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Tracing the Evolution of An American Identity Through the Study & Analysis of the Boston Massacre Orations (1771-1783)

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Tracing the Evolution of An American Identity Through the Study & Analysis of the Boston Massacre Orations

(1771-1783)

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Abstract:

On the evening of March 5, 1770, a beleaguered detachment of British soldiers fired into a crowd of perhaps 400 Bostonians, killing three men instantly and wounding eight more; two of the wounded died within the next few days. This muddled episode, soon labeled “the Boston Massacre,” brought to the forefront all of the struggles and frustrations that had arisen between British authorities and Bostonians over the previous half-dozen years. Today the event is remembered as a critical moment in the coming of the American Revolution. In the Spring of 1770 it was not clear that it would be remembered at all – or, if it was, that those who did would be able to agree on its meaning.

Boston’s Sons of Liberty, above all, were determined not only that the “massacre” should be remembered, but that it should be recalled in a specific way: as a moral lesson for Bostonians in the dangers of the unrestrained power of the state, as exercised by standing armies quartered on civilians in time of peace. They chose to commemorate the event by sponsoring a series of public orations, to be given in Boston each year on the anniversary of the incident. These orations which were clearly intended both to foster remembrance and to create a shared sense of meaning, were offered annually from 1771 through 1783 and published in pamphlet form. Taken together these fascinating documents open a window into both the evolution of radical political rhetoric in Revolutionary America and the emergence of an American cultural identity. This thesis analyzes the orations and assesses their importance in both of these dimensions.

Several legal, social, economic, and political histories have described the Boston Massacre and its role in the coming of the Revolution. The Boston Massacre Orations, however, have never been systematically analyzed, and hence exist today as a valuable and relatively untapped resource. These extraordinary documents serve as valuable primary source documents that allow for a micro-level analysis of the stages of ideological development in a pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary society. When analyzed as a cohesive unit the Orations bring to light four distinct stages of ideological development centered around the improper placement of a standing army in a city during a time of peace.

Since the town of Boston was the only colonial city to suffer a standing army twice before the Declaration of Independence, they had experienced the cold and merciless rule of the British tyranny long before any other colony. Furthermore, the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord as well as at the Battle of Bunker Hill all in Massachusetts in 1775 catapulted the Bostonian people to the forefront of the movement for independence. The Sons of Liberty effectively used the Boston Massacre Orations to influence and indirectly control the trajectory of ideological development in Boston, and eventually all colonies. The Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party became symbolic of Boston, allowing them to then be used as evidence to prove the British ministerial conspiracy against the colonies. By spearheading the movement for colonial rights, the Sons of Liberty and by extension, the Massacre Orators, served as loyal watchmen and guardians of the fundamental rights of man. While independence was not their initial aim, the Boston Massacre Orations exist to demonstrate the long and conflicted struggle that the people of colonial North America endured in order to create a virtuous and free society.
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-- Brendan A. Shea
On the evening of March 5, 1770, a beleaguered detachment of British soldiers fired into a crowd of perhaps 400 Bostonians, killing three men instantly and wounding eight more; two of the wounded died within the next few days. This muddled episode, soon labeled “the Boston Massacre,” brought to the forefront all of the struggles and frustrations that had arisen between British authorities and Bostonians over the previous half-dozen years. Today the event is remembered as a critical moment in the coming of the American Revolution. In the Spring of 1770 it was not clear that it would be remembered at all – or, if it was, that those who did would be able to agree on its meaning.

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Several legal, social, economic, and political histories have described the Boston Massacre and its role in the coming of the Revolution. The Boston Massacre Orations, however, have never been systematically analyzed, and hence exist today as a valuable
and relatively untapped resource. While scholars such as John Phillip Reid, *In Defiance of the Law*, have quoted the orations to demonstrate the threat that English subjects understood a standing army to be, no published scholarly analysis has treated the orations as a coherent set of texts. This lack of scholarship has created a gap in our understanding of how the experience of Bostonians acted as the catalyst for the American Revolution and the role they played in creating a model for the ‘American Identity.’ Massacre orations serve as an effective gauge for the political atmosphere in a pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary society. These orations are an important tool for not only understanding how the events between 1770 and 1783 shaped our cultural American identity, but how each of these orations represented a significant ideological shift in the social and political identity of Boston’s political radicals. Through the study and analysis of these orations, four distinct shifts in identity have been brought to light.

To understand the importance of these orations one must have a firm grasp of what had been the primary source of political conflict prior to the Boston Massacre, and how this conflict continued to expand following the massacre. Secondary scholarship has provided the necessary historical scope to understand the orations as well as the political atmosphere in Boston. Scholars have generally agreed that taxation without consent, the stationing of regular troops among civilians during peacetime, and ultimately the use of lethal force by troops during peacetime led to massive discontent in Boston. However, analysis of the orations will demonstrate that those fundamental issues initiated a progressive shift in the minds of Bostonians who came to think of themselves no longer as British, but American. To understand the impact of the Boston Massacre, one must first analyze the causes and ideology from a macro-perspective while progressively
narrowing the focus to a micro-level. As John Adams famously wrote to Hezekiah Niles in 1818,

“But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments, of their duties and obligations… This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people was the real American Revolution.1

Bernard Bailyn’s book, The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution, has served for a generation as the cornerstone of an ideological interpretation of the politics of British America in this period. Bailyn analyzed not only the Parliamentary taxes and reforms which were implemented prior to and following the Boston Massacre, but how the use of revolutionary literature and pamphlets were widely distributed throughout Boston and the colonies. The distribution of pamphlets and literature was a vital aspect of communication throughout the colonies. Bailyn is one of the few scholars who makes note of the Massacre orations, which he believed to be an important expansion of the pamphlet. According to Bailyn, orations took a form similar to that of a sermon, and were conducted as a celebration or remembrance on the anniversary of a given event. The Boston Massacre Orations were created and sanctioned following the outcome of the *Rex v. Preston* case, where the soldiers who took part in the Boston Massacre were acquitted. Bailyn gave no in-depth analysis of the orations, other than to assert their creation as an extension of the pamphlet and to highlight their creation as a response to the standing army controversy.

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The Sons of Liberty used the orations to allow Boston’s radicals the necessary platform to argue that the seeds of a larger conspiracy against liberty lay in the actions of British officials following the conclusion of the Seven Years War. Key to this argument were the twin beliefs that a standing army as well as taxation without consent were the engines of tyranny. From these premises and the evidence that the Massacre and related events furnished, the radicals constructed a narrative of oppression that convinced some colonists that the British Parliament sought to enslave them. Bailyn’s insights into the political ideologies and framework of the period not only helped to trace to evolution of an American identity, but also helped to provide context for the ideas contained in the orations themselves. Bailyn’s work effectively addressed the issue of what ideas lay at the root of the American Revolution.

Pauline Maier’s study of the Sons of Liberty, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776* continued to develop a similar to Bailyn’s, but the new and significant question which Maier raised was, “How did political interest groups such as the Sons of Liberty motivate people to join their cause?” Maier’s work provided an important step to understanding early colonial history, but more importantly how the town of Boston acted as the center for revolutionary activity. Maier traced the evolution of the Sons of Liberty from a group who, “organized against Britain’s Stamp Act of 1765,” when “independence was mentioned only as a gloomy possibility which, hopefully, timely action could preclude”

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2 For another important work to understanding the radicalism of the American Revolution see Gordon S. Wood. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1993) which explores the radical shift in the social and political nature of the American Revolution, particularly the want and denial of the colonists English rights.
into the leaders of a movement for colonial liberation.\textsuperscript{3} Maier’s narrative of resistance, radicalization, and revolution coincides with the creation of an American identity as a project of the Sons of Liberty. By understanding the nature of the opposition, as well as the men who led the opposition, Maier established the role that The Sons of Liberty played in the early development of a ‘Bostonian’ identity.\textsuperscript{4}

The Boston Massacre was without question one of the iconic events in the mobilization of the Sons of Liberty. Hiller B. Zobel continued to narrow the historical scope as he made the events of March 5\textsuperscript{th} the sole focus of his book, \textit{The Boston Massacre}. Zobel painted a masterful picture of how the British troops were provoked through the throwing of ice, horse manure, and snow along with a wide variety of insults, yet were still framed as the guilty party. Zobel’s central question was, “How does the legal interpretation of the Boston Massacre effect the popular interpretation?” Zobel argues that the way in which the people of Boston restrained themselves from harming the troops after the shots were fired, along the appointment of John Adams as lead defense council for the accused troops, allowed the people of Boston to portray themselves as the victims rather than the aggressors. By taking all available measure to ensure a fair trial, the people of Boston were able to avoid being labeled as “biased against the mother country” and were therefore seen as the victim of an oppressive

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{3} Pauline Maier, \textit{From Resistance to Revolution}, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1991) Preface, p.1
  \item \textsuperscript{4} For more ideological source material see Richard Archer. \textit{As If An Enemy's Country: The British Occupation of Boston and The Origins of Revolution} (New York: Oxford UP, 2010) which explores the correlation between the British military’s occupation of Boston and hostilities that arose as a result. Also see Benjamin L. Carp. \textit{Rebels Rising} (New York: Oxford UP, 2007) for an ideological examination of how the same events were portrayed in different colonies.
\end{itemize}
British rule. Important as this insight was, however, Zobel’s interest in the case remained confined to its legal and political dimensions, he made little use of the orations in explaining the significance of the Massacre.

*In Defiance of the Law*, by John Phillip Reid provided a necessary supplement to Zobel’s legal history. While Zobel primarily explored the impact of the court case *Rex v. Preston* and the implications of its outcome in the colonies, Reid sought to establish a fundamental misunderstanding between the colonists and the British Parliament. “The imperial government premised its claims on the eighteenth-century British constitution of parliamentary supremacy, while American whigs defended colonial rights by appealing to the seventeenth-century English constitution of customary restraints on arbitrary power.”

This fundamental disagreement on the source of the rights of the governed pushed the town of Boston into a very tight corner. As Maier and Bailyn argued, the Sons of Liberty were suspicious of a Parliamentary conspiracy to enslave the rights of the colonies, but the difference in opinion that existed between colonies and Parliament left the legality of Parliament’s measures purely subjective. In order to bring light to a populace shrouded in darkness, and clarity to an unclear situation, Boston’s political radicals mobilized the unique and interdependent structure that existed only in Boston to test the limits and bounds of Parliament’s authority.

Since there is no scholarship available that analyzes and assesses the orations, the argumentation of authors such as Bailyn, Carp, and Zobel allow us to reconstruct a picture of colonial Boston vital to understanding the social and political impact of the

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orations. Attempting to understand the orations without a firm grasp of the nature of the Bostonian people and their leaders would produce a rather colorless interpretation of the speeches. The orations themselves fill a significant gap in our history because they provide a fine grained, up close, micro-interpretation of the American Revolution that brings to light the distinct and traceable steps that the Bostonian radicals took in developing and shaping the idea of a new ‘Republican man.’ The current available historical accounts of the Boston Massacre were all written long after the event itself, making the interpretation of the event and its causes substantially less difficult. Even Adams’s observation made to Hezekiah Niles in 1818 fails to capture the emotional and political conflict as it was understood at the time in which it was happening. Through the incorporation of secondary sources we can re-create a picture of Boston that when considered in light of the orations, opens a new window to our understanding of the creation and expansion of the American identity.

Colonial Boston was a city of interdependent relationships in which the lives of the rich and the poor were tied together by commercial activities and mutual interests. It was this city John Adams recalled when he observed in 1794, “All the rich men will have many of the poor, in various trades, manufactures & other occupations in life, dependent on them for their daily bread.” 6 The people of Boston had their differences, but the wharfs and the waterfront formed the heart of their community and they knew it. The source of Boston’s uniqueness was the waterfront which gave, “the people of the waterfront a sense of community identification and allegiance.” 7 This sense of communal

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6 Carp, Rebels Rising, 28
7 Ibid
allegiance was fundamental to the involvement of many young men with the Sons of Liberty.

Boston served as one of the commercial hubs of colonial North America, exporting rum, fish, whale oil, lumber, naval stores, and foodstuffs. Imported items consisted of molasses, wine, brandy, clothing, ironware, glassware, tea, sugar, and luxury items in return. This thriving commerce employed more than half of the city’s working population of craftsmen, shopkeepers, laborers, and others. With such large numbers of the Bostonians employed in occupations directly related to the waterfront, the owners of the various wharfs and the wealthy such as John Hancock shared in the collective life of the community in ways unlike any other that existed in colonial America.

What specifically was it about the Boston waterfront community that held Bostonians in such mutual relation, despite the vast differences in wealth among them? There are, in fact, two answers to this question. In the first place Parliament held the economic well-being of all of colonial Americans, including the greater merchant kings and the humblest artisans and laborers, in its hands. In the second, Boston endured a series of tragic events in the years leading up to the implementation of the Sugar Act in 1764, that united Bostonians in the conviction that their community had been singled out for special abuse.

The Seven Years War had taken a significant emotional as well as economic toll on Boston; at its end the town owed creditors £500,000 for military expenses

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8 Carp, Rebels Rising, 27
9 Ibid
notwithstanding a £350,000 reimbursement from Parliament.\textsuperscript{10} At the end of the war the average Bostonian saw his taxes rise by 60% to pay this debt, a tremendous burden for many families. In this context a tax collector named Samuel Adams grew popular for being “lenient” in his collections, while John Hancock, “so wealthy that countless Bostonians either worked for him or were in debt to him,” earned the gratitude of many by forbearance in calling in the debts due to him and his firm.\textsuperscript{11} Bostonians gratitude for such help resulted in both Hancock and Adams being elected to positions of trust, such as moderator of the Boston Town Meeting, during the 1760s.

The Great Fire of March, 1760 compounded Boston’s suffering when it destroyed roughly 10% of all dwellings (220 families lost their homes) as well as 175 warehouses, shops, and commercial buildings. The reported damages from this fire alone were approximately £100,000.\textsuperscript{12} The destruction of these buildings added to the already heavy burden facing the average Bostonian, but the small pox epidemic that raged from December, 1763 to July, 1764 took a more personal toll by killing another 170 people, 124 from disease and 46 from inoculation.\textsuperscript{13} This series of tragedies made the Sugar Act particularly obnoxious to the Bostonians whose heavy debts and taxes seemed nearly insupportable in the midst of a protracted post-war depression. It is for this reason that Bernard Bailyn in \textit{The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution}, and Pauline Maier in \textit{From Resistance to Revolution} argued that colonial radicals such as Samuel

\textsuperscript{10} Tax revenue of the town of Boston in 1761 was 100,000 pounds. Since the town owed 500,000 pounds it led to a 60% increase in taxes for the average person  
\textsuperscript{According to Archer, \textit{As If An Enemy’s Country} (New York: Oxford UP, 2010) 8  
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid, 27,30  
\textsuperscript{12} Shortly following the Great Fire, Faneuil Hall and Harvard Hall also caught fire and were subsequently rebuilt. Ibid, 9  
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, 9
Adams and John Hancock were able to stimulate support for their hypothesis that a larger conspiracy was afoot to enslave colonists by depriving them of the property on which their liberties depended.

The refusal of Hancock, Adams, and the Bostonian merchants to press ruthlessly for payment of private and public debts encouraged common Bostonians to blame outsiders for their misfortune. When the Sugar Act was ultimately implemented, members of the Bostonian elite had established themselves as paternal figures who looked out for their fellow citizens best interests. The trust accorded to such paternalist “patriots,” no less than their wealth, gained the Boston Massacre orators a favorable public hearing, and helped the Sons of Liberty to raise significant resistance against the Parliamentary legislation. By earning the loyalties of the town in the early to mid-1760’s, Adams, Hancock, and other Sons of Liberty were prepared to lead in the decade of crisis that followed.

