

**A WAR OF WORDS:**  
**SATIRE AND SONG IN THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY**  
***VIRGINIA GAZETTES***

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Master of Arts

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Mark Howell

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## APPROVAL SHEET

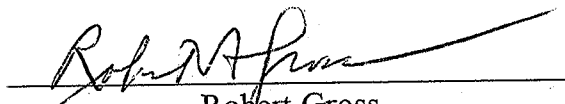
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The author wishes to express his admiration for all the eighteenth-century typesetters who were obliged to set the words "virtue," "liberty," and "tyranny" or their variants more times than anyone will ever be able to count.



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\*All illustrations have been reproduced from Joan D. Dolmetsch's *Rebellion and Reconciliation: Satirical Prints on the Revolution at Williamsburg* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1976).

## ABSTRACT

On the eve of the American Revolution Williamsburg was represented by three newspapers. Each was patriotic in tenor and used not only letters, essays, and news to support the grievances of the colonies but literary satires, songs, and poems as well. These literary pieces reflected the education and interests of the papers' subscribers and were an extension of British culture into Virginia. They represented Virginians' affinity for those things English that had not been corrupted by England's political machinations.

There were, however, important distinctions in how the three *Virginia Gazettes* used literary devices to comment on the coming revolution. The choice and form of satires utilized by each printer suggests subtle distinctions in their agenda. The origin of submissions, the level of the satire's reliance on a classical education, and level of prior knowledge on the part of the reader combine to show how each printing office reacted to this period of political change.

Additionally, the variety of literary motifs reflected the many and complex influences on gentry society and, increasingly, others in society who were being drawn to newspapers and the information to be gleaned from them. The varied inspirations of the Bible, theater, Rome, ribald club conversations, and English heritage—just to name a few—that helped to define the world of the gentry all found voice in the 74 satires that appeared in the *Virginia Gazettes* between August 1774 and July 1776. And yet, this increased reliance on the prints as a means of communication and the impersonality associated with it became part of the transformation of print culture as an experience shared by a few to one of a collective experience.

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## **A WAR OF WORDS:**

### **SATIRE AND SONG IN THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY *VIRGINIA GAZETTES***

## A WAR OF WORDS:

### SATIRE AND SONG IN THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY *VIRGINIA GAZETTES*

On 16 May 1766, a singular event occurred in the city of Williamsburg:

William Rind began publication of Virginia's second newspaper and launched a redefinition of the print media's role in informing and shaping opinion in the colony. By 1775 the city boasted three papers all more committed to the patriotic call for liberty and, if necessary, independence, than to any semblance of the parity and fairness now claimed as mandates by the fourth estate. This is not a story of impartiality and unbiased reporting—something that, newspaper claims to the contrary, was rarely a reality in eighteenth-century Britain and America—but of their participation in the colonies' process of declaring independence from Great Britain.

To be sure, the gazettes were instrumental in laying the intellectual groundwork that justified the radical arguments being set before Virginia. But their role went further than to simply place the facts before the populace and hope for the best. These printers, and their local contributors, molded and shaped opinion by a careful selection of news, essays, and literary pieces. The literary pieces were not just filler and fluff; they were important tools in the patriots' arsenal. Some were pirated from broadsides, pamphlets and other newspapers (as were the essays); many were supplied by subscribers, but, in either case, they have not received their due as major contributors to Virginians' understanding of the crisis. Even historian Bernard Bailyn dismissed their importance:

The communication of understanding . . . lay at the heart of the Revolutionary movement, and its great expressions, embodied in the best of the pamphlets, are consequently expository and explanatory: didactic, systematic, and direct, rather than imaginative and metaphoric. They take the form most naturally of treatises and sermons, not poems; of descriptions, not allegories; of explanations; not burlesques. The reader is led through arguments, not images. The pamphlets' aim is to persuade.

What Bailyn and others failed to recognize is the role literature played in the press in relating a particular party's position (even if it required the occasional exaggeration and/or distortion). Poetry, song and other forms of satire were accepted as valid mediums for critiques and analyses of current events as well being a forum for artistic expression.<sup>1</sup>

The printers reviewed here—Alexander Purdie, William Hunter, Jr., John Dixon, and John Pinkney<sup>2</sup>—used literature to varying degrees but all were committed to employing their respective papers to do more than simply present the news. From August, 1774 to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the *Virginia Gazettes* printed 74 literary satires and poems that directly pertained to the conflict between Britain and her colonies. Some were only a few lines long, several stretched to more than a page in length. Most were printed anonymously (and remain so) and will never rank as great literature, but they continued a literary tradition that paralleled the emergence of political philosophies in the early part of the century that were to be invoked by the patriots as a justification for their

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<sup>1</sup>Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 18-19; Daphne Hamm O'Brien, "From Plantation to Parnassus: Poets and Poetry in Williamsburg, Virginia, 1750-1800 (Ph. D. dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1993), 14.

<sup>2</sup>Although the dates of this study include a month during which Clementina Rind was in charge of one of the papers, she was dying of consumption and her paper was probably being managed and edited by her relative John Pinkney.

position. This reliance on both political precedent and literary tradition is not surprising; the colony's patriot leaders depended on the premise that their position was validated by history, English legacy, and natural law. By relying on British institutions as a bulwark for their grievances, Virginia's leaders worked within the system in hopes of correcting it or, when it became inevitable, to separate from it. As a result, the learned mechanics became a critical component in promoting resistance to tyranny as an acceptable stance. At the same time, these printers created a subtle undercurrent that implied that Americans had already gone beyond the station of being secondary British subjects and were well on their way to being a new, autonomous entity.

\* \* \*

It had not always been this way. For decades Williamsburg's lone printing office, founded by William Parks, was bound to the government by virtue of the printing contract it held and, like most other colonial printers, was limited to printing what was deemed acceptable by the governor. Parks first petitioned the Virginia Council for the contract to print the laws of Virginia while operating a shop in Annapolis in 1726. He eventually moved to Virginia in 1730 and produced the laws in 1733.<sup>3</sup>

Parks began publication of the *Virginia Gazette* on August 6, 1736 and continued the weekly paper until his death in 1750. The paper contained news, poems, advertisements, and letters and was remarkably devoid of any entanglements or controversy. Once in 1749 Parks was caught in a squabble between the House of

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<sup>3</sup>Mary Goodwin, "Printing Office and Post Office Historical Report" (Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Library Research Report Series--1420, 1990), i-ii.

Burgesses and the governor's Council and was ordered to be taken into custody by the House to answer for "a malicious and scandalous Libel, highly injouriously reflecting upon the Proceedings" of that body. When it was later discovered that the piece in question was ordered by the colony's council, Parks was released and the scandal came to nothing.<sup>4</sup>

Another passing judgment on Parks' and his successors' tacit relationship with the government appeared scrawled on a copy of a later gazette being published by future rival William Rind where, after Rind's declamation "to enter into a minute Detail of the Advantages of a well conducted NEWSPAPER," the subscriber sarcastically added "and the first that has ever been Establish'd in this Province."<sup>5</sup> This attitude towards Virginia's first paper was never articulated during its reign as the sole source for information but with the invitation to Rind to establish a competing newspaper in the mid-1760s, it became obvious that Virginia's populace had been increasingly frustrated by the limited role the first gazette had played in presenting the news.

Parks' immediate successor was foreman William Hunter. He purchased Parks' printing office and equipment and, after a few months, reestablished the *Gazette's* publication and was awarded the government's contract as the colony's public printer. In 1753 the British postmaster-general appointed Hunter and Benjamin Franklin deputy postmasters, a position Hunter held until his death in 1761.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>11 May 1749, *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1742-1749*, 401-404.

<sup>5</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Rind), 16 May 1766. This particular newspaper is owned by the New York Historical Society.

<sup>6</sup>Goodwin, "Printing Office," XVI-XX.



From Hunter's death through the 1780s the first *Virginia Gazette* was passed on to a series of successors who were all related to him either by blood or marriage. Hunter sired a bastard son, William, Jr., and willed him a major interest in the enterprise to be overseen by foreman Joseph Royle until he reached his majority. Royle, who married Hunter's sister Roseanna in 1763, carried on the business until his death in 1766 when *his* foreman, Alexander Purdie, in turn, took over the business and the education of young William, Jr.

Royle's tenure was highlighted by the introduction of William Rind's rival newspaper, brought to Virginia in response to charges that his press "was not renowned for its freedom."<sup>7</sup> By now, Virginians, or at least those who read Royle's paper, seemed to have reached a level of frustration brought on by the limiting exclusiveness of a single press (See Table 1 for the sequence of printers serving Virginia during this period). Some news was shipped up to Annapolis to be printed because, some suggested, Royle was "under such Influences as to be obliged to Print what he is directed, and *nothing else*."<sup>8</sup> Purdie was offered this backhanded compliment by "A Man of Principle" only a few months after Royle's death. "Has it not been said that Mr. Royle owned a private license, and that a paper was constantly carried to a certain house in Palace street to be inspected before it could be seen by the publick? If these allegations are true, how long has your house been the faithful servants of the colony? Just as long as you, Sir, have directed the

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<sup>7</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), 22 August 1766.

<sup>8</sup>*Maryland Gazette*, 3 October 1765. Original italics. Unless otherwise noted, all future use of italics will be from the original source.

press and no longer."<sup>9</sup>

Even the governor, Francis Fauquier, was aware of these frustrations:

"The printer to the Colony is dead, and as the press was then thought to be too complaisant to me, some of the hot Burgesses invited a printer [Rind] from Maryland."<sup>10</sup> Thomas Jefferson, reflecting back on those halcyon days from retirement, recalled that "we had but one press, and that having the whole business of the government, and no competitor for public favor, nothing disagreeable to the governor could be got into it. We procured Rind to come from Maryland to publish a free paper."<sup>11</sup> However, Jefferson and his friends were not defining "free" as impartiality. Coming on the heels of the repeal of the Stamp Act, Rind represented a new weapon to be brought to bear against future incursions; the burgesses now had a press that was free of imperial influence and receptive to patriotic ones.

In response, Purdie, who had now taken over the business, attempted to mollify his subscribers by characterizing his new enterprise "as free as any publick press upon the continent."<sup>12</sup> But impartiality was not truly in his best interest. As the conflict grew, printers became polarized to one camp or the other and it became virtually

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<sup>9</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), 22 August 1766.

<sup>10</sup>"The Letters of Francis Fauquier," in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Series 1, vol. XXI (1912-1913), 163-4.

<sup>11</sup>Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America*, (New York: Weathervane Books), 555.

<sup>12</sup>Cited in Stephen Botein, "Printers and the American Revolution," in *The Press and the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 43.

**Table 1:**  
**Williamsburg Printers for the Years 1765-1776**

	<i>Original Gazette</i>	<i>Second Gazette</i>	<i>Third Gazette</i>
1765	<b>Joseph Royle*</b>		
1766	Alexander Purdie	<b>William Rind</b>	
1767	Purdie and John Dixon	↓	
1768	↓		
1769	**	**	
1770			
1771			
1772			
1773		<b>Clementina Rind</b>	
1774		<b>John Pinkney</b>	
1775	Dixon and Wm. Hunter, Jr.	↓	<b>Alexander Purdie</b>
1776	↓	_____	↓

\***Bold** indicates public printer.

\*\*In 1769 the House of Burgesses contracted with both Rind and Purdie & Dixon to collectively print the *Laws of Virginia*.

impossible to publish a paper that attempted to be all things to all sides. Even the patriotic printer Isaiah Thomas had originally intended his *Massachusetts Spy* to be an impartial eye on the times when he began publication in 1770. Thinking back on the era that saw John Hancock convince him to make the *Spy* an organ of the patriots (and eventually New England's best selling newspaper), Thomas recalled the abortive attempt of the neutral *Pennsylvania Ledger*, a paper that barely lasted six months because, Thomas concluded, "the impartiality of the *Ledger* did not comport with the temper of the times." It stood to reason, Thomas surmised, that a printer "must be either of one [party] or the other (he cannot please both), he must therefore incur censure and displeasure of the opposite

party."<sup>13</sup>

This attitude was a departure from the customary stance of neutrality that provincial printers had clung to as an economic necessity for so long. Lacking powerful patrons or political factions that allowed London printers to actively promote an issue or maintain a partisan position, colonial printers, prior to the Stamp Act, labored to avoid alienating any constituent group in the community that might compromise the viability of the business. As in England, however, times of crisis forced the printers' hand and community pressure obliged them to dispense with the financially prudent policy of neutrality. As Thomas discovered, financial security lay in one camp or the other, and no longer between them. Loyalist printers concurred. New York printer James Rivington expressed the printer's plight in verse: "Dare's the poor man impartial be, He's doomed to want and infamy."<sup>14</sup>

Such was the case up and down the coast and Williamsburg's printers were no exception. With the arrival of Rind in May, 1766 both businesses, though tending toward the patriotic side, began competing for the government contract and subscribers. Rind soon won the contract as public printer and held it until his death in 1773. Purdie, who had taken on John Dixon (who, by the way, subsequently married Royle's widow) as

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<sup>13</sup>Thomas, *History of Printing*, 439-440; Botein, "Printers," 44-45.

<sup>14</sup>Stephen Botein, "'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers" in *Perspectives in American History* (Cambridge: Charles Warren Center for Studies in American History, 1975), 160-199, 218; Charles E. Clark, *The Public Prints: The Newspaper in Anglo-American Culture, 1665-1740* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 208-209.

a partner continued the first gazette in trust for William Hunter, Jr.<sup>15</sup> The two papers seemed to have carried on their respective businesses with little animosity, save an early attempt on Purdie and Dixon's part to limit the post riders' delivery of Rind's paper into the Virginia countryside (Dixon held the post of deputy postmaster at this time). Both were commissioned by the House of Burgesses to produce the *Laws of Virginia* in 1769 and, on occasion, a pamphlet produced by one press appeared for sale at the office of the other. In addition, each paper periodically carried notices and announcements submitted by the other.<sup>16</sup>

Both were certainly patriotic in their political affinities, firmly supporting the American cause and allowing little pro-government rhetoric to grace their pages. Willard Frank, in his study of biased and distorted news reporting in the *Virginia Gazettes* for the years 1773-1774, concluded that, of the 819 articles that pertained to politics, 40% were decidedly pro-American; only 3% were distinctly pro-British.<sup>17</sup> All the literary pieces fell into the patriots' camp; not a single song, poem, allegory, or fable that even remotely mocked or ridiculed a patriot or plank in the patriotic platform found space in the *Gazettes*.

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<sup>15</sup>For those interested in the tightly woven genealogy of this printing family, Purdie's first wife, Mary, died in 1772. By the end of that year Purdie had married Peachy Davenport, sister of Joseph Davenport whose daughter, Elizabeth, would eventually marry William Hunter, Jr. Davenport, by the way, was married to William Hunter, Sr.'s, sister, Mary. Mary Frick, "A History of Printing in Virginia, 1750-1783 (Masters thesis, Columbia University, 1933), 15-16.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 24, 26.

<sup>17</sup>Willard C. Frank, "Error, Distortion, and Bias in the Virginia Gazettes, 1773-1774," *Journalism Quarterly* 49 (1972): 739.

