huguenots who settled in Virginia. Attended William and Mary College. Ordained as Anglican Priest in 1741. Acted as the rector of a church in Louisa County," in John Mack Faragher, "*The Encyclopedia of Colonial and Revolutionary America*," 263; Cited as one of the "schoolmasters of great skill" by Carl J. Richard on "*The Founders and the Classics*," 18
[105] Thomas Jefferson, January 6 1821, in Thomas Jefferson Randolph ed "*Memoir, Correspondence, And Miscellanies, From The Papers Of Thomas Jefferson*," Vol. 1, 1

the direction of the public grammar schoolmasters or private tutors." This education was geared towards preparing the students for the entrance exams common to all colleges. The university entrance requirements had consisted of a basic knowledge of the classical languages, where "Colleges were interested in a candidate's ability to read Latin and Greek and little else."[106] This was not altogether different from the conditions in Europe, as the curricula of American colleges were in essence derivatives of the English educational system. The students were expected to be confident with the, for instance, texts of "Herodotus, Xenophon, Plutarch, Livy, Sallust, Quintus Curtius, and Cornelius Nepos."[107]

The 'Founders,' were subjected to the influences of the classical antiquity through their university education, as well as the popular political literature of the Radical Whigs in England. As Meyer Reinhold puts it, "the classics, and antiquity in general, reached Americans through the Renaissance and British filters;" along with the contemporary "translations of the classics, and by the books on ancient history and antiquities." Moreover their use of these sources varied with the "contemporary contexts and evolving climates of early America."[108] This presents a difficulty in establishing the direct source of this classical influence, but this mixed character of the source hardly has any bearing upon the ultimate affects of the classics.

These leaders of the American Revolution had maintained and often demonstrated the influences of their classical education throughout their political careers. Their steadfast devotion to the historians, politicians and constitutions of Classical Antiquity can be evidenced in their historical outlooks, their political philosophy and sometimes even in their portrayal of themselves.

Carl J. Richard maintains that "the classics exerted a formative influence upon the founders." The author finds that in their education in classical texts the 'Founders' were exposed to the "mixed government theory" which would be used as "the principal

[106] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 19
[107] Ibid., 21
[108] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 19

basis for the U.S. Constitution." More importantly still the classics "provided the founders with a sense of identity and purpose." From an early age, in their capacity as "intellectual tools," the classics had allowed the founders to analyze their problems and formulate remedial actions.[109] What Carl J. Richard calls as the "intellectual tools," we had been referring to as a *language* in this narrative of nationalism.

It is not enough to note the extent to which the revolutionary generation had been subjected to the classics; it is also possible to observe how they had appreciated and experienced these authors. Carl J. Richard remarks upon the role of secret societies in "classical conditioning" of the university students. Among these secrete societies were Yale's The Lionian Society and The Brothers of Unity, College of New Jersey's American Whig Society and Cliosophic Society and Harvard's Speaking Club. According to Richard, these societies had "formulated and taught their own curricula, awarded their own diplomas, operated their own libraries, established and enforced their own codes of conduct, and set the *ideological tone* for the student body." The classical conditioning in the secret societies was further elaborated by the names of historical figures given to each initiate.[110]

Edwin A. Miles finds that the curricula of the universities and the general popularity of the classical texts had "contributed to the mastery of rhetoric by such men as John Dickinson, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams." Not only the classics were useful for their practical rhetorical value, but they had also helped instill "the heroic virtues of classical antiquity" in Founders' public personae. Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, had been especially invaluable.[111] This was a type of role-playing to some extent, which helped bolster the popularities and legitimization of the leaders.

'Commonplace books,' books of memorabilia, that were kept by the majority of the revolutionaries offer another source of insight into the infiltration of the classics.

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[109] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 7
[110] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 23 (my emphasis)
[111] Edwin A. Miles, "*The Young American Nation and the Classical World*," in Journal of History of Ideas, Vol. 35, No.2 (1972)

These *scrapbooks* were kept by most of the famous personae of the revolution, most noteworthy of which were those of Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton. These commonplace books too accommodated a lavish amount of classical allusions, quotations and translations.[112]

In the end, the totality of its political, social and intellectual experiences would render America a school, in the eyes of its creators. As Jefferson would reminds George Wythe that "If any body thinks, that kings, nobles, or priests are good conservators of the public happiness, send him here. It is the best school in the universe to cure him of that folly."[113]

3.3 Education of the Future Generations:

The enterprise of molding the future generations did not come to a close with the early colonial period. The Republican preoccupation with education would revitalize the importance of classics shortly after the Revolution. The republican insistence on the virtuous character of its citizens entails a phenomenal devotion towards a carefully tailored education system.

Consider the following passage by Thomas Jefferson:

> (…) experience hath shewn, that even under the best forms [of government], those entrusted with power have, in time, and by slow operations, perverted it into tyranny; and it is believed that the most effectual means of preventing this would be, to illuminate, as far as practicable, the minds of the people at large, and more especially to give them knowledge of those facts, which history exhibiteth, that, possessed thereby of the experience of other ages and countries, they may be enabled to know ambition under all its shapes, and prompt to exert their natural powers to defeat its purposes.[114]

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[112] Ibid. pp. 24-27
[113] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to George Wythe*" Aug. 13 1786, in Thomas Jefferson Randolph ed "*Memoir, Correspondence, And Miscellanies, From The Papers Of Thomas Jefferson*," Vol. 2
[114] Thomas Jefferson, "*A Bill for More General Diffusion of Knowledge*" provided by Jim Allison as it appears on the website: http://candst.tripod.com/jefflaw1.htm

According to Jefferson, the proposed schools should teach not only common elementary subjects such as "reading, writing, and common arithmetick" but also "Graecian, Roman, English, and American history." This speech reflects upon the entire Republican tradition of acquainting the citizens with history and classics, and its attention to a proper system of bringing about this education. Republicanism, it can be generalized, looks to a *republicanized* version of history for the examples of virtue and corruption, and it is in history that classical republicanism finds its 'golden age.'

Although the classics were almost always acknowledged "in diluted form," Gummere notes, they were "nonetheless effective."[115] This effectiveness on the ideas, styles and language of the revolutionary generation has been demonstrated in the historiography of this subject in abundance. Hardly anything needs to be further remarked on these influences on the personal behaviors and political models that the founders have assumed.

Education was a factor that helped shape the characters that led the Revolution and the ensuing Republic, and at the same time it was conscientiously brought to the New World to raise a generation endowed with such characters. According to Gordon S. Wood "the revolutionaries' preoccupation with education," was caused by, "not just their interest in formal schooling but their concern with a variety of means to create new attitudes and to remake their culture. These comprised everything from the histories they wrote and the advice manuals they read to the icons they created."[116] Indeed, Carl J. Richard finds that "the founders' classical conditioning was so successful that most learned to relish the classics as a form of entertainment and to consider the ancients wise old friends."[117]

[115] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," 6
[116] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," pp. 190 - 191
[117] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 12

Chapter 4

A Theoretical Model of Constructions

The discussion of constructions of a national identity would benefit from a preceding conceptual outline. For unlike formations, which are not dissimilar to the observations made in any historical narrative, constructions are the subject matter of nationalism studies. Previously in the present study, we have tried to establish the rise of nationalism in the case of England.[118] This too had been a relatively straightforward exercise in identifying the causes and effects of the new nationalist ideology. In the case of American identity construction, however, the building blocks are obviously made out of more abstract materiel, which in turn warrant separate analyses. In order to fully appreciate the intricacies of the 'American design,' I will attempt to establish a workable conceptual outline.

There are several different, and equally useful, definitions of nationalism. Anthony D. Smith, for instance defines nationalism as "an ideological movement that seeks to attain and maintain the autonomy, unity and identity of a human population, some of whose members deem it to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'."[119] For Benedict Anderson, on the other hand "it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherent and limited and sovereign."[120] On the other hand, perhaps the *loosest* and therefore most practical definition of a nation is forwarded by Eric J. Hobsbawm as "any sufficiently large body of people whose members regard themselves as members of a nation."[121]

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[118] See Ch. 1
[119] Anthony D. Smith, "*Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History*;" 25
[120] Benedict Anderson, "*Imagined Communities*," 15
[121] E. J. Hobsbawm, "*Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*," 8

None of the commentators above have acknowledged nations independent of the nationalists; nor do their definitions ignore these agents of change. Thus, none of the accepted definitions regard nations anything other than the inventions of the eighteenth century. Hobsbawm's succinct remark emphasizes this point further: "(…) nationalism comes before nations. Nations do not make states and nationalisms but the other way around."[122]

In case of American Colonies, these agents of change have been referred to as "revolutionary leaders" in the present work; and there had been unmistakably insinuated to be an *intelligentsia.* But the most affectionately, and most significantly, they have been called the "Founding Fathers" by generations of American scholars.

American Revolution is rarely acknowledged as a nationalist struggle against an alien authority; and with good reason. It is not easily compatible with the model of comparative nationalist struggles that have been witnessed in Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One may observe that the typical discussion of the United States as a nation begins after the American Civil War. "To see the conflict as an attempt of a colonized nation, conscious of its unity and uniqueness," Liah Greenfeld observes, "to assert its sovereignty vis-à-vis a foreign power that had usurped it could not be more mistaken."[123] But it would not be proper to altogether disregard the tenets of nationalism, or proto-nationalism, in this struggle. For, notwithstanding the prevalent independent nature of the colonies immediately after the revolution – a union begun by necessity as Greenfeld calls it – all the ingredients of a nationalist movement can be observed before and during the struggle itself.

The American independence movement is easily acceptable as a nationalist movement for its agents did seek to form a unity and attain autonomy. In addition they did portray the colonists as a potential nation. Throughout the revolution there is little to contest that the citizens of thirteen colonies have presented themselves as a members

[122] E. J. Hobsbawm, "*Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*," 8
[123]Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*," 412

of a nation; and therefore it also conforms to Hobsbawm's criteria. Benedict Anderson's definition does not wholly correspond to the 'Founding Fathers,' who have often imagined their community to be a nonexclusive and potentially unlimited body of people.

In the American case, there is a twofold significance of Anderson's condition of "limited membership" for the definition of a nation. The first one is the necessity of acknowledging and studying American nationalism as a special case, in which the membership to the American nation is promoted by its 'Founders' as universal. The second significance lays in Liah Greenfeld's relativistic description, according to which nationalism is "a phenomenon whose nature (…) is determined (…) by a certain organizing principle which makes these elements into a unity and imparts to them a special significance."[124] The preconditions of the peoples, according to Greenfeld, determine the characteristics of the type of nationalisms they were to produce. Furthermore, Greenfeld holds that "*nationalism is not necessarily a form of particularism;* (…) a nation coextensive with humanity is in no way a contradiction in terms."[125] The American experience illustrates Greenfeld's point to its fullest extent, and draws attention to the dynamics which had brought about this non-particularistic nationalism of Americans.

Anthony D. Smith's definition perhaps is the one on which most leeway could be made; particularly with regards to the part, where the author identifies nationalism to be an "ideological movement." We require a tangible definition of 'ideology' in order to fully appreciate the consequences of Smith's definition. Gerard Delanty's definition of ideology is useful for these purposes; according to the latter ideology is "an all-embracing and comprehensive system of thought a programme for the future and a political doctrine for the mobilization of the masses." The author, moreover further

[124] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*," (author's italics)
[125] Ibid.

elaborates this definition with the following: "When a particular definition of reality comes attached to a concrete power interest, it may be called an ideology."[126]

Anthony D. Smith's definition, conceptualized as such, signifies the conscientious attitude of the ideologues in presenting the conditions of their colonies through the filters of their 'system of thought' and 'political programme' in order to motivate and mobilize their fellow colonists as a unified American front.

There are other tenets of nationalism that need to be articulated before these dynamics can be further illuminated. Most of the major works on nationalism make the distinction between two periods or two stages of nationalism. This dichotomy is essential for understanding the nuances of the varying experiences and characteristics of nationalism. A simplified account of these periods or stages can be put as the rise of the idea of national sovereignty in France (and arguably in America), and the ripple effects of reactionary nationalisms spawned by the emergence of the former.

Liah Greenfeld's analysis points to the relationship between nationalism and democracy. According to Greenfeld, both concepts are based on the idea of locating the "sovereignty within the people and the recognition of the fundamental equality among its various strata; (…) nationalism was the form in which democracy appeared in the world." The transformation of the idea into a particularistic connotation occurred at the point where the "emphasis in the idea of the nation moved from the sovereign character to the uniqueness of the people." [127]

Anthony D. Smith's account of 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalisms is another account of this differentiation of nationalisms. He calls attention to the often criticized dichotomy of Hans Kohn in which the latter had identified the two different nationalisms of West and East. Whereas the Western nationalism had been endowed with all the normative benefits of civilization, the Eastern practice had been "based on a

[126] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe*," 5; and for the second part of the definition Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann, "*Social Construction of Reality*" (1984)
[127] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*," 10

belief in common culture and ethnic origins," and not on the democratic ideals of national sovereignty. The product of such a position had led to the understanding of the nation "as an organic, seamless whole, transcending the individual members, and stamping them from birth with an indelible national character." Smith differentiates the 'civic,' or 'voluntaristic,' type of nationalism as a culture where individuals have some latitude, for although they must belong to one or the other they can choose the nation they wish to belong.[128]

This attitude towards a nonexclusive citizenship, based on choice, may be among the reasons for the particular identity around which the Founders have sought to unify the populace into a cohesive body; motivated not by ethnicity but by a worthy identity. Smith finds that although the majority of the colonists had been of British descent, the successive waves of emigration as well as slavery and conquest of Native Americans have placed America on the path to becoming a "truly polyethnic and plural nation;" in the 20th century. Moreover, Smith holds that this plurality had been cohered into this civic and plural nation through a "secular religion" consisting of common language laws and shared political symbols.[129]

With Ernest Gellner, E. J. Hobsbawm underlines "the element of artefact, invention and social engineering which enters into the making of nations."[130] This effort of inventing or engineering a national identity requires the services of charismatic leaders as well as an indoctrinated perception of "history, archeology, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and folklore."[131]

Anthony D. Smith touches upon this problematic of nationalism when he asserts that:

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[128] Anthony D. Smith, "*Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History*;" 40; see also Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*," 11
[129] Anthony D. Smith, "*Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History*;" 41
[130] E. J. Hobsbawm, "*Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*," 10
[131] Anthony D. Smith, "*Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History*;" 28

> The core doctrine of nationalism offers only a broad and abstract framework; it has to be filled out by all kinds of secondary concepts and particular notions (…) That is why nationalism often inhabits other ideologies and belief-systems, and channels their ideals and policies to nationalist ends.[132]

This rings true in the case of America, whose nationalism needed the most inventive ideas to fill those needs. Since their struggle took on the form of an independence movement and not a revolt to replace or reform their government, it can be said that the Americans needed a creative drive towards proclaiming themselves a different people. In turn, this drive brought about a hardship caused by a perceived lack of legitimate reasons for a separate identity. "People in Europe," according to Hans Kohn, "proclaimed their independence by referring to their old and different traditions of civilization." The typical nationalistic movement was sparked by the works of *intelligentsias*, which produced all the 'scientific' background for the legitimacy of their people over the particular dominions. No such appeal for their separate 'civilization, and therefore a separate dominion, could be put forward by the Anglo-Americans.