As Parliamentary measures of increasingly threatening nature followed the Sugar Act -- the Stamp Act, the Quartering Act, and the Townshend Acts culminated in the stationing of four regiments of British soldiers in Boston in 1768. The Sons of Liberty maintained that this proved conspirators within the ministry were plotting to put a chokehold on their livelihoods and to destroy their liberties. The garrisoning of Boston proved particularly counterproductive: as the historian Hiller B. Zobel observed, troops could only have succeeded with the consent of the colonists. “Whatever the merits of British revenue policy, whatever the political practicalities of filling the customs service (and for that matter, the governor’s chair) with British place-seekers, the enterprise could
succeed only if supported by American good will.”

Samuel Adams said the same thing more directly: “Four hundred, or even six hundred, soldiers simply could not withstand a population of sixteen thousand, its citizens adequately armed.” Merchants such as William Molineux used their influence over the working people of Boston to raise large-scale resistance in the hope of making it seem as if the British troops themselves caused all of the problems. “What the radicals needed, as they clearly must have realized, was some kind of incident in which the town rather than the army would appear as the injured party.”

The incident that gave the Bostonian leaders the evidence they needed of ministerial malignity, occurred on March 5, 1770.

The magnitude of the Massacre cannot be understated because, as John Shy argued in his book *Toward Lexington*, Bostonians saw it as the abrupt transformation of the troops from peacekeepers into enforcers of a plot to destroy their lives and liberties. Initially the troops had acted with restraint and many of them had begun to assimilate into society; but when their volley killed Samuel Gray, Samuel Maverick, James Caldwell, and Crispus Attucks radicals had all the evidence they needed to demand their removal as a threat to the community and its citizens’ rights. The actual facts of the case mattered less than how the people of Boston in its immediate aftermath interpreted the episode: as the culmination of a conspiracy that had begun with the Sugar and Stamp Acts’ attempts to impose taxation without consent. The decision of radical leaders to commemorate the Massacre annually thereafter reflected a determination to harness that sense of outrage.

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15 Ibid, 181
16 Ibid
and to build a durable ideological explanation upon it – a public memory that would be sufficient to sustain resistance to British “tyranny” for years to come.

Many prominent Bostonians had long feared the possibility of hostile encounters with the standing army following its deployment to Boston. Samuel Adams noted this fear in 1768 when he asserted,

“(A standing army) is an army rais’d, and kept within the community, to defend it against any sudden attacks. – If it be ask’d who is to judge, when the community is in danger of such attacks? One would naturally answer, The community itself: For who can be more proper judges of it than they, for whose safety alone, and at whose expence alone, they are kept and maintain’d. The people, while they enjoy the blessings of freedom, and the security of their property, are generally early enough in their apprehension of common danger; especially when it is so threatening as to require the military aid: And their judgment of the necessity or expediency of a standing army, is generally, at least as honest, as that of their superiors.¹⁸

Following the Boston Massacre, Adams and the colonial radicals were certain of one thing, the most eminent danger facing the town of Boston was the British Army stationed in their town. The question at this point then became clear, “What are our specific rights as Englishman? And if they have been violated, how do we reclaim those rights?” In 1771, the Sons of Liberty would receive their first opportunity to attempt to answer and address this question in the public forum following the Boston Massacre.

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¹⁸ Reid, *In Defiance of the Law*, 53
Chapter One: An English Dilemma

When printed in pamphlet form, as all were, the orations carried a title page that closely followed the form of the first:

AN

ORATION

DELIVERED

March, 5th, 1771

AT THE

REQUEST of the INHABITANTS

Of the Town of

BOSTON;

To COMMEMORATE THE

BLOODY TRAGEDY

OF THE

FIFTH of MARCH, 1770.

BY JAMES LOVELL

A committee of individuals who were normally either in the Sons of Liberty, or had strong political ties to them, selected each orator. These committees found men who not only stood for their cause, but often had significant personal experience/s with British hostilities and were therefore in a position to provide credible information to the general public.

1 Lovell, James, An Oration; Delivered March 5th, 1771, Boston, Edes & Gill, 1771, 3
audience. While I was unable to uncover the historical record as to who was the first to propose the orations, we do know who chose the first orator. For the first oration this selection panel consisted of John Hancock, Samuel Adams, Samuel Pemberton, Benjamin Church, Richard Dana, and Henderson Inches. Samuel Adams was the leader of the Sons of Liberty while John Hancock and Joseph Warren were both important social and political figures who allied themselves with Adams and were themselves selected to give orations.² Like these men, the typical Boston Massacre Orator was a college-educated, upstanding political and social figure in the community. James Lovell was given the honor of addressing the people for the first time following the Boston Massacre, and his selection as well as his oration set the mold for all of the orators who followed.

In order to understand what the Sons of Liberty sought to accomplish with the first oration, one must understand the fundamental question that existed in Boston during this time. The Boston community was socially as well as economically cohesive, furnishing the Boston Massacre Orators with an audience that was capable of taking common action if its members could understand themselves as sharing rights that were being threatened from without, which helped give the Boston Massacre Orators an audience that would ideally understand the specific rights that the colonists held as English subjects.³ Lovell was selected to address the danger of a standing army in

² Lovell, An Oration, 4

³ According to John Phillip Reid, In Defiance of the Law, (Chapel Hill: The University of NC Press, 1981) By maintaining a standing army during peacetime Parliament was in violation of the sixth article of the English Bill of Rights. 80,85
relation to Boston’s welfare and its inhabitants’ rights; his task was to educate Bostonians on why Parliament’s measures were both illegal and unconstitutional.

James Lovell was 32 when chosen as the inaugural Massacre orator. The son of a school teacher who was himself a noted public speaker, Lovell earned a reputation in his youth as a rake; he fathered an illegitimate son that he did not formally recognize until 1759. Lovell was then forced to confess and publicly repent his transgression in order to remain a church member. Lovell was ultimately forgiven and was still allowed to deliver the valedictory oration when he graduated from Harvard in 1757. Among his early achievements, Lovell was asked to deliver a funeral sermon for a local townsperson, Tutor Flynt, based on the acclaim that his valedictory remarks had earned him. Lovell was also known to have shared the sentiments and political ideologies of Bostonian radicals and was an active member in the Sons of Liberty. He was, thus, a man of some standing if not yet a major leader; he retained the reputation for oratorical ability while having overcome the taint of youthful scandal. If the committee was taking something of a risk in appointing him it was also choosing a man whose proven eloquence was matched by his political and social connections to the Boston elite.

The crowd that turned out to hear Lovell speak was so large that Faneuil Hall could not accommodate the audience forcing the oration to be given from Old South.

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5 Ibid
6 Ibid
7 Ibid, 31-32
8 Ibid,33
9 Shipton, *Sibley’s Vol XIV*, 34
Lovell began his address with a conventional display of humility aimed at gaining the sympathetic attention of his audience:

The certainty of being favoured with your kindest partiality and candor, in a poor attempt to execute the part to which you have invited me, has overcome the objection of my inability to perform it in a proper manner; and I now beg the favor of your animating countenance.  

Having suggested to the Bostonians that he was one of them, and that he viewed the collective interests of the community as his central concern, Lovell moved immediately to focus on the pressing issues at hand. His argument was rooted in classical republicanism, and couched as a plea for Parliament to return to a virtuous state, such that the colonists could trust it to protect their rights as Englishmen. If not, he warned, the use of military power could undermine freedom, as it had before:

Athens once was free; a citizen, a favorite of the people, by an artful story gained a trifling guard of fifty men; ambition taught him ways to enlarge that number: he destroyed the commonwealth and made himself the tyrant of the Athenians. Caesar by the length of his command in Gaul got the affections of his army, marched to Rome, overthrew the state, and made himself perpetual dictator. By the same instruments, many less republics have been made to fall a prey to the devouring jaws of tyrants…

Lovell raised the issue of the standing army as a danger largely because it was so familiar to his audience: English subjects, and by extension North American colonists, argued that colonial readers understood the classic account of ancient Rome and Greece as a story of conflict between liberty and tyranny where tyranny ultimately prevailed. By drawing on the classical references, the Boston Massacre Orators placed Great Britain as the next great empire to fall. Furthermore, Colbourn argued that Roman history was used to show “political decay brought by luxury and magistrates remaining too long in office.”

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10 Lovell, An Oration, 5
11 Lovell, An Oration, 8
12 H. Trevor Colbourn, The Lamp of Experience,(W.W. Norton & Company, 1974) argued that colonial readers understood the classic account of ancient Rome and Greece as a story of conflict between liberty and tyranny where tyranny ultimately prevailed. By drawing on the classical references, the Boston Massacre Orators placed Great Britain as the next great empire to fail. Furthermore, Colbourn argued that Roman history was used to show “political decay brought by luxury and magistrates remaining too long in office.” 23,19
had been deeply indoctrinated in the dangers that standing armies posed to political liberty. While the occupation of Boston was clear evidence of improper use of military force in a time of peace, however, the presence of the army, Lovell, argued manifested an even deeper problem, taxation without consent. In a legitimate government, which at this point Lovell still believed Parliament to be, no English subject would be taxed without the consent, given by the member of Parliament who represented him, and pursued and defended his local community’s interests. Lovell used his speech to better establish himself as a representative of the Bostonian community as well as to establish the rights of the colonists. Acting as one of his community’s leaders, Lovell sought to warn the town of the dangers that an unjust and tyrannical government could pose to a just and free society: to be compelled by force to submit to laws that had been imposed on a people without their consent was the very definition of tyranny. Without representation Bostonians could not hope to protect themselves or their families from ruin:

“When did our assembly pass an act to hazard all the property, the liberty and lives of their constituents? What check have we upon a British Army? Can we disband it? Can we stop it’s pay?”

13 Bostonians had been warned, well before the Massacre, of the dangers posed by the troops; the Rev. Andrew Eliot had argued in 1768 that with the stationing of soldiers in the town, “To have a standing army! Good God! What can be “Things are come to an unhappy crisis; there will never be that harmony between Great Britain and her colonies that there hath been; all confidence is at an end; and the moment there is any bloodshed, all affection will cease.” Archer, As If An Enemies Country, xiv

14 Lovell, An Oration, 10
With these questions Lovell focused his audience’s attention on the dangers inherent in unchecked government power. Like a school teacher asking his pupils small questions in order to lead them to a larger and more important truth, Lovell used these questions to show how the two issues of a standing army and taxation without consent were interwoven. Since Bostonians had no power over the military force that occupied their town, troops were not protecting them, but rather oppressing them. Furthermore, the significance of the transition to the problem of taxation without consent was that this issue was the oldest and most prevalent in the minds of the colonists following the end of the Seven Years War. Lovell in effect was asserting the notion that a larger British conspiracy was afoot to destroy the liberties of the colonies.

Fundamental to an Englishman’s rights was the idea that the state existed and should function to protect the interests of the whole people, as articulated by duly elected representatives. Later Boston Massacre Orations would follow Lovell’s position quite closely, describing it as the central issue which ultimately led to the tragedy of March 5, 1770. The Stamp Act of 1765 provided the colonists with “the overwhelming evidence, as they saw it, that they were faced with conspirators against liberty determined at all costs to gain ends which their words dissembled – that was signaled to the colonists after 1763, and it was this above all else that in the end propelled them into Revolution.”15 James Lovell used this first oration to not only commemorate the Boston Massacre and address the most pressing and immediate threat of a standing army during peacetime, but to recall and stress the previous Parliamentary transgressions which could be used as evidence to support the initial campaign for the preservation of an Englishmen’s rights.

Having established the rights of the English colonists, Lovell sought to warn the town of Boston that there might indeed be a larger conspiracy afoot.

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James Lovell traced out the path for the next two orators Warren and Church to answer the question, “What are our rights as English citizens? And how do we reclaim them?” Joseph Warren was one of the most prominent, respected, and well-liked men of Boston. After graduating from Harvard with the class of 1759, Warren began his rise to prominence in the medical profession as a doctor who was a successful inoculator during an outbreak of smallpox in 1763.16 This episode allowed Warren to establish himself as a prominent physician and benefactor of the community at large, “inoculating all comers with great success, and the poor, gratis, for which the town voted him official thanks.”17 This public recognition firmly established his credibility as a reliable and decent man amongst the common people.

Warren also belonged to the most prominent social circle of radicals in Boston, remembering James Otis, Samuel Adams, and John Hancock among his friends. Warren confirmed his role as a political leader by publishing articles in the Boston Gazette, published by fellow Sons of Liberty member Benjamin Edes that were notable for their blunt, even inflammatory, rhetoric. For example, he published an address to Governor Francis Bernard in February 1768, which forthrightly accused him of

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17 Ibid, 511
Enmity to the Province. We have had full Proof of your Cruelty to a loyal People. No Age has perhaps furnished a more glaring Instance of obstinate Perseverance in the Path of Malice, than in now exhibited….”

Such overt antagonism to the much-reviled governor earned Warren a place on the Boston Committee of Correspondence; his zeal, rather than his military experience, later gained him commission as a Second Major General in the army prior to the Battle of Bunker Hill.

Warren’s capacity for outrage was evident in his first oration, but he took great care to build his case deliberately, working from general principles to the specific situation of Boston in 1772. While Lovell had begun by focusing on the importance of retaining an Englishman’s Rights and merely hinted at the possibility of a larger conspiracy, Warren began by positing the pervasiveness of conspiracies against liberty:

> When we turn over the historic page, and trace the rise and fall of states and empires; the might revolutions which have so often varied the face of the world strike our minds with solemn suprize, and we are naturally led to endeavor to search out the causes of such astonishing changes.

This initial reference to the historical nature of revolutions, with particular emphasis on the behavior that led to and resulted from them, allowed Warren to stipulate the reality of an active conspiracy against liberty of the sort Lovell hinted at in 1771. His next step, to explore the general role and duty of civil government, unmistakably implied to his audience that Parliament was not ruling in accordance with the principles of justice. Like Lovell, Warren used rhetorical questions to lead his audience to draw inferences about how easily civil government, an “Institution which hath its origin in the weakness of

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18 Shipton, *Sibley's Vol. XIV*, 513
19 Ibid, 525
20 Warren, Joseph, *An Oration; Delivered March 5th, 1772*, Boston, Edes & Gill, 1772, 1
individuals, and hath for its end, the *strength and security* of all,” which “ought to be held in the highest veneration,” could be subverted. 21

Having defined civil government, Warren deployed classical examples to demonstrate what happens when men entrusted with governance fail to act virtuously, as had been the case of Julius Caesar in republican Rome, or Athens under the rule of The Thirty. Few in the crowd could have failed to understand the modern parallel that Warren was implying when he exclaimed, “PUBLIC HAPPINESS DEPENDS ON A VIRTUOUS AND UNSHAKEN ATTACHMENT TO A FREE CONSITUTION;” if any did, his next observation, that “greatest and most important right of a British subject is that he shall be governed by no laws but those to which he either in person or by his representative hath given his consent,” would have left no doubt that he was talking about the strife between Parliament and the colonies.22 Whereas Lovell had chosen the dangers posed by a standing army as his first point of emphasis, Warren’s more general approach was intended to demonstrate how Parliament had violated Bostonians’ fundamental rights as English subjects even before the occupation of Boston. This presented a clear answer to the first question, “What rights did the colonists hold? And had they been violated?” Whereas Lovell had urged his audience to entertain the possibility that a conspiracy might be afoot, Warren unmistakably implied that the occupation of Boston confirmed the existence of a conspiracy against the colonists’ rights that had been underway at least since the first effort to tax the colonies without consent, in 1764-65.