On 1 January, 1775, a third newspaper, also bearing the title *Virginia Gazette*, and also taking a patriotic slant in its reporting, entered the fray. It was published by Alexander Purdie who had arranged to leave the offices of the original gazette upon Hunter, Jr.'s, reaching his majority:

Immediately after Christmas, I shall begin doing Business for myself, and intend to print a GAZETTE . . . . In the Management of my Gazette, neither Pains nor Expense will be spared to render it worthy of the publick Favour; and the Motto I intend for it, scrupulously to be maintained, shall be, "ALWAYS FOR LIBERTY AND THE PUBLICK GOOD."<sup>18</sup>

By this time Rind's *Gazette* was being run by his wife's relative and apparently the shop's foreman, John Pinkney (the relationship is unknown). William Rind had died in August, 1773, and his paper was continued by his wife, Clementina, until her death the next year. For whatever reason—probably poor finances, considering the debts left by William's and Clementina's estates and the need for the local Masonic lodge to take in the couple's orphans—Pinkney's *Gazette* folded in early 1776 and he ended up in North Carolina as its public printer until his sudden death in September, 1777.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, back in the offices of the original *Virginia Gazette*, a unique blending of personalities was at work. Although it does not overtly show up in the editorial content of the paper, it subsequently became very clear that Dixon, whom Thomas deemed to have been "greatly esteemed," and Hunter, Jr. were at polar extremes

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<sup>18</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), 1 December, 1774.

<sup>19</sup>Jane Carson, "Clementina Rind," (Colonial Williamsburg Research Report, undated), 18.

of the mounting conflict with Britain.<sup>20</sup> Dixon was appointed colonel of the Williamsburg militia in September, 1775, and was one of the men elected to represent Williamsburg on the committee of deputies for the surrounding counties at the outbreak of the war.<sup>21</sup> William Hunter, Jr., was a loyalist. The political climate in Williamsburg was such that Hunter had no recourse but publicly to follow popular sentiment. Finally, Hunter "declined his Business in 1777 as he found he could not continue according to his Principles." "Being firmly attached to the British Constitution & ever averse to the proceedings of the Americans he embraced the earliest Opportunity of joining the Royal Army which he did when Lord Cornwallis was in Virginia in June 1781."<sup>22</sup> Despite Hunter's loyalties, this paper maintained as patriotic a stance as the others in choosing what information would be set and printed on its presses. Apparently Dixon, generally regarded by historians who have studied the *Virginia Gazettes* in depth to have come into the partnership with little actual knowledge of the trade, wielded quite a bit of influence over the content of the paper, half of which technically belonged to the younger Hunter.

So it was that on the eve of the Revolution Williamsburg was kept informed by two newspapers: Purdie's *Virginia Gazette* and Dixon and Hunter's *Virginia Gazette*.<sup>23</sup> What the previous litany reveals are three business establishments entwined

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<sup>20</sup>Thomas, *Printing in America*, 556.

<sup>21</sup>Goodwin, "Printing Office," LXX.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., LXIII-LXIV. Taken from Hunter's memorial to the British Commissioners that was presented in 1787 as a claim for payment of losses suffered as a result of his loyalty to the king.

<sup>23</sup>After Hunter left the partnership in 1777, Dixon eventually replaced him with Thomas Nicolson in 1779. When Virginia's capitol

by marriages, kinship, and politics. All three publicly supported the cause of American rights and liberties and provided a forum for their readership to express their sentiments as well, as long as those sentiments reflected favorably on the patriots' cause.

To create an appeal for their particular endeavor, the various printers developed their own peculiar style, each looking for a niche of subscribers and new markets that would find that style to their liking. Despite choosing the same name for their respective papers, each printer began the process of establishing their publication's tenor one line below with the motto. Prior to Rind's arrival the resident paper simply touted "the freshest advices, both foreign and domestick." Rind proudly declared his gazette to be "Open to all Parties, But Influenced by None," in reaction to the political climate that brought him to Williamsburg in the first place. On 19 November, 1767, the first gazette, now being run by Purdie and Dixon, changed its benign motto to a sophisticated Latin phrase, taken from Suetonius' biography of Tiberius in his *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*: "In Civitate Libera Linguam Mentemque Liberas Esse Debere (That in a free state, both tongue and mind ought to

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moved to Richmond in 1781 the paper moved with it and by 1783 Dixon and John Holt--who had run a print shop in Norfolk that was seized by Lord Dunmore prior to the Revolution and had as his mother a sister of William Hunter--had established *The Virginia Gazette or the Independent Chronicle*, Nicolson having started his own publication. Holt died in 1787 and Dixon continued the business, eventually adding his son to the firm. Dixon died in 1791.

Purdie died in 1779 and was succeeded by his nephew John Clarkson and one of his printers, Augustine Davis (who, would you believe, had married one of the Davenports.) Their run came to an end in 1780. Goodwin, "Printing Office," LXXI-LXXII, LIII; Frick, "History of Printing," 35.



be free)."<sup>24</sup> Since the motto was revised after Rind's arrival, the choice of a Latin phrase was a conscious effort to reinforce their desire to be perceived as *the* paper of the educated establishment; Rind, even though he now held the government printing contract, was still the interloper.

Pinkney retained the Rinds' motto until the paper closed during the early months of 1776. Dixon and Hunter kept the Latin motto after Purdie's departure but Purdie unabashedly dispensed with any pretence when he announced his motto even before the first paper was turned out: "Always for Liberty and the Public Good." No claims of objectivity, no pious paean to virtue, no classical imagery, just a blunt statement of his paper's role in the emerging revolution.

The choice of mottoes suggest individual editorial styles that are heralded by the literary pieces. Seventy-four literary pieces related to the conflict appeared in the three *Virginia Gazettes* between August 1774 and July 1776 (See Appendix 1). The poems, songs, and satires that graced these papers' columns were one way Williamsburg's printers used to establish a particular identity and curry the favor of potential subscribers on the eve of the revolution. Pinkney and the Dixon-Hunter alliance were most receptive to the use of literature as a component of their editorial philosophy. Dixon-Hunter printed thirty examples, Pinkney

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<sup>24</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie & Dixon), 19 November 1767. The translation used here is by James Clarke whose interpretation of Suetonius' *The Lives of the First Twelve Roman Emperors* was published in London by A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch in 1739 (p. 140). Suetonius (A.D. c.70-140) was a historian during the reign of Hadrian. Susan Berg has discovered that several of Clarke's primers and translations were sold in Williamsburg in the third quarter of the century.

**Table 2:**

**Forms of Literary Satires in the *Virginia Gazettes*  
August, 1774 - June 1776**

	Dixon-Hunter		Pinkney		Purdie		Total	
<b>Poem</b>	10	33.3%	7	19.4%	2	25.0%	19	25.7%
<b>Song</b>	6	20.0%	11	30.5%	-	-	17	23.0%
<b>Parable</b>	5	16.7%	6	16.7%	2	25.0%	13	17.6%
<b>Satire*</b>	6	20.0%	4	11.1%	2	25.0%	12	16.2%
<b>Editorial*</b>	3	10.0%	2	5.5%	1	12.5%	6	8.1%
<b>Allegory</b>	-	-	5	13.9%	-	-	5	6.7%
<b>Dialogue</b>	-	-	1	2.9%	1	12.5%	2	2.7%

\* "Satire" includes literary essays and short stories. "Editorial" includes letters to fictional characters or abstract groups of people.

inserted thirty-six separate submissions, several of which covered the entire front page. Purdie printed only eight satires during this time.

There were a variety of literary forms employed. Poems, songs, allegories, parables, dreams, editorials, Socratic dialogues, and history lessons all found their way into Virginia's newspapers. Dixon and Hunter tended to favor poems (Table 2). One third of their literary offerings were in this form. The two forms most favored by Pinkney were "liberty songs," accounting for thirty percent of his selection, and allegories. Although the total number of allegories account for only 14 percent of his total, their length and breadth are significant. The largest, *The First American Chronicles of the Times*, was serialized over six issues and took up nearly fourteen columns of space. It must have been very well received; it spawned two locally-produced imitators: *A Detached Chapter*, and a three-parter, *The First Book of*

*Shemaiah*. Purdie's choice of literary material is statistically too small to draw any inferences.

From a literary position, each paper did develop a distinct perspective and style, drawing on English literary precedents in defining their presentation. In Purdie's case, it was a situation of relying more on polemics and essays and eschewing literature. Interestingly, not once was a single article, editorial, poem, or literary piece duplicated by the printers, indicating that specific choices were being made to serve specific audiences.

More significant than the choice of literary forms is the origin of the submissions (Table 3). All three reprinted satires and news from other American newspapers as well as London publications. Pinkney associated himself very closely with American printers whose papers were staunchly patriotic, notably William Bradford, whose *Pennsylvania Journal* was the first to print *Common Sense*, and Isaiah Thomas, who published the *Massachusetts Spy* (see Appendix 2). Dixon-Hunter and Purdie are notorious for not citing their sources. There is no obvious association with specific printers, though it should be noted that almost all the papers cited advocated the patriots' position. Dixon and Hunter did cite two papers that aspired to impartiality, but, without a better statistical base, it would be rash to link their moderation to those papers' efforts.

Williamsburg's printers also served as a forum for local subscribers. Of the seventy-four satires that appeared in the *Gazettes* for the period studied, fifty nine, or 81 percent, can be attributed to either a specific source, such as another newspaper or a subscriber, or can be at least ascribed to an American author, as proven by the way topics are addressed and pronouns are used. Of all the literary pieces that can be attributed to a particular

**Table 3:**

**Origination of Literary Satires in the *Virginia Gazettes*  
August, 1774 - June, 1776**

	<b>Dixon-Hunter</b>		<b>Pinkney</b>		<b>Purdie</b>	
<b>British</b>	3	10.3%	5	13.9%	1	12.5%
<b>Continental</b>	8	27.6%	12	33.3%	2	25.0%
<b>Virginia</b>	11	34.5%	14	38.9%	3	37.5%
<b>Unattributable</b>	8	27.6%	5	13.9%	2	25.0%

source, local submissions proved to be the most common, accounting for a little over one third of each publisher's output. It is noteworthy that the gazettes are consistent in the amount of space available to local contributors, suggesting an unconscious formula of how space was divided up.

More than a quarter of Dixon and Hunter's pieces are unattributable. Judging from the perspective of the authors and the content, they are probably English in origin.<sup>25</sup> Added to the three satires that can be definitively attributed to London sources, Dixon and Hunter relied on English products 37.9 percent of the time to amplify opinions and attitudes related to the conflict that was developing between America and the mother country, suggesting that Dixon and Hunter maintained the strongest attachment to English culture of the three.

<sup>25</sup>When researching the satires whose origin is not specified in the papers, the trail generally led to a British source. For this reason, along with the point made in the text, I have concluded that it is reasonable to assume the unattributed satires to be from England.

To varying degrees, all American newspapers routinely borrowed content from London newspapers. Most were predominantly Whiggish in their editorial policies (see Appendix 3).<sup>26</sup> The American printers were adopting their style as well. By the time Rind had established his Williamsburg business in 1766 the conventions and design of newspapers had been well entrenched. Many of these conventions had their beginnings in the Augustan Age and then matured during the 1760s and 1770s. For example, the whole concept of the political essay was molded by such writers as Addison and Steele, Jonathan Swift, John Arbuthnot, Lord Bolingbroke and an army of anonymous scribblers and hacks, then given maturity by Tobias Smollett, Henry Fielding, "Junius," Oliver Goldsmith, Samuel Johnson (and an army of anonymous scribblers and hacks). It was Fielding who introduced such conventions as the use of italics for emphasis and the substitution of asterisks for names and dashes in the place of words to avoid charges of libel and sedition, a technique used to great satirical effect in this example from Pinkney's *Virginia Gazette* of 1 June 1775:

#### INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY

... A certain nominal itinerant governor ... is to be supported by the bold and daring captain S-----h [John Stretch], and *little* lieutenant S---s [Matthew Squires], with a detachment of *boiled crabs* from his majesty's ship the F---y [Fowey]; the magnanimous captain M-----e [Montegue] is to carry on the bombardment of Y--k [York] town, and his m-----'s [majesty's] schooner of war, the M-----n [Magdelan], is to cover the landing of the detachment under the gallows, which by some is thought ominous.

Another correspondent observes that R. C----n [Receiver General Richard

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<sup>26</sup>Of the forty-three political essays and literary pieces identified as coming from specific London papers, twenty two can be accredited to businesses known to be Whiggish in their leanings, particularly William Beckford's *Public Ledger* and William Woodford's *Morning Chronicle*. Of the eighteen papers identified, six were identified as leaning to the Whigs; three to the Tories, the rest are unknown, at least to the author.

Corbin], junior, is actually appointed powdermonkey to the general, and is soon to embark for London, to kiss his majesty's ---- [discretion forbids a translation] on his preferment, though some are of opinion that that station will be too hot for his *maccaroni* constitution. The reverend Mr. G-----n [Council chaplain Thomas Gwatkin], is to act in the capacity of spy, he being thought well qualified for that office, as he carries about him much falshood [sic] and treachery, under the deceitful appearance of a *simpleton*.

N.B. The BLACK LADIES, it is supposed, will be jollily entertained at the p-----e [Governor's Palace].<sup>27</sup>

The exclusion of names, extended even to ships and Yorktown, played up the convention of using blank space to avoid libel and emphasized the disdain Virginians felt for the British by feigning an excessive concern for inciting the wrath of those mentioned. Of course, the italicized descriptors conveyed the disrespect as well. Each of the printers used italics in their satires and songs as directoral prompts to the reader, ensuring that they recognize the emphasis that should be placed on the word or concept, either mentally or in public performance, should the occasion arise.

The sequence of topics and the physical appearance of the papers were also borrowed and displayed no originality on the part of the Williamsburg printers. Most newspapers in colonial America followed a fairly standard formula in layout. The

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<sup>27</sup>Jim Allee Hart, *Views on the News* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1970), 104; *Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 1 June 1775. Dixon and Hunter also printed innuendo concerning Dunmore's alleged sexual affinity for enslaved women. On 25 May 1776 they offered a brief extract from the *New York Journal* detailing the delivery of a male child to "a lusty likely NEGRO WENCH." The child, "in memory of a certain notable NEGRO CHIEF, is named Dunmore."

*Hail! doughty Ethiopian Chief!  
Thought ignominious Negro Thief!  
This BLACK shall prop thy sinking name,  
And damn thee to perpetual s[h]ame.  
Query, Is not this, though an act of justice to Dunmore, cruelty to the  
innocent Negro?"*

placement of news and its sequence depended on the distance it had traveled. Most papers led off with European and British news, then continental news, local, and, lastly, advertisements. Most papers also borrowed from London gazettes the convention of setting aside a specific space devoted to local submissions of belles lettres. Invariably titled the Poet's Corner, this space was often located in the top left-hand corner of the back page.<sup>28</sup>

Even the forms of the satires were borrowed from English precedent. The tunes to which the liberty songs were set were all English. (No doubt the irony of singing the praises of George Washington to the tune of "Rule Britannia" was not lost on the revelers.<sup>29</sup>) The allegorical stories favored by Pinkney had their birth in such narratives as John Arbuthnot's "History of John Bull." Dream sequences, at least two of which appeared in Virginia's gazettes, were used at least six times in the *Spectator*. "Historical" accounts, either real or imagined, had also been a mainstay. For example, *North Briton* compared the influence of Bute on a young George III with the reign of Edward II; *Craftsman* invoked the fictional Persian kingdom of Timbutan in 1728 as a legally safe way to parody Walpole and avoid a charge of libel.<sup>30</sup> In literary output, the creativity was

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<sup>28</sup>Clark, *The Public Prints*, 61; Walter Graham, *English Literary Periodicals* (New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 379-383.

<sup>29</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 24 February 1776.

<sup>30</sup>Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 121, 129; H. Trevor Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1965), 19-20; Bruce Ingham Granger, *Political Satire in the American Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), 20.

in professing the message, not in developing the medium.