The difficulty of Americans in making a convincing case for their independence did not end there. According to Miroslav Hroch, "in the forefront of the demands [of national revival] was the call for a national language." Moreover, Hroch classifies language as a particularly important tool of nationalists, which became part of "an ideological mission and acquired a purpose besides that of a simple language communication. It became the symbol of national identity and cultural independence and assumed a new, supralanguage and supracommunicative function."[133] Devoid of so essential a factor for their independence, their case for independence had to be based all the more heavily on the weight of their ideas.

Hans Kohn tentatively asks "what was the idea," which captured the imagination of the colonists and sparked a keen sense of belonging to America. In

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[132] Anthony D. Smith, "*Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History*;" 24
[133] Miroslav Hroch. "*Language and National Identity*," in Richard L. Rudolph and David F. Good ed. "*Nationalism and Empire: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Soviet Union,"* pp. 66 - 67

pointing out that the Constitution of the United States is in fact the earliest of its kind that is still in effect, Kohn signifies that this document owed its existence and longevity to the same source of ideas that had created and maintained the United States. From the answers he proposes one is convinced of the complexity of the problem. Kohn's answer can be summarized loosely as 'liberty.'[134] To be more precise, Hans Kohn holds that it was the tradition of liberty that the colonists had inherited from their English ancestors.

Liah Greenfeld, too, finds the drive for independence to be "inherent in the nature of the English nationalism which, furthermore, rendered it legitimate." Moreover the English population had maintained two different types of nationalism, which were sometimes in conflict. Whereas some professed to a "concrete and materialistic, for its referent was a concrete reality, materialized in a territory, way of life and specific political institutions;" others held fast to the 'original' idealistic and abstract "national values."[135] Thus, Greenfeld presents the motivation for the Founders not to be the English nationalism but the devotion to the 'English values.'

This answer, however, does not reflect the whole range of ideological tools that the 'Founders' had used in their effort to bring about a nation. For, if we are to admit these 'English values' to be the sole motivating factor for the drive for independence, we would hope to find the references to the 17th and 18th century radicals dominating all discussions. Instead what we find in the discussions is diversity in references; so much so that no ancient or mythical past – be that of Gothic, Germanic, Roman, Greek, Angle, Saxon or Norman - is left unturned or unused.

We may only hypothesize for this abundance of references, for a self-conscious account detailing the nationalist intentions of an intelligentsia rarely comes by. Since they had no 'ancient and great civilization' of their own, and that they had in fact shared the same language and culture with their 'oppressors,' they had to be inventive. According to Smith, "collective appropriation of antiquity, and especially of shared

[134] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 9
[135] Liah Greenfeld, "*Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*," 412

memories of the *golden age*[136], contributes significantly to the formation of nations." The significance can be observed in all examples of national 'revivals' throughout the world; none of them has failed to produce its national – and necessarily novel and unique – history. The greater, the more glorious, that antiquity appears," Smith continues, "the easier it becomes to mobilize the people around a common culture."[137]

In this sense, following Benedict Anderson's account of necessary ingredients for a community, history takes the place of 'shared memories;' and in the case of an official national history the need for 'face-to-face contact' is substituted for a direct exposure to the identical past. In the service of nationalists, an original and accessible history provides the population with common and artificial memories. The members of the same nation need not know each other by name or sight, if they are made to 'know' that they and their ancestors had shared the same difficulties and are 'destined' for the same glories.

"The concept of nation," Anthony D. Smith adds, "cannot be sustained without a suitable past and a believable future." The 'Founders,' or any other *intelligentsia* aspiring to form a nation, needs to rediscover and appropriate "a worthy and distinctive past" in order to create a convincing and legitimate representation of their nation. It is not possible, before these notions are fully articulated, to expect a people to make sacrifices for the *patrie*.[138]

The importance of history for the nationalists can hardly be overstated. For, the 'character' of the nation depends mostly on a convincing account of unique history. According to Rousseau, "The first rule," for nationalists is to find his nation's character; "if it lacks one, [he] must start by *endowing* it with one."[139]

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[136] I will return to this concept of "appropriation of golden age" in the next chapter.
[137] Anthony D. Smith, "*The Antiquity of Nations*;" 213 (*my emphasis*)
[138] Anthony D. Smith, "*The Antiquity of Nations*;" 211
[139] Jean-Jacques Rousseau 1915, II: 319, *Projet Corse* quoted in Anthony D. Smith, "*Nationalism Theory, Ideology, History*;" 27 (my emphasis)

For the Americans, the act of declaring themselves as a separate nation had not been an effortless endeavor. They did not benefit from some of the essential characteristics of a separate nation proposed by the studies of nationalism; i.e. a separate language, a separate civilization, or for that matter a distinguishable history. It is my argument that the Founding Fathers had overcome their crisis of legitimacy partly by building their arguments on the notion not of a different and unique civilization but on the whole idea of civilization itself. They had been able to accomplish this through a complex process in which the European culture had come to be associated, and indeed equated with the whole concept of civilization. Therefore by drawing their legitimacy from this source of *universal* civilization, they could make up for all other deficiencies.

4.1 The Idea of Europe as an Identity

Gerard Delanty begins his treatise on European Identity with the following statement: "This book is about how every age reinvented the idea of Europe in the mirror of is own identity."[140] Launching from this idea of inventing an identity, the present chapter investigates how the Americans invented an identity for the purposes of legitimizing their independence in the 'Age of Revolutions."

The intersection between this chapter and Delanty's monograph is not solely on the methodology of investigating identities. According to the author's analysis, European identity as a concept had come to be equated with the idea of civilization. The present work aims to underline how the Americans have used the idea of civilization in their project of building an identity.

Gerard Delanty's analysis has underscored the notion that the European identity is the result of construction; the produce of an intellectual labor. And that it is a powerful, and indeed hegemonic, source of legitimization. It is my premise that this source of legitimization was widely used in the context of the American Revolution.

[140] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 1

And that the classics, more so than anything else, served to strengthen the arguments for the legitimization of 'American' as an identity.

The analysis starts by underlining this constructed nature of the European identity. "It is not possible," according to Delanty, "to see European history as the progressive embodiment of a great unifying idea since ideas are themselves products of history." On the other hand, the idea of Europe had been a subject matter of "the state tradition and elite cultures;" not infusing extensively into "the politics of civil society."[141] These arguments are not unfamiliar to a student of nationalist movement. Indeed, one can find in the narrative many similarities with the methodology of nationalists.

Delanty clarifies his position further, and thus making his approach to investigate European identity comparable with the methodology of investigating nationalisms:

> To speak of Europe as an invention is to stress the ways in which it has been constructed in a historical process; it is to emphasise that Europe is less the subject of history than its product and what we call Europe is, in fact, a historically fabricated reality of ever-changing forms and dynamics. Most of Europe is only retrospectively European and has been invented in the image of a distorted modernity. (…) Europe does not exist any more naturally than do nations.

The author draws attention to the *constructedness* of the idea of Europe; constructed purposefully to *strategic* ends.[142]

These strategic ends can be summed up as presenting a "regulative idea for identity-building processes (…) not unlike what Anderson has called an 'imaginary community' to describe the national ideal." However, Delanty notes that the 'idea of

[141] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 2
[142] Ibid., 3

Europe' should be considered to be an even higher degree of abstraction than the national ideal."[143]

The first instances of a uniform culture in Europe, appeared in the context of common interest in the Middle Ages. In antiquity there is no discernible influence of the idea of Europe and was hardly more meaningful then a designation given for the North and the West of Greece. The word and the geography it designates gained importance only with the rise of Islam in the seventh century. The Christendom's struggle against the Muslims of the East and South in Spain, forged an alliance which in turn created the armies of the Crusades and other military alliances. In fact one of the earliest instances where a 'westerner' identified the forces of Christians as 'Europeans' occurred in such a setting against a *people* clearly of a different origin. According to Victor Davis Hanson, "the word *Europenses* makes one of its first appearances in historical narrative as a generic noun for the Westerners."[144] A chronicler of the Battle of Tours, where the invading Muslim forces met the European resistance in 732 A.D., Isidore of Beja had identified the soldiers of Charles Martel's army as "men of Europe" and "Europeans."[145] As the fighting force was clearly an amalgam of different tribes and locales, the chronicler chose to identify them with the generally as such.

"With the opening of the western frontier in 1492,"and the final retreat of the Muslims from Europe in the same year with the Spanish *Reconquista*, "[Europe] evolved a cultural ethos which tended to attribute to its own structures of consciousness a universalistic dimension." From then on fueled by the spread of European arms, trade and religious influence across the globe, European modernity and European technological superiority had become the "agent of universality."[146]

The actual building of the European identity, according to Delanty, was initiated in the sixteenth century and later evolved in tandem with the Enlightenment. As is the

[143] Ibid., 4
[144] Victor Davis Hanson, "Carnage and Culture," 140
[145] Isidore of Beja's Chronicle from Online Medieval Sourcebook (http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/732tours.html)
[146] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 11

case with nationalisms, the actual construction had been through the efforts of educated elite. Therefore it was in the discourse of the intellectuals and 'political class' that it became an ideology.[147] Along with the Enlightenment, the idea of 'Western Civilization' had become applicable, or indeed came to mean equal to, a universal culture and civilization.

"The idea of Europe," Delanty denotes "is a creation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for it was these centuries that it entered into its own as a secularized version of Christendom which began to decline as a unifying narrative." Christianity, which had ceased to be a source of unified identity for Europe with the Reformation, was gradually replaced with the secular ideas brought about by the Renaissance and later by the Enlightenment. According to Delanty:

> The idea of Europe henceforth became the cultural model of the West and served as a unifying theme of modernity. (…) The new polarity was one of civilization versus nature: Europe versus the non-European world, which now covered 'New World' and signified the barbarity of uncivilized nature. The idea of Europe became increasingly focused on the idea of progress, which became synonymous with European modernity. This was above all an achievement of the enlightenment.[148]

Considering the similarities between a nationalist project, and the construction of European idea, both of which are "retrospective inventions of history," the difference is at least as striking. Whereas the nationalist project takes on the mission to invent histories, glorify geographies, cultivate languages and construct a culture, according to Delanty, "the difference is that in the case of the idea of Europe it is the mystique of civilization that is cultivated and reinforced by *myths of high culture*."[149]

Myth is an encumbered concept in the discussions of identity building; one that needs to be elaborated upon. In his article "*National Identity and the Idea of European*

[147] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 6
[148] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 65
[149] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 49 (my emphasis)

Unity," Anthony D. Smith's definition of nations to include common "myths of origin."[150] He defines myths as:

> (…) widely believed tales told in dramatic form, referring to past events but serving present purposes and/or future goals. In that sense, nationalism's peculiar myth of the nation may be seen as a particularly potent and appealing dramatic narrative, which links past, present and future through the character and role of national community.

Furthermore, these myths "not only serve to legitimate particular orders or regimes," but they are essential to "envisage or promote radical change."[151]

These myths are often vague enough to facilitate a variety of ambiguous and far-reaching appropriations. Accordingly, the study of identity construction must be critical and aware of these myths, for they are the actual building blocks and reference points. For the construction of the American identity, the myths had been invaluable.

In the Age of Revolution, the idea of Europe had gained renewed interest as it became a potent political identity. From the secularization of the Western identity with Reformation, this identity had been gaining ground. Finally with "the American and French Revolutions the idea of Europe consolidated as the cultural model of the West and became increasingly important as its political identity." It became a product of modernity.[152]

The following can be read as Hans Kohn's testimony as a Westerner on the role of history for the ascendancy European civilization and identity:

> It has uncovered distant and unknown pasts, applied new methods, brought anthropology, psychology and the social sciences to bear upon our understanding of our own past and to exploration of all other civilizations. It has restored to the non-Western peoples the consciousness of their own history and has drawn them into growing realization at the unity of history and mankind. Thus modern civilization

[150] Anthony D. Smith, "*National Identity and the Idea of Europe*," in *International Affairs* Vol. 68, No. 1 (1992)
[151] Anthony D. Smith, "*The Antiquity of Nations*," 34
[152] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe,*" 68

> was at one and the same time the most revolutionary civilization pushing toward ever-new frontiers and the most history-conscious one. As it had discovered the space dimensions of the globe, so it widened the time dimensions of history. (…) [Western civilization]'s historism (*Sic.*) made it vulnerable to the tyranny of the past.[153]

To sum up, then, I suggest that the during and immediately preceding the American Revolution, the American ideologues - the so called 'Founding Fathers' - have worked towards constructing a national identity for a population that was not fully endowed with the necessary ingredients to constitute a nation. In order to achieve their desired effect, the Founders nurtured and presented the idea of European Civilization, which had come to mean a universal civilization, as their basis for independence.

The classics, and classical history in general, were perceived to be the means to consolidate the American identity with the idea of European civilization. These American ideologues, with a direct influence of their classical training coupled with the European discourse of classical republicanism, found the classics to be the best method of linkage to the core of European Identity.

[153] Hans Kohn, "*The Age of Nationalism,*" 60

Chapter 5

The Constructions of American Identity

I have tried to outline the 'blueprint' of identity construction in the previous chapter. This chapter is about how the edifice of American identity had been constructed in various steps and in various layers. The characteristics of the building blocks of this construction, to prolong the analogy, had been mentioned at one point or the other in the present study; still many of them are yet to be explained in detail.

For instance, I have already tried to outline what I have referred as 'western civilization' as a formative influence on the identity of the Americans. Also, the classics are already presented as part of the formative influences and have been discussed at some depth. What I hope to accomplish in this chapter is to illustrate the ways in which these concepts been used by Americans.

The 'Founders' have made use of their entire western heritage that they considered to be useful for their purposes. Independence would have to be legitimized with any and every argument that it could be strengthened with. The European heritage or identity, as Delanty had outlined in the previous chapter, had provided the Founders with a wide a pool of histories and cultures from which they could draw inspiration and ideas. But more importantly, western culture contained the necessary 'birthright' for the legitimization of the new American identity. This was indeed the source from which all other subsets of ideas became accessible.

As natural as it may seem that a people of Western European heritage to draw upon the history of this geography, the Revolutionary American did not often look kindly towards the East of the Atlantic. Hans Kohn suggests that "America seemed more and more to draw away from Europe;" the Old World lost its charm as America

offered a "degree of individual liberty and social mobility unknown elsewhere." The land of "experiment and fulfillment" as it was, it began to "drift in an opposite direction. The United States and western Europe turned their back to each other across the North Atlantic."[154] However, the dynamics of this rift did not preclude a rift also in culture; they remained part of the same tradition.

