CHAPTER 7

Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution

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On the eve of Independence, Americans interpreted imperial politics in highly unusual ways. Indeed, historians of the Revolution report that colonists—even educated leaders of church and state—enthusiastically endorsed conspiratorial forms of thought.[1] The popular appeal of such forms of explanation is not surprising. After all, mid-eighteenth-century Americans had to make sense of rapidly changing economic and political conditions for which there was no precedent in their experience. Parliament aggressively asserted its sovereignty by taxing the colonists at about the same time that a flood of British manufactured items transformed the American marketplace. When Stephen Hopkins, Rhode Island's governor, surveyed the relation of the colonies to an expanding empire in 1765, he concluded, as did many contemporaries, that "the scene seems to be unhappily changing."[2]

Uneasy perceptions of this sort provoked a creative cultural response. Americans such as Hopkins interpreted for themselves and for their neighbors as best they could the mysterious engines of political and economic transformation. Drawing on the language and beliefs of ordinary people, they told stories that helped situate Americans within an unstable world that had rendered problematic much that they took for granted about provincial society. Some of the tales invented during this period serve as apposite illustrations of a dependent culture struggling to control change by giving it plausible local meaning. These hermeneutic efforts generated what can be termed new narratives of everyday life.

By reconstructing the mental framework that informed one of the central narratives of the mid-eighteenth century—in this case, an elaborate story of misunderstood American consumers—we shall better understand how the

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colonists came to imagine themselves within an expanding empire of trade, how at a moment of extreme political crisis a bundle of popular ideas and assumptions about commerce suggested specific styles of resistance, and finally, how a boycott movement organized to counter British policy allowed scattered colonists to reach out to each other and to reimagine themselves within an independent commercial empire.

In 1763, no one could have foreseen that the translation of a "Genius of Commerce" into political protest would produce radical new forms of liberal community in America.[3] It was the unintended consequences of commercial ideas that made the Revolution genuinely revolutionary.[4] We shall look initially at the evolution of a popular narrative of commercial life and then explore the broad experiential and ideological context in which this bizarre account briefly but powerfully flourished.

Although the origins of folk explanations are difficult to isolate, we can with reasonable confidence begin the investigation of the new commercial narrative in the early 1760s. It was during this period that Americans first focused their attention on why British authorities had redefined the rules that had governed the empire for as long as anyone could remember. In this context, the Sugar Act of 1764 seemed so precipitate, so destructive to the normal flow of trade, so ill conceived that it defied easy explanation. But Americans accepted the interpretive challenge, probing connections between parliamentary oppression and the consumption of British goods.

The first troubled response appeared in Boston. Although the author of an anonymous pamphlet of 1764 entitled *Considerations Upon the Act of Parliament* did not proclaim a full-blown conspiracy, he suggested that Americans themselves bore responsibility for deteriorating relations with England. During the Seven Years' War, the colonists not only had lived too well but had done so too publicly. Their opulent consumption of British manufacturers strongly impressed "the gentlemen of the army and others at present and lately residing in the maritime towns." These outsiders learned that the Americans "spend full as much [on] the luxurious British imports as prudence will countenance, and often much more."[5]

The next year, the commercial interpretation of parliamentary taxation acquired fuller definition. John Dickinson, a respected Pennsylvania lawyer, traced the imperial crisis in part to a stunning misinterpretation in Great Britain of American consumer habits. "We are informed," Dickinson noted in *The Late Regulations*, "that an opinion has been industriously propagated in *Great-Britain* that the colonies are wallowing in wealth and luxury." That conclusion, he insisted, represented a pernicious misreading of colonial culture. The streets of America were not paved with gold, and in any case, impoverished colonists could not possibly pay new taxes. During the Seven Years' War, European visitors had witnessed an abnormal economy, artificially fueled by large military expenditures. Americans, Dickinson claimed, were ordinarily and mostly quite poor. British observers had been misled because the

colonists, "having a number of strangers among us," were too generous and hospitable for their own good. The Americans had "indulged themselves in many uncommon expenses." This "imprudent excess of kindness" was simply an ill-conceived attempt to impress British visitors.[6]