This study of the three papers indicates that, though all three *Virginia Gazettes* were patriotic in their political alignment, Purdie's and Pinkney's respective publications were substantially more aggressive in promoting the efforts of the patriots than the team of Dixon-Hunter. By April 1775, their particular tenor was well entrenched. A review of the papers' content during the fragile two months following Lord Dunmore's removal of gunpowder from the colony's magazine in Williamsburg on 21 April 1775 offers an example of the editorial positions each printer took in the increasingly volatile situation of Virginia. All three gazettes were consistently efficient in printing the official proclamations, pronouncements, and rebuttals that governor and government leveled at each other. It did not take long, however, for each publisher's posture to shine through all the formal communications.

In several ways, Dixon and Hunter's *Virginia Gazette* was decidedly moderate in its presentation. Just as they printed more literary pieces from England than the other two printers combined, they continued to affirm their ties to the mother country by printing more London news per page than their two competitors. The most telling evidence, however, was their choice of material and style of reporting events. Just one week after the powder's removal, a letter from "CIVIS" was inserted into the Dixon-Hunter paper reminding readers that even admitting the powder, which was removed to have been purchased by this country . . . yet the money given for that purpose could be constitutionally given only to the King. The powder must therefore be under his direction, to be employed indeed for the benefit of the country, but how, and in what manner, as long as our government exists, is in the discretion of the King, or of his representatives.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 29 April 1775.



Hunter and Dixon were also the only printers to record Massachusetts' military governor Gage's account of the raid on Lexington and Concord (20 May 1775) and Dunmore's proclamation declaring Patrick Henry an outlaw as a result of his march on Williamsburg at the head of the Hanover independent company (13 May 1775). In addition, Dixon and Hunter's literary contributions during this period were generic paeans to liberty and resolve, nothing like the vitriolic satires printed by Purdie or the damning allegories favored by Pinkney.

Both Purdie and Pinkney used their papers to fan the flames of outrage in the aftermath of the gunpowder's removal. For example, in May the commander of HMS Fowey, captain Montague, determined to reinforce Lord Dunmore at his residence with a detachment of marines. The letter he sent to Yorktown, threatening to "fire upon [that] town" if his party was molested and the town's response were duly reported by Dixon-Hunter but no more.

Pinkney also presented the exchange but then inserted an editorial comment denigrating the good captain:

It is imagined that captain M . . . will meet with some extraordinary mark of his majesty's approbation, as he has displayed the most exalted courage on a late occasion, by threatening to bombard the defenseless town of York, when the news of the INSURGENTS [being led by Patrick Henry] from Hanover was imported to him.<sup>32</sup>

Besides the satirical reporting of "Intelligence Extraordinary" summarizing recent events that is discussed on pages 18-19 and another on 8 June, Pinkney printed "A Detached Chapter," a Biblical allegory recounting Lexington and Concord and the Gunpowder Incident. The satire was probably inspired by the "American Chronicles," a similar allegory from the North that

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<sup>32</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 6 May 1775; *Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 4 May 1775.

Pinkney was in the midst of offering in serial form. The first four columns of his 25 May edition were devoted to the piece that, in addition to the story of the powder's removal, sent out a strongly worded condemnation to the king's ministers:

Hear also, O Adoram [Lord North]! and thou wicked men of the court of Rehoaboam: If you persist in your evil ways, and return not to the true God, and do justice to the people of the west . . . the vengeance of Heaven will be poured on thy heads in showers of stones.

Pinkney did more than just supply information; his paper provided both editorial and literary commentary on recent events that strongly favored Virginia's patriots.

Purdie, meanwhile, was also aggressively promoting a forceful reaction to events. His business had been open only five months and very quickly he developed a style that distanced him from his Scottish heritage (an issue to be discussed later) and the moderate, old gazette and its new partner. Patriotism was a good business strategy for a printer at this time and, judging from his paper, Purdie was a very good businessman. The Gunpowder Incident moved him to pepper his gazette with satire aimed at fueling the anger and insult being promoted by the colony's patriots. He published only eight satires in 1775-1776; three of them appeared in May 1775, including a particularly vicious poem titled simply "A CURSE:"

May all the evils of Pandora's box,  
Gout, leprosy, sciatica, and pox,  
Cramps, stitches, vertigos, and scalding sores,  
*Sans* intermission, glide through all the pores  
Of the foul, base-born, recreant, venal band,  
Who, locust-like, infest Britannia's land . . .<sup>33</sup>

Purdie's paper was laced with condemnations of the current scene. Where Dixon and Hunter were content to present events and actions, Purdie, like Pinkney, provided commentary. When

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<sup>33</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 12 May 1775.

Dunmore criticized as overdue an address by the House of Burgesses lauding his efforts in Ohio against the Shawnee in 1774, Purdie was quick to come to the side of the Burgesses, commenting that:

One cannot help remarking the injustice of this insinuation, for the journal of the House of Burgesses proves the resolution for the address . . . passed the House . . . the day before he left this city, and the gazette, published the day he went away, must have informed his Lordship of this generous disposition of the House. So, if the address was really late, as his Lordship conceives, the reason must be found in his Lordship's going from the seat of government, on board an armed vessel.<sup>34</sup>

This example is indicative of several others that show Purdie as clearly committed to ensuring that his readership understood events with a particular bias toward the justness of the colony's actions and for it he was rewarded.

On 6 June, 1775, the hastily called House took up the matter of choosing a government printer for the coming year. All three printers (Dixon and Hunter combined) had introduced petitions "praying to be appointed Printer to the Public." On the first ballot Alexander Purdie received 44 votes, John Pinkney 34, John Dixon and William Hunter 12. In accordance to form, Dixon and Hunter's petition was rejected. On the second vote, 47 burgesses stood together in support of Purdie, 43 for Pinkney. Alexander Purdie was to be colonial Virginia's last public printer.<sup>35</sup>

The breakdown of which burgess voted for which printer was not recorded. If

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 23 June 1775.

<sup>35</sup>6 June 1775, *Journal of the House of Burgesses, 1773-1776*, 195-196. The first round of voting involved paper ballots. The second round required the Speaker to physically divide the House, sending "the Members, who were [for] the said Alexander Purdie, to be on the right side of the House, and the Members, for the said John Pinkney, to be on the other side of the House."

we assume that moderates Dixon and Hunter received their meager support of 12 votes from the House's conservative faction, then the fact that Pinkney picked up 75 percent of that support on the second ballot is telling. The Dixon-Hunter backers offered scant support for Purdie and his short-tenured editorial philosophy. That Pinkney fell only four votes short of victory suggests a respect for the paper amongst a substantial portion of the burgesses and was considered the lesser of two evils by the conservatives when compared to Purdie. But it wasn't enough. Firebrand Alexander Purdie would be the government's official voice for the rest of the colony's existence, symbolizing the increasingly radical attitudes that Dunmore's action had precipitated.

The Gunpowder Incident acted as a catalyst, prompting printer and contributors to assert in a powerful way the villainy to which the colony was exposed. It was the culmination of a mounting avalanche of information being supplied by Williamsburg's printers since the middle of the 1760s. Throughout the eighteenth century, crises had prompted an increased vigor in the press. In England, Walpole's tenure as chief minister and the constitutional upheavals of the 1760s led to a spirited renaissance in political essays. Conversely, when England experienced periods of calm, such as the Pelham ministry and the years prior to the Seven-Years War, the vitality of the press reached a low ebb. In America, the constitutional crisis resulted in an upsurge in the printing industry: the number of publishing concerns increased from twenty-one in 1763 to forty two by 1775.<sup>36</sup> The increase of *Virginia Gazettes* from one to three during the 1760s and

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<sup>36</sup> Botein, "Printers," 43; Black, *The English Press*, 287.

1770s was part of a continental demand for an increasing supply of information and, as we have seen, familial relationships.

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At the most basic level, the literary pieces printed in the pre-revolutionary *Virginia Gazettes* served as political propaganda for the patriots. A closer analysis reveals much more. The satires reaffirmed the values and belief systems held by Virginia's educated elite on the eve of the Revolution as well as the printers' broadening market for information. The men reading and contributing to the newspapers of Messrs. Hunter, Dixon, Pinkney, and Purdie were participating in an activity that, by its very nature, defined their role in society. It was one of a variety of components that made up the eighteenth-century gentleman's world and each was inexorably intertwined with the other. As Joseph Ellis has noted: "Artistic, political, social and economic development were not conceived of as autonomous spheres or disciplines; they were all interrelated."<sup>37</sup> For example, classical education impacted on political duty, the gentry's instruction in and pursuit of the classics went beyond the classroom and personal study: it was manifested in political tracts or learned satires.

Reading and writing were a way of sharing like interests and the gazettes became a stage on which to display, share, and reaffirm the Virginia gentry's station as represented by learning. Williamsburg's printers were more than "meer mechanics." They

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<sup>37</sup>Gordon Wood, "The Democratization of Mind in the American Revolution," in *Leadership in the American Revolution* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1974), 66; Joseph J. Ellis, *After the Revolution: Profiles of Early American Culture* (New York: W. W. Norton Co., 1979), xiv.

served a vital function in not only disseminating information but in providing a network that bound educated Virginians to each other and to polite Anglo society at-large. Since most international (and even some North American) news was culled from the London papers, the *Virginia Gazettes* served as an extension of British society and provided a vicarious means of participating in and feeling a part of London society. Virginia's gentry shared with English society an appreciation for London fashion, their poetry was in imitation of established English forms, they danced minuets that were fashionable in Bath, they cheered plays in Williamsburg that had appeared in Covent Garden, they shared with their British brethren a suspicion and resentment of the Scots and their machinations, and they hated anything to do with Roman Catholicism.<sup>38</sup>

They also shared similar tastes in literature. The satires, songs, and poems that appeared in the gazettes followed the same forms and strictures that governed submissions in London papers. The most notable similarity was the author's penchant not to sign his name to his submission. Of the seventy-four satires reviewed here, only one contributor's name is given; the authors of three others provided their initials. Some of the authors, despite pseudonyms, were known anyway. John Dickinson's authorship of *The Liberty Song* and Thomas Paine's *Dialogue Between the Ghost of General Montgomery and a Delegate* were common knowledge at the time of their publication. It is probable that the identities of other contributors were known as well. What is

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<sup>38</sup>Richard Brown, *Knowledge is Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 62; Clark, *The Public Prints*, 170, 226; O'Brien, "Plantation to Parnassus," 41.

important, however, is that the veil of anonymity, however thin, was maintained in order to separate the author from the product. Genteel modesty proscribed a gentleman from achieving any merit from the appearance of a work in a public forum. Even though the circulation of the papers was generally limited to his sphere of influence, the appearance of a signed submission brought unsought attention to the author and not to the work that had been prepared for his fellows in the first place. The printed word was held to be an impersonal, disinterested expression of opinion that separated the private author from the civic-minded citizen. The association of a submission with a name tainted the piece with the personal agenda of the author and negated the value of the material as uncorrupted, pure information that the gazettes' readership could reflect on. Even though, in several instances, authorship was known, it was important that the contributor and printer not flaunt the fact and maintain the spirit of the unspoken rule of disassociation.<sup>39</sup>

Above all, these anonymous contributors were interested in providing their circle of friends with commentary. Their satires and songs demanded a level of expertise and knowledge that required an understanding of history, Latin, current events, and personages, acquired from education, books, pamphlets, newspapers, and a closely knit circle of friends and acquaintances with similar interests. Printers were important extensions of the oral network that pervaded the eighteenth-century world and they relied on their readership to bring some knowledge of the news to their reading. Newspapers

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<sup>39</sup>Michael Warner, *Letters of the Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 38-43, 84-85. *The Liberty Song* was first written in the late 1760s by Pennsylvanian Dickinson and was reprinted by Purdie and Dixon on 11 August 1774. Paine's Socratic dialogue was reprinted by Purdie in the supplement to his 8 March 1776 gazette.

rarely supplied their subscribers with new news or a dispassionate rendering of "who, what, when, where and why."<sup>40</sup> Their role was to provide a forum for reflection and reaction on information that had already been introduced into society. "We hear . . ." was an extremely common manner in which to begin a rendering of the latest information and reinforced the medium's dependence on the society's predominant oral culture. When loyalist Nicholas Cresswell wanted to get news on the actions of the Continental Congress late in 1774, he specifically states in his journal that "This evening went to the Tavern to *hear* the Resolves of the Continental Congress." When "Monitor," after a lengthy treatise on the lessons of antiquity in one of William Rind's *Gazettes*, enjoins his audience to "entertain one another frequently in conversation on these subjects," he was encouraging his fellows to participate in a public discourse like Cresswell's in which the printed word played a part, but the primary means of erudition was oral interaction.<sup>41</sup>

Freeholders came by the printed word vicariously. As Charles Clark notes:

Through channels formal and informal, intended and unintended, expected and unexpected, the newspapers' message almost certainly reached well beyond the audience most publishers had in mind. And if . . . newspapers were still serving as extensions and reinforcers of oral culture . . . the likelihood of a broadened audience is even greater.<sup>42</sup>

Reading was still the purview of the elite but the middling were becoming more involved in its content. Since the mid-1760s and the scare brought on by the Stamp Act, the *Virginia Gazettes'* role in shaping the minds and attitudes of the populace increased

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<sup>40</sup>Clark, *The Public Prints*, 20-21.

<sup>41</sup>Lincoln MacVeagh, ed., *The Journal of Nicholas Cresswell* (New York: The Dial Press, 1928), 45. The author's italics; *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), 3 March 1768.

<sup>42</sup>Clark, *The Public Prints*, 251.



dramatically. In quick succession Virginia suffered through three scandals: the announcement that stalwart patriot Richard Henry Lee had lobbied for the lucrative position of stamp distributor, the exposure of recently deceased Speaker of the House and treasurer John Robinson's misappropriation of public funds, and charges of preferential treatment afforded to accused murderer and gentry man John Chiswell. Each incident challenged the traditional role the gentry had enjoyed as leaders of Virginia.<sup>43</sup> The prints were in the forefront of at least questioning whether these specific episodes represented the evil that Americans believed had already corrupted Britain. Newspapers provided a vicarious participation in genteel conversation, available to anyone who could read (or was within earshot of someone who could).

By the 1770s these events had caused an erosion of the gentry's monopoly over information. Access to and control of information—be it political, social or financial—via the written word was a defining feature of the gentry. Now, the gazettes were overflowing with essays either defending (or deriding) the actions of the gentry. The gazettes were regularly printing freeholders' instructions to their delegates to the Virginia Conventions. This at a time when the Great Awakening was challenging communal authority, asserting the notion of individual choice, and encouraging the uneducated to learn of God's glory by learning to read the Bible, bypassing the traditional authority of the Anglican church. These events prompted a change in the newspaper's role in Virginia and began the process of redefining the relationship of the printer to his subscribers.<sup>44</sup> The world Virginians had gotten used to was changing and their desire to make sense of it was intensifying.

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<sup>43</sup>William E. White, "Charlatans, Embezzlers, and Murderers: Revolution Comes to Virginia" (Ph. D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1998), 181-182.

<sup>44</sup>Robert Weir, "The Role of the Newspaper Presses in the Southern Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution: An Interpretation," in *The Press*

One example of this changing relationship among printer, gentry, and freeholder was printed by Purdie in July 1775 as "an address delivered to the inhabitants of a certain county in this colony, assembled for the purpose of choosing deputies to represent them" at the Third Virginia Convention. The anonymous orator was certainly a member of the gentry, if his classically-inspired appellation, "Brutus," is any indicator. His oration is more an exhortation than an explanation. The speech, which covered over four columns, used several specific current issues to expose the "conspiracy" that Britain's government was concocting to subdue America. He prefaced the essay by telling Purdie that "it is adapted to the understandings, and intended for the information of, the middling and lower sorts of people, and may tend to reconcile the different opinions (if there be any now prevailing in this colony) respecting the necessity or propriety of resisting the enemies of American liberty and the British constitution." In other words, he used the press as a vehicle for expanding the impact of his speech from his county to the colony's freeholders. By communicating with the populace this way, Brutus acknowledged the necessity of involving the populace in political matters and that the reach and influence of the newspapers was expanding beyond his peers.