21 Warren, *An Oration*, 5
22 Ibid, 8
Having made the general case, and drawn the contemporary inference, Warren sharpened his rhetorical point and aimed it at the heart of the plot against liberty:

And yet, whoever pretends that the late acts of the British parliament for taxing America ought to be deemed binding upon us, must admit at once that we are absolute SLAVES, and have no property of our own; or else that we may be FREE-MEN, and at the same time under a necessity of obeying the arbitrary commands of those over whom we have not controul or influence. 23

Warren accepted the colonial position as subjects within the Empire, yet he created divisions between the American subjects and the British by stating that loyal subjects had in fact been enslaved, and that a once mutually profitable situation was no longer tolerable for the colonists. In an effort to demonstrate the long chain of events which led to the oppression of the North American colonies, Warren connected taxation without consent with the standing army controversy in order to demonstrate how conspirators against liberty were slowly increasing their hold over colonial rights. One invasion of their rights led to another:

It was soon found that this taxation could not be supported by reason and argument, it seemed necessary that one act of oppression should be enforced by another, and therefore, contrary to our just rights as possessing, or at least having a just title to possess, all the liberties and IMMUNITIES of British subjects, a standing army was established among us in time of peace…. 24

Warren did not mention the provocations Boston mobs had given in context for the stationing of troops in Boston; in his account the mob simply represented a virtuous, popular response to acts of oppression.

23 Warren, 10-11
24 Warren, An Oration, 11
Warren’s oration revealed that a slight, but clear, shift in identity had occurred in Boston; Bostonians were still loyal British subjects, but now distinguished from subjects in England by the unique injury that the troops had visited upon them. The divide between English and Bostonian Britons was never more evident than near the end of the oration when Warren cried out in the voice of a Puritan ancestor:

My Sons, scorn to be SLAVES! In vain we met the frowns of tyrants – In vain, we left our native land – In vain, we crossed the boisterous ocean, found a new world, and prepared it for the happy residence of LIBERTY – In vain, we toiled – In vain, we fought – We bled in vain, if you, our offspring want valour to repel the assaults of her invaders!25

This shift in identity was as yet subtle – an appeal to a 17th century New England heritage did not imply an outright rejection of an 18th century empire, but Warren’s oration set the stage for Benjamin Church’s more radical position in the Oration of 1773.

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The speaker chosen for the next year’s address, Dr. Benjamin Church has come to be seen as the most controversial of the orators because he was later accused of relaying information to the British. Even how his actions are debated; he may have been less a traitor to the patriot cause than an opportunist trying to play both sides against the middle in an effort to maintain favor regardless of the outcome of the war. In March of 1773, however, Church was simply another outspoken Harvard graduate who fit the typical mold of a Boston Massacre Orator. Like Joseph Warren, Church was a physician who had performed the autopsy on Crispus Attucks, the first victim of the Boston Massacre.26

This established his credibility amongst the common people of Boston as a leader who

25 Ibid, 17
26 Shipton, Sibley's Vol XIII, 384-85
had first-hand knowledge of the Massacre; indeed, his personal connection to the event probably influenced Church’s selection as an orator the most.

Church began, like Warren, by speaking in general terms about social obligations and the functions of government. While Warren chose to approach the issue by beginning with the proper function of a virtuous civil government, Church sought to connect to the audience from a much more ancient and basic level. He began with man’s emergence from the “state of nature.”

A sense of their wants and wants and weakness in a state of nature, doubtless inclined them to such reciprocal aids and support, as eventually established society. Men then began to incorporate; subordination succeeded to independence, order to anarchy; and passions were disarmed by civilization: Society lent its aid to secure the weak from oppression, who wisely took shelter within the sanctuary of law.

According to Church’s interpretation of Locke, government was created for the mutual interests of the community, but ultimately deprived man of the “natural equality” that existed in the state of nature. Nonetheless, he argued, all persons retain equal moral worth, and cannot justly be deprived of it by their governors. Orators by this time had gained significant popularity, placing themselves in a position of authority. Church reminded the people that ultimately, they were all moral equals, and that unjust behavior which deprived them of their liberties invalidated the claims of government to legitimate power:

27 The prominent Philosopher John Locke, in his work The Second Treatise of Government, argued that in a true state of nature where there is no government and no rules to bind society, individuals will ultimately band together to create a system of mutual benefit in order to protect the fundamental rights of life, liberty, and property.

28 Church, Benjamin, An Oration; Delivered March 5th, 1773, Boston, Samuel and Ebenezer Hall from Salem, MA, 1773, 5-6
Kings, the servants of the state, when the degenerate into tyrants, forfeit their right to government…. The crimes acted by a King against the people, are the highest treason against the highest law among men.29

The final line of this passage connected Church’s position to the ideas of Warren and Lovell. Lovell had sought to establish that the colonists were Englishmen in search of their proper rights, which had been infringed upon through the improper use of government power; this hinted at a larger conspiracy. Warren had continued to develop these ideas by suggesting that oppressive acts had created a division between the colonists and the government of the empire; thus Bostonians, as free men, were obliged to assert and defend the rights that they were entitled to. Church continued Warren’s philosophical approach to the role of government by focusing on the social contract that required individual interests to be considered within the framework of the collective good. Just as Bostonians depended on each other every day for their survival, Church implied, the British government must depend on the collective interests of the community for its continued existence, for no state could exist without the continued consent of its citizens, or subjects.

Church continued to emphasize the importance of civil government as established by Warren, but expanded significantly on Warren’s argument by emphasizing that the continuous consent of the governed was necessary for governments to retain their legitimacy.

As in every government there must exist a power superior to the laws, viz. The power that makes those laws, and from which they derive their authority: therefore the liberty of the people is exactly proportioned to the share of the body

29 Church, An Oration, 7
of the people have in the legislature; and the check placed in the constitution on the executive power. That state only is free, where the people are governed by laws which they have a share in making; and that country is totally enslaved, where one single law can be made or repealed, without the interposition or consent of the people.\textsuperscript{30}

For the first time in Church’s oration, and very near the end, he abandoned abstraction and addressed the immediate issue at hand: “An American freeholder according to the \textit{just} and \textit{judicious} conduct of the present ministry, has no possible right to be consulted in the disposal of his property.”\textsuperscript{31} Only then, in his peroration, did Church address the standing army controversy and the Boston Massacre by providing a descriptive and captivating account of the events which transpired on King Street. Moving the audience towards his grand finale, Church concluded his oration with a poem that further emphasized the divide between the Bostonians and the British:

\begin{quote}
Thou who yon bloody walk shalt traverse, there
Where troops of Britain’s King, on Britain’s Sons,
Discharg’d the leaden vengeance; pass not on
E’er thou hast blest their memory, and paid
Those hallowed tears, which sooth the virtuous dead:
O stranger! Stay thee, and the scene around
Contemplate well, and if perchance thy home,
Salute thee with a father’s honor’d name,
Go call thy Sons – instruct them what a debt
They owe their ancestors, and make them swear
To pay it, by transmitting down entire
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{30} Church, \textit{An Oration},11
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 12
Those sacred rights to which themselves were born.  

Church had formally answered the first question, “Have our rights been violated?” Lovell had hinted at a possible conspiracy; Warren had more or less assumed one; now an ideological shift in identity had been completed with his invocation of “Those sacred rights to which themselves were born.” Benjamin Church, a leader of Boston, was calling for the return of rights that the colonists had been promised as their birthright. Having provided a solution to the first fundamental question, the question that then arose became, “What, if any, place do we have within the Empire? And what is our identity if we are not being recognized as citizens or subjects?”

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32 Church, *An Oration*, 16
Chapter II: The Second Ideological Shift and the Development of a “Bostonian Identity” (1774-1776)

The question that remained after Church’s oration was nearly answered between March of 1773 and March of 1774. The most radical and important shift in the separation between the identity of “Briton” and “Bostonian” emerged during this year – a shift made possible by Parliament’s renewed effort to subordinate the colonists to the crown in the Tea Crisis of 1773. The dramatic resistance of the Sons of Liberty in December, 1773, when radicals dressed as Mohawk Indians dumped 45 tons of taxed British tea into the Boston harbor, was understood in Boston as an attempt to “trim bad government from the tree of liberty.” However, in Whitehall and Westminster, by contrast, it was seen as a provocation against legitimate authority that could only be met by an uncompromising extension of power. The re-occupation of Boston and the Coercive Acts would be understood by Bostonians as proof positive of a conspiracy to make them slaves.

Lovell’s oration had focused on educating the broader community about the pressing dangers of a standing army and the possibility of a larger conspiracy. Warren and Church had gone on to develop a more radical standpoint as by framing Bostonian as potential “slaves” to a tyrannical ministerial conspiracy. To avoid enslavement, Warren and Church had argued, Bostonians needed to stand up against taxation without consent, and to resist all attempts to enforce submission by military means. While Parliament sought to destroy what was in British eyes an unjust rebellion, Bostonians would interpret these events in an opposite light. In March 1774 the British ministry was poised to crush resistance to Parliamentary taxation by force, and no man was more ready to rally Bostonians to resistance then John Hancock.
Boston’s wealthiest merchant, John Hancock had enormous influence over both the livelihoods of those Bostonians whose lives centered on the waterfront and public opinion in the town generally. Hancock had, moreover, suffered directly from British power in 1768 when his sloop, Liberty, had been seized on a technical infraction of the Navigation Acts – an episode that precipitated the riots that occasioned the initial occupation of Boston, leading indirectly to the Massacre itself.\textsuperscript{12}

In March 1774, Hancock used more vivid and politically charged rhetoric than his predecessors to demonstrate the change that had taken place. He opened with an extravagantly humble introduction that highlighted the importance of the waterfront’s communal interests:

The attentive gravity, the venerable appearance of this crowded audience the dignity which I behold in the countenances of so many in this great Assembly, the solemnity of the occasion upon which we have met together, join’d to a consideration of the part I am to take in the important business of this day, fill me with an awe hitherto unknown; and heighten the sense which I have ever had, of my unworthiness to fill this sacred desk; but, allur’d by the call of some of my respected fellow-citizens, with whose request it is always my greatest pleasure to comply, I almost forgot my want of ability to perform what they required.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1} Carp, \textit{Rebels Rising}, 49
\textsuperscript{2} In the Liberty affair, the historian Benjamin Carp stated, “Hancock demonstrated visibly that he was willing to take a stand against Britain on the basis of waterfront grievances. Because Hancock was a major creditor, landlord, ship owner, wharf owner, employer and rising politician, his actions were destined to have a greater impact on the waterfront.” Ibid, 45
\textsuperscript{3} Hancock, John, \textit{An Oration; Delivered March 5th, 1774 (Second Edition)}, Boston, Edes & Gill, 1774, 5
Hancock then followed the example of Warren and Church by immediately explaining his own philosophical understanding of government.

“I have always from my earliest youth, rejoiced in the felicity of my Fellow-men, and have ever consider’d it as the indispensible duty of every member of society to promote, as far as in him lies, the prosperity of every individual, but more especially of the community to which he belongs; and also, as a faithful subject of the state, to use his utmost endeavours to detect, and having detected, strenuously to oppose every traitorous plot which its enemies may devise for its destruction. Security to the persons and properties of the governed, is so obviously the design and end of civil government, that to attempt a logical proof of it, would be like burning tapers at noon day, to assist the sun in enlightening the world; and it cannot be either virtuous or honorable, to attempt to support a government which manifestly tends to render the persons and properties of the governed insecure. Some boast of being friends to government; I am a friend to righteous government, to a government founded upon the principles of reason and justice; but I glory in publicly avowing my eternal enmity to tyranny. Is the present system which the British administration have adopted for the government of the colonies, a righteous government? Or is it tyranny?4

Perhaps as significant to the above statement as its context is the fact that Hancock immediately followed his humble introductory remarks with this statement. Hancock had adapted Warren’s idea of a civil government and Church’s attempt to show that reason and justice prohibited freemen from allowing their rights to be taken without struggle, incorporating these two ideas in the concept of “righteous government,” one that ruled with virtue and was maintained by placing the collective interests of the whole before those of the individuals. In such a state people will not be taxed without their consent and cannot be intimidated by military force.

The once small divide created by Warren had now become a chasm. Hancock posed the rhetorical question directly: had the British government fulfilled the necessary

4 Hancock, 6
criteria to be a righteous government? Or had it become tyrannical? At this point the intent and direction of the rest of Hancock’s oration became clear, along with his intention to distinguish between the virtuous colonists and the oppressive empire. Bostonians had abided by principles of just and civil government while the British authorities had broken the peace:

> The troops of George the Third have cross’d the wide atlantick, not to engage an enemy, but to assist a band of TRAITORS in trampling on the rights and liberties of his most loyal subjects in America, - those rights and liberties which as a father he ought ever to regard, and as a King he is bound in honour to defend from violations, even at the risque of his own life.⁵

Like an attorney seeking to assign the blame to someone other than his client, Hancock absolved the Bostonians of responsibility for anything that would happen as a consequence of the destruction of the tea. No longer were the British being portrayed as merely confused or mistaken about the situation in the colonies, but they were now shown to be aware and responsible for their actions. Hancock characterized the acts and actions of Parliament as premeditated betrayals of both the rights of Bostonians and the interests of the King: the ministers of King George III were the real traitors. This dramatic shift in the portrayal of the soldiers concluded with another rhetorical question aimed directly at the troops themselves, “Tell me, ye bloody butchers, ye villains high and low, ye wretches who contrived, as well as you who executed the inhuman deed, do you not feel the goads and stings of conscious gilt pierce through your savage bosoms?”⁶

Like Virgil guiding Dante through the trials and tribulations of hell, Hancock led the people of Boston to arrive at the conclusion that the British ministry, no longer

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⁵ Hancock, 7
⁶ Ibid, 11
capable of virtuous government, had placed Bostonians in the impossible situation of living under what amounted to military dictatorship. Rather than end in despair, however, Hancock concluded by offering a new idea of Patriotism which suggested a way forward.

PATRIOTISM is ever united with humanity and compassion. This noble affection which impels us to sacrifice every thing dear, even life itself, to our country, involves in it a common sympathy and tenderness for every citizen, and must ever have a particular feeling for one who suffers in a public cause.7 Here, returning to the cornerstone ideologies of Bostonian community, Hancock subtly suggested that the Bostonians’ sacrifices in defense of their own rights and liberties had made them people, set apart from their oppressors. The regional Bostonian identity of 1771, which Lovell had portrayed as fundamentally English, had become something more potentially universal: an association of justly angry citizens who could, if necessary, forge a society of their own. Where Lovell had portrayed the colonists as abused, discontented, loyal English subjects in search of their promised birthright, Hancock addressed Bostonians as citizens who must be prepared to forge a society of their own.

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The Massacre Day orators had made considerable rhetorical strides by the time it became necessary to choose a speaker for 1775, when the Sons of Liberty once more invited Joseph Warren to address a populace once more under military occupation and on the brink of intense political strife. There could have been no greater evidence of the respect which Joseph Warren held his selection as an orator for a second time. In 1774,

7 Hancock, 12
John Hancock had suggested that the people of Boston no longer had a proper place within the Empire. Now entrusted to instruct the Bostonians in what they had become in the intervening year, Warren elaborated the new Bostonian identity while undermining the idea that the “Englishman” somehow represented a cultural ideal.

Warren wasted no time in immediately highlighting colonial North America and Britain as increasingly separate entities as a result of The Coercive Acts passed by Parliament the previous year. In May of 1774, The Massachusetts Government Act had rewritten the colony’s charter and placed the colony under the direct control of the royal governor. At the same time the Boston Port Bill effectively closed Boston Harbor to trade until the colonists paid for the tea that they had destroyed. These drastic measures had occasioned the formation and meeting of the Continental Congress in September, 1774, an event that gave the Boston community a formal platform to voice their concerns of a British conspiracy to the remaining colonies. Since Hancock had made it clear that no damages would be paid for property destroyed in the name of virtue, Warren approached the platform dressed in a Roman Ciceroonian Toga evoking images of the prominent Roman senator killed at the hands of tyrant Marc Antony and proceeded for a second time under these conditions.

The sense I have of the obligation I am under to obey the calls of my country…..I mourn over my bleeding country: With them I weep at her distress, and with them [Church, Hancock, and Lovell,] deeply resent the many injuries she has received from the hands of cruel and unreasonable men.