Other writers took up the narrative of commercial life, adding innovative elements of their own. In 1768, for example, an anonymous New York pamphleteer situated Anglo-American consumption within a larger historical framework. Readers of *The Power and Grandeur of Great-Britain*—one of the more impressive political discussions of this period—learned that the original New World settlers had overcome "a thousand discouragements" and only recently had managed to establish themselves as "a numerous people." Whatever hardships they endured, the struggling colonists had contributed generously to English prosperity. As loyal consumers on a distant shore, they purchased "merchandize of an almost infinite variety, numberless useful and useless articles [that] are now yearly furnished to three millions of people." The profits of this trade flooded back to England. Even during the mid-century wars against France, commercial revenues increased. For the privilege of obtaining these goods uncomplaining colonists ransacked "the seas and the wilds of America . . . to make payment for them, and the improved lands are cultivated chiefly for the same purpose." Like other colonial authors, the New Yorker described the Seven Years' War as the crucial moment in the development of an empire of goods. In its aftermath, Britain turned the ingenuity of American consumers into a justification for parliamentary taxation, based on the reports of visitors "who saw a great display of luxury, arising from the wealth, which many had suddenly acquired during the wars."[7]

At this point, the author added a sociological dimension to an evolving commercial explanation of political crisis. It was not so much that the reports of extravagant American market behavior had been erroneous. Rather, the colonists were parvenu consumers who had failed to master the etiquette of a polite society. "It is an old observation," the pamphleteer confessed, "that those who suddenly plunge into unexpected riches, in ostentation greatly exceed those who either derive them from their ancestors, or have gradually acquired them by the ordinary course of business." Contemporary imperial policy, therefore, was the product of shoddy anthropology. The British refused to appreciate that, despite their superficial glamour, eighteenth-century Americans remained provincial bumpkins, too poor to pay parliamentary taxes and too untutored to display their wealth tastefully.[8]

In 1768, William Hicks of Philadelphia heightened the conspiratorial element in this broad folk discourse. It was no accident, he announced, that ordinary English people accepted inflated estimates of colonial prosperity as truth, for unnamed sources had systematically distorted reports of economic conditions in America. Hicks protested that "the estimates of our wealth which have been received from ignorant or prejudiced persons, are, in every calculation, grossly erroneous. These misrepresentations, which have been so industriously propagated, are very possibly the offspring of political invention, as they form the best apology for imposing upon us burthens to which we are altogether unequal." This interpretive framework—what was becoming for Hicks a conspiracy of commerce—carried extremely sinister implications for the colonists' happiness within a commercial empire. Boldly linking consumption and politics, Hicks asked Americans to remember exactly how Parliament had first reacted to the false reports of wealth. Had that body not immediately imposed new taxes? Were not these revenue acts an ominous hint of future assaults? Without money, what would the colonists be able to afford? The plot was obvious. The British wanted to keep the Americans poor, marginal consumers just able to pay the rising taxes but never "suffered to riot in a superfluity of wealth." Industrious colonists could surrender their dreams of luxury, their expectations of sharing the material culture of Britain. "Whatever advantages may hereafter present themselves, from an increased population, or a more extended trade," lamented Hicks, "we shall never be able to cultivate them to any valuable purpose; for, how much soever we may possess the ability of acquiring wealth and independence, the partial views of our selfish brethren, supported by the sovereignty of Parliament, will most effectually prevent our enjoying such invaluable acquisitions."[9]

Narratives of commercial life—a fluid assemblage of popular notions about consumption and politics—echoed through the colonial newspapers, indicating that the tale of hospitable American consumers and bemused British visitors, of luxury and poverty in a changing economy, had become a staple of popular culture on the eve of Independence. Writing in the *New-London Gazette*, "Incultus Americanus" reminded readers that the Seven Years' War had been responsible for "an insatiable itch for merchandizing; and the folly and extravagance of the people in imitating the customs and dress of foreigners." Self-indulgence had been the colonists' undoing. "Our extravagant dress and luxury had this fatal effect . . . , that Europeans concluded we were a people abounding with wealth, and well able to furnish largely for defraying the national debt."[10] The *Boston Evening-Post* noted that the British belief in "our being in affluent and flourishing circumstances, was grounded upon a mistake or the misrepresentation of travellers or others."[11] By 1771, the argument for disjuncture between appearance and reality had become standard fare. "A Friend of the Colony of Connecticut" explained in the *New-Haven Post-Boy* that "a large consumption of unnecessary foreign articles . . . has given us the false and deceitful appearance of riches, in buildings, at our tables, and on our bodies. Which has attracted the attention if not raised the envy of our neighbors, and perhaps had its influence in making the late grievous unconstitutional revenue acts."[12]