In the speech Brutus discussed free trade and manufacture, the Post Office, and the act to suspend the New York legislature but, more importantly, he felt the need to explain to the "middling and lower classes of people" why they should consider particular issues relevant to the conflict. While discussing the establishment of a post office, he counsels that

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*and the American Revolution*, ed. Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Worcester: American Antiquarian Society, 1980), 111,117; Botein, "Meer Mechanics," 211; Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, 272-273.

although the effects of that act are not universally felt amongst you, yet it is an instance of oppression, which *all* are, more or less, subject to, who are concerned with trade . . . and I mention this, to show you that if you are not oppressed by this law, it is because your circumstances in life are such that you have but little to do with *letters* . . . .

Regarding the issue of tea:

Perhaps some of you may now tell me it is a dispute with which you have nothing to do, as you do not make use of that commodity, and the duty cannot affect you. But you will go farther perhaps, and tell me, that the *high-minded gentlemen* are the occasion of the present confusion, and are bringing you in to difficulties to support their extravagance . . . . Can you suppose the *gentlemen* of all *America* would be so mad as to risk their lives and fortunes merely to save the trifling duty of three pence per pound of tea . . . ? Deceive not yourselves then, nor let others deceive you; listen to no doctrines which may tend to divide us; but let us go hand in hand, as brothers, as fellow sufferers in the same cause, firmly united to defend our rights and liberty.

On the one hand Brutus wants to maintain the authority he has traditionally held in society by continuing to instruct his inferiors but he recognizes the necessity of involving them the process. For the sake of mobilizing the common people behind the "high-minded gentlemen," Brutus advanced the popularization of Virginia politics and the deterioration of deference by directly appealing to the populace through a medium previously off limits to them. The *Virginia Gazettes* were part and parcel of this new relationship.<sup>45</sup>

Though changes in social relationships were accelerating, some aspects of Virginia culture continued along traditional lines. Virginia was still an oral culture. The songs that Pinkney and his competitors Dixon and Hunter favored are a case in point.

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<sup>45</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 14 July 1775. On 19 October 1775, Pinkney printed an essay—this time from "Cato"—very similar in purpose to Brutus' letter intended for those "who live in the more remote parts of the country."

Each one served as a forum for the contributor to display his wit and understanding of events affecting the colony. In turn, the reader's gentility was reaffirmed by a reliance on his access to information that is alluded to in the piece. Information was still a commodity that contributed to a gentleman's identity as much as the quality of his home and number of quarters he farmed. It was the result of careful cultivation of a variety of circles of influence and contacts. Correspondence with London merchants, conversations with ship's captains, school mates, travelers, fellow gentlemen, and reading books, pamphlets, and the *Virginia Gazettes* were just some of the ways educated men acquired information. The larger and more numerous these spheres, the greater the gentleman's command of his world. It was through these sources that readers acquired the ability to appreciate satires such as the song "Fish and Tea."<sup>46</sup>

"Fish and Tea" was one of sixteen songs devoted to the issue of revolution during the period researched for this essay. Songs provided Virginians with an opportunity to express their sentiments as part of their social intercourse. The majority of Virginians lived on scattered farms and cherished opportunities to socialize with others when the occasion presented itself. Militia musters, court days, church services, horse races and visitations during a journey all provided a forum to exchange news and information. When tutor Philip Fithian recounted an afternoon singing liberty songs with his employer Robert Carter and some friends, he was recounting not only a convivial

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<sup>46</sup>Brown, *Knowledge is Power*, 270; *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 17 July 1775.

occasion but an underlying reaffirmation of their sentiments as well.<sup>47</sup> The men who gathered around a bowl of punch singing "Fish and Tea" needed a command of British politics to truly enjoy their merriment, a command that was achieved as much by conversation as it was the prints.

Early in 1775 George III insisted that the ministry push through a series of punitive measures against Boston to force compliance with the so-called Intolerable Acts. One of the acts placed restrictions on the region's fishing industry. In April it was extended to cover all the colonies except North Carolina and New York.<sup>48</sup> The first printed announcement of the issue in Virginia was made by Dixon and Hunter who ran a brief account of the bill's second reading on 29 April. They also recorded the debate and vote in the House of Lords over three issues in June, devoting nearly four columns to the topic. Interest in the bill led an amateur songwriter to submit a set a lyrics in July to the printers titled *FISH and TEA*, set to "an old Tune." It is not known if the writer was Virginian—not even a pseudonym was used—but the printers chose to put it in their "Poet's Corner," a space normally reserved as a repository for local submissions so we can assume that it was local in origin. Tea, and now fish, became symbolic of the oppression imposed on America by the ministry.

The first three stanzas are replete with allusions to British politicians and

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<sup>47</sup>Hunter Farish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian 1773-1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Williamsburg: Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1965), 57.

<sup>48</sup>Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 264.

personalities. Some—like lords North and Bute—were always in the public eye, some would blaze briefly and die like a meteor, owing their celebrity to a recent event. "Lord S-----" and "Sir Peter" fall into the latter category. They appear in the third stanza as the songwriter turned his attention to his majesty's anti-American forces:

Lord S-----, he swears they are terrible cowards  
Who can't be made brave by the blood of the Howards;  
And to prove there is truth in America's fears,  
He conjures Sir Peter's poor ghost 'fore the Peers.

Lord S----- was John Montague, fourth earl of Sandwich, who served as first lord of the Admiralty in North's cabinet and was a hard liner when it came to the American colonies. The interplay between him and other personages portrayed in the stanza required a keen knowledge of recent events and of the British political elite. "The blood of the Howards" alludes to another hard liner, Henry Howard, earl of Suffolk, who was serving as secretary of the Northern Department. It was he who urged the king to relieve Gage of his command in Boston, a suggestion that he eventually acted on when generals Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne were dispatched to assist in the military operations in North America. But who is "Sir Peter?" The allusion refers back to the debate in the House of Lords. During the debate Lord Sandwich refuted Lord Camden's (a supporter of America's grievances) assertion that America was unconquerable by insisting that the colonists were, at heart, cowards. To make good his claim he related a story told him by Sir Peter Warren, the British admiral who conducted the successful siege of the French fortress at Louisbourg in 1745:

Suppose the colonies do abound in men, what does it signify? They are raw, undisciplined, cowardly men. . . . I will tell your lordships an anecdote that happened at the siege of Louisburgh: sir Peter Warren told me that, in order to try the courage of the Americans, he ordered a great number of them to be placed in the front of the army; the Americans pretended at first to be very much elated at this mark of distinction, and boasted what mighty feats they would do upon the scene of action; however, when the

moment came to put in execution this boasted courage, behold, every one of them ran from the front to the rear of the army, with as much expedition as their feet could carry them . . . Sir Peter finding what egregious cowards they were, and knowing of what importance such numbers must be to intimidate the French by their appearance, told these American heroes, that his orders had been misunderstood, that he always intended to keep them in the rear of the army to make the great push; that it was the custom of generals to preserve the best troops to the last; that this was always the Roman custom, and as the Americans resembled the Romans in every particular, especially in courage and love of their country, he should make no scruple of following the Roman custom, and made no doubt but the modern Romans would shew acts of bravery, equal to any in ancient Rome. By such discourses as these, said sir Peter Warren, I made a shift to keep them with us

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Sandwich's anecdote was not included in Dixon and Hunter's summary of the debate. Their portion of the debate related above only summarized the anecdote: "The noble Lord [Sandwich] had no sort of opinion of the bravery of the Americans; he thought them mere blusterers, who felt bold only in proportion as danger was at a distance."<sup>50</sup> Despite its absence from the papers, news of it released an outpouring of outrage in the Virginia papers. Dixon and Hunter printed a rebuttal from an "old and experienced officer, who served under Sir Peter Warren at the taking of Cape Breton in 1745 . . . declar[ing] that he hath frequently heard Sir Peter characterize the Americans in a very different style from that adopted by Lord Sandwich. Sir Peter Warren hath extolled the Americans for possessing qualities the very opposite of that of cowardice." On 8 July, a week before the publication of "Fish and Tea," they reprinted a letter from the *London Gazetteer* by "An old English Merchant" that also defended the Americans. On 7 July Purdie offered his own anecdote depicting Sir Peter (who had died in 1752) defending the bravery of his

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<sup>49</sup>*The Parliamentary History of England, volume XVIII* (London: T. C. Hansard, 1813), 446-447.

<sup>50</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 17 June 1775.

American soldiers.<sup>51</sup> Other than this, there was no mention of Lord Sandwich's anecdote or Sir Peter in any of Virginia's gazettes. The only reference to Warren to ever appear in a *Virginia Gazette* was in the 1740s and 1750s, recounting his expedition.

The amateur songwriter and his fellows who offered their anecdotal refutation of North could be fairly certain that their fellow readers would bring to their singing and reading a familiarity with the personages and stories summarized above. If that knowledge was not there, their submissions would act as a prompt for conversation about the incident with those who did. How knowledge of Lord Sandwich's tale got into Virginia is unknown but it was borne by a communications network other than Williamsburg's three newspapers. Perhaps the news entered Virginia by private letter, a conversation with a ship's captain lately arrived, or another newspaper. However it arrived, it had spread sufficiently through the colony for Dixon and Hunter to be reasonably sure that the allusions would be understood and appreciated. Even though the *Virginia Gazettes* were the primary source for printed information in the colony, they were ancillary to the power of the colony's oral network to disseminate information.

To effectively participate in these networks, Virginia's gentry required a proper education, a defining characteristic of its position in society. A proper, or "liberal," education—emphasizing ancient languages, rhetoric, history, and manners—combined with public duty, personal independence, land, and slaves endowed a gentleman with the trappings of gentility. The *true* mark of gentility depended on how that gentleman used those tools to project an image of refinement and quality. An appreciation and understanding of the classics was one important method of distinguishing oneself as a cultivated individual. The study of Latin and a mastery of Roman history, literature, and

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<sup>51</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 24 June and 8 July 1775; *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 7 July 1775.



culture separated the genteel from the common by inculcating them with an appreciation for timeless virtue and a devotion to liberty and civic duty. Access to these revelations was limited to those who could read or afford to be instructed in it, either by private tutor or in the College of William and Mary's classical grammar school. Print served as a critical bridge between the present and the past by preserving inheritable knowledge. Command of this knowledge, as Michael Warner has argued, served to extend the gentry's universe beyond the local to the worldly, beyond the present to the past. The result was to further confirm the gentry as being in positions of authority by virtue of the vast resources of knowledge that was available to and understood by them.<sup>52</sup>

The appearance of the classics in Williamsburg's papers was constant and even. There is no distinction between the three gazettes in their use of the classics when it comes to the satires. Proportionate to the number of satires offered by each printer, classical allusions are spread evenly between the papers, suggesting that they were a common topic shared by all newspaper readers, no matter what their political affinities, though additional research into other components of the gazettes is necessary to confirm this conjecture.

Not everyone in the eighteenth century was convinced of the importance of the classics. Samuel Johnson considered the invocation of classical authors as nothing more than "window dressing with which to ornament a page or speech." Indeed, some contributors to the *Virginia Gazettes* did pepper their satires with simple phrases: an "exempli gratia" here, a "nemini contradiente" there.<sup>53</sup> Overall, there are only nine

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<sup>52</sup>Rhys Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1982), 130-132; Meyer Reinhold, *Classica Americana: The Greek and Roman Heritage in the United States* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), 36. Warner, *Letters of the Republic*, 29.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted in Bailyn, *Origins*, 24; Exempli gratia, "by way of example," is used as a preface by Gage's chaplain to explain the

instances where Latin words, phrases, or quotations were used in the satires. Of these, only two significantly contributed to the overall understanding of the satire. Most historians have concluded that Americans tended to study their Roman history and literature through translations; persons like William Byrd II and Thomas Jefferson, who regularly began their day reading Latin or Greek, were an exception to the rule.<sup>54</sup> The original language does not appear to have been as important as the ideas they had first professed, but the use of Latin did serve as a subtle reminder of the gentility of the author and his audience.

Americans' political interest in the ancient world stemmed from the lessons that were to be gained from Republican Rome and, less often, Athens. William Smith, provost of the College of Philadelphia and an advocate of the liberal arts, observed that "the History of Greece and Rome . . . may justly be called the history of Heroism, Virtue, and Patriotism . . . . It is History that, by presenting those bright Patterns to the eyes of Youth, awakens Emulation and calls them forth steady Patriots to fill the Offices of State." Closer to home, the afore-mentioned "Monitor" "earnestly beg[ged] leave to recommend to my countrymen, especially the younger part, a thorough acquaintance with those records of illustrious liberty, the histories of *Greece* and *Rome*; from whence they will imbibe a just hatred of tyranny and zeal for freedom."<sup>55</sup> The satires using classical allusions

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apparition of Cromwell that figures prominently in the *American Chronicles*. *Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney) 6 April 1775. *Nemine contradiente*, "without opposition," was a common notation of governing bodies in reference to the passage of bills and was used in the *Grand Political Race* to allude to the resolve of the Continental Congress to ignore unconstitutional laws imposed on America by Parliament. *Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 6 December 1775.

<sup>54</sup>Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 30, 96; Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, 22.

<sup>55</sup>Quoted in Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 38; *Virginia Gazette* (Rind), 3 March 1768.

reflect these sentiments. "A Virginian's" poem titled "Libertas & Natale Solum" (Liberty and My Native Land), printed by Pinkney in his 1 September 1774 edition, displays not only rhetorical skill, but an in-depth knowledge of the past as well. Ten times he makes a specific reference to a Roman myth, fable, or personage to elaborate on his belief that Rome and Virginia shared many of the same virtues.

The poet, like so many other essayists, was not out to overthrow the existing order, but to insist on necessary political reform to save the British constitution:

All friends to virtue will our zeal applaud,  
VIRGINIA will find advocates abroad [in England],  
Whose uncorrupted hearts, by honour sway'd,  
Have not their country or their King betrayed;  
Who dare be good, and feel no other flame,  
But to advance Britannia's growing fame

Friends to her constitution, strictly just,  
Inviolatè, nor traitors to their trust;

Then let's associate firmly, without fail,  
With virtue persevere, and then prevail;

Virtue, the pivotal trait inherent in all effective government, was more than the act of being good; it was the antithesis of luxury and corruption. It was that pure state that gentlemen read about in the works of Horace, Livy and Virgil in which the common good triumphed over self-interest. It was the same trait that discouraged contributors to the prints from signing their names to their submissions, as discussed earlier. To "associate," that is, publicly refuse to sell or buy imported British goods as called for by the Continental Congress, was to demonstrate an honorable, virtuous method of resisting tyranny without violating constitutional law.

Perhaps no other Roman author was more widely read in colonial America than Cicero. His essays on civic morality and the preeminence of natural law were the

cornerstone of the patriots' political position.<sup>56</sup> It was not "window dressing" when the poet invoked this great man in his comparison to Patrick Henry:

Say to what end was HENRY born?  
Why shou'd persuasive speech his lips adorn?  
Say why? But that our most invet'rate foes  
May learn, Virginia wants not Ciceros.

Cicero was carefully chosen to serve as a bridge between the past and present. An accomplished orator, not born into Roman aristocracy, he was well suited as a comparison to Henry and not some convenient name that fit the rhyme.