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9 Ibid
10 Ibid, 22,23
11 Shipton, *Sibley's Vol. XIV*, 520
As when Hancock had called the British troops “bloody butchers,” Warren demeaned the value of what it meant to be English by informing the audience that the British oppressors not only stood apart from Bostonians but were, in fact, “unreasonable men.” This same group of unreasonable men were the ones who had inflicted grievous wounds in order to ensure that the colonial state still functioned according to the best interests of the crown, rather than protect the liberties of its subjects. In order to better demonstrate this point, Warren turned to the first foundations of the colonies to show the people of Boston how their forefathers had been compelled to create a society of their own in the previous century, with aid from neither the crown nor Parliament. It was only, Warren argued, when the colonies began to become profitable, that the British concerned themselves with the colonial affairs. What they intended was nothing more or less than economic gain.

When the hardy adventurers justly expected that they and their descendants should peaceably have enjoyed the harvest of those fields which they had sown, and the fruit of those vineyards which they had planted; this country was then thought worthy the attention of the British ministry and the only justifiable and only successful means of rendering the colonies serviceable to Britain were adopted.12

This passage is the key to the rest of the oration because Warren stated that greed was the origin of the division between the province of Massachusetts and the empire. It was no secret that many people in Massachusetts believed a conspiracy was afoot to enslave them; here Warren subtly illustrated to the broader community that the separation between Bostonian and English had in fact occurred long ago. Warren went on to highlight the fundamental differences between “Americans” and “Britons.” This shift in terminology was vitally important because Warren no longer referred to colonists and

12 Joseph Warren, An Oration, Delivered March 6, 1775, Boston, Edes & Gill, 1775, 10
English subjects as one and the same; he was beginning to develop the idea of an American identity more inclusive than that of Bostonians alone.

The hearts of Britons and Americans, which lately felt the generous glow of mutual confidence and love, now burn with jealousy and rage. Though but of yesterday I recollect (deeply affected at the ill boding change) the happy hours that past whilst Britain and America rejoiced in the prosperity and greatness of each other, (Heaven grant those haleyon days may soon return.) But now the Briton too often looks on the American with an evious eye, taught to consider his just plea for the enjoyment of his earning as the effect of pride and stubborn opposition to the parent country. Whilst the American beholds the Briton as the ruffian, ready first to take away his property, and next, what is dearer to every virtuous man, the liberty of his country.  

Warren distinguished between hardworking Americans and greedy, oppressive Britons; but in fact he was also, delicately painting a portrait of Bostonians as prototypes of all Americans. The second important implication of the above statement stems from the first, in that Warren now used the Boston Massacre to demonstrate how the struggle for liberty and freedom was the most important struggle and the most just of causes for Americans as a whole.

Our streets are again filled with armed men: Our harbour is crouded with ships of war; but these cannot intimidate us; our liberty must be preserved; it is far dearer that life, we hold it even dear as our allegiance; we must defend it against the attacks of friends as well as enemies; we cannot suffer even BRITONS to ravish it from us. 

Immediately reaching back into the histories of the colonies, Warren cast himself as the elder and wise figure, reciting examples of how the first fathers who inhabited the colonies would fight for their freedoms and defend their lands. Nearing the climax of his oration and stirring the crowd into what must have been a frenzy, Warren issued the first real call to arms in a Massacre Oration:

13 Warren, An Oration...1775, 13-14
14 Warren, An Oration..1775,17
You will maintain your rights or perish in the generous struggle. However difficult the combat, you never will decline it when freedom is the prize. An independence on Great-Britain is not our aim. No, our wish is, that Britain and the Colonies may like the oak and ivy, grow and increase in strength together. But whilst the infatuated plan of making one part of the empire slaves to the other, is persisted in; the interest and safety of Britain. As well as the Colonies, require that the wise measures recommended by the honourable, the continental Congress, be steadily pursued.¹⁵

The events that transpired in the year ahead, as well as the meeting of the Continental Congress, made Warren’s statement all the more important. In April 1775 war broke out in Massachusetts; in June Warren himself died at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Warren became the symbol of all that it meant to be a Bostonian: a man willing to sacrifice his life so that the freedoms of his fellow countrymen could be preserved. Warren’s death further symbolized the coercive power that the British were willing to deploy in an effort to rein in the liberties of all American colonists. This final attempt to destroy the political liberties of the Bostonians, prior to the formal Declaration of Independence, answered the second ideological question, “What place do we have in the empire, and if we are not English, what is our identity?”

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“Those who make peaceful revolution impossible, make violent revolution inevitable.” – President John F. Kennedy

In 1776 the Sons of Liberty looked to the Reverend Pater Thacher as a Massacre orator. No biographical record of Thacher was available, but he, nonetheless, provided the final justification necessary to complete the split between an “American” and “English” identity, a religious one.

¹⁵ Ibid, 21

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Previous orators had provided historical justifications for why the British Parliament was acting in an unjust manner, citing the examples of Ancient Rome, or Athens under the oppressive rule of The Thirty; while other orators such as Benjamin Church and John Hancock provided the necessary philosophical justifications as to why Parliament was no longer virtuous. The town of Boston was a deeply religious town, and the one prominent justification which was missing was a religious explanation of what needed to be done. Following the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington Green and Concord on April 19th, 1775, the town of Boston was under military siege and the Boston Massacre Oration for the year of 1776 was given from Watertown, MA. For the first time since the Boston Massacre, colonial blood had been shed; and with that, American independence had become conceivable in ways it had not been before. Thacher, unlike his predecessors, framed issues in theological terms in an attempt to provide divine sanction for the creation of an independent American people.\footnote{Thacher used religious terminology to frame the Bostonian cause as a moral matter, aided by divine justification. \textit{Peter Thacher, \textit{An Oration Delivered at Watertown, March 5, 1776, Watertown, Benjamin Edes, 1776, 5}}}

Thacher began his oration by immediately undermining the claims of monarchs to the unlimited obedience of their subjects.

When the ambition of Princes induces them to break over the sacred barriers of social compact, and to violate those rights, which it is their duty to defend, they will leave no methods unessay'd to bring people to aequiesce in their justifiable encroachments….to assert, that, by the command of the supreme lawgiver, we are bound to surrender our rights into the hand of the first bold Tyrant who dares seize them; and that when so seized, it is rebellion against God, and treason against the Prince, for us to attempt to resume them.\footnote{Thacher used religious terminology to frame the Bostonian cause as a moral matter, aided by divine justification. \textit{Peter Thacher, \textit{An Oration Delivered at Watertown, March 5, 1776, Watertown, Benjamin Edes, 1776, 5}}}
Thacher, for the first time in a Massacre Oration, cast the social contract not solely as between men, but between men under God. By highlighting the prince as a tyrant, Thacher illuminated the notion that obedience and loyalty to an unjust ruler is not only objectionable, but in and of itself unjust. The monarch represented a ruler who received his charter and right to rule from God, if the monarch no longer ruled justly, his people were absolved of their allegiance in order to remain faithful to God. Thacher severed the connection between Bostonian and Briton, by nullifying any sort of religious sanction for the authority of the King. Warren and Hancock severed the historical and philosophical ties to Britain; Thacher cut the last remaining cord, that of the Christian obligation of obedience to the ruler, when he asserted:

Extensive are the revenues of princes, they are still inadequate to the purpose of bribing large communities to submit to their pleasure; corrupting therefore a few, they have overawed the rest, from small beginnings, and under spacious (specious? Unclear in text,) pretences, they will use a standing military force, the most successful engine ever yet wielded by the hand of lawless domination.

Having preached many sermons, Thacher possessed great oratorical skill. When he equated the dominion of a prince who used a standing army to impose “lawless domination,” he denied that the actions of Parliament and the crown could possibly have been mandated by God. His next rhetorical was to focus on the importance of sustaining the moral fabric of society. The fundamental problem with Britain’s use of military force was not merely that it had destroyed liberty in Boston, but eroded the moral fabric of society as well.

An easy task would it be to enlarge upon the fatal consequences of keeping up such a standing army in time of peace, and of quartering a lawless body of men, who despise the just restraints of civil authority, in free and populous cities: That no vestige of freedom can remain in a state where such a force exists; that the morals of the people will be gradually corrupted; that they will contract such an habit of tame submission, as to become an easy prey to the brutal tyrant who rules
them, hath been heretofore largely and plainly demonstrated, by persons so much more capable of doing it, than he who is speaking, that it would be presumption in him to attempt it now.\(^{18}\)

Thacher’s emphasis on “moral authority,” and his warning that the morals of the people will be gradually corrupted in a society dominated by force rather than consent, hinted at his concern for a populace suffering the effects of war, and the continued threat posed by unrestrained military force. What could be the real advantage of being a part of an Empire that did not rule justly, but rather used an oppressive military force to erode the moral fabric of society? How did such an Empire attain its power in the first place?

In theory, the British constitution is, on many accounts, excellent; but when we observe it reduced to practice, when we observe the British government as it has been for a long course of years, administered, we must be convinced that its boasted advantages are not real: The management of public revenue, the appointment of civil and military officers, are vested in the king: Improving the advantages which those powers give him, he hath found means to corrupt the other branches of the legislature: Britons please themselves with the thought of being free; their tyrant suffers them to enjoy the shadow, whilst he himself grasps the substance of power. Impossible would it have been for the kings of England to have acquired such exorbitant power, had they not had a standing army under their command.\(^{19}\)

The divide between “Briton” and “American” was further emphasized by Thacher’s portrayal of inhabitants of Massachusetts colony as sinners who had suddenly awakened to the perils of tyranny, while the English subjects of King George remained oblivious of their danger, unknowingly yielding their liberties. Americans were now in a position to fight for their salvation, not just on a philosophical or historical platform, but a religious one as well. Furthermore, portraying the colonists as enlightened political dissenters who rejected an unjust government made a strong connection to the original founders of New England, who left to escape political oppression. By referencing the history of

\(^{18}\) Thacher, *An Oration*, 7
\(^{19}\) Thacher, *An Oration*, 8-9
Massachusetts in terms of its religious origins, Thacher further distanced the Bostonians from the English. The time had come, he implied, for Americans to seek righteousness through independence.

Thacher concluded by contemplating the ways in which the dead at Bunker Hill of Joseph Warren further lent meaning and justification to the cause of independence:

This audience, acquainted, in the most intimate manner, with his numberless virtues, must feel his loss, and bemoan their beloved, their entrusted fellow citizen! Ah! my countrymen, what tender, what excruciating sensation rush at once upon our burdened minds, when we recall his lov’d idea! When we reflect upon the manner of his death; when we fancy that we see his savage enemies exulting o’er his corpse, beautiful even in death; when we remember that destitute of the rites of sepulture, he was cast into the ground, without the distinction due to his rank and merit; we cannot restrain the starting tear, we cannot repress the bursting sigh! We mourn thine exit, illustrious shade, with undissembled grief; we venerate thine exalted character; we will erect a monument to thy memory in each of our grateful breasts, and to the latest ages, will teach our tender infants to lip the name of WARREN, with veneration and applause.\(^\text{20}\)

Joseph Warren had served as one of the leading men of Boston during his lifetime; in death he was established as the model of the ideal American patriot. Thacher used this ideal, which Warren represented, to conclude his oration by characterizing the American people.

The Americans are jealous of the least infringement of their rights; strangers to that luxury, which essemimates the mind and body; they are capable of enduring incredible hardships; with eagerness they rush into the field of battle, and brave with coolness, every danger: They posses a rich and fruitful country, sufficient to supply them with every necessary and convenience of life; they have inexhaustible resources for carrying on war….\(^\text{21}\)

To the average person in attendance at the oration, Thacher was issuing a call to arms and a call to live up to what it meant to be an American, to live up to and secure

\(^{20}\) Thacher, *An Oration*, 12

\(^{21}\) Thacher, *An Oration*, 14
what Joseph Warren had fought so hard for. People who had once seen themselves as
loyal British subjects and Englishmen, had now become something new. Hostilities had
broken out and the time for legal, philosophical, and historical justifications for the
necessary defense of liberty had passed. Peter Thacher was called upon to provide the
element of righteousness necessary to lend further justification to the cause of
independence, which he did with his concluding prayer,

“O GOD, LET AMERICA BE FREE!”

With the conclusion of Thacher’s oration and the Declaration of Independence
following shortly thereafter, the second stage of the ideological development of an
“American” identity was complete. In little over six years following the Boston
Massacre, the continued attempts of the Parliament to bring the unruly colonists into line
had led to the rebellion not just of New Englanders, but American colonists generally.
The Bostonians had suffered first, and now by their example were furnishing – for the
Massacre Day orators at least – the prototype for the new American identity

The conclusion of this second phase in the great ideological shift also marked a
change in the meaning and direction of the orations. Up to 1776, the orators had
addressed the town of Boston as loyal Englishmen and urged Bostonians trying to
reclaim their rights within the empire. Following the Declaration of Independence the
Boston Massacre Orators faced the distinct challenge of solving a new and more difficult
question, “If we are not an English nation, what are we?” Thereafter, the primary tone of
the orations no longer focused on educating Bostonians of their rights as Englishmen, but
on warning Americans about the potential danger that could arise from their own army –

22 Ibid, 15
the very force, under General George Washington, that was engaged in the defense of American independence.
Following the Declaration of Independence, the North American colonies found themselves in the midst of a revolution against the same oppressors that the Bostonians had been fighting politically and militarily since 1770. The conclusion of the 1776 oration marked the end for one oratorical direction, and gave way to a new set of questions and a different set of problems that would be posed by both the British and Continental standing armies. Prior to independence, in May of 1776, four colonies still had not granted their delegates in the Continental Congress the right to vote on independence.¹ According to the historian Benjamin Carp in *Rebels Rising*, the turning point for a unified independence movement came on May 8th, when cannons were heard along the Delaware River and news spread that the King was sending an army of mercenary soldiers to “crush the American rebellion.”² At this point the political commentaries of leading Bostonian radicals such as John Adams became the primary source that other colonies turned to in order to help them better understand their predicament.³ Between 1770 and 1776, the Massachusetts colony was the only colony to experience a military occupation, these prior experiences pushed the political and social leaders of Boston to the forefront. No longer were the Boston Massacre Orators merely leaders trying to steer their community away from an oppressive and tyrannical regime, but prophets of a new American identity, built along Bostonian contours.

One of the most difficult tasks that the Boston Massacre orators had to address post-independence, was a source of identity that a new and fragile state could cling to and unite around in their cause. Eager to pioneer this movement, the Sons of Liberty and the

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¹ Carp, *Rebels Rising*, 172
² Ibid
³ Ibid
orators they chose, used Joseph Warren, the Bunker Hill hero, as a symbolic martyr in the cause of liberty. The first post-Independence Massacre orator, Benjamin Hichborn, had Warren very much in mind as he sought to continue the tradition of denouncing the threat of standing armies, at the same time he tried to suggest that Bostonian heroes could be understood as prototypes of American heroism and identity. Hichborn took it upon himself to apply the standard of the deceased and honorable Warren to the living patriot hero George Washington, in order to ensure that Washington’s power remained within its proper legal scope, as well as to warn the people of the threat that Washington could eventually pose to liberty if the American cause was victorious. It was a delicate if not impossible, task, one that continued to confront orators through 1780.

In his earlier years, Hichborn was considered by many to be a Tory, or loyalist to the crown, for his legal clerkship with a man who was known to hold loyalist sympathies. Following admission to the Suffolk Bar in 1771, Hichborn persuaded John Adams to let him carry personal letters so that he could appear to have the public confidence of the Congressional delegation. The letters that Adams entrusted to Hichborn were of particular importance and were addressed to General George Washington and Colonel Joseph Warren. Unfortunately, the British Captain James Ayscough captured Hichborn. While under captivity, Hichborn was treated poorly, which may have later played a significant role in his membership with the Boston Independent Corps. The injustice that Hichborn suffered at the hands of the British

4 Shipton, *Sibley’s*, 37
5 Ibid, 36,37
6 Ibid, 37
7 Ibid
8 Shipton, *Sibley’s*, 37
played a central yet unspoken role in Hichborn’s oration. Hichborn believed that through the capacity to reason, developed over time, he came to realize that the British crown was no longer virtuous.