Even as the contest with Great Britain intensified and the possibility of armed conflict loomed, Americans maintained that the political crisis was somehow related to their own participation in a new Anglo-American marketplace. One example appeared in 1774. The Reverend Ebenezer Baldwin of

Danbury, Connecticut, published a short sermon explicitly directed to ordinary farmers living in isolated communities who were "not under the best advantages for information from the news papers and other pieces wrote upon the controversy." How had it come to pass, Baldwin asked these rural people, that Americans were contemplating armed resistance against the British empire? For answers one needed to look no further back in time than the Seven Years' War. "As America was much the seat of the last war," Baldwin recounted, "the troops sent here from the mother country, opened a much freer communication between Great Britain and the Colonies, [and] the state of the colonies was much more attended to in England, than it had been in times past."

Such familiarity generated only superficial understanding. British visitors failed to appreciate just how much the social dynamics of America differed from those of England. "In a country like this," Baldwin reminded the farmers, "where property is so equally divided, every one will be disposed to rival his neighbor in goodness of dress, sumptuousness of furniture, &c. All our little earnings therefore went to Britain to purchase mainly the superfluities of life." Economic leveling in the colonies stimulated status competition; consumer goods were the primary means by which men and women sorted themselves out in society. "Hence the common people here make a show, much above what they do in England," Baldwin asserted. Here was the source of a profound cultural misunderstanding. "The luxury and superfluities in which even the lower ranks of people here indulge themselves," the Connecticut minister observed, "being reported in England by the officers and soldiers upon their return, excited in the people there a very exalted idea of the riches of this country, and the abilities of the inhabitants to bear taxes."[13] Whatever their former excesses as consumers may have been, Baldwin thought that Americans could still save the political situation. All they had to do was reform their buying habits, putting aside the imported goods that had made them seem richer than they actually were. The moment had arrived for the "lower ranks" of society to appreciate that their private decisions in the marketplace had helped to precipitate and could influence the greatest political event of their lives.

Versions of the commercial narrative had strong popular appeal. In 1774, for example, "A Citizen of Philadelphia" submitted a story of naïve American consumers to several urban newspapers. This form of the evolving story was more elaborate and less sophisticated. To be sure, the Seven Years' War brought British troops to America. These had not been average soldiers, however, for as A Citizen explained, the officers were upper-class figures, "many of them sons of the best families." Other eminent Englishmen accompanied the military to the New World. "Gentlemen on their travels extended their route to America," the writer explained, "and even Peers of the realm landed on our shores." Sudden attention from such distinguished personages flattered the colonists, who worked hard to make a favorable impression on their elite guests. A Citizen recaptured their effusive hospitality: "we lavished the fruits

of our industry, in social banquets,—We displayed a parade of *wealth*, beyond the bounds of moderation and prudence; and suffered our guests to depart, with *high ideas of our riches*." As the prodigal Americans soon learned, these socially prominent officers and gentlemen lost no time informing well-connected friends in England about the affluent consumers they had encountered in the New World. Perhaps these reporters meant no harm; perhaps they did not consciously engage in conspiracy. There was no disputing, however, that as England "was oppressed with a heavy load of debt, . . . how natural then, was it for Parliament, to hunt out fresh resources?"[14]

The narrative of commercial life gained what may have been a final reformulation in David Ramsay's *History of the American Revolution*. Published in 1789, this sedulously researched account of the War for Independence strove to avoid the shrill partisan tone that marred many early patriot histories. Like others who reviewed the conflict, the South Carolina physician and army veteran found it difficult to understand why Parliament decided to tax the Americans in the first place. He located the answer in Britain's willingness to accept "exaggerated accounts" of Americans' wealth. "It was said," Ramsay explained, " 'that the American planters lived in affluence, and with inconsiderable taxes, while the inhabitants of Great-Britain were borne down.' " The culprits again seem to have been British soldiers serving in America. "Their observations were founded on what they had seen in cities, and at a time, when large sums were spent by government, in support of fleets and armies, and when American commodities were in great demand." Kind Americans spared no expense in feting their British allies in the great struggle against France. "To treat with attention those, who came to fight for them," Ramsay asserted, "and also to gratify their own pride, the colonists had made a parade of their riches, by frequently and sumptuously entertaining the gentlemen of the British army." The visitors mistakenly concluded that the colonists lived very well. It was a natural error. These officers "judging from what they saw, without considering the general state of the country, concurred in representing the colonists, as very able to contribute, largely, towards defraying the common expenses of empire."[15]