The self-congratulatory statements about their New World came often hand in hand with the colonists' snide remarks about the prevalent conditions of Old Continent. The dissatisfaction with contemporary Europe, we can assume, have heightened the esteem with which the colonists held on to its history. That is to say, although their evaluation of the present conditions in Europe was not favorable, their belief in the value of the underlying culture did not diminish.

In these histories they found "Golden Ages," which were 'worthy' of their new nation. Their successes became the 'artifacts' on which they could all relate with, their failures would be warning sufficient. It is not surprising that the most potent of their Golden Ages should be classical antiquity, for it was the past that they knew and loved best.

5.1 Modes of Historiography

History had undoubtedly been in service of the American revolutionaries as a political tool. It was the most readily available medium through which they could access a potent source of ideas. For, history as a 'dispenser of wisdom' was more elastic than the lessons of Enlightenment philosophes, and much more accessible. Histories were useful for the viewpoint of their original authors, some of whom were agreeable for the purposes of the founders; and, surely, if these authors were not useful in their original forms, their histories could always be reinterpreted.

[154] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 19

They had used history both as a list of precedents and as a collection of essential political lessons. From pool of history, the founders have drawn lessons form as deep as the classical antiquity and wide enough to accommodate such cultures as Swiss or the United Provinces. "Because the Americans sought nothing less than 'a comprehensive knowledge of history and of mankind,'" Gordon S. Wood observes, the Founders believed "they ought to be well versed in all the various governments of ancient and modern states." In order to achieve this "comprehensive knowledge of mankind" the Founders' efforts had reached out to a "profuse and various" sources for their revolutionary paradigm. According to John Adams, the revolutionaries had to

> search into the spirit of the British constitution; read the histories of ancient ages; contemplate the great examples of Greece and Rome; set before us the conduct of our own British ancestors, who have defended us the inherent rights of mankind against foreign and domestic tyrants and usurpers.[155]

Another way in which the founders had found use in history was in its capacity for legitimization. The 'maltreatment' of the Mother Country of her colonies had taken on nuances similar to that which was observed in the peasant revolts of Feudal societies. Here I am using the term 'maltreatment' after the fashion of Marc Bloch's treatise on Feudalism; and as an ultimately non-binding analogy. According to Bloch in Feudal societies, "life was ruled by tradition, by group custom. (…)" These traditions and customs were being generated and ultimately established by virtue of their longevity. "If a certain institution was known to have existed 'time out of mind,'" Bloch observes, "then it was assumed to be good and sufficient. (…)" Bloch Finds that the

> effect of the appeal to custom was not so much inhibit all development as to *legitimise*, by gradually transforming precedents into rights, a host of abuses arising from intentional violation or mere neglect; custom in fact, was a double-edged sword which served both lords and peasants in turn.[156]

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[155] John Adams, quoted in Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," pp. 6-7
[156] Marc Bloch, "*French Rural History*," 70

In the case of Americans' presentation of their grievances, we can observe that in the place of customs and traditions, 'history' becomes an effectual tool for distinguish 'just' rule, from the unjust. What is interesting in the American usage is that they had not only based their claims for 'just rule' on the English precedents; but they had also chosen liberally among a variety of cultures and traditions and made them each effective tools.[157]

This value that the American revolutionaries had placed in history necessitates a few remarks on the nature of historiography prevalent in the era. As it became 'history proper,' and not the oral tradition, history became a potent political tool.

The first methodical study of history had been the work of Italian Renaissance statesmen. With a throwback to Hegel's brief remark about the coming of age of history[158] we must reiterate a point about beginnings of the Western historiography. Hans Kohn believes that "… Western civilization was the first to understand the historical nature of man and of all his thought and activities." This feat had been the fruition of a more complex epistemological breakthrough from the medieval Christian world-view. J. G. A. Pocock has tried to unravel the precise nature of this breakthrough by reconstructing "a scheme of ideas within which the sixteenth-century mind sought to articulate the equivalent of philosophy of history."[159]

We can utilize a "useful simplification," one offered by Pocock, which states "that the Christian world-view was based upon the exclusion from consideration of temporal and secular history." Very much in the Christianized tradition of Aristotle, "the mere telling of a tale" was considered "inferior to poetry, as poetry was inferior to philosophy." Therefore narratives of history were not the proper methods of understanding the world. It was against this philosophical tendency that history had to content with. "The emergence of historical modes of explanation," Pocock resumes

[157] For the discussion about the various histories used in the American Revolution, see below.
[158] See Ch. 1, pg 19
[159] J. G. A. Pocock, "*Machiavellian Moment*," pp. 5, 8

"had much to do with the supersession of that world-view by one more temporal and secular."[160]

With respect to this Renaissance nuances on the reading and writing of history, Thomas Jefferson's utilization of the past was typical among the American intellectuals. This disposition towards history entailed the usage of it "as furnishing the empirical data needed to support conclusions already arrived at rationally." According to H. Trevor Colbourn, Jefferson had "studied history as an extension of [his] political experience and as a guide to the perfectible future."[161] He considered history, and the experiences of the historical figures in general, as readily available and compact lessons that could be put to practical use. The mistakes of the past were as useful as personal experience, which could be put to political use.

At this juncture another important aspect of classical-republican preoccupation with history must be reiterated. The fear of corruption and the sustenance of virtue are the central issues of classical republicanism. Moreover, they are both vigorously tested with an idealized history consisting of both the warning signs of the former and the embodiments of the latter. The histories that had a determinative effect on the character of this ideology had been typically grim about the longevity of the republican mode of government. Therefore classical republicanism is a political philosophy, whose fixation with history is an integral part of its paradigm.

J.G.A. Pocock asserts that "the American Revolution and Constitution in some sense form the last act of the civic Renaissance."[162] Similarly Meyer Reinhold affirms that "inbred with these republican predicaments," early Americans, "lived in the *afterglow of the renaissance*." Although they had not been near the centers of humanistic tradition, they had as we have seen took care to import this education. The fact that they had no "visible relics of the Greek and Roman presence to memorialize

[160] Ibid.
[161] H. Trevor Colbourn, "*Thomas Jefferson's Use of the Past*," in "*The William and Mary Quarterly*," 3rd Ser., Vol. 15, No.1. (Jan.,1958)
[162] J. G. A. Pocock, "*Machiavellian Moment*," 464

the continuity with classical antiquity and excite feelings of pride in their cultural heritage," apparently did not relinquish their curiosity. Moreover, "the markedly higher level of literacy in America provided a wider audience for the classics."[163] "For Americans the mid-eighteenth century was truly a neo-classical age;" Gordon S. Wood concurs.[164]

Needless to say, history had not been left untouched with the methods and philosophy of the 'Scientific Revolution.' Its methodology and philosophy had been appropriated to the Cartesian and Baconian principles. Hans Kohn reflects upon this progress in historiography: "Only since the eighteenth century has history prospered as a science with its research in the sources and its critical analysis of all traditions." With this '*scientification*' history had been able to gaze upon "entirely new vistas, not inferior therein to the natural sciences."[165]

Therefore it would not be improper to assume that the revolutionary generation had been directly exposed to the narratives and implications of the classical republican texts on the one hand, and on the other they were also aware and attentive to the uses to be made out of the contemporary histories. These newer histories as well as the other aspects of European history beckon mention; before we launch into the discussion of the classics, which constitutes the main focus of the present study.

5.2 Western Civilization

Western Civilization, which was after all the only civilization that the revolutionary Americans found valuable for their project, was the outline of all the cultures and ideas that could contribute to the American identity. The ideologues formulated their identities through the discourse of this large conception.

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[163] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classical Americana,*" 23 (my emphasis)
[164] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 50
[165] Hans Kohn, "*The Age of Nationalism*," 60

The history of the British peoples came into prominence once again in America, as it had done in Britain under the rule of House of Tudor. Most of the discussion thereof, according to Gordon S. Wood "presumed the existence of a Saxon golden age of liberty and equality with a pristine gothic constitution which had been ruthlessly invaded by the (…) Norman tyrant." And a similar encroachment on British liberties had been undertaken by the House of Stuart, when they "had made a grand and desperate effort to snuff out liberty of the people once and for all, causing a fierce and bloody civil war and a disruption of the constitution."[166]

Colbourn draws attention to the political pressures on the historiography of the era. In the instance of English history there had developed "two principal views of English history;" namely Whig and Tory interpretations. According to the author the 'Whiggish' history writing had been motivated by a desire to "support parliamentary claims upon the royal prerogatives by exalting the antiquity of parliament." They hoped to accomplish this with idealization of the "solid foundation [of] ancient customs." This was done partly by presenting an "idealized version of an Anglo-Saxon democracy, which they usually found overturned by Norman treachery and feudalism." On the other hand, the Tory interpretation dismissed the claims for this so called Anglo-Saxon democratic tradition. In Tory imagination, the Anglo-Saxon England too had been based on a feudalistic order.[167]

Bilie Melman acknowledges this idealization of the ancient liberties as "quite old." Accordingly, the "political fiction about Gothic, Teuton freedoms preceding the 'Norman yoke'," had been created early on in England, by the efforts of the sixteenth-century intelligentsia.[168] "The Saxon character of representative government, of English freedoms and of the limited monarchy," Melman continues, "are motifs which recur in the writings of constitutionalists -Whig and radical alike."[169]

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[166] Gordon S. Wood, "*Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 31
[167] H. Trevor Colbourn, "*Thomas Jefferson's Use of the Past*," in "*The William and Mary Quarterly*," 3rd Ser., Vol. 15, No.1. (Jan.,1958)
[168] See Ch. 1 The British Heritage of the Colonists
[169] Bilie Melman, "*Claiming the Nation's Past: The Invention of an Anglo-Saxon Tradition*," in "*Journal of Contemporary History*," Vol.26, No.3/4, The Impact of Western Nationalisms, (1991)

Thomas Jefferson makes an observation about the *imagined* or *idealized* liberties of Saxons demonstrating this effect. Jefferson focuses on the immediate as well as long lost liberties of the British, when he claims that his ancestors,

> before their emigration to America, were the free inhabitants of the British dominions in Europe, and possessed a right which nature has given to all men, of departing from the country in which chance, not choice, has placed them, of going in quest of new habitations, and of there establishing new societies, under such laws and regulations as to them shall seem most likely to promote public happiness. That their Saxon ancestors had, under this universal law, in like manner left their native wilds and woods in the north of Europe, had possessed themselves of the island of Britain, (…) and had established there that system of laws which has so long been the glory and protection of that country. Nor was ever any claim of superiority or dependence asserted over them by that mother country from which they had migrated; and were such a claim made, it is believed that his majesty's subjects in Great Britain have too firm a feeling of the rights derived to them from their ancestors, to bow down the sovereignty of their state before such visionary pretensions.[170]

One can sense the overtones of Enlightenment sentiments of 'natural rights and liberties' blended with the envisioned liberties of the Saxons. This emphasis on the right to relocate oneself is not all that Jefferson reminds the British of 18th century. According to Jefferson, the Saxons had not known of feudal holdings before the conquest by 'William the Norman. "Our Saxon ancestors held their lands," Jefferson resumes "as they did their personal property, in absolute dominion, disencumbered with any superior, answering nearly to the nature of those possessions which the feudalists term allodial."[171]

Richard Bland of Virginia took a similar position of calling onto the 'ancient rights of their Saxons ancestors' in assistance to the American cause:

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[170] Thomas Jefferson, "*Summary View of the Rights of British America,*" from Photo reprint (Google Books) of the 1774 ed. printed by C. Rind, Williamsburg, 13

[171] Ibid., 27

> the present civil Constitution of England derives its Original from those Saxons who, coming over to the Assistance of the Britons (…) made themselves Masters of the Kingdom, and established a Form of Government in it familiar to that they had been accustomed to live under in their native Country. (…) This Government, like that from whence they came, was founded upon Principles of the most perfect Liberty: The conquered Lands were divided among the Individuals in Proportion to the Rank they held in the Nation; and every Freeman, that is, every Freeholder, was a Member of their Wittinagemot, or Parliament.[172]

The Founders had also made some interesting republican appropriations of the Germanic histories. According to Carl J. Richard, Jefferson "sought to justify the American opposition to British measures [using] the Germanic model." These references had all been classical republican in orientation and, based on Tacitus' *Germania*, presented the Anglo-Saxon political organization as "republican, consisting of an elected king and parliament reinforced by "allodial" (nonfeudal) land ownership, until the Normans had overturned it."[173]

John Adams, in his ruminations "On Government," arrives at a similar conclusion about the perfection of government enjoyed by the Germanic peoples:

> Teutonic institutions, described by Caesar and Tacitus, are the most memorable experiment, merely political, ever yet made in human affairs. They have spread all over Europe, and have lasted eighteen hundred years. They afford the strongest argument that can be imagined in support of the position assumed in these volumes. Nothing ought to have more weight with America, to determine her judgment against mixing the authority of the one, the few, and the many.[174]

Considering these, albeit idealized, liberties of the Germanic peoples against the "the wide-spread miseries and final slavery of almost all mankind," he finds that the accomplishment of England had been "The balance, and that only."

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[172] Richard Bland, "*An Inquiry into the Rights of British Colonies*," 4
[173] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 80
[174] John Adams, "*A Defense of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*," pp. xx, xxi

> The English have, in reality, blended together the feudal institutions with those of the Greeks and Romans, and out of all have made that noble composition, which avoids the inconveniences, and retains the advantages of both.[175]

The Founders' divulgence into the rights of Saxons, as their ancient ancestors is not contradictory to Hans Kohn's assertion. Beginning with the histories of other Germanic tribes, and the affairs of contemporary 'free' states the histories begin to encompass the whole of 'civilization' much more liberally.