The poet also sings the praises of America's women:

Depriv'd of liberty, death's more than life,  
Altho' we leave behind a loving wife,  
Our virtuous dames with sense of honour glow,  
By them we're taught th' important truth to know,  
Whose merits may some MARO of renown,  
In after times with tuneful measures crown;

Have we not wives of Amazonian stamp,  
Whose faces not one female fear can damp?  
From some of these, Camillas we might cull,  
Whose same detraction cannot disannul;

His tribute to the colony's women is made by intimating that their virtues deserve to be immortalized by a poet equal in ability to one of the most popular of Roman poets, Virgil.<sup>57</sup> The resolve of the poem is heightened by comparing America's women to the legendary race of Amazons and, specifically, to Camilla, one of their more notable virgin (and, therefore, virtuous) warriors.

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<sup>56</sup>Bailyn, *Origins*, 18-19; William C. Dowling, *Poetry and Ideology in Revolutionary Connecticut* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1990), 38-40; Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 150-2; Richard Gummere, *The American Colonial Mind and the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 3.

<sup>57</sup>"Maro" was Virgil's personal family name.

The poet's references to ancient mythology and personages were well-chosen. They demonstrated a comfortable familiarity with the subject matter and a confidence that Pinkney's readership shared that knowledge. The poem also demonstrates the parallels Americans saw between their values and those espoused by republican Rome's best authors at its height (an attribute that Admiral Warren allegedly used to manipulate the Americans in 1745). A love of liberty, belief in virtue, and the resolve to maintain Nature's law were values that both cultures shared. "Libertas & Natale Solum" was a clear statement of the value of virtue in the crisis—clear, that is, if the reader had the education to interpret its many allusions.

On the other hand, the reader's command of the classics was not always required; the contributor supplied the necessary information. In these cases, the use of the classics demonstrated the contributor's familiarity with Rome, reaffirming his breeding and genteel education. It was up to the reader to be aware of current events to appreciate *why* the satires had been printed in the first place. On three occasions contributors submitted stories about prominent Romans that either provided a moral example or commented on a recent incident. Pinkney had just taken over editorial responsibility for the Rinds' *Virginia Gazette* when he published "one of the most remarkable examples which is to be met with in ancient history: M. Attilius Regulus is put to a cruel death for his singular love to his country."<sup>58</sup> Regulus (a sobriquet often used by eighteenth-century essayists) was a Roman prisoner of the Carthaginians who was persuaded by his captors to present their peace proposals in Rome on his promise to return to Carthage. Upon his arrival in Rome, Regulus declared that "though I am a slave of Carthage, yet I am a free man in Rome, and as such shall now exhort you not to agree by any means to the proposals made now to

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<sup>58</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 8 September 1774.

you." True to his word, Regulus returned to Carthage and certain martyrdom for love of his country and personal honor, a precept many Virginians felt they shared.

On the other hand, the story of Sejanus instantly brought to mind the perceived machinations of Lord Bute. Sejanus, favorite of Emperor Tiberius, had learned that "to flatter a man in power, to praise his words, approve his deeds, and promote his desires, are certain steps to his favour, and almost always secure his esteem." Having secured the emperor's confidence and much of his authority, Sejanus promoted such destructive policies that

the republic was totally destroyed, riot and luxury were let loose among the people, who were thus blinded to the chains which were preparing for them, by inspiring them with a love of pleasure, and while they were diverting themselves in the theatre, or circus, Sejanus was arbitrarily fixing his own dependents in all those posts and employments which should have been filled up by their free election. . . . After 16 years of almost regal power . . . he was suddenly plucked from his aspiring height, and given up to a death both ignominious and dreadful. . . . Sejanus seems to have been marked out by Providence as an example to futurity of that justice which will at one time or other overtake the great bad man who uses his power to oppress or to curtail the liberties of his country.<sup>59</sup>

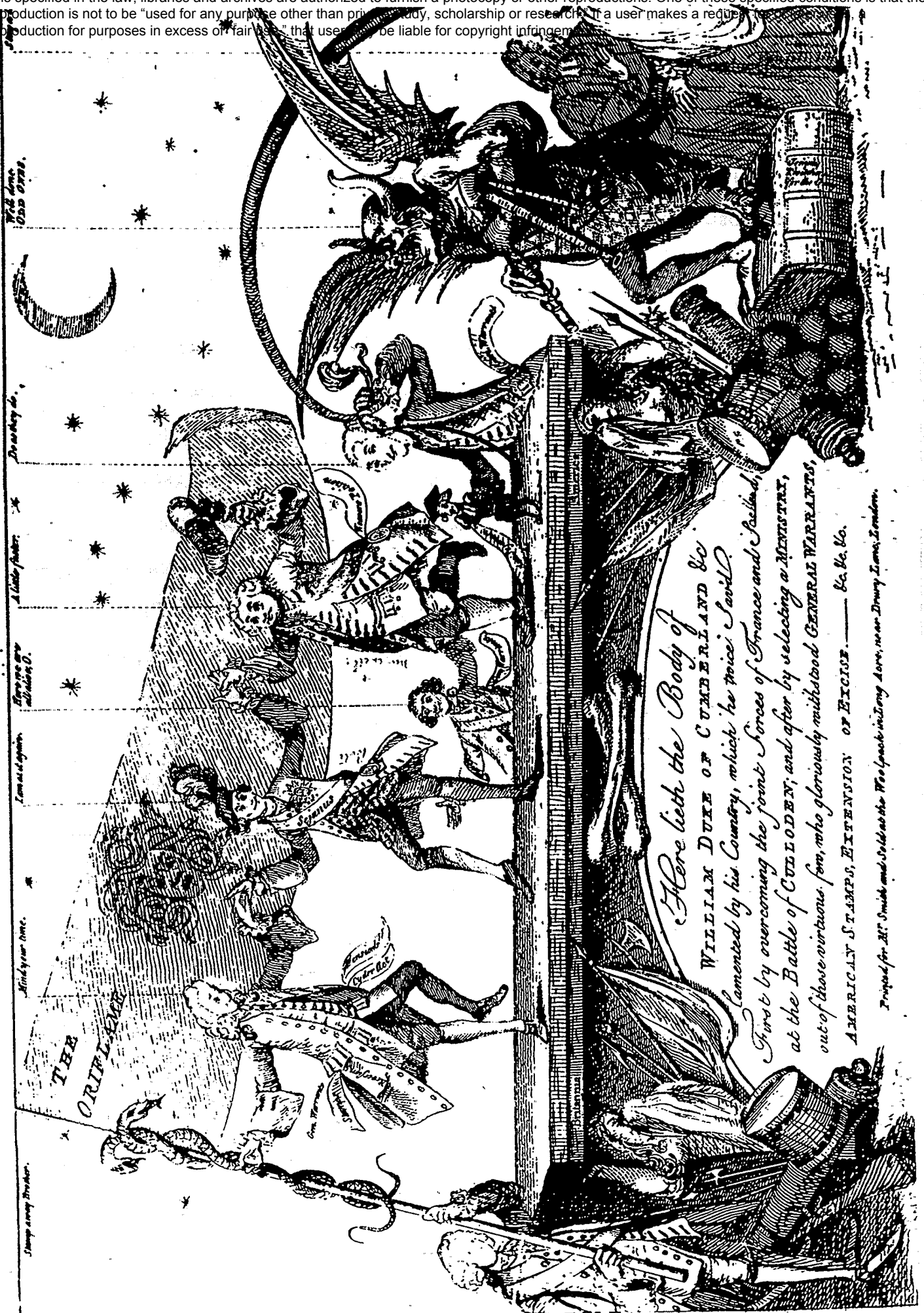
If Providence had failed in exposing Sejanus and his corrupting influences to future generations, patriotic Whig propagandists made certain that he would not be overlooked. The character of Sejanus had become synonymous with Lord Bute by the time this story was printed by Pinkney. Satiric engravers would almost always depict the Scot in either a kilt and/or sash with the name "Sejanus" on it to expedite the reader's identification of the character, as in illustration 1, presupposing a basic understanding of classical allusions and accepted modern political conventions.

The last fully-developed anecdote was drawn from one of the most popular of Rome's authors among Americans, the biographer Plutarch. His recounting of the life of Publicola, reprinted by Purdie on the advice of "a Customer," resonated with the news

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 16 November 1775.

**T H E T O M B = S T O N E .**



High Street  
1025 0788.

Drumby do.

A little further

There are  
allusion D.

Even at night

Monday eve.

Stamp every  
Breath.

**THE  
ORIFLAMME**

*Here lieth the Body of  
WILLIAM DUKE OF CUMBERLAND &c  
Lamented by his Country, which he twice Sav'd.  
First by overcoming the joint Forces of France and Scotland,  
at the Battle of CULLODEN; and after by selecting a MINISTRI,  
out of those virtuous men, who gloriously withstood GENERAL WARRANTS,  
AMERICAN STAMPS, EXTENSION OF EXCISE. — &c. &c. &c.*

Printed for M<sup>r</sup>. Smith and sold as the *Woolpack* in *Drury Lane*, London.

that Lord North had recently suggested sending a group of commissioners to America with a peace proposal. The story recounted how ambassadors from the dethroned emperor Tarquin attempted to subvert the populace's understanding of their relation to him. Only the virtuous Brutus saw through the deception, but would his opinion carry the day? The question was left unanswered and readers were left with the ominous ending that "thus they [Tarquin's ambassadors] gained time to *corrupt* two of the best families in Rome."<sup>60</sup> Was America going to give Britain time to corrupt her? No. As Purdie was setting his anecdote in type delegates to the Fifth Virginia convention were preparing to meet. On 15 May they voted unanimously to instruct their delegation to present a resolution for independence at the Second Continental Congress. The parables from 1774 and 1775 cautioned Americans to be virtuous and vigilant during their negotiations; the parable from 1776 (and Purdie) cautioned against negotiations altogether. His anecdote was an anticipatory prologue to the July declaration in Philadelphia.

But Americans were inheritors of a proud legacy and did not cast it off lightly. As late as 18 May 1776 Dixon and Hunter were still offering cautionary notes such as this admonition from "A Lover of Liberty," a subscriber in Sussex County:

That the *Americans* are able to throw off their dependence on Britain, and still be a happy people, I hope, appears obvious to all, but this is not to be done in a moment. . . . [W]hy should we, through an impetuous zeal, involve ourselves still deeper in an expensive war, for the sake of injuring a people with whom we have been long connected, and in which connexion we were once happy, when perhaps it might be avoided?<sup>61</sup>

Dixon and Hunter, of course, knew very well that this plea was still born. It had been posted on 24 April to their offices and was printed three days after the Virginia convention's vote for independence. That they did print it is another indication of the

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<sup>60</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 3 May 1776.

<sup>61</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 18 May 1776.



moderate stance they had taken in the long process that led to the break with Great Britain. Yet even their reluctant patriot recognized that he and his fellows now had a separate identity, that they were, distinctly, Americans, and Dixon and Hunter thought the notion significant enough to italicize it.

The parables related above and a host of others that conjured up visions of evil viziers and sage Chinese emperors were culled from history (or the satirist's active imagination) to assert the timelessness and universality of the problems plaguing America. Not only were readers made aware of the cyclical nature of history but they were reassured that these were problems that *could be solved*. Thomas Gordon wrote that "mankind will always be the same, will always act within one Circle, and when we know what they did a Thousand years ago in any Circumstance, we shall know what they will do a Thousand Years hence in the same. This is what is called Experience."<sup>62</sup> The printers' invocation of classical, Biblical, and oriental parables and stories provided their subscribers with experiences that went beyond their day-to-day life, experiences that expanded their world and insights into the human condition.

It was Purdie and Pinkney who printed these classically-inspired stories that required little prior knowledge of Rome. On the one hand, they relied on their educated subscribers to continue to present them with submissions, but the demands placed on the readership was small. Each of the three businesses continued to publish literary pieces whose appeal was limited to the educated elite but the majority could be appreciated by the public at large. John Pinkney was the least likely of the printers to require a high degree of education to understand the satires. Eighty percent of his literary offerings could be understood without special knowledge. These satires did not require an understanding of Latin, subtle classical allusions, or references to past historical events.

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<sup>62</sup>Thomas Gordon, "Cato's Letters," no. 18 (25 February, 1720).

Seventy-five percent of Purdie's offerings could be appreciated without a liberal education. Only 66 percent of Dixon and Hunter's satires could be fathomed without access to a liberal education.

Readers could not be blank slates, however. The vast majority of submissions did require subscribers to be aware of current events and personages. There was also a high premium placed on the empire's immediate history. If Rome was to be the culture Americans wished most to emulate, much of their understanding of it was filtered through England via her philosophers and past glories. The values of Cicero and Horace were given new life and meaning by the likes of Milton, Algernon Sidney, and John Locke. As much as Greece and Rome were held up as beacons of virtue, many contributors found merit in England's past glories as well. At the beginning of the constitutional crisis, in 1765, John Adams exhorted Americans to:

Read the histories of the ancient ages; contemplate the great examples of Greece and Rome; set before us the conduct of our British ancestors, who have defended for us the inherent rights of mankind against foreign and domestic tyrants and usurpers.<sup>63</sup>

Dixon-Hunter and Pinkney printed five and six satires respectively that invoked either Britain's past glories or the men responsible for it. Purdie, in his small collection of satires, provided two examples that cast Britain in a positive vein. The pivotal grievance concerning the government's suborning of the constitution was often traced back to an idealized Anglo-Saxon democracy that was undermined by England's conquest by the Normans and their corrupting brand of feudalism. This was not an argument conceived in America but one that had been formulated in England as it wrestled with its own issues over the constitution (a debate that continued long after its loss of the American colonies). In many ways they thought of the Saxons as the first "noble savages," a people

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<sup>63</sup>Quoted in Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 96.

whose pure relationship to nature was jeopardized by the corrupting influences of William, the "French Bastard" (as Paine characterized him in *Common Sense*).<sup>64</sup> A local subscriber, impressed by an "extraordinary speech" by London's Lord Mayor reprinted by Purdie, offered an anecdote "that actually fell my share in reading not long ago." He then related a story about how the noble men of Kent submitted to William the Conqueror on the condition that they

Retain that *liberty* which they received from their ancestors; neither will they be reduced to a state of *servitude*, by any *new* and *unconstitutional* legislature, for they can bear with a *regal*, but not a tyrannical authority. . . . It must be needless to contend with historians, for the effect of this truly spirited conduct. . . . We may let the temporising writers of these times choose to what memorable event they will ascribe them.<sup>65</sup>

Like Brutus on pages 31-32, this subscriber was sharing his education (he explicitly refers to the fact that the anecdote came his way from his reading) and knowledge in the prints with his fellows, as well as sharing his pride of English ancestry and their defense of their natural rights.

Sometimes the example from British history was not in celebration of history but served as testimony to the current situation. Refer back to the poem "Libertas et Natale Solum." The piece begins: "Friends! Brethren! And Fellow Sufferers." This brief prologue and the title would naturally be appreciated by anyone with an affinity for Shakespeare and Roman history but the particularly well read might have picked up on a more recent reference to the works of Jonathan Swift. In the 1720s the staunch Irishman wrote a series of satires, *The Drapier's Letters*, that challenged the increasing sway

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<sup>64</sup>Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, 6-32; E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), 86-89.

England held over his native land. The first of the letters begins "Brethren, Friends, Countrymen and Fellow Subjects," also invoking the Shakespearean allusion and recalling Brutus' speech to the Romans. The poet's use of the phrase suggests his interest in uniting both Roman and British history in his indictment of current affairs, particularly when it was reinforced by the Latin phrase that was so significant in Swift's condemnation of England.

One of the pivotal issues that concerned Swift was England's intention to introduce minted coins into Ireland. One of the English judges in Ireland supporting the legislation had the motto "Libertas et Natale Solum" inscribed on his coach, prompting Swift to comment in a famous passage: "Fine words! I wonder where you stole 'em." The resentment Swift felt toward the English for slowly taking over his country mirrored Virginians' resentment of the slow erosion of their native rights by the British ministry. The choice of the opening reinforced the poet's intention that the reader consider the plight of the Drapier (and the fact that the Irish thwarted England's machinations!) and theirs as the same.<sup>66</sup> Again, the notion that history offered not only precedent but hope was subtly implied.