Relying on the cohesive interdependence of the Bostonian people to cast the mold for the United States of America, Benjamin Hichborn was selected to delicately establish two paths with his remarks; one of caution, and one of patriotism. In customary fashion, Hichborn offered humble sentiments, followed by the first definition of a civil society following independence:

The right that every individual has to reason freely upon the nature of that government he is called to submit to, having nature for its source, is no less obvious and perceptable – and hence as a necessary foundation for the exercise of this right, I define civil liberty to be, not “a government by laws” made agreeable to charters, bills of rights or compacts, but a power existing in the people at large at any time, for any cause, or for no cause, but their own sovereign pleasure, to alter or annihilate both the mode and essence of any former government, and adopt a new one in its stead. Placing ourselves then upon this broad basis of civil liberty, founded on natural right, we will unawed by the standing armies of any tyrants, tools, or monarchs, deliberate freely upon the nature of their institutions, and their dangerous tendency to the rights of man.  

With this definition, Hichborn clearly laid the framework of the two paths that succeeding orators would follow. The first path, focused on the development of an independent identity that followed from the idea that American self-government derived from English authority, but rooted in the people. According to Hichborn, a government was the power and the right of the people to empower or overthrow any sovereign body that they saw fit, so long as it was in the interests of the whole. The importance of this first step taken by Hichborn is the establishment of the people of the colonies as their

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9 Benjamin Hichborn, *An Oration, Delivered March 5, 1777*, Boston, MA, Edes & Gill, 1777, 5-6
own sovereign body who contained the power to choose their own government and
overthrow that same government if they so wished.

The orators second path required a much more delicate hand in its development,
so that the orator and the Sons of Liberty would not appear unpatriotic. Having placed
the power of the sovereignty in the people, Hichborn warned the people to closely defend
their liberties not only from the English, but the Continental Army and George
Washington as well. Since the colonies had been dependent on British protection for
such an extended period of time, a successful revolution would lead to the formation of a
delicate and fragmented state desperate for leadership. The Sons of Liberty believed that
it was their duty to warn the people that a victorious general, even Washington, could use
his popularity to seize power as a dictator. According to Hichborn, standing armies are
the source of all of the unhappiness of man, regardless of the allegiance of the soldiers,
and this made the potential tyranny of generals the greatest threat of all to political
liberty.10

Hichborn believed that all peoples could answer the question of whether or not
their state was virtuous merely by exercising their capacity to reason. Through
deliberation, man naturally comes to discover the threat of standing armies. Having
proved the lack of virtue in the British-state, Hichborn carefully undermined the English
identity by placing the British Empire as the next link in the chain of prosperous empires
that had fallen as a result of the enslavement of their citizens. Such had been the case of
Rome.

The formalities of a free and the ends of a despotic State (says a modern writer)
have often subsisted together. – Britain furnishes a most unhappy example of this

10 Hichborn, An Oration, 6
shocking truth: -- As if the relish of liberty was pampered to make slavery itself more intolerably loathsome. 11

With the English identity sufficiently undermined and the dangers of a standing army highlighted, Hichborn seized upon his opportunity to thrust the Bostonian patriots to the front of the revolutionary movement as wise and understanding leaders who had substantial experience with tyranny. From this platform Hichborn launched into his account of the Boston Massacre, in order to further establish the Boston community as the revolutionary pioneers:

It is needless to recount the various preludes to hostilities, the fatal day we now commemorate, opened a scene that filled every honest mind with indignation, and every tender heart with distress. – It is impossible for any who were not witness of that shocking event, to conceive the terrors of that dreadful night, and they who were must have images of horror upon the mind they never can communicate.12

At this crucial moment, Hichborn turned the entire direction of the oration inwards, making the Bostonians the sole true interpreters of the Boston Massacre. Having experienced the “horror” of tyranny and the atrocious misuse of military might, the Bostonians were forced to “hear the piercing groans, to see the mangled bodies and ghastly visages of the dying and the dead – to hear the shrieks and cries of the timid.”13

By recounting the Boston Massacre, Hichborn separated the Bostonians from all of the other colonists, but drew an even more decisive line to divide the Americans from Britons, by extending the suffering of Boston to all colonies:

11 Hichborn, An Oration, 9
12 Ibid, 10
13 Ibid, 11
The eye of pity is yet called to drop a tear at the sufferings, and patriotism to pour the balm of charity over the wounds of half-murdered citizens, dragging out a miserable life, and fresh bleeding with the blows aimed at our country.\textsuperscript{14}

To conclude the oration, Hichborn offered a poem which gave patriotic sentiment, as well as necessary caution:

'Tis best that \textit{reason} govern man,
'Tis calm, deliberate, wise
Yet \textit{passions} were not given in vain,
Here then the difference lies.
\textit{Reason}, tho' \textit{sure}, too slow is found
In great emergencies,
While \textit{passion} instant feels the wound,
As quick the cure applies
Yet \textit{that} must not due bounds transgress,
But move at reason's nod,
Submit at last to her decrees
And own her for the God
'Twas thus the synod of our land,
The \textit{reasoning power} of state,
Gave WASHINGTON supreme command
And made his orders fate
Yet as \textit{necessity} impelled
The step – when that is past
The \textit{Senate} shall resume the field
And reign supreme as last."\textsuperscript{15}

The American Revolution presented the opportunity for leaders to re-shape society in their image of a just state. Hichborn seized the opportunity to begin the inscribing in the \textit{Tabula Rasa}, or “blank slate.” The first inscriptions made by the Sons

\textsuperscript{14} Hichborn, \textit{An Oration}, 11
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid, 18
of Liberty laid out the two-paths that were necessary and vital to the preservation of liberty in a young nation. Hichborn began his poem with praise for the colonies, that used the capacity to reason to discover the traitorous plot against colonial liberty (the first path, or patriotic path) but then quickly moved to warn the colonies of the danger Washington posed. The Continental Congress had voted to grant Washington supreme command, now it was the duty of the Congress (“the Senate”) to exercise control over military power. No man – not even Washington – was immune to the temptations of dictatorial power.

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There were several vital developments in the war effort that would have had a significant impact across Colonial America that occurred between the oration of 1777 and 1778. Perhaps the most significant victory for the American cause came with the defeat of British General Henry Burgoyne and his troops when they surrendered to General Horatio Gates following the Battle of Saratoga. After a year of hard fighting and many setbacks, the Continental Army was making progress, despite the loss of many lives. As the Continental Army continued to gain ground in the war effort, so did Washington’s popularity and the threat that the army could eventually pose to liberty. However, the victory in the Battle of Saratoga also provided the patriots with a victory that they could rally around. The Continental Army was beginning to develop as a point of identity and pride amongst the colonists, who were still in desperate search of some identity that was entirely their own. Jonathan Williams Austin continued to highlight the problem of

\[16\] Karapalides, *Dates of Am. Rev*, 95
promoting the American identity and Continental Army as a source of unity, while still issuing a message of caution in his oration.

The second most important development was the creation and ratification of the Treaty of Alliance with France. This treaty formally recognized an alliance between the United States and France, with promised French military support. Beyond the support in arms, by engaging in a treaty with another sovereign nation, France effectively recognized the United States as its own sovereign nation. From 1777-1778, the development of ‘identity’ had taken 3 key strides. First, the Sons of Liberty used the Boston Massacre Orations to set out two paths for the states to follow. Second, the Continental army was beginning to make strides as a fighting force. Finally, the French Treaty provided the American Colonies with recognized foreign support, a crucial aspect of being a sovereign nation. Leading up to Austin’s oration, it had become evidently clear that some form of identity was beginning to take shape and it would be the continued duty of the Boston Massacre Orators to ensure that the development would remain in-line with the two-paths and the Sons of Liberty’s ideals.

Jonathan Williams Austin followed in the typical mold of the all of the other Boston Massacre orators in that he was educated at Harvard (graduated 1769), and was an associate of many of Boston’s political elite. Significant to note is that Austin was thrown out of Harvard for organizing a rebellion against the Tutors that became known as

“Primary Documents in American History; The Treaty of Alliance with France.”
http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/alliance.html
18 Shipton, Sibley's Vol. XVII, 116
the “Rebellion Elm.”\textsuperscript{19} This rebellion caused such a commotion that several petition attempts to have Austin restored failed. It was only when John Hancock became the “principal Actor” on the behalf of Austin that he was ultimately re-admitted.\textsuperscript{20} The final significant piece of biographical information of note was that Austin was called upon to testify to the part of a soldier, William McCauley, who took part in the Boston Massacre.\textsuperscript{21} Austin overcame early adversity after being thrown out of Harvard, and rose into the upper echelons of the Boston’s social and political elite, but it was his testimony pertaining to the Boston Massacre that was the ultimate motivation for his selection as an orator.

Austin began his oration as a memorial for those who had died for the cause of liberty:

\begin{quote}
To weep over the tomb of the patriot – to drop a year to the memory of those unfortunate citizens, who fell the fist sacrifices to tyranny and usurpation is noble, generous and humane…To commemorate the deaths of those men who fell unhappy victims to brutal violence – To show the dangerous tendency of standing armies in populous cities in time of peace, the origin of this fatal catastrophe.\textsuperscript{22}
\end{quote}

By evoking images of Joseph Warren and the other noble patriots who had died for the American cause, Austin aimed to reaffirm the righteous nature of the American Revolution, having stated that it is “noble” and “humane” to die fighting against tyrant.\textsuperscript{23} Furthermore, by re-emphasizing the dangers of the standing army Austin laid out the direction for his oration where he would follow in the footsteps of the previous orators,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19} Shipton, \textit{Sibley's Vol. XVII}, 116
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 117
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{22} Jonathan Williams Austin, \textit{An Oration, Delivered March 5, 1778}, Boston, MA, Edes & T. & J. Fleet, 1778, 5
\item \textsuperscript{23} Austin, \textit{An Oration}, 5
\end{itemize}
warning against not only a foreign standing army, but a domestic one as well. After Evacuation Day in 1776, Boston would never be militarily occupied again which gave the colonial radicals of Boston more liberty to expand their influence and share their experiences of a standing army with the other states who had not had the same extensive experience with the British military.

Austin then used the remainder of his oration to not only provide the usual classical examples of tyranny destroying liberty, i.e. Rome, Athens, but to begin to warn the colonists about the potential dangers that Washington and his army posed to society.

In absolute monarchies this is indeed (standing armies) necessary for the safety of the prince, and arises from the main principle of their constitution, which is governing by fear: but in free states, the profession of a soldier, taken singly and merely as a profession, is justly an object of jealousy. The laws there, and constitution of these kingdoms, know no such thing as a perpetual, standing soldier.24

One of the potential causes of strife could undoubtedly be seen as jealousy over one man’s profession, as well as the misuse of that profession towards a negative end. In this particular circumstance, the Boston Massacre Orators were careful to glorify the role of the Continental soldiers, so as to encourage the cause and reaffirm the just nature of their ends; but also to warn people about the potential seeds of destruction that came with the dangers of having a professional standing army. This connection is a very fine line that on the one hand showed how the Continental Army and its regiments were seen as a serious point of pride and ideological identification, yet this army which had become an important symbol of the American cause also possessed the dangerous power to unravel a just society. For this reason, it was of the upmost importance that there were men like

24 Ibid, 6
Joseph Warren who could be looked at as the model of an ideal patriot. He died fighting for his liberties and was a military hero, but beyond that he understood that what he was fighting to protect were his liberties, and not fighting simply for the sake of fighting. It is for this reason that Austin specifically highlighted the death of Warren in his oration as “Illustrious” in his existence and tragic in his death. Having provided an account of the danger that strife and disunity can cause to liberty, as well as having given an example of the ideal philosopher patriot, Austin used the remainder of his oration to provide a clear and distinct interpretation of both the promise and danger that the Continental Army bore.

Austin sought to expand and emphasize the distinction between proper and improper military use, “‘So great antipathy ever appears between citizens and soldiers; while one pretends to be safe under laws, which the other pretends shall be subject to his sword and his will.’”25 “Proper military force,” according to Austin, was the firm belief that the sword should only be used in defense of liberties, and not used as a tool to gain the forcible submission of others. It is with this degree of caution that William Tudor, the Boston Massacre Orator of 1779, chose to proceed as the war not only continued, but the development of a still fragile and unclear identity progressively continued to emerge.

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Nearly a year had passed since the victory at Saratoga and the ratification of the French Alliance and the United States had made drastic strides in the development of their own independent identity. On May 5, 1778, George Washington formally announced the alliance with France to his army, which led to an enthusiastic and patriotic

25 Austin, An Oration, 8
parade where 13 cannon shots were fired in honor of each colony.\textsuperscript{26} Shortly following this display of unity and optimism, the colonial cause received more good news when the French formally declared war on England on June 17, 1778.\textsuperscript{27} Two crucial military victories also aided the American cause when George Washington was able to defeat Sir Henry Clinton at the Battle of Monmouth Courthouse in New Jersey on June 28, 1778; and John Paul Jones was able to achieve an astounding naval victory when he seized the British ships \textit{Serapis} and the \textit{Countess of Scarborough}.\textsuperscript{28} After suffering initial setbacks in the battle, Jones was offered terms of surrender but choose to rally his men with the famous cry, “I have not yet begun to fight!”\textsuperscript{29} The final and much more symbolic development of identity came when the Continental Congress voted to place the “United States of America” on all bills of exchange on July, 11, 1778. These symbolic, military, and foreign relations achievements provided a substantial framework for William Tudor to maneuver as he prepared to fulfill the duty of a Boston Massacre Orator.

William Tudor was born on March 28, 1750 and followed in the path of the elite men of Massachusetts when he attended and graduated from Harvard in 1769.\textsuperscript{30} Similar to Jonathan Williams Austin, Tudor was suspended for his role in a revolt led against the faculty.\textsuperscript{31} By taking part in such a movement, Tudor displayed early signs that he seemed to favor civil action over obedience to disagreeable. This commitment to justice rather than law would later carry over into Tudor’s professional life, for it was said that during his tenure as a lawyer and judge advocate of the Continental Army that he favored,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Karapalides, \textit{Dates of Am. Rev}, 111
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid, 113
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid, 121
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid
\item \textsuperscript{30} L. Kinvin Wroth, \textit{William Tudor}, American National Biography Online, Feb. 2000
\item \textsuperscript{31} Ibid
\end{itemize}
“social and civil activity over dedication to the practice of law.” The final two pieces of biographical information which bare significance are: 1) that Tudor began his legal studies under John Adams in 1769; 2) that George Washington appointed Tudor to be the judge advocate of the Continental Army, a post he later resigned in 1777. Tudor maintained a reputation for favoring what was morally just as opposed to merely legal.

William Tudor used his oration in 1779 to provide what was arguably the most complete oration in terms of the amount of material he was able to address as well as the ideological strides he was able to make. In Tudor’s oration, we begin to see the fruit of the previous orators’ warnings against the appointment of a military general, as well as one of the most in-depth classical society analysis given. By providing such a rich philosophical, and political message, Tudor was able to highlight the prominent flaws of the British Constitution from multiple viewpoints. In his attempts to demonstrate the flaws in the English Constitution, Tudor linked the British Identity to ‘tyranny’ in an ongoing attempt to sever the ties between the United States and Britain in the ideological sense. Finally, Tudor’s oration marked the end of the third stage of ideological development where the question of what identity the colonists had was finally answered and the ‘two paths’ laid out by Hichborn would ultimately meet with the development an ‘American.’

Now officially recognized as the “United States of America,” Tudor began his oration by separating Bostonians from the rest of the colonists, so as to portray the town

32 Ibid
33 Ibid
34 It is significant to note that John Hancock was a member of Tudor’s selection Committee
as distinct pioneers and visionaries who stood up to the injustice of tyranny before any other colony had done so.