The idea of resisting undue authority is also firmly emphasized in the histories that the founders often quote. John Adams recites the examples of the successful resistances of the Swiss cantons and the United Provinces against their respective 'oppressors' in the same breath as his own ancestors' struggle to obtain their rights in Magna Carta.[176]

Although the colonists had "had at their finger tips, and made use of, a large portion of the Western culture," Bernard Bailyn proposes that the amalgam of several distinct groups of sources and intellectual traditions was wrought into a "distinctive tradition. Despite the fact that Bailyn belongs to a certain 'sect' among the historians of American revolutionary period, who have downplayed the influence of the classics upon the founders of the American Republic, he cannot help but concede to their importance. The author grants that the "most conspicuous in the writings of the Revolutionary period was the heritage of classical antiquity." [177]

Narratives with more sympathy for the value of classics observe this blend of heritages more vividly. For instance, in Gordon S. Wood's evaluation "it was not as scholarly embellishment or as a source of values that antiquity was most important to Americans in these revolutionary years." Their interest in the ancient republics had

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[175] Ibid., xxi
[176] John Adams, "*Letter addressed to the Inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay*," Jan. 23 1775, in "*Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays Published In the Years of 1774 – 1775*," 14
[177] Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," pp 23 - 24

stemmed from a sincere curiosity towards the moral and social basis of politics.[178] According to Carl J. Richard, "The founders considered the histories of the classical world, England, and America (including their own experiences) their three most significant pasts." The parts which had contributed to the 'American mix' of political traditions had been "inextricably intertwined in the founders' minds, [and were] denied separate identities." Richard finds that the characterization of the ancient heroes, in the minds of the Founders, had been influenced by the personalities of the early British Whigs. And since these early Whigs had in turn been avid readers and formulators of the classics and classical republican sentiments, they can be considered part of the same tradition.[179]

This amalgam is illustrated most vividly in the works of John Adams, where he cites the examples antiquity as well as contemporary Europe in the same breath as the part of the same Western tradition. The 'Founder' had urged the inhabitants of New York to consider the consolidation of the American continent "under one national Government;" which would be created "after the Example of Greeks, the Dutch and the Swiss," as a "Confederacy of States, each of which must have a separate Government.[180]

From this vantage point we may produce a more complete answer for the question posed by Hans Kohn. Caused partly by the uniquely American formulations of Western Heritage, and partly by the socially and politically ideal conditions of America, this interwoven idea of American, Whig and Classical liberties were united into the *only* "tradition of liberty."

When liberty is so defined in an all-encompassing grandness, it excludes all other competing interpretations. Until this feat is accomplished what had been the Tory interpretation of liberties, could now be considered as 'tyranny.' Therefore it has also

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[178] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 50
[179] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 82
[180] Sentinel, "*To the Inhabitants of New York,*" in Butterfield ed. "*Diary of Adams,*" Vol. III, quoted from Gordon S. Wood "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 128

been compatible with the discourse of 'natural liberties' prevalent in the Enlightenment tradition. Without this perspective, Thomas Paine's calls for universal principles for Mankind would not be meaningful:

> The cause of America is in a great measure the cause of all mankind. Many circumstances hath, and will arise, which are not local, but universal, and through which the principles of all Lovers of Mankind are affected, and in the Event of which, their Affections are interested. The laying a Country desolate with Fire and Sword, declaring War against the natural rights of all Mankind, and extirpating the Defenders thereof from the Face of the Earth, is the Concern of every Man to whom Nature hath given the Power of feeling; of which Class, regardless of party Censure...[181]

With this, both the western heritage of the colonists and the legitimization of their revolution in western terms had been made possible.

5.3 Declaration of Independence: An Identity Crisis

The secession from the British Empire necessarily entailed a void in the identity of the colonist. This was a period in between the complete eradication of the former ties and the realization of the American identity. To be sure the word American was already in use, but as a concept it had not been fully constructed. This crisis in identity, moreover, would partially be responsible for the ultimate form of the concept.

The nature of their descent "should not have, according to widely accepted theories of nationality, encouraged their separation from people of the same stock."[182] Thomas Paine readily retorts with a particularly *commonsensical* argument against this problem that the colonist may ask themselves:

> But admitting, that we were all of English descent, what does it amount to? Nothing! Britain, being now an open enemy, extinguishes every other name and title: And to say that reconciliation is our duty, is truly

[181] Thomas Paine, Isaac Kramnic ed. "*Common Sense,*" pp. 63 - 64
[182] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 3

> farcical. The first king of England, of the present line (William the Conqueror) was a Frenchman, and half the Peers of England are descendants from the same country; therefore, by the same method of reasoning, England ought to be governed by France.[183]

By disregarding the ethnic and paternalistic ties that comes naturally to any given inhabitant of the colonies, he also initiates the effort to substitute these ties for another that would bond the Americans; namely in a voluntaristic and pluralistic conception, which regards the nation as a rational association of common laws and culture within a defined territory.[184]

Yet, before this was given a chance to happen, the American colonists, who had always considered themselves to be English and/or European, could not help but feel they were forcefully evicted from this prestigious and comfortable identity. Richard L. Merritt finds "the point at which the colonists stopped considering themselves Englishmen and began more often to think of themselves as Americans" to be "of signal importance in the rise of American nationalism;"[185] and justifiably so. For, the existence of the colonists in the New World had always been a precarious one. Not only was the very survival of the newly established fragile settlements threatened by very simple questions of sustenance, even as prospering towns they were continually under threat of foreign invasion. This threat was sometimes in the form of indigenous tribes; but much more potent as far as the British loyalty of the colonists was concerned was the threat posed by the French. The "dread of the French" as Paul A. Varg calls it, was one of the factors of the "ardent British feelings of the colonists."[186] By declaring their independence, they were willfully leaving an identity that they had so vehemently stuck to amidst the 'primitive conditions' of their New World, as well as their only tangible support against an invading European power.

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[183] Thomas Paine, Isaac Kramnic ed. "*Common Sense,*" 85
[184] See Chapter 3, fn. 11
[185] Richard L. Merritt, "*The Emergence of American Nationalism: A Quantitative Approach*" in *American Quarterly*, Vol.17, No.2 (1965)
[186] Paul A. Varg , "*The Advent of Nationalism, 1758-1776*," in *American Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.2 (1964)

According to Max Savelle, the Declaration of Independence signaled "the final abandonment, by the whigs, of their long-preserving loyalty to the British nation," and hailed the beginning of "their consequent search for new concepts and new symbols toward which to direct new loyalties."[187] However, before the tenets of this new beginning can be satisfactorily investigated it is important to establish the gradual depreciation of the former.

The implications of the act were not immediately apparent to the colonists; for some, it was unconceivable not to be part of the 'civilized world'. "It was an amazing transformation," according to Gordon S. Wood, "and even after the Declaration of Independence Americans continued to express their astonishment at what had happened."[188] "To patriot," Philip Detweiler observes, "a mighty revolution was in the making;" whereas for another substantial portion of the population it was "a deplorable colonial rebellion."[189] Indeed, this group of colonists could not cope with the circumstances at all; they considered it "the ill-shapen, diminutive brat, INDEPENDENCY" forced upon the colonies.[190]

Paul A. Varg explains the loyalists sentiments of the American colonists as a "lusty growth of British nationalism in the new world," caused not simply by the "common political principles." It was a few years after the Glorious Revolution of Britain that Cotton Mather had exclaimed:

> It is no Little Blessing of God, that we are a part of the English Nation. There is no English man, but what has for his Birthright those Liberties, which are a rich Inheritance: When all the Nations of Northern Europe of late years foolishly Lost their Liberties, the brave English

[187] Max Savelle, "*Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution*," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 67 No. 4 (1962)
[188] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 12
[189] Philip F. Detweiler, "*The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years*," in *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 19 No. 4 (1962)
[190] Braxton, *Address* (JHL 66), p. 19 (author's emphasis), quoted in Bernard Bailyn, "*The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*," 142 (author's capitals)

> (tho' with struggle enough, against the Unnatural Conspiracies of the Late Reigns) have still preserved-Theirs. . . .[191]

These sentiments echoed through the imaginations of generations of colonists.

Even on the brink of the revolution sentiments such as John Randolph's - a native of Virginia and a member of a prominent family, who served in the Common Council of Williamsburg upon returning from his studies in London[192] - could be found describing the contemporary events:

> A more pleasing and natural Connection never subsisted between any different bodies of Men than did till of late, (…) between the *Great Britain* and her Colonies. The Americans are descended from the Loins of *Britons*, and therefore may, with Propriety, be called the Children, and *England* the Mother of them. We are not only allied by Blood, but are still farther united, by the extensive Trade and Commerce carried on between us. Our Manners are similar; our Religion, and Language the same …[193]

These Tory sentiments constituted at least a worthwhile counterpoint to the arguments of "self evident truths" and "inalienable rights;" for they were referring to a tangible identity that had lasted for centuries. To them, the British nation was real, "and the concept of it, its image, was supreme, vivid, and commanding in their minds and hearts. In other words, they were content with their established British identity with all "its mythos, its ideals, and its present majesty."[194]

"The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen States of America," had been a gesture of a closure more than anything else. It was announcing the act of one people ceasing to be British, without any systematic discussion about who they were

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[191] Cotton Mather cited in Paul A. Varg , "*The Advent of Nationalism, 1758-1776*," in *American Quarterly*, Vol.16, No.2 (1964)
[192] John Mack Faragher, "*The Encyclopedia of Colonial and Revolutionary America*," 353
[193] John Randolph, "*Considerations on the State of Virginia*," (1774) quoted in Max Savelle, "*Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution*," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 67 No. 4 (1962)
[194] Max Savelle, "*Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution*," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 67 No. 4 (1962)

becoming. Benedict Anderson remarks upon the significance of the "Declaration of Independence," which "was made in the name of a People who still had no name"[195] "King George's former subjects in the New World were forced to examine their new status as non-Europeans." Detweiler considers the American Revolution as "the wholesale uprooting of a way of life."[196]

Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur illustrates this sense of closure, who at the same time emphasizes that the "new man" would be who "he" made himself to be:

> What then is the American, this new man? (…) He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. (…) Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world … the American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions.

Despite the fact that the Declaration of Independence offers a single account with which the old identities are abolished, we can find no solitary 'recipe' for this "New American;" the accounts are numerous.

Since the colonists were no longer British or European, there was an urgent question that demanded their immediate answer. "Who were they?"[197] D. H. Meyer's excellent question, echoing that of Crèvecoeur's, has no simple answers. All of the replies that draw attention to the novelty of the new people, and those that remark upon their cultural ties to the Old World, have all been agreeable. Thus, the short answer is that they had the luxury of fashioning themselves as they wished within the parameters of their perceived heritage. More importantly, they wished to fashion themselves foremost to be 'civilized.' With this intention they have made use of the most

[195] Benedict Anderson, "*To What Can Late Eighteenth-Century French, British, and American Anxieties Be Compared*," in The American Historical Review, Vol. 106, No. 4 (2001)
[196] Philip F. Detweiler, "*The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years*," in *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 19 No. 4 (1962)
[197] D. H. Meyer , "*Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*," in "*American Quarterly*," Vol. 28, No. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (Summer, 1976)

fashionable show of sophistication; the prestigious learning of the day; classics. That is not to say that they had simply been insincere with their commitment to the discourse of classics and classical republicanism; what is meant by this is they had at their disposal a very uniquely European and 'civilized' tradition upon which they could build an American Identity.

Carl J. Richard comments on this transformation when he observes that the founders had suspected that they:

> occupied the same position in western society that they themselves had occupied in pre-revolutionary America: that of self-made gentleman who must prove his worth to his social superiors by surpassing them in classical knowledge. Even while repudiating European corruption, American leaders longed for European respect.

Moreover, conforming to the self-image of the puritan emigrants, who had crossed the Atlantic to found the proverbial "City on the Hill," "these leaders defined America in European terms," while "emphasizing [their] national mission to save the mother continent." This mission had to be accomplished in European terms, and the point had to be made efficiently if they were to be perceived as more than a "low brow comedy." This mission was not only their main reason for 'removing' but also acted during the revolutionary crises a cohering factor; it "provided the nation with a sense of identity and purpose."[198]

Similar to the narrative of first movements with nationalist sentiments outlined by Liah Greenfeld, Kohn argues that "it was a new and revolutionary civilization, based upon the belief in the equal rights of all, irrespective of religion, ancestry or class; (…) and upon the right to intellectual and political opposition and criticism."[199]

The word 'civilization' did not possess the same meaning that it does today. Gordon S. Wood's comment about the word 'civilized' is a necessary clarification at

[198] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 52
[199] Hans Kohn "*The Age of Nationalism*," 31; also see "*The British Heritage of the Colonists*" section in Ch.1

this juncture: According to Wood by the late eighteenth century, "'Civilization' was not yet a widely accepted term, but 'civility' was." The root of the word, 'civility,' had initially been a legalistic term deriving from 'civil'. After the word was defined in Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary* of 1755 as "a law, act of justice, or judgment which renders a criminal process civil," the word gradually acquired a wider implication by the latter half of the eighteenth century. "The modern meaning of civility, arising first in France and spreading to Great Britain," Wood resumes, "had come into use in order express the advanced state of enlightenment that Europe had attained."[200]

Nevertheless, from the accounts of the 'Founders' we can find that the concept was none too novel for them to acknowledge and use it. While the sentiment of civilized personal conduct is not disassociated from its meaning, the Founders have used it in a variety of ways.

John Adams, in his "Defense of the Constitution of Government of the United States of America," clearly establishes the passage of civilization from the Old World to the New. In Adam's view the city of Florence bore some responsibility for this feat on account of two of its accomplishments. Therefore Adams, in a thankful manner, does not "find it tedious to consider" Florence, whose "brave and enlightened people," including Machiavelli and Guicciardini, were responsible for the "resurrection of letters." And on the other hand, he reiterates his gratitude to Americus Vespucius of Florence, who had established "a second civilization of mankind." "Next to Athens and Rome," Adams concludes, "there has not existed a more interesting city."[201]

Thomas Jefferson has the most numerous references to 'civilization' both in his private correspondences and in his addresses. We can observe that he was distinguishing several degrees of civilization in the American continent. According to Jefferson, "a philosophic observer" would witness at the westernmost territories of North America people "in the earliest stages of association living under no law but that

[200] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 194
[201] John Adams, "*Defense of the Constitution of Government of the United States of America*," in Charles Francis Adams ed. "*Works of John Adams With a Life of the Author, Notes and Illustrations*"(vol. 5)

of nature, subsisting and covering themselves with the flesh and skins of wild beasts." As the imaginary observer advances closer to the Eastern seaboard of the continent he would find on the frontiers of the colonial settlements peoples living in "the pastoral state, raising domestic animals to supply the defects of hunting."

> Then succeed our semi-barbarous citizens, the pioneers of the advance of civilization, and so in his progress he would meet the gradual shades of improving man until he would reach his, as yet, most improved state in our seaport towns. This, in fact, is equivalent to a survey, in time, of the progress of man from the infancy of creation to the present day.[202]

Jefferson's recollection of the "advance of civilization" on the American Continent is equally striking. Writing at the age of 81, Jefferson recollects that he had "observed this march of civilization advancing from the sea coast," and that had passed over their rudimentary home "like a cloud of light, increasing [their] knowledge and improving [their] condition."

From Jefferson's evaluation of Britain's conduct leading to and during the War of Independence, we can observe that the notion of civilization is used both in its 'civility' meaning and in its implication on the international conduct.. According to Jefferson

> Assassination, poison, perjury (…) were legitimate principles [of government]in the dark ages which intervened between ancient and modern civilization, but exploded and held in just horror in the eighteenth century.[203]

It is also significant that Jefferson acknowledges only the conducts of ancient and modern civilizations worthy of observing.