Those satires that refer to British history all mourn the loss of virtue and liberty in that country. The glory that was Rome (albeit in an idealized state) had existed

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<sup>65</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 17 March 1775.

<sup>66</sup>Herbert Davis, *The Drapier's Letters and Other Works* (Blackwell: Oxford Press, 1941), xxii-xxiii, 99-101.

in England and the satires offered by Williamsburg's printers almost wistfully yearn for a return to that former state:

Spirit of ancient Britons! where art thou? Into what happier region art thou fled, or flying? Return, Oh! Return into our bosom! expel every narrow and grovelling [sic] sentiment, and animate us in this GLORIOUS CAUSE! Where the voice of public virtue and public liberty calls, thither may we follow, whether to life or to death!<sup>67</sup>

Though speaking of his English ancestors, the author's words resonate with the moral precepts of Cato and Cicero in fixing the issue on the importance of public virtue. The distinction of "public" is important. True virtue was devotion and service to the state, divorced from personal interest. This "disinterestedness," the term most often used in the eighteenth century, was an extremely fragile commodity and easily liable to corruption.<sup>68</sup>

It had happened in Rome and it was happening in England. Virginians were on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand they were desirous of maintaining their cultural ties, but the threat of the corruption that was infesting England landing on their shores was a powerful argument for severing those ties, as suggested in the song "Fish and Tea."

There is no knowing where this oppression will stop;  
Some say—there's no cure but a capital chop;  
And that I believe's each American's wish,  
Since you've drenched 'em with tea, and depriv'd 'em of fish.<sup>69</sup>

Still, in 1774 and most of 1775, the satires reflected the desire of many Virginians to remain in the empire, though on their own terms:

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<sup>67</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 4 March 1775.

<sup>68</sup>Gordon Wood, *The Radicalization of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 103-106; Reinhold, *Classica Americana*, 142.

<sup>69</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 17 July 1775.

While we were simple, you grew great,  
Now swell'd with *luxury* and *pride*,  
You pierce our peaceful, free retreat,  
And haste t'enslave with great stride.

Let us, your sons, by freedom warm'd,  
*Your own example* keep in view,  
'Gainst TYRANNY be ever arm'd,  
Tho' we our TYRANT find in you.

Our *youth* shall prop thy tott'ring age;  
Our *vigour* nerve thy feeble arm;  
In vain thy foes shall spend their rage,  
We'll shield thee safe from ev'ry harm.<sup>70</sup>

In this "American Parody on the old song of 'Rule Britannia,'" the italics emphasize the differences between the corrupt mother country—given to the vices of luxury and pride—and the youth and vigor of America. The second stanza reveals the conundrum felt by many Virginians; on the one hand, they hold England as their example, yet acknowledge in the same breath that it is that very country that is suffocating them.

The glories that were once Great Britain were most often personified in General James Wolfe, conqueror and martyr of Quebec in the Seven-Years War and hailed by Americans as a hero. It is Wolfe who is conjured up by an American satirist in a bid to attempt to sway Governor Gage from his nefarious actions. In the dialogue he comes to Gage "in the name of Blakeney, Cumberland, Granby and an illustrious band of English heroes, to whom the glory of old England is still dear, to beg [him] to have no hand in the execution of [the Bostonians]." It is "Wolfe, and hosts of heroes, superior, bending down—[that] cry out, with eager transport—Well done, brave WASHINGTON"

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

in a song set to the music of "The British Grenadiers." And it is Wolfe, in the virtuous company of Cato who is compared to America's second martyr (the first being Dr. Joseph Warren, who had died at Bunker Hill), General Richard Montgomery, who died while trying to subdue Quebec in a New Year's Eve attack late in 1775:

To brave MONTGOMERY we that tear will give:  
His name with Cato's and with Wolfe's shall live.<sup>71</sup>

This last example is not only an example of Virginians' fondness for those vestiges of virtue and honor that were once England, but the relationship they saw between themselves, Rome, and England. America was to be the next great empire, following in their footsteps:

In mighty pomp AMERICA shall rise,  
Her glories spreading to the boundless skies:  
Of ev'ry fair she boasts th' assembled charms,  
The Queen of empires, and the nurse of arms.

From the 1750s to the end of the century, Americans increasingly saw themselves as destined to inherit the mantle of greatness. Many, including Benjamin Franklin, subscribed to the tenet of *translatio imperii*, the concept that civilization moved from east to west. Beyond political agitation, the Revolution provided an opportunity for Americans to formally express pride in their emerging identity and future greatness, a

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<sup>71</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 1 December 1774; *Ibid.*, 2 March 1775. William, Lord Blakeney was hailed a hero for his defense of Minorca during the Seven-Years War; The Duke of Cumberland was the victorious English general at Culloden. John Manners, marquis of Granby, also earned his laurels in the Seven-Years War; *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 24 February 1776; *Ibid.*

theme that is very prominent in the gazettes' satires.<sup>72</sup>

Englishman Thomas Paine's influential pamphlet *Common Sense* is generally considered one of the best polemical expressions of this pride. One of the best literary examples was Paine's Socratic dialogue between the ghost of Montgomery and a recalcitrant congressional delegate, printed by Purdie. After a point-by-point examination of the inevitability of American independence, Montgomery heeds the call of a "band of heroes" beckoning him back to heaven. As he leaves, he concludes by saying that "America is the theatre where human nature will *soon* receive its greatest military, civil, and literary honours."<sup>73</sup> In the dialogue Paine has turned his back completely on England; even William Pitt, John Wilkes, and the marquis of Rockingham, staunch supporters of America, were shunned. He bluntly asserts that "Britain and America are now distinct empires. Your country teems with patriots, heroes, and legislators, who are impatient to burst forth into light and importance." Paine, like many of the anonymous gentleman contributors of poems and songs, predicted an optimistic and confident vision of America. An issue they were not yet contending with was whether they would be able to break the vicious cycle from greatness to ruin that had claimed Rome and England.

One important aspect of Britain's recent history that many Americans believed was responsible for her ruin was her relationship with Scotland. This relationship

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<sup>72</sup>The verse is taken from the poem "A PROPHECY of the Future Glory of AMERICA," printed in the *Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 4 March 1775; Ellis, *After the Revolution*, 3-10; Bailyn, *Origins*, 141; Kenneth Silverman, *A Cultural History of the American Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 230-231.

<sup>73</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Purdie), 8 March 1776.



is borne out in the tracts presented to and culled by Williamsburg's printers. In 1707 the Act of Union joined England and Scotland under one ruler and one legislature and brought the northern country into the English economic system. It was an uneasy marriage from the beginning, exacerbated by Scotland's strong Catholic legacy and England's decision to import a Protestant heir to Queen Anne's throne from the German principality of Hanover, bypassing exiled James Stuart. Hostility came to a head in 1715 and 1745 when Jacobite armies marched into England, determined to place Stuart, and later his son, on the throne as the true ruler of Britain. By the 1770s English antipathy for the Scots still existed but violent invasions were no longer the motive. The English perceived a more insidious design on the part of their northern brothers. Since the Act of Union, Scots had slowly been gaining increasing responsibility in the government. The emerging empire not only offered enterprising Scots great opportunities to be financially successful but created a situation where social-climbing persons could hope to be included in England's privileged circles. Many English perceived the Scots as interlopers and resented their aggressive incursions into their world.<sup>74</sup>

Mistrust and resentment of Scots were also sentiments held by many of Virginia's gentry. Throughout the eighteenth century, tobacco merchants from Edinburgh and Glasgow slowly increased their share of the colony's trade by providing an alternate means for small planters to sell their crop. Their store system, which was extremely efficient and successful, came at the expense of Virginia's large planters, who had

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<sup>74</sup>Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 117-130.

traditionally bought up the neighborhood's leaf and consigned it to London along with their crop. In 1738 Scotland accounted for only ten percent of the total British imports of tobacco. By 1769 they commanded 52 percent of the total, that number tapering off to 45 percent on the eve of the Revolution.<sup>75</sup>

Virginians desperately wished to be perceived as equals within English society but their distance from London, if nothing else, relegated them to a provincial status. They could only look on as Scots, also on the fringes of the empire, made greater headway into England's leadership and social circles. This frustration and apprehension regarding Scots is a key component of the satires. Twenty-four percent of all revolutionary satires refer to the Scottish involvement with the crisis in some manner. Five overtly express frustration with the Scots, four assert a Catholic plot to subvert the government, and eight focus on Scottish personalities that were responsible for the corruption that had incapacitated the government. Fourteen of these satires were printed by Pinkney, Dixon and Hunter only four. Purdie, a Scot, offered no satire disparaging his countrymen and only a fleeting reference to the Pope. Pinkney would seem to be the most insistent about indicting the Scots and their role in current affairs.

It was not enough to condemn Scots in general. Specific persons were identified as instigators of the crisis and then vilified. A cabal of three came to personify the threat to the empire: Lords Bute and Chief Justice Mansfield and occasionally solicitor

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<sup>75</sup>Jacob Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> series, XI (1954), 180-181.

general Alexander Wedderburne. On five separate occasions Pinkney printed satires that allied Lord North with the first two in a trinity of corruption, as in this parody on a proclamation by Massachusetts Governor Thomas Gage:

With the united powers sent forth,  
Of *Bute*, of *Mansfield*, and of *North*,  
To scourge your insolence, my choice,  
Whilst *England* mourns, and *Scots* rejoice!<sup>76</sup>

The parody casts Gage as a military puppet of the government's Scottish schemers and asserted the opinion widely held in Virginia that Scotland was vigorously lobbying for a contentious policy toward the colonies. After subduing the valiant Bostonians, Gage turns his attention to "Virginia's hostile land" and vows that

The hardy sons of Scocia's race  
Shall ready fill each vacant place.

England mourns because of her corruption at the hands of those Scots who have insinuated themselves into the highest positions of the land. The author, a Virginian, expresses his fear that Virginia is ripe for corruption as well by suggesting that Scots might be inserted into the colony's government under fellow Scottish governor Lord Dunmore to continue the subversions of the empire begun in England. He concludes with an arrogant boast by Gage:

By Scotchmen lov'd, by Scotchmen taught,  
By all your country Scotchmen thought;  
Fear Bute, fear Mansfield, North, and me,  
And be as blest as *slaves* can be.

This and the other satires repeat a common theme: Scots were responsible for much of the corruption in England and were on the verge of doing the same in Virginia. It was already happening. Scottish merchants were stealing the economy. Scottish tutors were being hired by some gentry to instruct their children. The father of the colony's governor had

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<sup>76</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 4 September 1774.

sided with the Pretender in 1745. The infection was everywhere.

Virginians' concerns were justified. Linda Colley has found that in Great Britain Scottish MPs and town associations were particularly militant. Their voting record, speeches on the floor of the House of Commons, and town memorials were overwhelmingly in favor of subduing the rebellious colonies by military force, if need be.<sup>77</sup>

For many Virginians, like this lyricist from Nansemond county, there was no doubt that

The Scotch politicians have laid a deep scheme,  
By invading America to bring Charlie in;  
And if the Scotch mist's not remov'd from the Throne,  
The Crown's not worth wearing, the kingdom's undone.<sup>78</sup>

By the time Virginians learned that the king had declared them to be in rebellion in fall, 1775, Dixon and Hunter printed the realization that they—good, virtuous Britons—were now being called rebels, "aye, and by some of those who were actually rebels in 1745."<sup>79</sup>

Scotland had come full circle. Though they failed to place "Charlie," one of the Stuart Pretenders on the throne, they had succeeded in packing the government. From solicitor general Alexander Wedderburne's attack on the virtuous Franklin earlier in 1774 to the ascension of Scots into such lofty positions as chief justice and King's advisor, it was obvious (to Americans) that Scotland's success was coming at their expense.<sup>80</sup> Where

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<sup>77</sup>Colley, *Britons*, 139-140.

<sup>78</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Dixon and Hunter), 29 July 1775.

<sup>79</sup>*Ibid*, 2 December 1775.

<sup>80</sup>Franklin, acting as London agent for Massachusetts, had been accused of obtaining the private correspondence of that colony's governor Thomas Hutchinson and lieutenant governor Thomas Oliver and publishing it in an effort to encourage the already festering hatred being heaped upon Massachusetts' royal administration. It was probably true. In a dramatic scene at Whitehall, Wedderburne questioned and bullied Franklin about the issue for over an hour, instantly making Franklin a martyr. The event was depicted in the "American Chronicles" (*Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 12 January 1775, 1:6-14) as a parody of a similar plot appearing in the book of Esther, 3:2-6. Franklin was stripped of his post as deputy postmaster for North America and he

would it end!? These few satires suggest many Virginians feared the influences Scotland had on England and resented the successes that supposed backwater of the empire had achieved in being accepted into British culture.

This contempt was not limited to poetry and song but found voice in rough, even scatological, satire as well. The gentleman's world was made up of more than public duty, a classical education, and a moral life borne from his youthful catechism. Clubs, coffeehouses, and taverns provided havens for masculine society to engage in literary competition beyond the strictures of polite society. In these spaces, men were free to vent their wit and raillery in any form they desired, free from religious orthodoxy.<sup>81</sup>

Williamsburg's newspapers provided a limited forum for these satires. The two that stand out as examples of club wit are "A Vision," printed by Dixon and Hunter in March 1775 and "The Order of the Napkin," printed by Pinkney in December 1774. Interestingly, both involved Scots. The authors of both use classical imagery as a vehicle for scatological humor. "A VISION" describes a dream that casts Lord North as the Colossus, striding a river made up of members of Parliament. What is particularly

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returned home some time after a hero. Bernard Bailyn, *The Ordeal of Thomas Hutchinson* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974), 253-257. The event and Franklin's return home were celebrated in a poem that first ran in Philadelphia and copied by Dixon and Hunter in their 27 May 1775 edition:

Here lend thine aid to quench *their* brutal fires,  
Or fan the flame which LIBERTY inspires,  
Or fix the grand CONDUCTOR, that shall guide  
The tempest back and 'lectrify their pride:  
Rewarding Heaven will bless they cares at last,  
And future glories glorify the past.

Why staid apostate Wedderburn behind  
The scum, the scorn, the scoundrel of mankind?  
Whose heart at large to ev'ry vice is known,  
And ev'ry devil claims him for his own.

<sup>81</sup>David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Williamsburg: Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 174-178.

intriguing about this piece is that the year before the *London Magazine* ran a print titled "The Colossus of the North, or the Striding Boreas" (illustration 2) that was mirrored by the dream almost exactly. The written satire is virtually a word picture of the print, painting and expanding on its message so vividly that, in many ways, it is more evocative than the visual image.