That man was born to delude and be deluded; to believe whatever is taught, and bear whatsoever is imposed;” are political dogmas which have long afforded matter for exultation and security to dignified villains, from the powergrasping monarch, to the lowest minion of office. But however justified they may have been, and now are, by the passive conduct of the greatest part of mankind, you, my fellow-citizens, thank God, you are an exception to their truth.35

The British Parliament had managed to delude the North American colonists for an extensive period of time; but the town of Boston and its watchful guardians, the Sons of Liberty, had worked to ensure that an early breech of constitutional rights would not go unnoticed. Due to the early levels of revolutionary activity in Boston led by Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty, the town of Boston was able to experience British rule in a truly unique and tyrannical fashion long before an official declaration of independence. By having stated that “man was born to delude and be deluded,” Tudor placed the town of Boston and the colony of Massachusetts on a pedestal for the other colonies to look up to. This intelligent and cohesive community had not been deluded by the Parliamentary attempts to seize upon their rights, rather their enlightened leaders such as Joseph Warren and the likes of John Hancock and Samuel Adams were able to uncover the seeds of a traitorous plot long before they had had the time to grow. These men were the educated protectors of the colonies, as such, they were fit to understand what the fundamental definition of a civil society should be and which liberties were inherent to all men.

35 William Tudor, An Oration, Delivered March 5, 1779, Boston, MA, Edes & Gill, 1779, 5
As support for the war increased, the idea of being an independent autonomous peoples began to grow in the states. Eager to capitalize on this general sense of optimism, Tudor offered his definition of a civil society and the basic rights of man in order to remind the Bostonians of their proper duties to the state following the conclusion of hostilities. Tudor stated, “the origin of civil society, which, founded in reciprocal advantage, and begun in social virtue, on the mutual necessities and mutual assistance of individuals built the combined happiness of the community.” Similar to Hichborn who placed the power of the sovereign amongst the ‘collective whole’ of society, Tudor incorporated the ‘collective whole’ mentality, in-order to place a strong emphasis on the overall well-being of all of the states. Without continued unity and cohesiveness, the states cause would fail just as society would fail if its citizens did not rise up in action against improper forms of government.

In-order to ensure that the new United States would not fall into the hands of a tyrant, Tudor provided the same classical society examples as most of the Boston Massacre Orators, but also provided what he believed to be the fundamental seeds of destruction for a just and virtuous peoples. “Luxury is ever the foe of independence, for at the same time that it creates artificial wants it precludes the means of satisfying them. It first makes men necessitous, and then dependant. It first unsits men for patriotic energies, and soon teachers them to consider public virtue as public jest.” Tudor argued that once a state became focused on luxurious goods, then the individuals of that state would no longer care for the interests of the whole, but rather their own personal interests. Furthermore, whilst people are focusing on their own prudential interests, a

36 Tudor, An Oration, 6
37 Tudor, An Oration, 7
system of jealousy and want is created that could lead to the corruption of the state since many people would be looking to satisfy their own private good. “At such a period, corruption funds an easy access to men’s hearts. To the promotion of interested pursuits, and the gratification of voluptuous wishes, a ready sacrifice is made of the general good at the shrine of power.” The final stage of tyranny that Tudor argued would develop as a result of luxury and corruption; was the standing army that would become necessary to ensure the enforcement of the unjust laws created by the greedy and corrupt officials.

Weary of the situation that was transpiring in colonial North America, Tudor and the Sons of Liberty recognized the war with Britain as a prime opportunity for a military commander to rise up and seize control over a young nation lacking a true identity. It is for this particular purpose that the Boston Massacre Orations were not only vital to creating an informed populace, but essential to the foundation of an identity based on natural rights and the ‘collective whole,’ to ensure that a tyrant could not arise from the battlefield.

Caesar who boasted that he had slain a million of men was at length ordered home by the senate to answer to some charges against his conduct. He knew that at such an interview his sword would be his ablest advocate. He therefore led his

38 Ibid
39 John Phillip Reid echoed these sentiments in his work, In Defiance of the Law, when he cited a letter to Charles Townshend that stated, (pertaining to the overthrow of Charles I,) “A military force which themselves had raised, paid, new modeled, and in which they disposed of all commands, seeing plainly that they had given them the power to do all that they had done, undid it at once, and raised their General to supreme power, which he exercised in a manner before unknown to this island, and much beyond what had ever been effected by the most ambitious and absolute of our Kings.” Reid’s analysis of the army that overthrew Charles I is vitally important since it helps provide an example of an improper use of military force in English history, which the Boston Massacre Orators, and many of the colonists themselves, were most likely aware of.
veteran legions, “nothing loth,” against his country; passed the rubicon; fought his way to Rome; plunged a dagger in her vitals; impiously trampled on her dearest rights; and seized on empire crimsoned, execrable paricide! Crimsoned with the richest blood of Rome’s best citizens!

Too late the patriot poniard reach’d the traitor’s heart, Caesar fell-allas! The republic had fallen before – one tyrant dead, like the Hydra-head cut off, up started more. Rome changed her tyrants, but the tyranny remained. The same army that had enabled Julius to triumph over the liberties of his country, led the cars of OCTAVIUS, ANTHONY, and LEPIDUS through seas of Roman blood, and bad the cursed triumvirate divide an enslaved world.  

By drawing on Octavian Caesar, (Augustus,) Antony, and Lepidus, Tudor emphasized the threat that one popular and well-placed citizen could pose to society. “A free and wise people will never suffer any citizen to become too popular – much less too powerful.”  

In order to assure that no individual could become too powerful, the ‘collective’ must function in accordance with the prudential interests of the whole, due to individual human weakness that is prone to lust, power, and corruption when given the opportunity. In light of human-weakness, Tudor delicately transitioned the focus of his oration from the path of caution, to the path of patriotism in order to demonstrate how unity and support could prevent a state from becoming weak. Having set his oration up in a manner that would allow him to now strategically and continuously undermine the flaws in Britain’s limited monarchy, Tudor proceeded.

Much like Rome, Tudor argued that the fundamental problem with the British form of government was that it granted too much power to the prince. While the House of the Commons and House of Lords still existed, the prince was in control of, “every

40 Tudor, An Oration, 10
41 Tudor, An Oration, 11
lucrative and honorable appointment, civil, ecclesiastic and military; his influence becomes too enormous to be compatible with the public liberty.”

Since the prince controlled such valuable appointments the King had managed to corrupt the Parliament and other offices so that the perceived advantages of the English Constitution were a mirage. In Tudor’s eyes, the British Crown had fallen victim to luxury, corruption, and the usage of a standing army; effectively placing it next inline to the Roman Empire. The only way to restore the liberties of the people and to ensure a free government once the corruption is unearthed was through “total revolution.”

Cautiously and craftily, Tudor fulfilled his duty as an orator by warning the people of the dangers of a standing army, while still strongly advocating for the American cause. The American people were not like the British, who Tudor described as cowards that “Instead of bravely drawing your swords in defence of your freedom and national honor, you first tamely acquiesced in an insidious and ignominious law by which you were basely disarmed like slaves, and then from necessity submitted to keeping on foot, in time of peace, a standing army.” The developments in the war up to this point, both in combat and in the political realm, allowed Tudor and the Sons of Liberty the necessary facts to establish the American people as superior to the British both in courage, and in virtue. The once blank identity that the orators had sought to develop had finally taken shape. While the colonists had once been portrayed as the slaves to the British Empire, the American people were now free and independent, while those left in England were slaves to a tyrannical King:

42 Ibid, 15
43 Tudor, An Oration, 16
44 Tudor, An Oration, 17
My countrymen, suffer not the slaughtered brethren we now lament to have bled in vain; let us forever retain the important lessons, and they will not have ineffectually fallen. Security shall spring from their tombs, and their deaths preserve the lives of citizens yet unborn. Succeeding generations shall celebrate the aera of this anniversary as the epoch of American triumph, not as a day of sadness; and future patriots nobly envy the death of those, who dying taught their countrymen experimental wisdom.45

Crying to his countrymen, Tudor begged the people to stand strong in their pursuit, and patriotic in their mind, for what could be worse for a nation of free people than falling back under the rule of an oppressive tyrant? Through the wisdom and courage the Warren represented, the cause for liberty would not fail.

45 Ibid, 23
Chapter IV: An ‘American’ and the Meaning of the War

The year 1779 was thoroughly tested the will of the colonists and pushed their new born identity to the absolute extreme. The war effort had become a long and grueling process that bore the cost of many American lives. The fabric that held the men together was strained and in some cases, fractured, as can be seen with the ‘Mutiny of the Massachusetts Line,’ where 100 soldiers from the West Point Massachusetts Line abandoned their duties, claiming that the terms of their three year enlistment had been fulfilled. The mutinous group was returned to West Point, and the leaders of the mutiny were arrested. While this one small instance seems to have been resolved, the larger implications of this mutiny were not lost. The group that had abandoned their posts were from Massachusetts, the colony that the Sons of Liberty had worked so hard to establish as the patriotic and revolutionary center of Colonial America. The oration of 1780 marked the beginning of the final stage of ideological development in the ‘American Identity.’

William Tudor, and the group of Massacre orators from 1777-1779 had carefully identified and shaped the term ‘American’ and given it meaning for the remaining orators. The final set of orations, 1780-1783, represented the beginning of the orations looking to the future where they are primarily concerned with the preservation of the identity and liberties that the Sons of Liberty and the previous Massacre orators had established. While previous orators had sought to explain how the British Parliament and English monarchy had lost its virtue, the final orators focused on how a state should maintain its virtue, tying the ideal of patriotism to the very core of the preservation of

1 Karapalides, Dates of Am Rev, 139
2 Ibid
liberty. By tying the idea of an ‘American’ to virtue and honor, the identity that was once weak and unclear will become powerful and vivid. Finally, these orations will directly and intimately establish the regional Bostonian identity as the primary cornerstone of the new American identity.

Little is known about Jonathan Mason, the Boston Massacre Orator for 1780. What is known for certain is the Mason, broke the typical Massacre orator mold in that he was educated at the College of New Jersey (Princeton,) and ultimately served as a United States Senator from 1800-1803. However, Mason represented an elite member of society and had significant social standing in Boston, where he served on the State House of Representatives and was an attorney. John Hancock and well as William Tudor were also on the selection committee for Mason’s oration, lending further support for this claim.

The final ideological shift, and the new ‘on-ward’ looking perspective became immediately clear, as Mason broke from the tradition humble sentiments or letters of caution. “That the greatness and prosperity of a people depend upon the proportion of public spirit and the love of virtue, which is found to exist among them, seems to be a maxim established by the universal consent and I may say experience of all ages.” The 1777-1779 orators established the ‘collective whole’ as the body of people containing within them the power of sovereignty and the fundamental right to choose one’s government. Mason not only accepted this position, but placed the virtue of the United

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4 Ibid
5 Jonathan Mason, An Oration, Delivered March 6, 1780 Boston, MA, John Gill, 1780, 5
States as part of the collective. With the trust and virtue of the state placed within the people, it becomes the duty of each individual to uphold and to protect those liberties and the virtue of the ‘whole’ when it becomes endangered.

A CONDIFENCE is established between him and his benefactor, they swear perpetual friendship, and a compact for mutual protection and assistance becomes imperceptibly consented to. Thus doubly armed, together they pursue their morning rout to satisfy those demands only which nature reminds them of, and while the ingenuity of the one is exercised to ensnare, the strength of the other is perhaps employed to subdue their vigorous opponent.6

Based on this confidence and trust in the communal protection of virtue, the newly sovereign United States would be assured of its continued existence, as long as the people held together. With such attention given to the establishment of the social contract and the obligations of the citizens to the sovereign, the new concerns of the Sons of Liberty began to become abundantly clear. The Mutiny of the Massachusetts line was symbolic of a larger issue, the longer the war went on, the greater the toll on the local communities who were suffering losses for the cause of liberty. Desperately trying to reinforce the importance of unity and the preservation of the delicate bond that bound all Americans, Mason cried:

PATRIOTISM is essential to the preservation and well being of every free government. To love one’s country has ever been esteemed honorable, and under the influence of this noble passion every social virtue is cultivated, free prevails through the whole, and the public good is the object of every one’s concern. A Constitution built upon such principles, and put in execution by men possessed with the love of virtue and their fellow men, must always ensure happiness to it’s members. The industry of the citizen will receive encouragement and magnanimity; heroism and benevolence will be esteemed the admired qualifications of the age. Every least invasion on the public liberty, is considered as an infringement on that of the subject; and feeling himself roused at the appearance of oppression, with a divine enthusiasm he flies to obey the summons

6 Mason, An Oration, 8
of his country, and does she but request with zeal he resigns the life of the individual for the preservation of the whole.\textsuperscript{7}

Speaking to an audience that had long felt the cruel and unrelenting lashes of British tyranny and oppression, Mason urged the community to stand strong and hold together in the time of the darkest and most intense strife. Pushing the “injure one, injure us all,” mentality Mason offered a new and unique Classical Society reference, putting forward the example of Xerxes and the struggle of the 300 Lacedimonians:

When Xerxes, the ambitious prince of Persia, vainly thinking that nature and the very elements were subject to his controul, inflamed with the thoughts of conquest, threatening the seas should they resist with his displeasure, and the mountains should they oppose his progress: When[rest of word unclear] having collected the armies of the then known world under his banners, he entered the bowels of Greece…With three hundred Lacedimonians, one only of whom was left to tell the fate of these intrepid men to their weeping country, they conquered the combined force of the whole Eastern world.\textsuperscript{8}

Rallying the audience, and juxtaposing the American cause to that of the 300, Mason sought to inspire not only patriotic zeal and fervor, but to imply that no army fighting for the just cause of liberty and virtue could be destroyed, so long as its loyal sons stood firm, and the ‘whole’ resisted tyranny. In accordance with the continued development of the American identity, Mason concluded his general discussion of the collective whole and turned his attention to making a clear and distinct break from the British identity, so that the idea of an American could no longer be mistaken for a rebellious Englishman.

The steadfast dedication of the Bostonians to rooting out the seeds of tyranny allowed the cause for liberty and virtue to begin. Therefore, Mason suggested, it should not be abandoned at any cost. Eager to continue the negative portrayal of the English identity, Mason offered a subtle reference to the Massacre as well as all of the fallen

\textsuperscript{7} Mason, \textit{An Oration}, 8
\textsuperscript{8} Mason, \textit{An Oration}, 9-10
soldiers in-order to set up his concluding patriotic sentiments by evoking images of
Joseph Warren, “Modest in prosperity, and shining like a meteor in adversity, we behold
this patriotic hero, with a small army of determined freemen, attacking, fighting and
conquering an army composed of the bravest veteran troops of Britain.”

The North American colonists had once considered themselves to be loyal and
proud English subjects, but according the Mason and the Sons of Liberty, the mutually
reciprocal relationship deteriorated when the traitorous plot against the liberties of man
was uncovered. In order to ensure that the liberties of the colonies would remain
enslaved, the British sent a vast and powerful force, similar to that of Xerxes, to conquer
the liberties of the American people. By holding steadfast in the dedication to justice and
the cause of freedom, the noble patriots for the colonial cause pushed the United States
on the path to liberty and prosperity, while exposing Britain’s slow and steady
degeneration:

American and Britain are not at this day, running the road to greatness and
glory in concert; and what is but the want of patriotism that could induce this
haughty nation, divested of every public virtue, of every bosom feeling, of every
pretention to humanity, without apology or pretext to suffer a standing army,
composed of vagrants, criminals and mercenaries into our peaceful country…We
have every thing to hope; they on the other hand have everything to fear. Youth,
vigor and the invincible arm of justice are on our side: -- The genius of liberty is
also our advocate, who though persecuted, hath never been conquered.10

With this impassioned plea to the common people, Mason attempted to provide certainty
in an uncertain time, “Liberty…though persecuted…hath never been conquered.”

Victory would come in time, only if the hearts of the men fighting the colonial cause
failed, would the hands of a lawless tyrant squeeze the remaining life and liberty from the

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9 Mason, An Oration, 16
10 Ibid, 19
United States. The heart of the true American patriot could never fail, and like the 300, neither would the colonial cause.