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[202] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to William Ludlow*," 1824, in John P Foley ed. "*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*," under "*Civilization, Progress of*"
[203] Thomas Jefferson's Letter to James Madison (Paris, August 28 1789) from "*Memoir, Correspondence, and Miscellanies - from the papers of Thomas Jefferson*" (vol.3)

Thomas Paine, too, refers to the idea of civilization as a concept of international law. Paine observes that the "circle of civilization" had not yet fully been implemented in the World. According to the revolutionary:

> A mutuality of wants have formed the individuals of each country into a kind of national society, and here the progress of civilization has stopt. For it is easy to see, that nations with regard to each other (…) are like individuals in a state of nature. They are regulated by no fixt principle, governed by no compulsive law, and each does independently what it pleases or what it can.[204]

Thomas Paine charges civilization with the duty of bringing about a proper conduct of nations. In this civilization, a nation "that which extends and promotes the principles of universal society," is considered great. The conduct of a civilized nation must necessarily be "above the atmospheres of local thoughts," and it must consider mankind as a whole.

Moreover, this age of Enlightenment, must mark its difference from the previous ages by implementing an enlightened order. Thomas Paine observes that

> The rage for conquest has had its fashion, and its day. Why may not the amiable virtues have the fame? The Alexanders and Caesars of antiquity have left behind them their monuments of destruction, and are remembered with hatred; while these more exalted characters, who first taught society and science, are blest with the gratitude of every age and country.[205]

Paine, as an American, does not shrink away from this responsibility of bringing about such an ideal 'order of nations.' "Should the present revolution be distinguished by opening a new system of extended civilization," Paine concludes, "it will receive from heaven the highest evidence of approbation."[206]

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[204] Thomas Paine, "*Letter to Abbé Raynal By the Author of Common Sense*," 45
[205] Ibid., 70
[206] Ibid., 70

The notion of the gradual move of – what we now call – civilization from the East to the West was not lost on the revolutionaries. In what may have been the very first celebration of the Fourth of July, Dr. David Ramsay gave an oration underlining this sentiment:

> We have laid the foundations of a new empire, which promises to enlarge itself into vast dimensions, and give happiness to a great continent. It is now our turn to figure on the face of the earth, and in the annals of the world …
> Ever since the flood, true religion, arts, empire, and riches, have taken a slow and gradual course from east to west, and are now bout fixing their long and favorite abode in this new western world.[207]

5.4 Creating the Other

With the histories and cultures of the western civilization the founders had the vast and diverse pool of ingredients that they could use to construct their identity; and with the establishment of the civilization's 'frontiers' in the form of 'savages' they established what they were not. Just as Gerard Delanty outlined in his study of the emergence of the European identity,[208] the construction of an identity is intimately concerned with the qualities of 'others.' The "binary typology of 'Us' and 'Them'" is at least as important as the "sense of belongingness and solidarity arising out of shared life-worlds." Delanty observes that

> the 'We' is defined not by reference to a framework of shared experiences, common goals and a collective horizon, but by the negation of the Other.(…) This is frequently what the pursuit of community really is about: the imposition of otherness in the assertion 'we are different from them'. The defining characteristic of the group is not what its members have in common but in what separates them from other groups.[209]

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[207] From "United States Magazine," I (January, March 1779), 24, 106; quoted from Max Savelle, "*Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution*," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 67 No. 4 (1962)
[208] See Chapter 3, pg. 59
[209] Gerard Delanty, "*Inventing Europe*," 5

Americans, whose occupation had also been the construction of an 'abstract' community, were basing their identity on what can loosely be called 'civilization.' Their 'others' had accordingly been formulated in light of the nature of this identity.

We have already remarked upon the rejection of the circumstances of Europe in various instances, particularly in the context of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense." The 'otherness' of Europe had derived from its inability to incorporate the best aspects of the enlightened way of life, including 'natural liberties.' The European circumstances had simply prohibited the people from flourishing.

The classical republican notion of corruption, and every other type of vices, did not help settle the matters between the *philosophes* and the tradition establishment in Europe. Gordon S. Wood remarks upon this as "it was more than Europe that the Americans rejected in 1776;" but rather "it was the whole world as it had been, and indeed it was themselves as they had been." The Americans were becoming aware of "the ways in which [their] society was moving and maturing, the distinctions of prestige and status that were arising, the rate and the nature of mobility, and the distribution of power and wealth."[210] A Mr. Yeherton would exclaim out of these sentiments in 1775 about the corruptive influence of luxury:

> Englishmen surely did not lose their spirit as well as their rights by crossing the Atlantick. No! They did not; they carried thither their freeborn spirit, before it was contaminated with an influx of Asiatick wealth.[211]

A much more influential orator, John Adams in his persona as the Novanglus, asks his fellow colonists:

> But, when luxury, effeminacy and vitality are arrived at such a shocking pitch in England, when both electors and elected, are become one mass of corruption when the nation is oppressed to death with debts and taxes,

[210] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 113
[211] "*Correspondence & Proceedings of November 1775*," in ed. Peter Force "*American Archives*"

> owing to their own extravagance, and want of wisdom, what would be your condition under such an absolute subjection to parliament?

In his feud against Massachusettensis, John Adams draws the attention of the Americans to the essential issue of freedom. "There are but two sorts of men in the world," Adams declares, "freemen and slaves." And according the Adams no man is free, who does the bidding of a parliament thus defined "at three thousand miles distance."[212] A Mr. Thacher describes the superiority of the free Americans rather succinctly; "who but a pompous blockhead … could expect to conquer a hardy virtuous set of men," who were "strangers to that luxury which effeminates the mind and body."[213]

Aside from corruption, and the 'corrupted Europeans,' Barbarism and the barbarous 'aborigines' represented an additional 'other,' against which to shape the American identity. Barbarism, according to Jefferson, was that brutish existence that had been "been receding before the steady step of amelioration; and will in time, trust, disappear from the earth."[214]

In the context of Barbarism , then, a further 'other' had been substantiated in the form of the Native Americans, who have been identified as 'savages' on numerous occasions, and indeed routinely. This is one of the aspects rarely noticed by historians such as Bernard Bailyn and Gordon S. Wood, who aim to narrate histories of the birth of American nation. Hans Kohn, similar to these authors, states that "the expanding Western empire," as well as the nature of this expansion "helped the United States in its newly awakened nationalism to turn away from, and against, England and Europe." The difficulties arising from the necessity of building an American identity in the face of the "common roots and origins binding the two shores of the North Atlantic," were

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[212] John Adams, "*Address To the Inhabitants of the Province of Massachusetts Bay*," March 20 1775, in "*Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays Published In the Years of 1774 – 1775*," 10

[213] Thacher, Oration Delivered on March 5th 1776, in Niles, ed., "*Principles*," quoted in Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 100

[214] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to William Ludlow*" 1824, in John P Foley ed. "*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*," under "*Civilization, Progress of*"

lessened by the unique experience of the Americans in their New World.[215] These new circumstances and the new 'others' on their doorstep, did not always connote positive aspects; the truly alien nature of the new surroundings and new peoples did not necessarily produce amiable feelings in the colonists.

It is to this failure to perceive the original inhabitants of the New World that scholars such as Amy Kaplan and Myra Jehlen respond. According to Jehlen, historiography (such as in the fashion of Bailyn and Gordon) portray the European settlement in America as the act of populating a vacant continent. "The arriving Europeans were so intent on taking over," Jehlen remarks, "that few even registered the indigenous cultures."[216] Though that does seem to be impression one could get from the prevailing historiography, Myra Jehlen's words encourage an investigation on this interaction.

Though Hans Kohn's optimistic assessment of the rise of American nationalism is valuable, it must be immediately followed by more realistic accounts of the said process. According to Amy Kaplan, "the Frontier," had been "a major conceptual site in American studies, which has undergone revision from the vacant space of the wilderness to a bloody battlefield of conflict and conquest." In Kaplan's analysis the historiography attending to birth and rise of the American nationalism needs a revision from its latest course which acknowledges the 'frontier' as a 'borderland,' i.e. "a site of contacts, encounters, and collisions that produce new hybrid cultures." This attitude of comparable influences acted on both sides of the encounter, according to Kaplan, is not a proper method of investigation of the interaction. Amy Kaplan's warns that "the most recent revision of the frontier risks downplaying the imperial dimensions of power and violence that structure, underwrite, and are informed by cultural 'interpenetrations.'" This interpretation of the 'frontier' as 'borderlands,' Kaplan informs "transform the

[215] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," 22
[216] Myra Jehlen, "*Why Did the Europeans Cross the Ocean*," in Kaplan and Pease ed. "*Cultures of United States Imperialism*," 43

traditional notion of the frontier from the primitive margins of civilization to a decentered cosmopolitanism."[217]

In accordance with Amy Kaplan, and in addition to the oft cited 'Other' in the form of Europe, the 'frontier of civilization' needs examination. There is ample evidence in the public speeches, memoirs, and private correspondences of the revolutionary generation of Americans that allows us to investigate their outlook toward this 'frontier.' For example, John Adams had once declared the Native Americans as a community of "poor ignorant savages."[218] James Madison, in his State of the Union Address, had drawn attention to the 'atrocities' of the "wretched portion of the human race" residing in the American continent.[219]

But these comments are almost always accompanied with the passionate works of 'civilizing' these 'unfortunate souls.' The 'Good Samaritans' of the New World, so to speak, had spent both their time and resources in order to bring civilization to the 'Indians.' John Adams laments about the

> infinite pains [that] have been taken and expenses incurred in treaties, presents, stipulated sums of money, instruments of agriculture, education? What dangerous and unwearied labours to convert the poor ignorant savages to Christianity? And alas ! with how little success?[220]

Yet, the 'Indians,' who were "as bigotted to their religion as the Mahometans are to their Koran, the Hindoos to their Shaster, the Chinese to Confucius, the Romans to their Saints and Angels, or the Jews to Moses and the Prophets," did not cherish and acknowledge the best efforts of the Americans. They had exhibited "such an invincible aversion both to civilization and Christianity," that there was little that could be done about their "perpetual hostilities against the colonists and the independent

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[217] Amy Kaplan, "*Introduction*," in Kaplan and Pease ed. "*Cultures of United States Imperialism*," 16
[218] John Adams, in "*Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays Published In the Years of 1774 – 1775*," 312
[219] James Madison, "*State of the Union Address*," Nov. 1809
[220] John Adams, "*Letter to William Tudor*," Sep. 23 1818, in , "*The Works of John Adams*," Vo. 10, 361

Americans."[221] It seems, as though his presidency had been somewhat more successful about these efforts. Adams would write to James Lloyd in 1815 about his efforts of civilizing the natives:

> I was engaged in the most earnest, sedulous, and, I must own, expensive exertions to preserve peace with the Indians, and prepare them for agriculture and civilization, through the whole of my administration. I had the inexpressible satisfaction of complete success. Not a hatchet was lifted in my time.[222]

While James Madison declares that it had always been "the benevolent policy of the United States invariably recommended peace and promoted civilization among that wretched portion of the human race," he announces that the

> tranquility which has been restored among the tribes themselves, as well as between them and our own population, will favor the resumption of the work of civilization which had made an encouraging progress among some tribes, and that the facility is increasing for extending that divided and individual ownership, which exists now in movable property only, to the soil itself, and of thus establishing in the culture and improvement of it the true foundation for a transit from the habits of the savage to the arts and comforts of social life.[223]

Thomas Jefferson, too, had maintained this effort to 'civilize' the 'savages.' In a letter he wrote in 1822, Jefferson ensures Jedediah Morse that he had "had much at heart, and never omitted an occasion of promoting (…)the civilization and improvement of the Indian tribes."[224]

5.5 Creating the 'Self'

Priscilla Wald draws attention to the text of Declaration of Independence to the meaning of "one people" that are renouncing their former ties. Pointing out the

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[221] John Adams, "*Letter to Thomas Jefferson*," Jul. 17 1813, in , "*The Works of John Adams*," Vo. 10, 54
[222] John Adams "*Letter to James Lloyd,*" Mar. 31 1815, in "*Works of John Adams,*" Vol. 10, 153
[223] James Madison, "*State of the Union Address*," Nov. 1809
[224] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to Jedediah Morse,*" 1822, in John P Foley ed. "*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*," entry no. 3910

differences in the initial draft by Thomas Jefferson and the final draft as ratified by the Congress, she finds in the last paragraph of the text that "Jefferson's 'good people of these states' becomes the Declarations 'good people of these colonies,' and it is from these 'good people' that the documents derives its authority to turn those colonies into 'free & independent states.'" Priscilla Wald finds that the "one people" is a term, whose borders are established by the implication of the English, the Loyalists, and the "merciless Indian savages." Once these forms of otherization are no longer sufficient to define the "one people" at the end of the struggle with the foremost two 'Others,' she amply asks: "Who will comprise the "one people" of the emerging political entity?"[225]

It was not clear who an American was from time eternal; though the nationalists of any European or Asian descent could with some effort make an argument for a separate language and history; that was not the case for the former. It was through the efforts of the ideologues that the concept of 'American' was eventually constructed and supplanted for the 'colonists.'

Richard L. Merritt traces the advent of the identity of 'Americans' slowly replacing the identity of 'His Majesty's subjects' in the newspapers of the late colonial era. According to Merritt, this transformation is not evident until "the years after 1764." Before the issuing of the Stamp Act in 1765 by George III, "the newspapers were all but unanimous (97.1 per cent) in identifying the colonists with the British political community." From 1765 to the final breakdown of British-Colonial relations in 1775 "almost six in ten (57.0 per cent) of the collective self-referent symbols identified the colonial people as American rather than as British" Merritt's conclusion from his survey is especially interesting for our purposes, according to the author, "processes of symbolic identification in the American colonies seem to have been neither revolutionary nor evolutionary in the strictest sense of these terms. Rather, like other *learning situations*."[226]

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[225] Priscilla Wald, "*Terms of Assimilation*," in Kaplan and Pease ed. "*Cultures of United States Imperialism*," 61

[226] Richard L. Merritt, "*The Emergence of American Nationalism: A Quantitative Approach*" in American Quarterly, Vol.17, No.2, (1965) (my emphasis), also see Appendix A outlined in his article.

Another replacement that was happening in identities is manifested by John Adams as he refers to his fellow 'New Worlders' as "emigrants" in his persona as Novanglus. This emphasis on the wrong-doing at the hands of the British was significant.[227] This was a symbolic but ultimately strong gesture, which brought to mind the circumstances of the original settlers' trans-Atlantic voyage.

Before its predominance, American, as a concept had come into existence "by the end of the French and Indian War," when "spurred by the tightening of English colonial policy, [the colonists] began to perceive their interests as different from those of the mother country and (…) began to refer to themselves more regularly as Americans"[228]

But neither Merritt's nor Meyer's explanations as to the reasons of this replacement include another vital aspect of this act of 'replacement;' i.e. with what these identities were being replaced. Necessary, 'American' had to be a concept with wider and more positive implications than 'emigrant,' it had to be endowed with positive and inspiring characteristics to be useful. The mere availability of 'American' as an identity does not explain the foundation of a United States in its name.