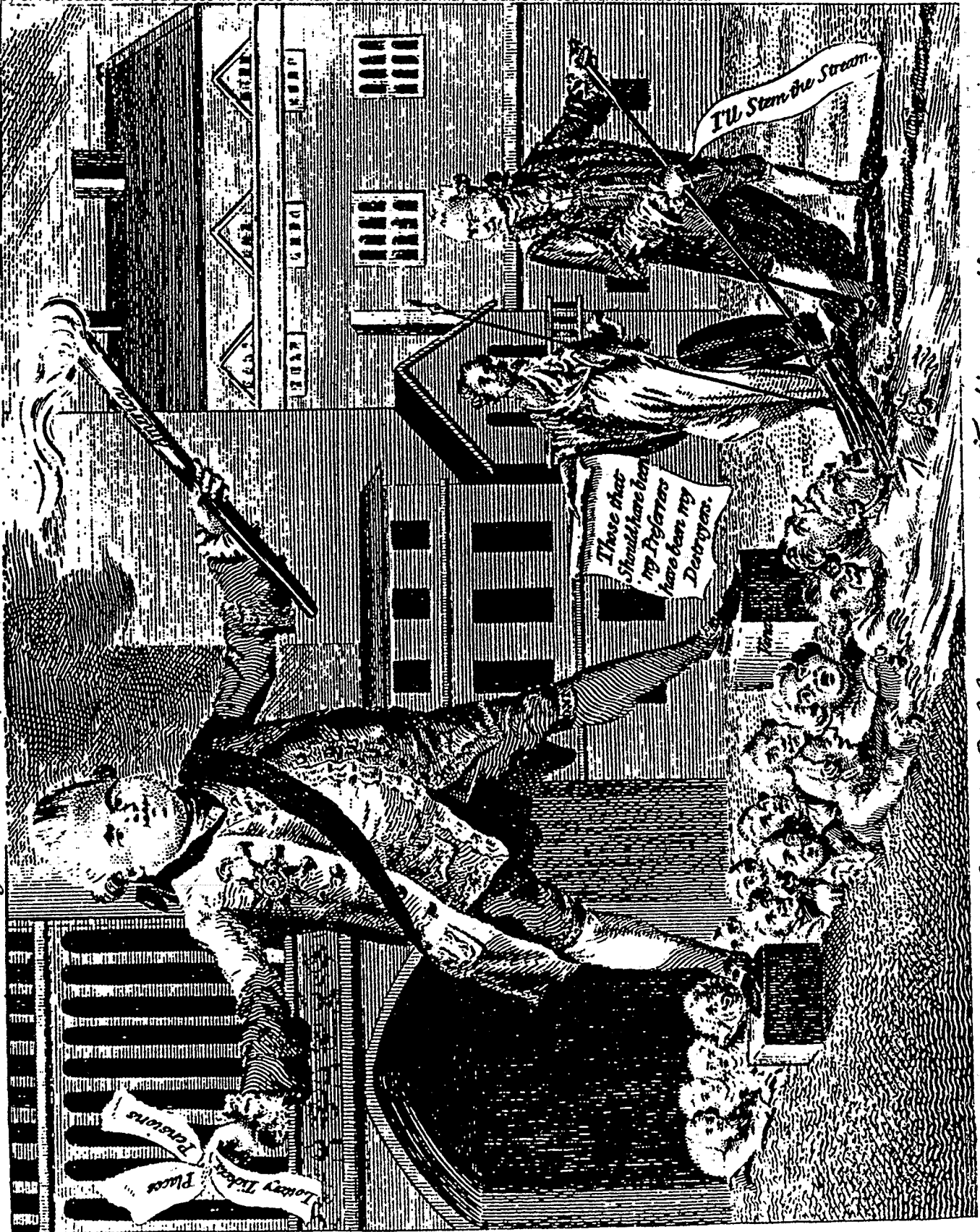
All of the satires in the *Virginia Gazettes*, whether they were local or imported, were written. Prints, a medium that was made as valid a satirical tool by William Hogarth as Swift did for the written word, were imported into Virginia sporadically via magazines and occasionally as individual sheets. On the eve of the Revolution Williamsburg benefited from the output of three printing establishments, but had no copperplate engravers in residence and lacked the capacity to produce visual images. Virginians were obliged to rely on whatever images came from across the seas. This reliance on England for almost all of their visual images, as well as the vast majority of their books, was not perceived negatively, as something that needed changing (though there was the continual frustration of distance and British publishers' penchant for "dumping" unpopular titles on America). Rather, these imports were indicative of Virginians' affinity for British culture and served as a lifeline to the mother country.

As the arrival of visual images was infrequent, literary contributors' ability to create images with words was paramount, a situation not unlike the advent of radio in the early twentieth century and its reliance on the listener's ability to visualize the programs. The descriptive power of many of the literary satires in Williamsburg effectively mirrored the print satires that proliferated in London in the 1760s and 1770s.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Tory propagandists, mostly English officials and Anglican clergymen in the northern colonies, are almost exclusively represented in essay form, with very few oral, dramatic or pictorial representations. Most were aimed at the educated and were contemptuous of the patriots' efforts to influence the lower classes. Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (Chapel

*The Colossus of the North; or The Striding Boreas.*



*See our Colossus strides with Trophies around,  
And Monsters in Corruption's Stream abound!*

The satirist's "vision" begins with the author "being weakened by a too violent exertion of them [supporters of the constitution, himself included] against those who have been esteemed destroyers of my country." He drops into a "profound sleep" and proceeds to envision a dream that very closely mimics the London print. North is described as the Striding Boreas, a play on the chief minister's name, Boreas was the Roman personification of the north wind. Beneath his legs, caught up in the tide of corruption, swirl the House of Commons. In the print Britannia stands on the shore holding a scroll saying "Those that Should have been my Preservers have been my Destroyers" but the dream draws her attitude more explicitly: "Britannia stood quite disconsolate on the shore. Her shield and spear reversed on the ground, saying, 'you have, ye venal ones, proved my country's ruin!'" John Wilkes, in his mayor's robes, stands on the shore ready and willing to "stem this stream of corruption" made up of members of Parliament who were "still looking with earnest and beseeching eyes to that hand which held the places and pensions." In the dream the satirist reinforces the virtues of John Wilkes by describing him as "*augean*" (Herculean) and makes a point that is not explicit in the print by emphasizing that the corruption of Parliament had crept to its very heights when he relates that one of the creatures in the stream, the Speaker, "had a voice more sonorous than the rest, which repeatedly sounded, "*To order, Gentlemen, to order!*"

The satirist then does what the print cannot do; he allows the Colossus to express himself: "At this instant the COLOSSUS broke silence, which was like pent wind issuing from a monstrous cavern, or the roaring of [Mt.] Aetna upon a sudden eruption." The allusion to the wind from the "North" as being nothing more than flatulence succinctly expresses the disdain the author has for the chief minister's convictions. That the "creatures floating beneath his legs" are willing to hear him, despite the implied stench of



the words, only further emphasizes the level of depravity to which they have succumbed. They are creatures of passion subject to no rational order but only to crude manipulation and brute force.

Britain's ruling elite was even more vividly savaged in a local submission to Pinkney celebrating "The Order of the Napkin." The shortest of the satires reviewed here—it took up only 19 lines—it perfectly expressed America's condemnation of Britain's corrupt privileged elite. Titled "*The* CHANCELLOR, *or* INTELLIGENCE EXTRAORDINARY," the satire, written by a Virginian who signed himself only as "B. D.," degrades Britain's aristocracy by juxtaposing refined classical allusions with one of the most base of human actions. The satire is so full of information that it is quoted in its entirety here:

The unhappy prostration of English honour and magnanimity before the northern image set up within these fourteen years last past is most disgracefully exemplified by the new order lately erected in London. It is called "THE ORDER OF THE NAPKIN," and is to be filled only by the prime nobility of England, with an exception, in the first instance, for Lord North, who is to be principal of the order. The *fundamental* duty of this *order* is, that one of its knights must be constantly in waiting with an a--e napkin in his hand, ready to attend the earl of Bute to the temple of Cloacina. A correspondent informs, that, except a few anti-courtiers among the lords, the rest of the English nobility are strenuously contending for admission to this new order. It has been proposed to enlarge the above plan by admitting the bench of bishops, except the *wicked* St. Asaph; and we are assured, that, at all events, it is intending to gratify the wordy and placeseeeking Wedderburne, by creating him CHANCELLOR OF THE ORDER OF THE NAPKIN.<sup>83</sup>

As in the dream, the aristocracy prove themselves to be base creatures, worse than the rest of society—certainly worse than the virtuous Americans—despite their genteel pretensions. Their physical attendance to and worship of Bute's fundament

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<sup>83</sup>*Virginia Gazette* (Pinkney), 29 December 1774. "B. D." may have been patriot Bartholomew Dandridge, a radical and a associate of Patrick Henry.

contradicted one of their principal prerogatives: that persons of their ilk were not obliged to work with their hands. To sully them with merchant's ink was bad enough. To cover them with a craftsman's grime was worse. To dirty them with the excrement of a Scotsman . . . there was nothing worse.

In both cases, the scatological allusions illustrate the complexity of club wit. On the one hand, education is evident. References to Boreas, the Colossus, and the "augean Wilkes" required some knowledge of Roman mythology and folklore. Also present is a school boy's fascination with crudity, woven into the polite references. One of the Seven Wonders of the World is shown with flatulence. The nobility of England are depicted in a degenerate operation that takes place in the temple of Cloacina. The reader must be versed in the classics, or he will miss the comparison of an elegant classical temple to a privy.<sup>84</sup> He must be up on his current events or he will not understand why the "placeseeking Wedderburne" is singled out. The salacious aspect of the satires simply do not work without knowledge of the classical world and current events. B. D. and the dream's author raise themselves above their subject by recognizing the contradiction between the aristocracy's pretensions and reality. The satirists' success lies in their ability to elevate raunchy insinuation to wit by requiring their audience to be versed in gentility to get the joke. Otherwise, the satire is meaningless. These "dirty" satires were not meant for the masses but for the educated elite.

Despite such condemnations, B. D. and other contributors were careful to maintain their pride of empire. Until the last months of 1775, many Virginians held out some hope of an eventual reconciliation with Britain. In the "Order of the Napkin" North, Bute, and Wedderburne were singled out to reflect their centrality to the crisis but the

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<sup>84</sup>The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a "cloacca" as a privy, sewer, a receptacle of moral filth. Napkin, in this case, is defined as a diaper.

author was careful not to put forth a general indictment against all of Britain's leadership. The exclusion of the "anti-courtiers" reflected B. D.'s appreciation for the efforts of such men as lords Chatham and Camden on the colonists' behalf. The "wicked St. Asaph" was Jonathan Shipley, bishop of the Welsh diocese of St. Asaph, and one of the few clerical peers to oppose North's actions against the colonies.<sup>85</sup> Eleven satires, nearly 15 percent of the sample, explicitly cited persons to whom America was indebted.

B. D. concluded his satire by making timely references to recent events. By drawing attention to the recent proposal to admit bishops to the club he refers to the passage of the Quebec Act in late June of that year and the general opinion held by many that the Church of England had not taken a strong enough stance against this perceived incursion of Catholicism into the empire (See illustration 3: Catholic bishops dance over the Quebec Act while Anglican bishops sit idly by. Lords Bute, North, an unidentified minister, and the Devil watch as their plans unfold).<sup>86</sup> The Anglican Church—

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<sup>85</sup>Lord Shipley's and Pitt's praises were sung again in Pinkney's gazette, this time in a song that appeared in 12 January 1775:

Lord Shipley is a man of sense,  
Lord Chatham's acted brave,  
But NORTH and BUTE, with impudence,  
Wou'd make each man a slave.  
. . . . .

They were also praised in a biblical allegory printed by Pinkney on 23 November 1775:  
Remember this [O king], and call it to mind, ye that are far from  
righteousness, ye that have refused to hear the counsel of Jonathan the  
Asaphite, and of William the Pittite . . . .

<sup>86</sup>Passage of the Quebec Act was regarded as yet another example of the dissolute nature of the empire's leaders and was popular fodder in several satires appearing in Virginia's gazettes. This extract is from the last chapter of the American Chronicles, printed by Pinkney on 29 June 1775: "Now Johnny the Buteite and Haman the Northite caused Rehoaboam [George III] to do evil in the fight of the Lord. Howbeit it made the belly of the pope to shake for joy, and his holiness cracked his sides with laughter, for they caused Britain to sin, they encouraged the setting up groves and golden calves, in the land of the Canadians



*The Minnedonnet.*

Protestantism—was a defining feature of English, and Virginia, society. Pinkney's allegories traded on this trait and took advantage of society's familiarity with Biblical stories. Biblical teaching was one of the constants that all segments of society shared. All had learned their catechism as children and were required to attend church regularly. The dissenting preachers of the Great Awakening encouraged their flock of predominantly unschooled planters and tradesmen to learn to read and seek God directly through their reading of the Bible, a skill already practiced by the gentry. Pinkney counted on the universality of this medium. These narratives followed a tradition that Rhys Isaac calls "speaking books." These printed accounts—the Bible is the best example—derived from oral precepts such as speeches, story telling, drama and court proceedings. Isaac notes that these books were extensions of oral performance settings that had been established to instruct the common person.<sup>87</sup> The allegories are, in effect, political "passion plays." "The

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and the Quebeckites . . . And Rehoaboam walked no more in the ways of Solomon his grandfather [George II], but walked in the ways of Louis king of France, and of Carolus king of Hispania, and made molten images for Balaam and for pope Gregory Hildebrand."

Pinkney also reprinted a song from the *St. James Chronicle* on 15 September 1774 "supposed to have been sung by Goody North, by way of lullaby to the foundling brat, the POPISH QUEBEC BILL:"

. . . .  
My dear little popish puppet,  
    So like its dad, lord Bute-e  
O naughty papa, to drop it,  
    And the bishops all sit mute-e!  
Then up with the papists, up, up,  
    And down with the protestants down,  
Here we go backwards and forwards,  
    And all for the good of the crown.  
. . . .  
And heigh for the popish churchwardens,  
    And heigh for the priests and the friars;  
And heigh for the rareeshew relics,  
    To follow my Canada bill-e

<sup>87</sup> Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 123-125.

American Chronicle of the Times," "A Detached Chapter," and "The Book of Shemaiah," like Hopkinson's "A Pretty Story," were recountings of the evolution of the political situation that existed between America and Great Britain. Each adapted Biblical stories to their particular circumstances. Consider two extracts, the one on the left from II Chronicles, the tenth chapter; the second from the last chapter of the "American Chronicles." George III's alter ego is Rehoboam, Solomon's successor:"

6. Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the old men, who had stood before Solomon his father while he was yet alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer these people?" 7. And they said to him, "If you will be kind to this people and please them, and speak good words to them, then they shall be your servants forever. 8. But he forsook the counsel that the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him and stood before him. 9. And he said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put upon us'?" 10. And the young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus shall you speak to your people . . . 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins . . . 11. My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.'"<sup>88</sup>

Did not the antient men, the Pittites, that stood before Solomon thy grandfather [George II] while he lived, counsel thee to be kind unto the children of America, and speak loving words unto them, and please them, and they will be thy servants forever? But behold, O king, thou hast rejected the counsel of the old men, the Pittites, and followed that of the young men, even that of Johnny the Buteite, and that of the wicked Haman<sup>89</sup> the Northite. Who said unto thee, thy least part shall be bigger than thy grandfather's loins, make their yoke more grievous, thy grandfather corrected them with rods, but do thou, O king Rehoboam, chastise them with scorpions, then shall we trample them under our feet.<sup>90</sup>

Not all of the allegories borrowed so directly from the Bible. In several instances the wit

<sup>88</sup>II Chronicles 10: 6-11.

<sup>89</sup>As recounted in the book of Esther, Haman was chief minister in the court of Ahasuerus who convinced that king that the Jews were a threat to his kingdom and needed to be destroyed.

<sup>90</sup>Virginia Gazette (Pinkney), 29 June 1775.

involved was no more than using Biblical style to tell their story. Here the author clearly intended that the plight of the Jews and of the Americans be perceived as one and the same, that the corruption that infested George's court was not unlike Rehoboam's.

These allegories were intended to be instructional. Just as parish priests each week turned to the Bible, looking for passages from which to teach their congregation, the allegories were offered up by Pinkney as fodder for pedagogical conversation. "The American Chronicles" and its successors did not contribute new information about the conflict between America and Great Britain but, by using the Bible as a model, Pinkney's authors implied that their allegories were of a truth, that their recounting of past events offered insights to the reading public as valid as messages culled from the Holy Writ. They served as a witty contribution of the Americans' case that, like other examples already discussed, required of the reader an appreciation of the Bible as literature and an understanding of current events.