Mason concluded his oration by offering a message of caution, something that each orator following independence had done. Once independence had been achieved, Mason urged the people to, “REMEMBER that prosperity is dangerous; that though successful we are not infallible; that like the rest of mankind we are capable erring.”(22)

Through the collective enforcement of the public will, and the commitment to justice that the Bostonians had shown since the initial whispers of conspiracy, North America would become, “The land of Liberty, and AMERICA an asylum for the oppressed.”(Mason 23)

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The beginning of the 1781 oration marked a definitive shift in the way that the orators referenced classical societies. Furthermore, the orators began to look forward towards the future preservation of their society, rather than looking back in history to show why Parliament had lost its virtue. Also unique to Dawes’s oration was the explicit connection he established between the Bostonian identity to the American identity. This direct link that Dawes and the Sons of Liberty finally established allowed them to focus the remaining orations on establishing Bostonian ideology as the ‘American’ ideology.11

In order to establish what the collective was supposed to be protecting, Dawes sketched a general framework of the traits that all virtuous and free societies possessed. To begin this process, Dawes immediately referenced the founding of the Massachusetts colony,

Our first fathers had but few desires and those to be satisfied by the works of virtue…enough to give a spring to good actions… Liberty, sent from above, was their peculiar inmate: that Liberty, whose spirit, mingling with the nature of man at his formation, taught him, unlike the other animals, to look upward and hope

11 No Biographical Record of Dawes has been found
for a throne above the stars: that Liberty who taught him to pluck with confidence
the fruits of Nature; to pursue the direction of reason upon his heart and, under
that direction, to acquire, secure and enjoy all possible happiness, not impeding
but assisting other in the same privilege…
Nimrod commenced his prelude to tyranny, and Fame was clamorous with the
deeds of death. Liberty heard and trembled – considered herself an outcast and
has on many times since travelled up and down the world, forlorn, forsaken,
majesty in rages. Nor will She, perhaps until the millennium comes, if America
does not now retain her, ever command that complete and permanent homage
which is suitable to her nature 12
Each generation of Bostonian people had been prepared to receive their natural liberties
when they were born, once the British made an attempt upon those liberties, it became
the duty of the Sons of Liberty to rise up in defense of those liberties. As the fight with
England drew on, the orators no longer paid the same level of attention to justifying the
cause for independence, but now were faced with the difficult question, “Are we prepared
to receive liberty?” And if received, “How will we ensure that it is not lost again?” By
offering America as the permanent home and protector of liberty, Dawes placed an
immeasurable weight on America remaining true to the very principles that founded it
once independence had been achieved.

[Lady Liberty] O let her not return to the courts above with a story that shall fire
the heavens against us – that She had blessings for us; but that we were not
prepared to receive them13

To help lay the framework so that the common Bostonian could effectively
understand the strength that existed in a free society Dawes provided a new classical
society reference:

Situate upon a venerable pile of rocks in Italy stands the Commonwealth of St.
Marino. It was founded by a holy man whose name it bears, and who fled to this
romantick fairy-land to enjoy religion and free air, unpursued by power and the restless

12 Thomas Dawes, An Oration, Delivered March 5, 1781, Boston, MA, Thomas and
John Fleet, 1781, 6-7
13 Ibid, 8
spirit of the world. His example was followed by the pious, the humane and the lovers of freedom. And these, a favorite few who were before scattered up and down thro’ other parts of Italy; who had lived all their days under arbitrary rule and whom Nature had secretly taught that there was somewhere a happier institution for man – these hurried away to the snowy top of St. Marino: And having there first tasted these rights which come down from God, made it their life’s labor to support and hand them down in purity. There every man finds his prosperity in submitting to those laws which diffuse equality. There every man feels himself happily liable to be called to the senate or the field: every man divides his day between alternate labor and the use of arms – on tip toe, ready to start for the prize, the mark of universal emulation – The Commonwealth; officious to promote that interest which is at once the publick’s and his own. So stands a constitution informed with the very essence of Liberty.\textsuperscript{14}

Dawes craftily provided an example that would tie both to Massachusetts’s history, as well as to the future of the United States. Like the original founders of St. Marino, the founders of Massachusetts had came and tasted the fruits of liberty, making the attempted deprivation of these rights all the more appalling. Rather than allow these rights to simply taken, they fought to defend their fundamental rights. The two-fold importance of Dawes’ is through his selection of St. Marino. A young nation, the United States of America and the colonists would be inexperienced at running their own nation, without question they had regional political beacons, but how would these provincial loyalties tear at the fabric of a new nation? By using St. Marino, Dawes subtly suggested that each colony lay aside their local biases, and come together in the creation of a sovereign nation, founded on the preservation of the liberties of all that came.\textsuperscript{15}

Dawes carefully used this unique interpretation of classical societies to shift the way in which the previous societal references, Greece and Rome, were to be used in all proceeding orations. Prior to independence, and in the years immediately following, the Massacre orators used Athens, the Rule of the Thirty, and Rome as examples to

\textsuperscript{14} Dawes, \textit{An Oration}, 9
demonstrate how Great Britain had degenerated into a tyranny. These examples were aimed at understanding the causes of the destruction of society, Dawes now sought to focus on understanding the founding principles of the once great republics, so that the United States would have clear vision of what destroys a state, as well as a lucid and intelligible plan for what ideals to found their government on.

When Liberty fled from the gloom of Egypt, she sought out and settled at infant Greece – there disseminated the seed of greatness; there laid the ground-work of Republican glory. Simplicity in manners, piety to the gods, generosity and courage were her earliest character. “Human nature shot wild and free.” Penetrated with a spirit of industry, her sons scarcely knew of relaxation: even their sports were heroic. Hence that elevated, independent soul, that contempt of danger, that laudable byass to their country and its manners. Upon the banks of Eurota flourished her principal state. Frugality of the living and an avarice of time were of the riches of Lacedaemon. Her maxims were drawn from Nature, and one was “that nothing which bore the name of Greek was born for slavery.”

If the United States was to succeed as its own sovereign nation, they must scorn to be slaves, embrace a life of moderation and the accept a collective mentality. So long as these basic principles were preserved, so too would be the liberty of the United States.

Linking the U.S. to the foundation of Greece, Dawes moved to the conclude his oration in dramatic fashion. A British army hell-bent on the enslavement of the colonists, or the Continental Army who would find itself in the unique position of being able to seize power and establish a military dictatorship if it so wished.

When society is considered as “a publick combination for private protection” – and the governed find their happiness in their submission – there is the essence of all-powerful Liberty… Liberty, as that every man who has once tasted it, becomes a temporary soldier as soon as it is invaded and resents any violence offered it, as an attack upon his life – Hence it is that in free states as such there is no such thing as a perpetual standing army…Indeed, it is said that no nation ever kept up an army in time of peace that did not loose its liberties. I believe it. Athens, Corinth, Syracuse, and Greece in general were all overturned.

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Dawes, An Oration, 12
by that tremendous power: and the same power has been long operating with
other causes to humble the crest of Britain.\textsuperscript{17}

This vital passage, while limited in its warning compared to some of the previous
orations, is possibly the most vivid and important. Dawes took no subtlety by pointing
out that the army was a necessary tool for the protection of liberty, but once made a
profession, would lead to the destruction of liberty. It was important that the Continental
Army not lose sight of their intended purpose, to defend liberty. “Such are the troops of
every free people. Such were the troops who, led on by the patriot Warren, gave the first
home-blow to our oppressors.”\textsuperscript{18} Warren was a man who understood that the attempted
destruction of liberty had caused the war, he also understood that the war could lead to
the destruction of liberty by a domestic threat.

The Boston Massacre had taught the Bostonian people all to well what could arise
from the placement of a standing army in a peaceful and free society. As the American
identity continued to develop and expand, the Massacre orators strongly advocated for
patriotism in the community. One fundamental aspect of the American identity was the
undeniable fact that the Boston Massacre served as the catalyst for colonial opposition.
The Massacre gave the Bostonian people a legitimate platform to voice their longstanding
complaints. Eager to ensure that the new United States did not forget who had been the
long standing, dedicated, and wise protectors of the rights of the colonies, the Sons of
Liberty finally made their move to explicitly establish Boston as the heart of the entire
movement.

To come nearer home for an example – do we not see the darkened spring of
1770, like the moon in a thick atmosphere, rising in blood and ushered in by the figure of
Britain plunging her poniard in the young bosom of America? Oh our bleeding country!

\textsuperscript{17} Dawes, \textit{An Oration}, 15
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, 17
… May we never forget to offer a sacrifice to the manes of our brethren who bled so early at the foot of Liberty…

Having described the memorable 5th of March as a season of disaster; it would be an impiety not to consider it in its other relation…The provocations of that night must be numbered among the master-springs which gave the first motion to a vast machinery, a noble and comprehensive system of national Independence. “The Independence of America, says the writer under the signature of Common Sense, should have been considered as dating it’s AEra from the first musquet that was fired against her.” Be it so! But Massachusetts may certainly date many of it’s blessings from the Boston Massacre – a dark hour in itself, but from which a marvelous light has arisen. From that night Revolution became inevitable and the occasion commenced of the present most beautiful form of government.19

By strategically making an explicit connection between the Bostonian identity, and the American identity, Dawes set the stage for George Richard Minot to expand upon the Bostonian identity as well as to extend its already substantial influence deeper into the heart of the American.

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Thomas Dawes and Jonathan Mason faced the extreme difficulty of preaching the importance of political liberty to a population that was currently in the depths of a horrible and vicious war. The Sons of Liberty and George Richard Minot were blessed with an extraordinary opportunity for the 1782 oration when chief British military commander, General Charles Lord Cornwallis surrendered to the Continental Army and George Washington following the conclusion of the Battle of Yorktown.20 With the promised French military support paying substantial dividends, George Washington forced the defeat of one of Britain’s essential fighting forces and the surrender of 8,081

19 Dawes, An Oration, 18,19,20
20 Karapalides, Dates of Am. Rev, 183
men on October 19, 1781. Upon learning of Cornwallis’s defeat British head of
government Lord Frederick North was said to have exclaimed, “Oh God! It is all over!” This decisive victory drastically and forever altered the fortunes of the American cause for the remainder of the war. Following the news of this victory, the Sons of Liberty chose George Richard Minot to perform the duties that were required of a man fortunate enough to be selected for an oration.

Minot’s oration represented a clear tonal shift in the verbal content of the orations. Rather than trying to unite a fragmented group of colonies for the cause of independence or rally support for a difficult war effort, Minot was allowed the freedom to express a deep sense of patriotism as well as concern for the overall direction of a soon to be victorious nation. Furthermore, Minot began the masterful reconstruction of the primary arguments and points of the previous Massacre orators, in an effort to reinforce the importance of virtue in maintaining a just and civil society. In order to accomplish this goal, Minot re-incorporated the two path approach, seeking to both caution and promote a new society. The final important aspect of Minot’s oration to bear in mind is his continued establishment of the Bostonian identity as the American identity while explicitly condemning the English identity. Minot’s oration marked the beginning of the answer to the question, “Who are we as Americans? And what will we do following Independence?”

The shift in the tone of the speaker was immediately evident:

WHEN I consider the important occasion from which this anniversary derives its origin, and the respectable characters that have exerted themselves to perpetuate

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21 Ibid, 184
22 Ibid, 185
23 No biographical record of Minot was found.
its history, I confess there is an unusual security in my feelings; since no mistaken
effort of mine can injure an institution, founded on so memorable an [unreadable]
supported be names so justly claiming the applause and posterity.  
Having long felt the uncertainty and danger of the Revolution, Minot and indeed all
colonists would be able to feel the security of freedom, and soon return to their daily
lives. In order to ensure that a return to the status quo did occur, the Sons of Liberty and
Minot sought to highlight and address many fundamental concerns that still existed in the
colonies. True in all times with all men, the passage of time can lead to the distortion or
disappearance of memory altogether. What could be worse for a virtuous state than the
people forgetting the principles upon which their just state was founded? As the previous
Massacre orators had demonstrated, the ancient republics of Greece and Rome fell when
its once virtuous citizens abandoned or forgot their duty to the state. Furthermore, these
same societies allowed themselves to be enslaved and destroyed by the same standing
army that they had believed would protect them. This could not be the fate that would
befall America.

[Great Britain] A NATION falling from those great principles of justice and
virtue which had made her respectable; subverting the basted improvements of
her arts to the savage purposes of revenge; with venality and corruption
entrenched on her cabinet; affords a spectacle too serious for the amusment of
the beholder…But from the misfortunes of such a nation much is to be learned.
As she is hurried onwards by the vortex of that immeasurable gulph in which
empires sink to rise no more, let her serve us as a signal to avoid the first impulse
of its resistless tide.  

The link between Briton and Bostonian had been broken, the development of an
American had occurred, and the long history of injustice done upon the North American
colonies remained. The preservation of the history of injustice, as well as a well-kept

24 George Richards Minot, An Oration, Delivered March 5, 1782, Boston, MA, Edes & Sons, 5
25 Minot, An Oration, 6
record of the fundamental principles of virtue would be essential to the continued survival of a young nation. Great Britain was once a virtuous nation, like Rome, who had diverted from the ideals present at its inception and foundation. This digression from virtue arose as a result of luxury, greed, and want. The greed of Empire led to an abandonment of virtue and the:

Promulgation of a scheme so repugnant to the fundamental principles of the late English constitution, announced the fall, but did not obliterate the memory of that much respected system in this country. America saw that the act bore not a single feature of its reputed parent, and having detected its illegitimacy, effectually resisted its operation.26

With clear reference to the problem of taxation without consent, as well as a standing army, the British government, “Violated the greatest law nations or individuals can be held by…[Britain] threw a veil over the altars of her gods whom she was too haughty to appease.”27 Though the British tried to enslave the colonists, a just and virtuous people remained steadfast and true in their goal of preventing tyranny.

Leading up to independence, many loyal subjects had hoped and believed that the alleged conspiracy to enslave the rights of the colonies was not in fact a reality. Having used the Boston Massacre and the Boston Massacre Orations as the platform to prove the allegations, the Sons of Liberty effectively warned and informed the Bostonians about their specific rights and the eminent threat that was facing those rights. Suppressed and strangled, the rights of the colonists continued to be withheld from them in tyrannical fashion.

If “every act of authority of one person over another for which there is not an absolute necessity is tyrannical,” and if tyranny justifies resistance, to have remained inactive under these injuries had been a kind of political stoicism,

26 Ibid, 7
27 Ibid, 9
equally inconsistent with the laws of nature and of society. On such principles arose the memorable declaration of July 1776. A declaration which at once gave life and freedom to a nation; dissolved a monopoly unnatural and unjust; and extended the embraces of our country to the universe. A declaration which heaven has since ratified by the successful event of her arms.

The victory at Yorktown had clearly made a dramatic impact across the colonies, so much so that Minot was confident in his assertion that heaven had ratified their cause through the success of their soldiers in combat. Like many of the Massacre orators and the town of Boston, the United States had experienced a moment of intense patriotism immediately following the Declaration of Independence in 1776, followed by what would have been 7 years of fighting at the time of Minot’s speech. Collectively, the colonists pulled together to overcome a substantial threat to their liberties.

With the end of the war in sight, the issue of a domestic standing army led by a powerful and charismatic leader would finally collide with the liberties of a new nation. Would this army and its leader peacefully resign their positions and return to their daily lives? Or would they crown George Washington king and proceed to destroy all that had been fought for? When facing such a question, Minot recommended that people turn to their identity, rather than law for protection.

But to what identity would a new and fragile nation turn? Previous orators had worked tirelessly and delicately to ensure that the Continental Army was a positive symbol of identity throughout the war, but maintained a strong sense of caution in doing so. Thirteen states would be left with no identity to turn to other than what they had known before the Revolution, but only one colony was truly virtuous and committed to a just state before 1776, Massachusetts, specifically Boston.