Hans Kohn lays emphasis on this necessity of founding the 'man-made' American identity on constructive terms. Kohn remarks that "the Americans constituted themselves as a nation (…) on the basis of a universal idea."[229] This was the task awaiting the colonists as they were "faced with the job of self-consciously creating a national identity. In accomplishing the task, they drew on every available source;

[227] John Adams, in "*Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays Published In the Years of 1774 – 1775*," 31
[228] D. H. Meyer , "*Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*," in "*American Quarterly*", Vol. 28, No. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (1976)
[229] Hans Kohn, "*The Age of Nationalism*," 14

colonial history, classical models, Indian lore and symbols, Protestant Christianity, and prevailing eighteenth-century thought – including the ideas of enlightenment."[230]

According to Hans Kohn, the entrance of the American nation to the history of nations had differed from the typical "process of a nation's coming into being." Kohn holds that "natural and subconscious forces" generally contribute more in such processes; but "not so with the Anglo-Americans."[231] Kohn's crucial observation about the 'created' nature of American nationalism is crucial for the present purposes. It is the acknowledgement of the notion that the Americans had operated with remarkable freedom in their nationalism project.

In this respect, The War of Independence had been a fertile ground for the seeding of the new American identity. Although it was a union of political necessity, this would hardly hinder the efforts of the ideologues in their quest to create the identity of 'American.' Not only the initiation but also the fruition of these efforts was possible in the circumstances of a war. During the war, the citizens had manifested remarkable displays of popular order, and shared the language of the classical republicanism, even if they the majority of these were using it incorrectly.[232] The cohesion that can only surface in battle conditions has inspired not only the revolutionary intellectuals produce better political pieces, but it also makes the population more inclined to accept these ideas. It is a process of 'positive feedback' in which success begets success, and myths beget new myths.

Max Savelle considers this aspect of the struggle when he asserts that "the practical exigencies in the course of events were driving men toward a conceptualization of an American nation, intellectuals and publishers were both discovering and creating an American mythos." While the ideologues were producing

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[230] D. H. Meyer , "*Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*," in "*American Quarterly*", Vol. 28, No. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (1976)
[231] Hans Kohn, "*The Age of Nationalism*," 3
[232] Richard R. Beeman, "*Deference, Republicanism, and the Emergence of Popular Politics in Eighteenth-Century America,*" in "*The William and Mary Quarterly*," 3rd Ser., Vol. 40, No. 3 (1992)

their best material about their esteemed ancestry, the soldiers at the front were generating new stuff for the American legend:

> Poets, publicists, and politicians exalted the first pioneers who crossed the ocean, American heroes (…) Again and again, also, reference was made (…) to the English mythos of liberty inherited by Americans and to the fact that British blood still flowed in American veins. As the war progressed, the heroic deeds and men of that struggle became part of the American mythos.[233]

Thus, the American population was producing its own 'heroic past,' in the accounts of the ideologues. This heroic past would, in turn, stimulate them to newer heights of motivation.

Paul A. Varg finds that "once the War for independence had been won this inter-colonial unity appeared to dissolve." Though not an altogether unexpected outcome at secession of the hostilities, this dissolution is interesting nevertheless. "The apparent absence of any concern for the Union in the immediate postwar years," according to Varg, "raises questions about the genuineness of the prewar article we have called nationalism."[234] Varg's misgivings on the genuineness of the nationalistic sentiments of the Americans are justified, but nevertheless the conditions succeeding the revolution should be studied under another light. The actual trend of dissolution is all the more significant in light of the subsequent push towards the unity of the colonies in 1780s. This almost complete reversal in the tendency of the Americans entails a substantial effort by the revolutionary leaders, along with the spontaneous fruition of the 'American Legend.'

In post-revolutionary era, what had hitherto been sufficient to inspire a sense of unity among the general populace was clearly not enough. After the Declaration of Independence on the 4th of July 1776, and the end of "fanfare" that accompanied the

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[233] Max Savelle, "*Nationalism and Other Loyalties in the American Revolution*," in "*The American Historical Review*," Vol. 67 No. 4 (1962)
[234] Paul A. Varg, "*The Advent of Nationalism, 1758-1776*," in "*American Quarterly*," Vol.16, No.2, Part 1, (1961)

fervor caused by the "end of subservience," "'self-evident truths' were seldom mentioned by those who formulated wartime propaganda." Detweiler detects a change towards more practical, systematical and paradigmatic approach to the issue of the new nation's identity. "The much-used words in the propaganda war were not 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,'" Detweiler observes, "but 'rights and liberties,' 'freedom,' and 'independence.'" Thomas Jefferson himself would later remark about the political language of the Declaration of Independence; he would recall that he had not been "aiming at originality of principle or sentiment."[235]

Another difficulty that stood in the way of the nationalists was the virtual nonexistence of a general feeling of nationalist fervor; despite the propaganda, mere act of secession had not turned the colonists into Americans overnight. "Socially, of course, Gordon S. Wood reflects, "they were not really another people, but intellectually and culturally they were;" or to be more precise we should interject that through the conscious efforts of the ideologues they would eventually become one. Therefore I consider Thomas Paine's sentiments about the distinctiveness of American culture to be idealistic, but not completely representative of reality:

> Our style and manner of thinking have undergone a revolution more extraordinary than the political revolution of the country. We see with other eyes; we hear with other ears; and we think with other thoughts, than those we formerly used.[236]

We may not accept Paine's words at face value, but it stands to show that by 1782 he could sincerely describe such a 'revolution of mind.' In absence of another international crisis this transformation could not be a 'naturally occurring phenomena,' but rather it reflects a degree of success of the political efforts of the 'Founders.'

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[235] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to Henry Lee*," May 8 1825, quoted in Philip F. Detweiler, "*The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years*," in "*The William and Mary Quarterly,*" Vol. 19 No. 4 (1962)

[236] Thomas Paine, "*Letter to Abbé Raynal*," Philadelphia 1782, quoted in Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 48

D. H. Meyer finds that "insofar as the American writer really believed he was capable of influencing the popular mind, he himself came subtly under the influence of American democracy." In this interplay between the *idea* and the *idealist*, the latter skillfully handled "the very process of mass-marketing ideas, [as] he modified their meaning and function." The revolutionary leaders found that when properly presented, ideas "were effective tools for mobilizing opinion and exerting social control."[237]

Gordon S. Wood's analysis in *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* seems to be a much better effort at a summary than his other work. Wood observes that the revolutionaries "told themselves that they had the ability, like no other people before in modern times, to shape their politics and society as they saw fit." The politically engaged citizens of the colonies had "for the first time in American history," and arguably in World History, "saw that their culture was exclusively man-made."[238]

In America, the reassert a point I have made earlier, the ideas that could contribute to the construction of an identity were in abundance. References were made to a variety of cultures and histories of Europe. However, one of these cultures would come to prominence during this effort to construct the American identity. Owing to their classical education, their classical republican disposition, and what they perceived to be ideal conditions in America for the cultivation of a Republic, the classical tradition became one of the principle cultures and histories in the shaping of the American identity.

Another point that was made in the present study was that the American ideologues were placing the idea of Western civilization in the basis of their national identity. To be sure, the classical antiquity of Greek and Roman civilizations can in no practical fashion be equated with "Modern Western civilization" in academic terms today. According to Hans Kohn's standard definition, "Modern Western civilization arose in North-Western Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth

[237] D. H. Meyer , "*Uniqueness of the American Enlightenment*," in "*American Quarterly*", Vol. 28, No. 2, Special Issue: An American Enlightenment (1976)
[238] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 190

centuries."[239]Although the European fascination with classical antiquity had most definitely contributed to the culture, what is called the modern western civilization does not seem to be in any vital way connected to it.

Nevertheless, the determining factors contributing to the construction of the American identity are not based on the modern twentieth century understanding of this affiliation between the classical culture and the modern European civilization. Instead, it was what the American ideologues had perceived to be the essence of European civilization that mattered. Thus, the crucial point that needs to be reiterated is that the classical tradition had a central place in the process of shaping the American identity *because* they had perceived it to be the central tenet of civilization. Images of classical antiquity "survived in the belief firmly cherished by many Americans that the United States was the modern heir of the ancient republics, and idea that found widespread expression in published orations, debates and political pamphlets."[240]

Since America would essentially be a republic, it could draw upon the 'Golden Age of Republics' in antiquity. Along with its role as the source and origin of 'The Civilization,' the classical antiquity was also the Golden Age that any republican could refer to. Thus serving in this dual capacity, we can observe that the classical tradition became a very potent form of identification and legitimization.

The actual infusion of the classics from the Old Continent to ultimately the construction of the American identity was a lengthy process. Among the initial stages of this process had been the education of the Founding Fathers, who were after all the responsible parties of this construction effort. What can duly be called the "classical conditioning of the Founding Fathers' had been underway from childhood onto their college educations and throughout their lives. As this subject had already been

[239] Hans Kohn, "*The Age of Nationalism*," 31
[240] Edwin A. Miles, "*The Young American Nation and the Classics*," in "*Journal of the History of Ideas*," Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1974)

visited,[241] we are presently concerned with the actual utilization of this education in their political career.

Carl J. Richard begins his study on the *Founders and Classics* on such premises. According to Richard, "the classics exerted a formative influence upon the founders," which would in turn help determine 'the founders'' conception of human nature, their understanding of the nature and purpose of virtue, and their appreciation of society's essential role in its production."[242] That being said, through the agency of the 'Founders' the classics would, in turn, be used as a factor of construction.

Richard M. Gummere investigates the nature of the Founders' interest in the classics in a systematical fashion. According to Gummere, his "Colonial predecessors did not force their study of the ancient sources into group patterns." Their attention to the classics was not conducted as scholarly investigation; i.e. "theorizing, or seeking a strict logical arrangement of ideas." As far as their interest on the classics was concerned, the Founders were pragmatic as "they took from the past whatever was relevant to their own concerns and transmuted the material into their own language."[243] Meyer Reinhold concurs with this assertion, who also finds the Founders' "reading in and meditation upon the classics was eminently practical and purposeful;" and their principle interest laid in "prose authors – the moralists and the historians – for their practical value in promoting moral and political wisdom."[244] Stripped from its dramatic embellishments, the classical texts became a much more accessible and practical ideological tool.

From their private communications and their journals we can observe this first-hand familiarity with the ancient authors. Apart from their direct exposure, one important medium through which they accessed the classical thought was the publications of the British Whig authors. The revolutionary Americans, most of who

[241] See Chapter 2, The Formative Features of Education.
[242] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 7
[243] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," vii
[244] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," pp. 24-25

were of radical Whig persuasion, had sustained a belief in republicanism as the perfect government. By the 'rule of thumb;' since it was in the "classical antiquity, [that] the greatest republics in history had flourished," it was ideally the "one historical source of republican inspiration."[245]

The classical tradition, according to Gummere had "penetrated deeply into the speeches and writings, the formal and informal language of provincial Americans." Rather than a scholarly ornament, the classics were "merged into the spirit of the age and became a progressive force rather than a relic of antiquity."[246] It was accordingly utilized in the construction of the American identity in several different ways. The revolutionary leaders realized that they could use their public personae as powerful illustrations of the characteristics of an ideal republican citizen.

It is important to remember that the 'ideal' conditions of the New World allowed for liberal grounds on which to implement new ideas. Accordingly, the classical tradition had been molded into an "American pragmatic humanism, [with] the immediate goals of freedom and the establishment of a new republic, and the contemporary nationwide quest for useful knowledge."[247]

This practice had surely differed from the value of the classics in Europe. As we have observed in the first chapter, there was an established political tradition that every contending idea had to cope with. Whereas, the British Whigs had to be content with the persuasiveness of the classical authors, and the idealism of the classical republicanism, the revolutionaries of the New World could put this idealism into practical use. Their idea of a model statesman did not have to clash with the reality of already present and complex relations of a British court.

[245] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 49
[246] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," 1
[247] Meyer Reinhold, "*Classica Americana*," 32

5.6 'The Great Men' of Antiquity

To be sure, the classical tradition could not be introduced to the general public through any kind of systematized education; at least not in the short-term. Therefore it was not through the texts of ancient histories or the maxims of the ancient philosophers that the leaders of the American Revolution used in their efforts. The principle way in which the classics weighed in the construction of the American identity is the Founders' efforts to inspire their fellow Americans by emulating the embodiments of republican virtue. According to Carl J. Richard, whose account outlines the role of classical emulation in the political careers of the Founders, "the revolutionary leaders sought to [create] a society led by an aristocracy of merit. In the eighteenth century merit meant learning – and learning meant classical knowledge."[248]

Although he is cautious in his analysis of the degree of importance the classics have played in the American Revolution, Edwin Miles believes they had "stimulated respect not only for those ancient writers and orators (…) but also for those Greek and Roman heroes who had displayed bravery, patriotism, fortitude, and perseverance."[249] Furthermore, the more the Founders imitated these heroes, the more they were held to the same heights of esteem.

At one time or another, as Gordon S. Wood observes, "almost every Whig patriot took the name of an ancient republican hero, and classical reference and allusions run through much of the colonists' writings, both public and private."[250] According to Carl J. Richard, the most common classical symbol was the pseudonym. According to Douglas Adair, "during the late eighteenth century," it was the standard procedure of the time to write under a pseudonym "even in countries like England and the United States were the press was relatively free."[251] The use of pseudonyms was a part of the effort by the Founders to utilize "classical symbols and allusions to

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[248] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 51
[249] Edwin A. Miles, "*The Young American Nation and the Classics*," in "*Journal of the History of Ideas*," Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1974)
[250] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Radicalism of the American Revolution*," 49
[251] Douglas Adair, "*A Note on Certain of Hamilton's Pseudonyms*," in "*The William and Mary Quarterly,*" 3rd Ser., Vol. 12, No. 2 (1955)

communicate, to impress, and to persuade."[252] This most conspicuous method of self-identification can be understood as a thinly disguised modeling of the ideal American.

It should be noted that the historical characters used in the pseudonyms of the pamphleteers, orators and politicians were precise tools, the significance of which would be immediately apparent to any 'educated' person - that is to say educated in classics. The immediate image that the reader associated with a pseudonym would be obvious in the classical republican sense. For example, a message alluding to *Caesar* would never be confused to be pertaining to a 'victorious general,' but a tyrant.

The most popular historical source for the biographies of venerated heroes of the classical antiquity was Plutarch, "whose Parallel Lives successfully combined entertaining narratives with inoffensive moralizing."[253] Yet, it was not the only one; for the classical heroes that the Founders were fond of impersonating were diverse. Drawing chiefly from the partial biographies of statesmen, generals and philosophers of antiquity, the Founders could allude to a variety of different historical examples. The most prominently featured among them had been the 'heroes' of the Roman Republic.