Only John Pinkney chose to publish allegories during the period studied. Together with Paine's Socratic dialogue between Wolfe and Gage, published 2 March 1775, Pinkney devoted over twenty-nine columns of space, nearly one third of which appeared on the front page, to these dramatic narratives of the crisis developing between Great Britain and her colonies. Adding his inclusion of six parables, it becomes evident that he favored the use of drama and storytelling as a method for explaining America's grievances in a way that was not nearly as important to Dixon and Hunter, who preferred poetry. Pinkney's satires seem to have been chosen to actively appeal to a broader market; they made the information more accessible and did not require a high level of education to appreciate and enjoy them. The allegories may have been chosen to appeal to a populace who perceived themselves more as a virtuous *Protestant* people than as a people schooled in Roman republicanism. This disposition is also reflected in his strong

anti-Catholic satires.<sup>91</sup> These conclusions strongly suggest that Pinkney was the most aggressive of Williamsburg's printers in attempting to broaden his constituency beyond the educated elite.

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Militarily, at the outbreak of the American Revolution, the American forces used British weapons and tactics to fight their foes. On the literary and propaganda front they used British weapons and tactics as well, in the form of satires, poems, and songs. These portions of the *Virginia Gazette*s served to expose the flaws in Britain's social fabric, yet they also served as an extension of that very culture into the Virginia countryside. The gazettes devoted most of their space to imperial and continental news and very little space to local news that was already covered by the oral webs of communication in the community. The same held true for the literary pieces: of the forty-two satires addressing current topics or persons, thirty seven were imperial in nature, only five were local. Specific Williamsburg events rarely became fodder in the *Virginia Gazette*s and when they did, lord Dunmore was invariably involved.

All three of Williamsburg's printing establishments continued to print news and literary pieces for their traditional constituency, the educated elite. On the eve of the Declaration of Independence, the newspapers were still secondary to oral communication and remained the purview of the educated. But the definition of "education" was beginning to be extended. Over the course of the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the demand for and access to information and knowledge increased. The number of newspapers in Williamsburg increased from one to three. Susan Berg has shown that there was an expanding market for books in the 1760s, particularly political pamphlets, and that classical works and Latin primers were finding their way into the homes of

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<sup>91</sup>Isaac, *Transformation of Virginia*, 246.



tradesmen.<sup>92</sup> The gentry's monopoly on information was beginning to slip.

This study suggests that over the course of the 1770s each business developed a particular style that varied according to what specific aspect of the market each printer attempted to attract.<sup>93</sup> All were patriotic in tenor. All were disposed equally to the use of classically inspired literary satires. None offered a satire that questioned, much less condemned, the patriots. Pinkney aligned himself with other notable patriot printers. Purdie constantly offered commentary derogatory of Dunmore and his legions. Dixon and Hunter, though not strident, were consistent in printing literary pieces that sang the praises of America and the justness of her cause.

John Pinkney was the most aggressive of the three in attempting to appeal to a broad market and popularize the patriots' arguments. Eighty percent of his literary pieces required no formal education to appreciate. He tapped into Virginians' antipathy for Scots more than the other gazettes combined. He printed a variety of satires that appealed more to Virginians' broad-based Protestant upbringing than to a more rarified classical education. Many of his satires were narrative based and served as instructional pieces. As such, these, together with his songs, had a public appeal that would have been more popular in coffeehouses and taverns than in the quiet privacy of a library.

Alexander Purdie was the most assertive of the three in his condemnation of Great Britain and support of the radical patriots. He seems to have been an admirer of radical propagandist Thomas Paine. He was the only Williamsburg printer to reprint a

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<sup>92</sup>Susan Stromei Berg, "Agent of Change or Trusted Servant: The Eighteenth-Century Williamsburg Press," Masters thesis, The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 1993, 31-41.

<sup>93</sup>Most of the findings in this essay are based on a review of the literature appearing in the *Virginia Gazettes*. This study suggests that further research into the essays, news, announcements, and advertisers would further develop the distinctions between these three printing establishments. A comparative analysis of the gazettes to other regions and earlier Williamsburg printers would also prove fruitful.

portion of *Common Sense* and he published one satire and at least two essays by the pamphleteer. His commentary and aggressive use of satire in the wake of the Gunpowder Incident resonate with outrage over how Great Britain was dealing with the crisis. That he was accorded the post of public printer in June, 1775, attested to the mood of many in the House of Burgesses as tensions between America and England began to escalate.

John Dixon and William Hunter maintained the least militant and most traditional press in Williamsburg in the years leading up to 4 July 1776. Their gazette could be counted on to offer more London news and English literary pieces than the others. Their satirical offerings were the most likely of the three newspapers to require some classical education. They were more likely to offer moderate opinions—such as the letters from "Civis" and "A Lover of Liberty"—than the other two, as well. They were least likely to offer satiric commentary of the events they presented. They maintained as close an association with British culture as was reasonable, even while celebrating the virtues of the man who would lead them in war against their mother country.<sup>94</sup>

Ultimately, the crisis that had begun in the 1760s led to a revolution that separated Great Britain from her colonies and started a new experiment in republican self-government. That same crisis also started a revolution in who used the public prints and how. The events that unfolded between 1764 and 1776 created an unprecedented interest in acquiring information, leading to an upsurge in printing establishments. Concurrently, Virginia's gentry recognized the importance of an educated society if their experiment were to succeed. A transformation of Virginia was occurring in ways that the colony's patriot leaders intended and in ways they were not able to control, despite their intentions. The late-colonial printers were a part and product of the change materializing around

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<sup>94</sup>Dixon and Hunter would sing George Washington's praises three times in 1776: in the afore-mentioned song to the tune of the "British Grenadiers," a poem by Phillis Wheatley (30 March 1776), and in a locally-submitted poem printed 25 May 1776.

them. On the one hand, they served a limited clientele, producing news and literary pieces for that select group. On the other, the revolution led to such a clamor for information that the traditional role newspapers had played in the life of Virginia's society would never be the same.

*finis coronat opus*

## APPENDIX 1

### Revolutionary Songs and Literary Pieces Appearing in the *Virginia Gazettes* Between August 1774 and June 1776

#### Purdie and Dixon

1774

	Form	Origin	Title
11 August	song	continental	"The Liberty Song," by John Dickinson, sung to the tune "Hearts of Oak."
25 August	parody	local	Parody of a proclamation issued by Gage.
13 October	satire	unattributable	"Intelligence Extraordinary," showing a reorganization of the British government as a result of the passage of the Quebec Act.
27 October	satire	continental	Petition to "his most exalted Highness, the most Potent, the Omnipotent Bashaw Thomas Gage" from "three Hundred Thousand Americans."
14 November	song	local	New lyrics to "The Roast Beef of Old England."

#### Dixon and Hunter

1775

28 January	parable	unattributable	A "Memento for Princes," surveying the life of Junchin, emperor of China.
4 March	editorial	continental	Extract of an old sermon by the "Reverend and learned Doctor Smith, Provost of the College of Philadelphia."
4 March	poem	local	"A Prophecy of the Future Glory of America"

4 March	dream	unattributable	"A Vision" of Lord North as the Colossus.
4 March	poem	British	"On the Proceedings against America," from the <i>London Magazine</i> .
18 March	parable	unattributable	"The Fate of Tyranny," the story of Almet, one of the ancient kings of Persia.
27 May	poem	local	Untitled four-line poem on American defiance.
17 June	letter	British	"Address to the Soldiers," about to leave Ireland for America.
24 June	poem	continental	Six-line poem on Col. Hancock
1 July	song	local	"A Song, from a new musical interlude called the Election."
15 July	song	local	"'Fish and Tea', a new song," to the tune "Derry Down."
29 July	song	local	"A New Song on the present critical times, by J. W. Hewlings, to the tune of 'Hearts of Oak.'"
19 August	poem	local	"The Present Times: Addressed to a Young Lady."
14 October	parable	unattributable	"An Historical account of the attempt of Philip II, King of Spain, to deprive the Low Countries of their Liberties."
23 December	editorial	British	"To the World," A lamentation for the state of England by "Thousands."
1776			
13 January	satire	unattributable	"A Picture of a Certain Nation," a listing of the woeful condition of the institutions, social classes and colonies in the king's empire.

13 January	poem	continental	"The Patriot's Prayer"
13 January	poem	local	"On Freedom"
17 February	history/ parable	unattributable	"How Nations are Enslaved."
24 February	poem	continental	On the death of General Montgomery, from the <i>Pennsylvania Packet</i>
24 February	song	local	"'A New Song' (To the Tune of the 'British Grenadiers')," in praise of George Washington.
30 March	poem	continental	Poem in praise of Washington by Phillis Wheatley.
25 May	parable	unattributable	"A singular passage in the life of Behram, King of Persia."
25 May	anecdote	continental	Extract of an article at the expense of Virginia governor Lord Dunmore relating the birth of a slave child.
25 May	poem	local	Poem calling on America to be vigilant.

### **Clementina Rind**

1774

4 August	parody	local	Parody of a proclamation by Gage.
25 August	anecdote	unattributable	Anecdote about George I and the Duke of Argyle.
25 August	poem	continental	Comparison of Gage to Elizabeth I, taken from the <i>Pennsylvania Packet</i> .

## John Pinkney

### 1774

1 September	poem	continental	Classically-inspired poem originally submitted to the <i>Pennsylvania Packet</i> .
1 September	poem	local	"Libertas & Natale Solum."
8 September	parable	unattributable	Story of Marcus Attilius Regulus.
15 September	song	British	"A New Song, supposed to have been sung by Goody North, by way of lullaby to the foundling brat, the Popish Quebec-Bill. To the tune of 'O my Kitten, my Kitten, &c.'"
6 October	allegory	continental	"A Pretty Story," by Francis Hopkinson.
6 October	song	continental	"'The Glorious Seventy Four,' a new Song. To the tune of 'Hearts of Oak.'"
1 December	song	continental	"An American Parody on the old song of 'Rule Britannia.'"
29 December	satire	local	"Intelligence Extraordinary," relating news about a new order called "The Order of the Napkin."

### 1775

12 January	song	local	"A Song, to the tune of 'Last Sunday Morning we Sail'd from Cork.'"
12 January	allegory	continental	"The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times," Chapters I and II.
19 January	editorial	unattributable	"The Political Cobler, A Fragment."
19 January	allegory	continental	"The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times." Chapter III.

19 January	song	British	"Song, to the tune of 'Derry Down.'"
2 February	allegory	continental	"The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times." Chapter IV.
23 February	song	local	"A new Song, to the tune of the 'Prussian King.'"
2 March	dialogue	continental	"A Dialogue between general Wolfe and general Gage," by Thomas Paine.
9 March	poem	British	"Elegy to the memory of the late King."
9 March	poem/ fable	local	"The two Dogs, the Monkey, and the Cat."
30 March	allegory	continental	"The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times," Chapter V.
6 April	allegory	continental	"The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times," Chapter V, continued.
20 April	poem	local	"A Soliloquy on the Times," in imitation of Hamlet's soliloquy.
25 May	allegory	local	"A Detached Chapter," biblical prose.
1 June	satire	local	"Intelligence Extraordinary," relating the movements of Virginia governor Lord Dunmore and his minions.
22 June	song	continental	Song on liberty, set to "The ecchoing [sic] Horn."
29 June	allegory	continental	The first Book of the American Chronicles of the Times," Chapter VI.
6 July	song	continental	"Liberty" to the tune "Hearts of Oak."



20 July	poem	continental	"Tom Gage's Proclamation or Blustering Denunciation."
27 July	song	continental	"An extempore song" against oppression
3 August	parable	unattributable	"Anecdote," recounting the reign of Tham, king of China.
17 August	song	continental	"A Junto Song, to the tune of 'a begging we will go, we'll go. &c.'" "
14 September	editorial	unattributable	"A Letter to those Ladies whose Husbands possess a Seat in either House of Parliament."
14 September	song	local	"A new Song," on the need for vigilance.
21 September	allegory	local	"The first Book of Shemaiah," Chapter I.
21 September	satire	British	"Intelligence Extraordinary," recounting "the humble petition of George Pious King."
19 October	poem	local	"A Hue and Cry," about locally stationed British officer Matthew Squire.
16 November	allegory	local	Abdallah, of the city of Balfora.
16 November	allegory	local	"The first Book of Shemaiah," Chapter II.
16 November	parable	local	"The Character and Fate of Sejanus."
23 November	allegory	local	"The first Book of Shemaiah," Chapter III.
6 December	allegory	British	"Grand Political Race."

**Alexander Purdie**

1775

17 March	parable	local	Story of William the Conqueror and the men of Kent.
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5 May	parody	unattributable	Lord North as Richard III.
12 May	poem	unattributable	"A Curse."
26 May	dream	British	Visit to a wax head sculptor.
1 December	parody/poem	local	"A Proclamation: Desolation," a parody of the proclamation issued by Dunmore attempting to emancipate any slave who would fight for him.

**1776**

8 March	dialogue	continental	"A Dialogue between the Ghost of general Montgomery and a Delegate."
8 March	editorial	continental	"To all parents in the 13 United Colonies."
3 May	parable	local	Passage from Plutarch's life of Pubicola.

## APPENDIX 2

### American Publications Cited by the *Virginia Gazettes: 1774-1776* (All papers were patriotic in tenor, unless otherwise noted)

Publication	Purdie/Dixon, Hunter/Dixon	Rind, Pinkney	Purdie
<i>Boston Evening Post</i> *	1		1
<i>Boston Journal</i>		1	
<i>Essex Gazette</i>		1	
<i>Massachusetts Spy</i>		7	
<i>New York Journal</i>	1		
<i>Newport Mercury</i>		1	
<i>Pennsylvania Evening Post</i>	1		1
<i>Pennsylvania Gazette</i>	1		1
<i>Pennsylvania Journal</i>	1	6	1
<i>Pennsylvania Ledger</i> *	1		
<i>Pennsylvania Packet</i>	3	4	1
"Rivington's Paper"**,			1
<i>South Carolina Gazette</i>		2	

\* The *Boston Evening Post* and the *Pennsylvania Ledger* aspired to be impartial but, because of the difficulty of maintaining a neutral press during the crisis, were both abandoned by 1776. Botein, "Meer Mechanics," 214-215.

\*\* James Rivington's *New York Gazetteer* was probably the most outspoken of the few Tory newspapers in America. Rivington's name was synonymous with Tory rhetoric, which is probably why Purdie chose to identify the extract with his name instead of the name of the publication. In effect, Purdie was counseling his subscribers to "consider the source" before continuing on.

### APPENDIX 3

#### London Publications Cited by the *Virginia Gazettes: 1774-1776* (Political affiliations, where known, are noted by a "W" for Whig and "T" for Tory)

Publication	Purdie/Dixon, Hunter/Dixon	Rind, Pinkney	Purdie
<i>Gentleman's Magazine</i>		1	
<i>Lloyd's Evening Post</i>	1	1	
<i>London Chronicle (T)</i>		3	
<i>London Evening Post(W)</i>	1	3	1
<i>London Gazette</i>	1		1
<i>London Gazetteer</i>	1	1	1
<i>London Magazine</i>	1	2	1
<i>London Mercury</i>		1	
<i>London Packet (W)</i>	1		
<i>Morning Chronicle (W)</i>		4	
<i>Morning Post (T)</i>		1	
<i>Political Annotator</i>	1		
<i>Public Advertiser (W)</i>	2		1
<i>Public Ledger (W)</i>	3	3	1
<i>St. James Gazetteer</i>	1		
<i>Universal Magazine (T)</i>	1		
<i>Westminster Magazine</i>		1	
<i>Whisperer(W)</i>		4	

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