28 Minot, An Oration, 10
AMONG the advantages which have arisen from these great events to the people of Massachusetts, that of securing their lives, their liberties, and property, the great object of all civil government, by a constitution of their own framing, is not to be accounted the least. Dismembered from a government, which had long stood by the exactest balance of powers even against the corruption of its ministers, they found themselves accustomed to principles, which age had stamped with authority, and patriots sealed with their blood…The quick return of all delegated power to the people from whom it is made to spring, and the check with each party of the government has upon the excesses of the other, seem to warrant us in placing on it all the confidence human laws can deserve. But, [new paragraph] Let us not trust to laws: an uncorrupted people can exist without them; a corrupted people cannot long exist with them, or any other human assistance.\(^{29}\)

Through the unity of the ‘collective’ and the dedication to justice rather than law, the Bostonian people rose up in opposition to an empire in decline. Instead of following the commands or accepting the word and laws of Parliament, the King, and the Royal Governors of the colonies, the Bostonian people turned to their local leaders whom they knew that they could trust. Samuel Adams, John Hancock, and the Sons of Liberty were the ones who assured the colonial people that England had attempted to deceive and trick the colonists out of their rights. “Virtue and long life seem to be as intimately allied in the political as in the moral world.”\(^{30}\) The British Parliament had sought to diminish the existence of the colonies through crafty political measures, and ultimately through violent measures, but the Bostonian leaders were not fooled or intimidated. By understanding history, philosophy, and the science of government, the Bostonian elites were able to use their influence in the Boston Massacre Orations to provide the necessary historical examples of republics that had fallen. Gradually the colonists understood, Great Britain was the next link in the chain of once great empires who had lost their virtue and that the standing army in their midst was often the cause for the loss of liberty.

\(^{29}\) Minot, *An Oration*, 11,12
\(^{30}\) Ibid, 13
Having guided the Bostonian people as well as the entire United States through a long and difficult struggle, Minot concluded his oration by echoing the sentiments of previous orators, but also offered his perception of the American identity:

AMERICA once guarded against herself, what has she to fear? Hear natural situation may well inspire her with confidence. Her rocks and her mountains are the chosen temples of liberty. The extent of her climate, and the variety of its produce, throw the means of her greatness into her own hands, and insure her the traffic of the world. Navies shall launch from her forests, and her bosom be found stored with the most previous treasures of nature. May the industry of her people be a still surer pledge of hear wealth. – The union of her states too is founded upon the most durable principles: the familiarity of the manners, religion, and laws of their inhabitants, must ever support the measure their common injuries originated. Her government, while it is restrained from violating the rights of the subject, is not disarmed against the public foe… Could Junius Brutus and his colleagues have beheld her republic erecting itself on the disjointed neck of tyranny, how would they have wreathed a laurel for her temple as eternal as their own memories! America! fairest copy of such great originals! be virtuous, and thy reign shall be as happy as durable, and as durable as the pillars of the world you have enfranchised.\textsuperscript{31}

With caution and optimism, the United States could move forward, but not until the decisive and undisputed end of hostilities in America. While the people of the colonies may have thought that the threat to they liberties had almost passed, a potentially more dangerous and malicious threat loomed ever present. Only with an informed populace that is dedicated to virtue, could the United States truly prosper and not fall into the hands of another despotic ruler.

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Between March 1782 and March 1783, the long fought battle for independence came to an end with the Peace Treaty of Paris on November 30, 1782.\textsuperscript{32} This treaty effectively marked the ratification of the ‘American’ identity as entirely separate from a ‘Briton,’ since the people who were once loyal subjects to the Crown formally rejected

\begin{footnotes}
\item Minot, \textit{An Oration}, 15
\item Karapalides, \textit{Dates of Am. Rev}, 193
\end{footnotes}
the ‘pardon’ and return to the status quo that George III offered following the defeat at Yorktown.\textsuperscript{33} Even through 1776, many colonists were still eagerly pursuing a reconciliation with England as was evident with the Olive Branch Petition. In 1776, King George III rejected the proposed restoration of the status quo in favor of teaching a group of unruly political dissenters a lesson. By denying ‘identity’ to a group of people who wanted to view themselves as English, King George III ensured that an ‘American’ and ‘Briton’ would never be one and the same again. Rather than return to a tyrannical and oppressive state a new system of justice and virtue was built upon the early labor and effort of the Bostonian people.

At a time when the meaning of Independence was unclear and direction was sorely need, the Sons of Liberty selected Dr. Thomas Welsh to bring meaning and clarity to the events that had transpired. Thomas Welsh graduated from Harvard with the class of 1772 and was a highly respected student amongst the faculty and student body. Welsh was afforded the honor of having won the Hopkins Prize for scholarly excellence as well as being asked to be the fourth ensign officer when the student body organized a militia company in 1771.\textsuperscript{34} Welsh was also a strong advocate for the patriot cause having assisted Dr. Isaac Foster in the treatment of soldiers wounded following Lexington and Concord as well as after the Battle of Bunker Hill and Winter Hill.\textsuperscript{35} Beyond merely having treated soldiers, Welsh picked up arms and joined the Continental Army as a member of the 27\textsuperscript{th} Infantry for the campaign for New York and fought in the Battle of

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 188
\textsuperscript{34} Shipton, \textit{Sibley's Vol. XVIII}, 183
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 184
\end{flushleft}
Trenton.\(^\text{36}\) Having both served in battle as well as in the aid of wounded soldiers, Dr. Thomas Welsh made a logical choice to conclude the Boston Massacre Orations since he, himself, was the model of an ideal patriot.

Welsh represented the conclusion of the fourth and final ideological development of an American identity, as well as the answer to what the orations had meant. In one of the more concise orations, Welsh provided the people of Boston with a clear summary of the collective meaning of all of the orations. However, it is important to remember that while the immediate threat of England had passed, the domestic standing army and George Washington remained.

Welsh used his opening remarks to harp on the grand opportunity that the Americans now possessed, as well as the great threat that was on their doorstep.

INVITED to this place by your choice, and recollecting your well known indulgence, I feel myself already possessed of your candor, while I “impress upon your minds, the ruinous tendency of standing armies being placed in free and populous cities in a time of peace…”

A field here presents annually traversed by those, who by their sagacity have discovered, and by their voices declared, in strains of manly eloquence, the source from whence these fatal streams originate, which, like the destroying pestilence, have depopulated kingdoms and laid waste the fairest empires. In prosecution of this subject, I resume I shall not offend a respectable part of my audience, I mean the gentlemen of the American patriot army. An army whose glory and virtue have been long since recorded in the temple of the same – her trumpet has sounded their praises to distant nations – her wing shall bear them to latest ages.\(^\text{37}\)

The Continental Army consisted of men from each colony, dedicated to the preservation of liberty and the fundamental rights of man. War afforded each of the survivors the

\(^\text{36}\) Ibid
\(^\text{37}\) Thomas Welsh, \textit{An Oration, Delivered March 5, 1783}, Boston, MA, John Gill, 1783, 5-6
chance for glory, monetary rewards, and the chance to elevate Washington to the role of a dictator. Rather than give into the luxury and temptation that the Massacre orators established as ruinous to a just society, Welsh formally introduced the means by which a just society could be defended.

It had been well established that the Sons of Liberty were concerned by the possibility of a standing army in their midst, domestic or foreign. Standing armies, or professional armies, either became the arm of dominion for a lawless tyrant or a profession of envy for all other men. In either circumstance, professional soldiers led to the degradation and destruction of virtue. Rather than commission a permanent standing army to protect the new United States, Welsh built on Minot’s idea to use the militia as the primary means of protecting a virtuous state.

A militia is the most natural defence of a free state, from invasion and tyranny: they who compose the militia, are the proprietors of the soil; and who are likely to defend it, as they who have received it from their ancestors – acquired it by their labor – or obtained it by their valour [symbol unclear] every free man has within his breast the great essentials of a soldier, and having made the use of arms familiar, is ever ready for the field. And where is the tyrant who has not reason to dread an army of freemen?38

When called upon to answer the threat to the liberties of the colonies, militiamen such as Joseph Warren abandoned their traditional posts in society in order to help protect the community in a time of great need. By having a well-regulated militia, the Sons of Liberty believed that the virtue and freedom of that society would be ensured since the community would rise up in defense of the collective whole when danger was imminent. Through the dedication and trust in the militia, the Continental Army was raised in defense of the rights of the North American colonies, and ultimately succeeded in

38 Ibid, 7
defeating the professional British standing army. Welsh believed that only when a state abandoned the militia did the people lose the ability to defend themselves. The various colonial militias had been raised and shaped into the Continental Army, a standing army whose command was granted to George Washington.

George Washington and the Continental Army had become firmly established as an early beacon of American identity since the army was itself, the guarantor of independence. Without the resolve of Washington and the soldiers, independence would have been lost and the United States would have been returned to an unjust and tyrannical King George III. While the liberties of the United States seemed secure from danger, Thomas Welsh urged the community to not forget the two-fold significance of the army. It had brought freedom with one hand, but could bring slavery and tyranny with the other if proper measures were not taken to ensure that the army be returned to a militia.

AT the conclusion of a long and bloody war, the liberties of a people are in real danger from the admission of troops into a free city. When an army has suffered every hardship to which the life of a Soldier is peculiarly incident, and has returned crowned with the well earned laurels of the field, they justly expect to be received into the open arms, and with the applause of those for whom they have fought; and in whose cause they have bled; in a situation like this, whole communities in transport of gratitude, have weakly sacrificed at the shrine of a deliverer, every thing for which their armies have fought or their heroes have bled.\footnote{Welsh, \textit{An Oration}, 10}

The jubilant and victorious troops would no doubt feel entitled to positions of privilege and fortune following their immense personal sacrifice in order to achieve a free society for the citizens of the United States, but no such treatment should be given. Welsh echoed the sentiments of previous orators who warned that victorious soldiers breed jealousy amongst a population who did not partake in the battle. It would be easy for a
well-liked leader, such as Washington, to capitalize on the patriotic sentiments of the people and the delicate political structure that existed at the time since all those who did not partake in the fighting would not want to appear ‘unpatriotic’ by not supporting the men who had fought for the lives of the people. Only a weakness in resolve and misplaced sympathy could undermine what had taken nearly two decades to build.

Despite the temptation to heap praise and rewards on the gallant soldiers who had fought righteously and vigorously for the cause of liberty, Welsh urged the community to remember Joseph Warren and the ideals that the Boston Massacre Orations had delicately and intricately placed at the heart of an ‘American identity.’

AMERICA separated from the nations of Europe by the mighty ocean, and from Britain by the mightier hand of Heaven, is acknowledged an independent nation; she has now to maintain her dignity and importance among the kingdoms of the earth. May she never be seduced from her true interest, by subtle intrigue, mistaken policy, or misguided ambition! But considering her own condition may she follow the maxims of wisdom, which are better than the weapons of war.40

Through the weapons of war independence had been won, but through the application of wisdom the liberties and virtue of the United States would be ensured. Welsh and the Sons of Liberty explicitly and conclusively tied the two-paths of warning and patriotism together in an effort to provide the common Bostonian and American with a clear vision of the way forward. At great length independence had been won through the harsh and sad reality of war, the only greater tragedy than not winning the war would be the elevation of Washington to dictator and the continued existence of a standing army.

40 Ibid, 13
Heading into a time of great uncertainty the cohesion and patriotism of a new nation would be rigorously tested and tempted by the fatal fruits of victory.

AT length, Independence is ours – the halcyon day appears; lo from the east I see the harbinger, and from the train ‘tis peace herself; and as attendants all the gentle arts of life; commerce displays her snow white navies, fraught with the wealth of kingdoms; plenty from her copious horn, pours forth her richest gifts. Heaven commands! The east and the west give up, and the north keeps not back! All nations meet! And beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks, and resolve to learn war no more. – Henceforth shall the American wilderness blossom as the rose, and every man shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make him afraid. 41(18)

Only a strong and steadfast dedication to the humble and communal principles of virtue would ensure the United States continued existence and well-being as a virtuous and just republic, home to the true ‘republican man.” Once the soldiers returned to their ploughs and businesses, the Continental Army and its leader could no longer pose a threat to liberty, thus ensuring that the United States of America could continue to grow and emerge as the global symbol of liberty.

41 Welsh, An Oration, 18
Conclusion:

The Treaty of Paris marked the end of the war for American independence, and Dr. Thomas Welsh’s oration marked the end of the Boston Massacre Orations, giving way to what became known as the “Fourth of July Orations.”¹ All Americans born following the conclusion of the war in 1783 were able to enjoy and take part in the liberties and the freedoms afforded under a just and virtuous state without truly understanding the cost and struggle that the brave patriots of Boston and colonial America endured in order to pry open the tightly clenched fist of tyranny. It is for this sole reason that the current histories written on the Revolution and Boston Massacre fail to adequately understand the immense difficulty that the Sons of Liberty endured.

Bernard Bailyn’s work provided an incredible cornerstone that analyzed the ideological development of the American Revolution from a broad macro-level perspective, while later histories such the works of Maier, Carp, and Zobel focused more intimately on the micro-level events and actors such as the Sons of Liberty or the Boston Massacre. While each of these histories incorporated primary and secondary source material to assert and prove their arguments, The Boston Massacre Orations serve as an up close and intimate gauge of the ideological shifts in identity as they occurred between 1770-1783. Many scholars believe the orations to be highly quotable (Bailyn and Reid,) but redundant arguments for the dangers of a standing army. Only when treated as a cohesive group do the orations paint a magnificent picture of life in colonial Boston as

¹ For reference to the 'Fourth of July Orations,’ see the footnote in Bailyn, Ideological Origins, 6
the Sons of Liberty and the common people slowly moved in four ideological shifts from loyal English subjects, to autonomous “Americans.”

The true meaning and importance of the orations is brought to light when they are understood from the standpoint of a common Bostonian citizen. As Benjamin Carp and Richard Archer proved, colonial Boston was a city of unique and interdependent economic and social relationships centered on the waterfront as the primary means for income. The overall cohesive nature that existed in Boston has been heavily elaborated on and requires no further explanation other than to recall that it allowed for John Hancock, Samuel Adams, and the Sons of Liberty to command the loyalties of the people both through economic power and social stature. By commissioning the Boston Massacre Orations the Sons of Liberty acted shrewdly to ensure that not only would the Massacre be remembered, but its continued remembrance would serve as the prime example of the destructive tendencies of a standing army. With the creation of these orations, the Sons of Liberty and each orator left behind an invaluable first-person account of life in a pre-revolutionary, revolutionary, and post-revolutionary society.

Upon re-examination of Adams’ question posed to Hezekiah Niles in 1818\(^2\) in light of what has been unearthed through the study and analysis of the orations, it can logically be concluded that the American Revolution occurred in four distinct phases of ideological development that was not completed until the end of the war in 1783. The four stages of development can be understood as moving from a loyal English subject to a Bostonian, and Bostonian to an “American.” However, the development of the “American” as a political identity entirely separate from the “British” identity occurred in

\(^2\) See p.3 for specific quotation
two phases. Immediately following independence, from 1777-1779, a new and fragile nation lacked clear direction and the term “American” remained ambiguous. The formal recognition of the United States by France as a sovereign power and several key military victories helped to cement the existence of an “American” as his own man between 1780-1783.

The Sons of Liberty effectively used the Boston Massacre Orations to influence and indirectly control the trajectory of ideological development in Boston, and eventually all colonies, since they were able to experience the cold and merciless rule of the British tyranny long before any other colony. The Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party became symbolic of Boston, allowing them to then be used as evidence to prove the British ministerial conspiracy against the colonies. By spearheading the movement for colonial rights, the Sons of Liberty and by extension, the Massacre Orators, served as loyal watchmen and guardians of the fundamental rights of man. While independence was not their initial aim, the Boston Massacre Orations exist to demonstrate the long and conflicted struggle that the people of colonial North America endured in order to create a virtuous and free society.

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