One of the most interesting among these emulations can be found in the example of George Washington, who through painstaking measures ensured an image virtuous in the classical sense. Unlike many of the revolutionary leaders, George Washington was not classically educated. This might have been a contributing factor for the perseverance with which he maintained his image. His role model had been Lucius Quintius Cincinnatus; one of the most revered heroes of the Early Roman Republic who had given up his dictatorial authority at the successful completion of his duty and returned to his farming.[254] George Washington's analogous conduct after the completion of the War of Independence brought him high praise and indeed a

[252] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 39
[253] Edwin A. Miles, "*The Young American Nation and the Classics*," in Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. 35, No. 2 (Apr. - Jun., 1974)
[254] Livy, Book III 12, 19-21

reputation for virtuousness.[255] The Order of Cincinnati had been formed in 1783 by the veterans of the war with George Washington residing as its 'President General.'[256]

The fascination with this semi-mythical statesman of Rome was in part caused by the constant apprehension of tyranny that had never released its hold on the American revolutionaries. One of the clearest examples of this characteristically republican aversion of subversion of the Republic by a popular leader can be found in the writings of Thomas Jefferson. He observes "three epochs in history, [which had] signalized by the total extinction of national morality. The first was of the successors of Alexander, not omitting himself: The next, the successors of the first Caesar." In all of these accounts, including Jefferson's own age, the people who had once attained the opportunity to obtain the whole authority of the government onto themselves had given way to men "courting the usurpation of a military adventurer," a predicament which had "destroyed, and is yet to destroy, millions and millions of its inhabitants."[257]

The march of contemporary international politics had also been observed with alarm in America. As Britain had emerged triumphant from the Seven Years War in both North America and India; she had also emerged with a substantial expansion of her commercial, naval and colonial power; i.e. with an empire. This was the "… appropriate moment, according to all the conventions for the classical vocabulary, at which to utter warning against the fate of Rome, transformed from a republic to a despotism by the conquest of an empire whose wealth corrupted the citizenry and could only be distributed by a Caesar…"[258]

This was the fate that the revolutionaries had feared the most, and thus one of the most contested figures of ancient history had been Julius Caesar. According to Carl J. Richard, Caesar was the "the Founders' greatest villain."[259] It would not be an

[255] John Mack Faragher, "*The Encyclopedia of Colonial and Revolutionary America*," 444
[256] John Mack Faragher, "*The Encyclopedia of Colonial and Revolutionary America*," 71
[257] Thomas Jefferson, "*Memoirs*," in Thomas Jefferson Randolph ed. "*The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*," Vol. 1, 82
[258] J.G.A. Pocock, "*The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition,"* 509
[259] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 91

exaggeration to assert that this ancient Roman general incited more apprehension than any tangible danger; the latter had always been braved in a proper fashion. Even a story was invented that played on these fears; a certain Mr. Malone had relayed the events of an alleged

> dinner meeting at Jefferson's house during the early years of the Washington administration, when Hamilton, noticing unidentified portraits of Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke, asked who they were: 'They were his trinity of the greatest men the world had ever produced,' Jefferson said, but they meant little or nothing to Hamilton's philosophy. 'The greatest man that ever lived,' said the Colonel, 'was Julius Caesar.'[260]

Yet Alexander Hamilton's political career had produced little, if any, obvious signs that he had admired Julius Caesar, much less planned to become one. If anything, Hamilton had been as wary of Caesars or Catilines as any of the other revolutionaries.

> Every republic at all times has it[s] Catalines and Caesars. Men of this stamp, … while in their real characters … are arbitrary persecuting intolerant and despotic, are in all their harangues and professions the most zealous, nay if they are to be believed, the only friends of liberty.[261]

Hamilton would say, and he would reflect on the contemporary domestic turmoil, such as Shay's Rebellion:

> The tempestuous situation, from which Massachusetts has scarcely emerged, evinces that dangers of this kind are not merely speculative. Who can determine what might have been the issue of her late convulsions, if the mal-contents had been headed by a Caesar or by a Cromwell?[262]

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[260] Dumas Malone, "*Jefferson and His Time,*" Vol. II: "*Jefferson and the Rights of Man*," quoted in Thomas P. Govan, "*Alexander Hamilton and Julius Caesar: A Note on the Use of Historical Evidence*," in "*The William and Mary Quarterly*," 3rd Ser., Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul.,1975)
[261] Quoted in Thomas P. Govan, "*Alexander Hamilton and Julius Caesar: A Note on the Use of Historical Evidence*," in "*The William and Mary Quarterly*," 3rd Ser., Vol. 32, No. 3 (Jul.,1975)
[262] Ibid.

Thomas P Govan's argument clearly demonstrates that there was hardly any instance to warrant the suspicion of 'Caesars' in Alexander Hamilton's political orientation. It also demonstrates the revolutionaries' suspicion of demagogues after the fashion of Cataline, Lucius Sergius Catilina, a Roman demagogue who had been successfully persecuted and exiled by Cicero in 70 B.C.[263]

Caesar was not only the subject of debate among the American revolutionaries for his political ambitions, but he was also an important character for the manner of his death. Especially during the constitutional debates of 1787 – 1788, "Antifederalists often adopted the names of such tyrant-slayers as Brutus and Cassius."[264] The significance placed upon these leading patricians of late Roman republic is a typical manifestation of the classical republican fear of corruption and the fall of republic thereof.

Cato the Younger, another one of the enemies of Caesar, had also been a popular pseudonym among the Founders. Cato had been known for his devotion to the mannerisms, and in some cases idiosyncrasies, of the Early Roman Republic. In the eyes of the revolutionaries he was the embodiment of the republican insistence of holding fast to the 'old virtuous ways.'

As mentioned above, the war against Britain had also generated 'homegrown' American myths. The classical figures also helped establish these myths on solid classical grounds. John Dickinson, for example, took on the name of 'Fabius,' after the Roman general, consul and dictator, who had been Hannibal's nemesis during the long march of the latter on the Italian peninsula. 'Fabius the Delayer' as he was at one time called in Rome, had procured the "guerrilla tactics [which] helped defeat Hannibal and the Carthaginians in the second Punic War, thereby preserving the republic."[265]

[263] Plutarch, "*Life of Cicero*," Book 17.1
[264] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 40
[265] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 40

The second most prominent source of classical heroes had been the Classical Athens. It must be noted that although the number of references may be less, much weight was placed upon the ancient Greek lawgivers. The Founders had displayed a fascination on many occasions with the ancient Greek city, which they held to be the wellspring of culture and learning even for the Romans. Carl J. Richard does not find it surprising that "many of the founders' Athenian heroes were aristocrats who had attempted unsuccessfully to rein in the mobs." As they were aware of their own difficulties in bringing about an ideal constitution and government and the cultivation of an ideal people, they were none too ignorant of the ancient Greek law-givers. Their heroes had been Lycurgus, the mythical patron of ancient Sparta, and Solon.[266]

In fact, the ancient heroes had been in the mouthpieces of both the 'loyalists' and the 'revolutionaries.' Charles Inglis, who had retorted to Thomas Paine's '*Common Sense,*' had asserted this necessity for moderation in his speech, "The True Interest of America Impartially Stated." Inglis proclaimed:

> In nothing is the wisdom of a legislator more conspicuous than in adapting his government to the genius, manners, disposition and other circumstances of the people with whom he is concerned. If this important point is overlooked, confusion will ensue; his system will sink into neglect and ruin. Whatever check or barriers may be interposed, nature will always surmount them, and finally prevail. It was chiefly by attention to this circumstance, that Lycurgus and Solon were so much celebrated; and that their respective republics rose afterwards to such eminence, and acquired such stability.[267]

Solon had been particularly popular in discussions of constitution, for the moderation he had exhibited in setting up the laws of Athens. He was famous for his dictum of setting up not the best government possible, but the best government that the people would accept. Jefferson would be reminded of this maxim when he would be working on a 'Public Money Reform.' He would recollect the wisdom of Solon when he realized "difficult it is to move or inflect the great machine of society, how impossible to

[266] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 55
[267] Charles Inglis, "*The True Interest of America Impartially Stated*" as it appears on the website (http://ahp.gatech.edu/true_interest_1776.html)

advance the notions of a whole people suddenly to ideal right." Jefferson affirms "the wisdom of Solon's remark, that no more good must be attempted than the nation can bear."[268]

John Adams, too, emphasizes the very same point. After relaying a very sympathetic account of Solon's reforms in Athens, he pinpoints the real persuasiveness of his laws

> He had not, probably, tried the experiment of a democracy in his own family, before he attempted it in the city, according to the advice of Lycurgus; but was obliged to establish such a government as the people would bear, not that which he thought the best, as he said himself.[269]

John Adams' work, "On Government," has large sections dedicated to the histories ancient cities, empires and law-givers. While ruminating on the successes and failures of the ancient states of Sparta, Athens and Rome, Adams finds

> The experiment of Lycurgus lasted seven hundred years, but never spread beyond the limits of Laconia. The process of Solon expired in one century; that of Romulus lasted but two centuries and a half.[270]

John Adams' interest in these ancient states had clearly been determinative of his own experience as a 'Founder,' as he confidently declares that "the institutions now made in America will not wholly wear out for thousands of years." His linear vision of history is also interesting and very important in account of its conclusions. Adams does not see an obstacle in the way of cultures and traditions from the ancient Egyptians, to the foundation of the United States of America:

> As the laws of Solon were derived from Crete and Egypt, were afterwards adopted by the Romans as their model, and have by them been transmitted to all Europe, they are a most interesting subject of inquiry.[271]

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[268] Thomas Jefferson, "*Letter to Walter Jones*," 1801, in John P Foley ed. "*The Jeffersonian Cyclopedia*," under "*Reform, Public money and*"
[269] John Adams, "*On Government*," in , "*The Works of John Adams*," Vo. 4,, 477
[270] Ibid., 297
[271] Ibid., 477

5.7 Governments of Antiquity

Both the historical accounts and observations, and the philosophical treatises of the governments of antiquity had featured prominently in the minds of the 'Founders.' The importance that can be attributed to their interest in the ancient forms of governments derives from the role of the individual in a republican society. Classical republicanism is the ideology, with perhaps the most taxing disposition towards the polity's citizens for it's insistence on the virtuousness of its citizens, and its constant preoccupation with the signs of corruption among them. A particularly interesting evidence of this attitude can be found in the post-war social life in the colonies, where the "Continental Association Committees in all counties, cities, and towns were ordered by the Congress to be 'attentively to observe the conduct of all persons,' to condemn publicly all violators as "enemies of American liberty," and to "break of all dealings" with them (…)"[272]

In their discussion of the proper citizenry their main sources of interest had been the "Greek republics of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. and the Roman republic from the sixth to the first century B.C."[273]

The allusions to the Roman Republic had been the most potent source of inspiration and comparison in the work to found the American Republic. The Founders had at their disposal a library of grim histories of the fates of the ancient republics. "History as written by Sallust and Plutarch," two of the most popular histories that the founders had at their disposal, "only too grimly showed the fate of empires grown too fat with riches." Gordon S. Wood draws a parallel that had often been made by the Founders, which accentuated the rise of Rome while her citizens had held fast to "their love of virtue, their simplicity of manners, [and] their recognition of true merit." The ancient historians had often demonstrated only too vividly that, when "they stretched their conquests too far and their Asiatic wars brought them luxuries they had never known before;" along with the corruption that ensured the republic's end. The

[272] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Great Republic*," 185
[273] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 74

omnipresent suspicion of corruption and the "steady encroachment of tyranny upon liberty," *programmed* the Founders to be "obsessed with spotting the early warning signs of impending tyranny, so that they might avoid the fate of their classical heroes."[274]

5.8 Constitutional Debates

The most vigorous phase of the references to the classics had been witnessed in the debates on the Constitution. Richard M. Gummere finds that "the preliminary discussions and debates on the Constitution, at the ratifying conventions, in the Federalist Papers, and in such publications as John Dickinson's Fabius letters," had seen the height of the classical influence in any era political of activity. "In no field were Greek and Roman sources more often invoked; and at no time were they more frequently cited," than the last quarter of the eighteenth century America, Gummere confirms. He also considers this period had also seen the work of applying the classical forms in a "workable form."

> The delegates to the Constitutional Convention assembled at a time when the influence of classics was at its height. They were not interested in mere window dressing or in popular slogans filched from history books. They dealt with fundamental ideas and considered them in the light of their applicability.[275]

Every aspect of the intended central government was being put to the test of classical antiquity. The proposed models for the heads of state were also a part of these discussions. Carl J. Richard notes some of these models that had been debated in the Constitutional Convention. According to Richard the founders had initially perceived 'plural executive' model to be flawed. The examples of Spartan Kings and Roman Consuls had been cited. While the former had co-ruled their *polis* with a degree of

[274] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 8
[275] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," pp. 174 - 175

unison, the latter institution had bred bitter competitions between the consuls, sometimes leading to disastrous situations.[276]

Even the terms that the presidents were to be elected for became a question that was tested against the practices in antiquity. To the proposition that the presidents should serve for four year periods, William Grayson protests "The [Roman] consuls were in office only two years. This quadrennial power cannot be justified by ancient history. There is hardly any instance where a republic trusted its executive so long with much power."[277] This evocation of the ancient constitutions as a source of legitimization is especially striking. It serves to highlight the notion that the nascent American nationalists were considering ancient republics as potent and tangible historical examples.

When the Founders were not debating the feasibility of the ancient government models, they were citing the instances where the actual ancient government had followed a just rule. Through these histories of Greek and Roman rules, the Founders could draw upon numerous examples of proper and improper conducts.