These various versions of the commercial narrative joined other discourses that Americans invented to explain to themselves why relations with England had soured so suddenly. Although other tales circulated widely throughout the colonies during this period—for example, stories of massive political corruption in Great Britain—this largely overlooked account of eager, misunderstood colonial consumers possesses unusual interest. It represents an imaginative, often entirely plausible response to two distinct crises in the Anglo-American world of the mid-eighteenth century. The colonists had to accommodate not only the demands of a new consumer marketplace that inundated the homes of free men and women with alluring goods but also the aggressive Parliament that threatened to destroy a delicate commercial system that made it possible to pay for these goods.

The commercial narrative that enjoyed popularity for over two decades effectively linked these separate challenges. For one thing, it established a shared chronology. Change accelerated during the Seven Years' War, setting the stage for a cultural misinterpretation so profound that the Americans could never again persuade Parliament that they were in fact poor. The interpretation turned on the consumption of English manufactures by Americans who were overly hospitable, remarkably self-indulgent, and socially insecure. Versions of the story came from all regions of the continent, from different classes and backgrounds, from people who seemed in retrospect to have felt a little guilty that their own excesses had given off such confusing signals. The narrative of commercial life explained that it was not the goods that had hurt the Americans but, rather, their misuse; not the purchase, but the vulgarity.

Historians have failed to give the commercial perspective proper interpretive standing. Another body of thought has long dominated the search for the ideological origins of the American Revolution. According to Bernard Bailyn, who more than any other has set the terms of this debate, eighteenth-century colonists subscribed to a controlling set of "assumptions, beliefs, and ideas—the articulated world view—that lay behind the manifest events of the time."[16] This complex mental framework, often labeled "republican," marginalized the language and experience of commercial capitalism.[17] In this interpretive perspective, colonial Americans were not trying to accommodate to a rapidly changing world economic system; instead, they resisted it. They condemned the modern commercial mentality. They were backward looking, suspicious of trade and banking, fearful of spreading political corruption produced by financial revolution in Great Britain. Americans of republican persuasion spent their days exposing plots consciously designed to pervert Britain's ancient constitution, schemes to establish a standing army, efforts to silence the press—in short, conspiracies to crush liberty. These shrill anxieties helped Americans to see the evil hand behind British policy, and by 1776 colonial readers of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon had transformed themselves into armed rebels against the empire. So runs the "republican synthesis."[18]

Historians critical of this dominant interpretation have argued that the colonists' political ideology before the Revolution was more liberal and Lockean than we had been led to believe. Others have tried to restore elements of traditional Protestant theology to the ideological mix, but with the notable exceptions of Joyce Appleby and Isaac Kramnick, few seem comfortable with a political discourse that owed much to the experiences of ordinary men and women in a new consumer marketplace.[19] To construct a persuasive explanation of the dialectic between experience and ideology on the eve of Independence, one would need to address two separate interpretive problems about which current historiography has little to say.

First, we should focus on the elusive relation between the events of everyday life and the stories that contemporaries invented to make sense of those events.

This is not an exercise that necessarily gives interpretive privilege to the writings of highly educated colonial leaders—for example, to the pamphlets produced by great planters, successful lawyers, and prominent ministers. These familiar sources have obvious utility, but we should cast the net more broadly to include elements of popular thought—inchoate, sometimes contradictory ideas and assumptions that persons of very different economic and regional backgrounds came to share by mid-century.[20]

Second, we should consider how artisans and farmers—the sort of folk who may have heard the Reverend Baldwin—confronted a mid-eighteenth-century world that impinged ever more insistently on their sense of self. The great value of the local studies produced by American historians over recent decades is that they powerfully draw attention to ordinary men and women making decisions about the conduct of their lives. The drama of the past reveals itself most poignantly within small units, within communities trying to explain environmental change, within families experiencing the joys and disappointments connected to cycles of life and death, within the minds of individual men and women attempting to work out their sexual, racial, and ethnic identities.