5.9 The Colony and the Metropolis

One of the most demonstrated examples of proper legislative behavior was on the subject of treatment of colonies. Richard M. Gummere cites the concept of colonies as one of the fundamental classical ideas for the American revolutionaries. Accordingly "the Greek concept of colony independent of the mother state," had been one of the most influential cries of injustice aimed at the British. Based on Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War, many revolutionary leaders, "from John Winthrop to Samuel Adams,' invoked the lenient treatment of Athens towards its colonies.[278]

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[276] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 15
[277] William Grayson cited in Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 78
[278] Richard M. Gummere, "*The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition*," pp. 97

This was not an altogether original conduct of nationalists. As Benedict Anderson observes in his investigation the similar advents of nationalism in the European colonies world-wide, he finds that "all were created by maritime expansion of the imperial core." Moreover, these European colonies had "at different times and to different degrees, felt themselves slighted and misruled by the metropole's political, military, and/or ecclesiastical emissaries."[279]

During the discussion on the nature of the union in the American continent, both parties used the examples of ancient colonies to illustrate the positive and negative aspects of unions. The interrelations of the Greek *poleis* had been the main topic of interest in these discussions. There were widely known cases in which the cooperating Greek city-states overcame insurmountable odds by virtue of their association during the Greco-Persian Wars. However, the first ancient confederacy to be invoked was the Amphictyonic League. According to Carl J. Richard, "the leading classicists of the eighteenth century believed that the council of the Amphictyonic League had served as a federal government." Both Federalists and Antifederalists based their discussions on this League's credentials as a federal system. Although it is now know that the League had been "a loose association of Greek city-states of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.," whose political power rested on its nature as "a religious body," on the basis of statements by Greek historians Dionysius, Strabo and Plutarch, to the Founders it represented a very real option.[280]

Achaean League was the second most referred-to unions of antiquity; the Achaean League in question here is the second union named as such.[281] Its significance lies in its *raison d'etre*, for the second Achaean League had come into existence against the threat posed by a Sparta against the Greek city-states located on the Gulf of Corinth. There was a threat of foreign intervention that each individual State of America was vulnerable against after their war of independence had been won. (Separate financial

[279] Benedict Anderson, "*To What Can Late Eighteenth-Century French, British, and American Anxieties Be Compared*," in *The American Historical Review*, Vol.106, No. 4 (2001)
[280] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 104
[281] Carl J. Richard, "*The Founders and the Classics*," 109

agreements with foreign nations, of course, were perceived to be a threat only felt by the Federalists. In fact many of the "Westerners were ready to deal with any government that could ensure access to the sea for their agricultural produce."[282])

John Adams, in his persona as Novanglus, would cite the conduct of Greek *metropoleis* towards their colonies; "there is nothing in the law of nations," Adams declares in 1776, "that requires that emigrants from a state should continue, or be made a part of the state." When "the Greeks planted colonies," the revolutionary continues, they "neither demanded nor pretended any authority over them, but they became distinct, independent commonwealths."[283]

One of the best demonstrations of this preoccupation of the revolutionaries comes in the form of Richard Bland's *An Inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies*. Bland, in this obvious comparison of the British colonies and the Corcyra, he argues that Thucydides

> would make the Corcyreans answer, that " every Colony, whilst used in a proper Manner, ought to pay Honour and Regard to its Mother State; but, when treated with injury and Violence, is become an Alien. They were not sent out to be the Slaves, but to be the Equals of those that remain behind.[284]

The finer points of ancient conducts of colonization were not limited to the case of Corcyra; in 1777, James Otis was answering a Tory's citation of the allegedly strict control of the Romans of their colonies:

> 'Tis well known the Grecians were kind, humane, just and generous toward their [colonies]. 'Tis as notorious that the Romans were severe, cruel, brutal, and barbarous toward theirs. I have ever please myself in thinking that Great Britain since the [Glorious] Revolution might be

[282] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Great Republic*," 231
[283] John Adams, in "*Novanglus and Massachusettensis or Political Essays Published In the Years of 1774 – 1775*," 81
[284] Richard Bland, "*An inquiry into the Rights of the British Colonies*," 26 ed. Earl Gregg Swem (1922)

> justly compared to Greece in its care and protection of its colonies. (…)[285]

These cases of 'maltreatments' were called into evidence by the colonies in their efforts to legitimize their revolution with historical precedents.[286] These cases are the clearest instances that show the importance of classical tradition in the newly rising American identity.

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The Founders' fascination with the classical histories can be characterized as an interest born out of fear for the fate of their own country. But other accounts such as Carl J. Richard's, whose narrative often portrays the most personal aspects of the Founders' interest in the classics, finds that "John Adams loved the early Roman republic so much that he frequently compared America with it."[287] Richard's narrative also blames "the horror and disgust which Roman historians' accounts of imperial corruption had instilled the founders' minds," to be responsible for their 'harsh' reaction to the encroachments of Britain upon their liberties.[288] Richard is not an author that shies away from using such descriptive words like 'hate,' 'fear,' or indeed 'disgust;' therefore both of the accounts given above can be insightful.

The significance of histories, of course, was not limited to ancient negative examples for the Founders. The authors of the classical texts, "writing at a time when the greatest day of the republic were crumbling or already gone," had in their histories "contrasted the growing corruption and disorder they saw about them with an imagined earlier republican world of ordered simplicity and Acadian virtue."[289] While the Founders made the most of these 'cautionary tales,' they had also looked optimistically towards their own future. As the beneficiaries of these long gone teachers, the Founders hoped, the Americans would rise above the limitations of the ancients.

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[285] James Otis cited in Carl J. Richard, "*Founders and the Classics*," 76
[286] See, above in CH.4 "Modes of Historiography"
[287] Carl J. Richard, "*Founders and the Classics*," 77
[288] Ibid., 85
[289] Gordon S. Wood, "*The Creation of the American Republic*," 51

Gordon S. Wood asserts that the Founders were very much infatuated "by the belief that they were beginning anew the work of their ancient republicans;" and this time they would succeed where the ancients had failed. Whereas "Cato and Cicero had lost the first round of combat against the tyranny of Caesar and Augustus," the Founders, who wore and paraded with their mantles in the New World were "starting afresh in [this] virgin country with limitless resources." These ancient statesmen had provided them with enough ammunition to "pack the punch that would win the second and decisive round."

The American revolutionaries had this particular sense of solidarity with the heroes of classical antiquity. Their reading of histories was not critical; they did not doubt the veracity of the claims of the ancient authors, they simply upheld those notions that they found to be 'right.' Therefore, Wood holds, it should not be "surprising that the founders referred to their classical works as often during the revolutionaries and constitutional periods as during the leisure of their retirement."[290]

[290] Ibid. 82

Chapter 6

Conclusion

It was an incompatibility in the identities of the settlers and those that had dominated in the political habitat of England that drove the former to a kind of exile in America. Initially, the colonists' identity had been defined in religious terms, but the act of 'removing' had been political in essence. This premise is better illustrated by the initially precarious conditions of these colonies in the New World; setting out on a self-imposed exile to an alien environment is an act demonstrating the persistence of the colonists to their liberties.

In America, the migrating English and Europeans had founded societies that would suit to their particular sense of political and religious organization. Though the practices may have varied from one colony to the other, one thing in common was the perseverance to uphold what each had perceived to be the correct way of implementing social order.

The colonists saw in America endless mass of land, and endless opportunities to establish themselves as they saw fit. The land was simply available and the existence of the original inhabitants of the continent hardly registered in their minds at all; accept when they had been in conflict with them. There was no moral inconsistency for them to take land when they could. It was the age-old act of 'just banishment of the faithless' that the Europeans were familiar with from their conflict with the Muslims. In short, their settlements could be fashioned in 'ideal' conditions; that is to say without the contention of the European 'order of things.'

This *ideality*, as opposed to the *reality* of the Old World that they had escaped from, encouraged 'migrants' to experiment with the utopian recipes that had influenced

them. In short, their settlements could be fashioned in 'ideal' conditions; that is to say without the contention of the European 'order of things.'

The nascent colonies would be populated by a landed citizenry to a great extent. Hardly comparable to the prevalent conditions in Europe, the colonists could aspire for new spots at the expense of the Amerindians. This problematic notion of availability of land would become very important for the nature of the constructions of the American identity.

Though the studies on the American Nationalism mostly focus on the Civil War period; that most significant stigma of national consciousness, a revision of history into a narrative more suitable for the purposes of the nascent nation, is present in the pre-revolutionary America. Whereas the language before the decision for independence had been those of radical British in opposition to the contemporary affairs of the government, with the decision to secede from England, the discourse changes considerably. The colonists become emigrants, a designation that is defined not in accordance with the place of origin as 'colonist' is, but in opposition to it. When the designation of American ultimately becomes the principal one, at that point the need to establish themselves as a separate European civilization occurs.

In this respect, there arises an interesting concept in Benedict Anderson's analysis of the emergence of nationalism in European colonies; a transference of almost psychological connotations. In his examination, Anderson finds that in most of the cases of liberation movements, there is a persistent "allure of the metoropole and its high civilization." Although the metropole is ultimately rejected as a legitimate ruler, the civilization that it represents is not abandoned altogether. But rather the loyalty felt towards the source of civilization is directed at the concept of civilization itself.[291] It was in accordance to this that the argument for the construction of the American identity on the basis of European civilization was forwarded.

[291] Benedict Anderson, "*To What Can Late Eighteenth-Century French, British, and American Anxieties Be Compared*," in "*The American Historical Review*," Vol. 106, No. 4 (2001)

The construction of the American identity, and the subsequent rise of American nationalism was an intellectual endeavor. Though hardly unique in this aspect comparative to the equivalent transitions in the world, the American experience stood out in some respects. The main philosophy prevalent in the political output of the revolutionary generation was upholding the rights and liberties that they thought they had naturally inherited. The source of this inheritance makes the American case interesting: the framers of the American identity chose to base their claims for independence on the heritage of virtually every period of European political tradition and philosophy.

Despite the fact that some of the revolutionary literature dealing with Europe condemns it for its corruption, the idealized America was built upon the same foundation of European heritage. The founders have idealized the European history, and have based their claims for maltreatment on these precedents they took to be their own.

Hans Kohn's optimistic envisioning of the young American nation presents the case for civilization in America. According to Kohn, despite "its human and all-too-human shortcomings, the United States represents in principle the most characteristic modern Western society." It had not only secured its place in the world as a co-inheritor of civilization, but it had surpassed it in the eyes of "Europeans and Americans alike" as it came to be associated with "the reign of liberty and rationality contrasting with the despotism and superstition then still prevailing in Europe."[292]

Edwin A. Miles casts a critical eye towards this problematic when he observes a shift in Americans' historical perception of *ideals*. The English Constitution, which had been previously declared to be the 'most perfect constitution' the world had ever seen is later defined as unfulfilled promise, the failure of the Glorious Revolution. Miles finds that the citation of English tradition, which had been the norm before the Declaration of

[292] Hans Kohn, "*American Nationalism*," pg. 38

Independence, is later abandoned "when they severed their ties with Great Britain." Their answer to this crisis in loyalty and identity had been solved by an insightful look at their most cherished values, where the brilliance that had been the 'Wise Greece' and 'Glorious Rome' stared at them in form of their histories. "It was altogether natural that they should do so," assures Miles, for "Since the renaissance the literature and history of the classical world had fascinated the educated men of the western world, and this appeal had been singularly irresistible to advocates of republicanism."[293]

The infatuation with the classical history, not only in general culture, but also in the very serious discussions about the construction of the new American State, clearly shows the potency of the classical tradition in the determinations of the newly forming American people. In fact, it can be asserted that the founders have claimed the Golden Ages of the states of classical antiquity as their own. Therefore, as Anthony D. Smith has outlined, with this appropriation the classical history was made available in the construction of American identity. This had been made possible with the intrinsic *transubstantiation* of civilization into a basis of identity. As they were descendents of the same 'stock,' they were continuing their work in the young republic.

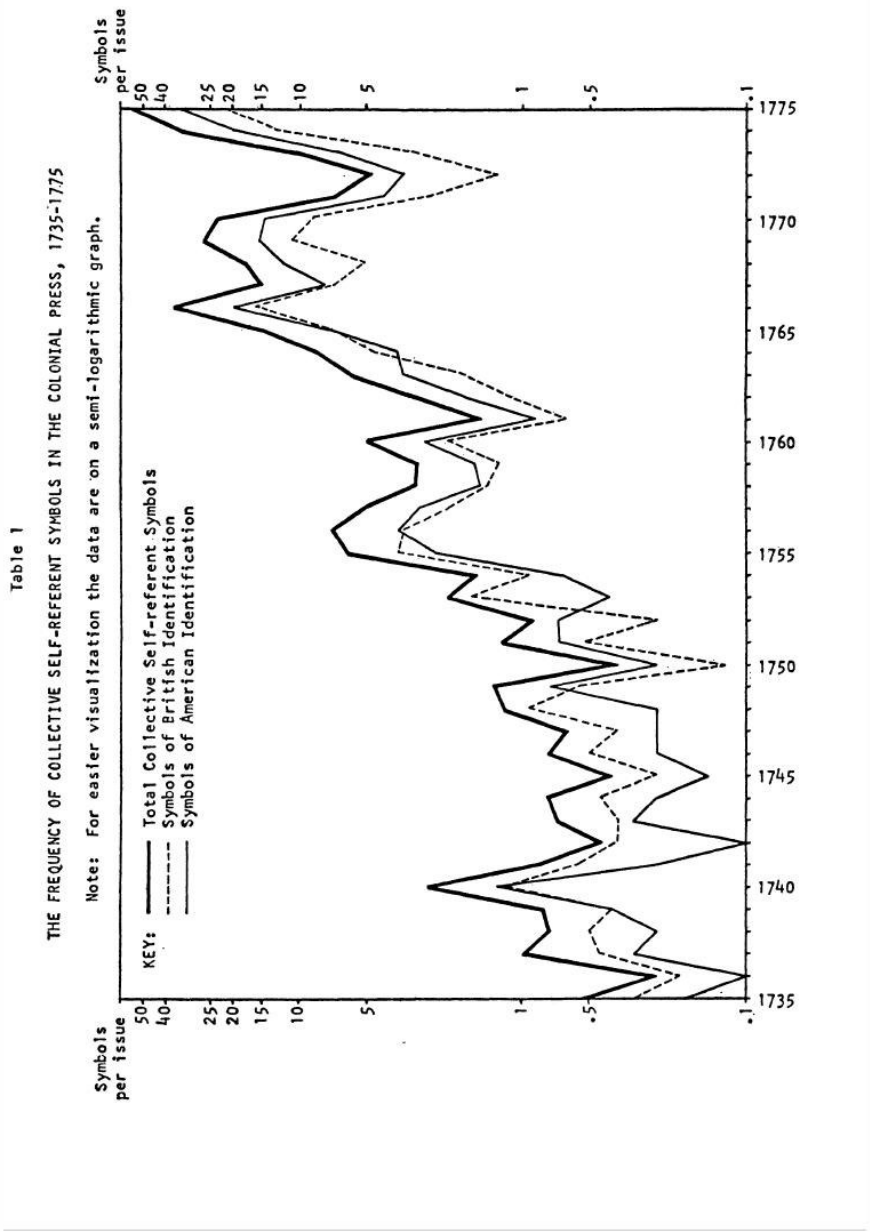
For, the only truly efficient source of legitimization flows through the idea of civilization. "Is our new country worthy of a place in the world?" the founders of a nascent nation had to ask themselves. And their work was not done until the positive answer to this question is cemented in the minds of their people. In the case of America, the 'Founders' supplied their people with an idealized past, a mythos of both themselves and the Golden Age and finally an inspiring identity with their use of classical tradition. "Consequently," Edwin A. Miles observes, "Americans called their nation "this embryo of Rome," "The new Rome," or "our Rome of the West."[294]

The history of the birth of American Nation, as presented here, portrays the colonists as a politically active and nonconformist people emigrating mainly from

[293] Edwin A. Miles, "*The Young American Mind and the Classical World*," in "*Journal of the History of Ideas*," Vol. 35, No. 2 (1974)
[294] Ibid.

England to found societies betters suited to their perception of liberties. These colonists would, in time, evolve a kind of world-view that was shaped mainly by their particular heritages and the circumstances of the New World. Coupled with this evolving sense of being a colonist, the political vehemence of the Revolutionaries that called for the independence of these people would shape the characteristics of the American Identity.

APPENDIX A



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