Local analysis, however, cannot be its own reward. Throughout recorded history, ordinary people have found that they must express agency within larger frameworks, such as capitalism and nationalism—forces that puzzled and frightened, that demanded personal response, and that presented an unprecedented range of choice.[21] In mid-eighteenth-century America, the outside world often spoke most seductively through imported consumer goods, and because they imagined themselves within an empire of commerce, colonists who had previously not had much to do with each other came to see it a matter of common sense to respond to the disruption of their economic and political lives through specific commercial strategies such as an ever-wider boycott movement. Political actions grew out of a popular ideology. What no one anticipated was that mass political mobilization within a consumer marketplace would radically transform how Americans construed community so that by the 1770s their experience provoked them to imagine a powerful commercial empire of their own.

Americans brought to the final political crisis a complex bundle of ideas about the British empire that were products of long commercial experience. This set of popular assumptions provided an interpretive lens through which the colonists viewed parliamentary claims to absolute sovereignty. Jonathan Mayhew, a leading Boston clergyman, understood these patterns of thought as well as any colonist, and he was therefore an appropriate person to celebrate in 1766 the repeal of the Stamp Act with a sermon entitled *The Snare Broken*. Mayhew used the occasion to reexamine what membership in the British empire meant to colonial Americans. He concentrated on shared assumptions—what he termed "commonly-received opinions" and notions generally "taken for granted"—that he believed had shaped popular political identity.[22] At that

happy moment, Mayhew must have sensed that scholarly arguments would not spark the desired emotional response. To be sure, Americans cared deeply about the empire to which they swore allegiance. It was just that their thoughts about this subject were a bit fuzzy—a loose amalgam of beliefs about the balanced constitution, the common law tradition, and the sanctity of the Protestant succession. These disparate elements had somehow contributed to their own freedom and prosperity.[23] Certainly, there was no denying success. According to one American writing in 1768, "Britain seems now to have attained to a degree of wealth, power, and eminence, which half a century ago, the most sanguine of her patriots could hardly have made the object of their warmest wishes."[24]

On one point Americans expressed near universal agreement. They believed that the empire owed its ascendance almost entirely to international commerce, that trade was the indispensable source of national wealth and military power, and that trade even sustained political liberty.[25] World history, they claimed, demonstrated that commercial societies were freer and happier than those that had not experienced its marvelously transforming effects. Thus writer "X" in the *Connecticut Journal* insisted that "the experience of every age, and nation from the remotest knowledge, down to the present-day, join in asserting this fact; that no nation, ever became rich or poor, but in proportion to the increase, or decrease of their trade." For "X," the British empire brought Americans more than economic prosperity: commerce went "hand in hand with liberty; rose, flourish'd and declin'd together."[26]

Colonial newspapers regularly reaffirmed the lesson. Commerce distinguished the British empire from other empires, from despotic systems that could never deliver the peace, security, and coherence that eighteenth-century Americans now took for granted. "Commerce is the most solid foundation of civil society," the *Boston Evening-Post* announced in 1764. "By this our necessities, conveniences, and pleasures are supplied from distant shores; every region is amazed to find itself abounding in foreign productions, and enriched with a thousand commodities unknown to itself, and promoting its welfare and serving to make life more agreeable."[27] Mid-century Americans imagined themselves within a great circulation of money and goods, a practically Newtonian marketing system connecting them in mutually beneficial ways to strangers throughout the empire.

For Americans, trade implied reciprocity. All groups within the empire stood to gain something by exchanging goods. Commercial relations between peoples and societies were analogous to private contracts, all parties negotiating and each party compromising a little in an effort to reach agreement. To take advantage of a partner's weakness, to take more from a relationship than one returned, was condemned as shortsighted as well as avaricious. A young man chosen in 1766 to deliver a prize-winning dissertation on "The Reciprocal Advantages of a Perpetual Union Between Great-Britain and Her American Colonies" voiced the common wisdom: "I hope . . . to make it appear," he declared, "that a reciprocal emolument will arise from a perpetual union between *Britain* and her *American* Colonies; as she may by their means greatly enlarge her trade and commerce . . . , as they will reap the advantage of her riches and power, by being protected from their enemies, and supplied with the conveniences of life at a cheaper rate, and of a better quality than if manufactured by themselves." [28] From this perspective the empire was a bargain. Members of an Annapolis trade inspection committee expressed the point less effusively in 1770, but they too assumed reciprocity. "The Province of Maryland," they explained, "and the whole Continent of *British America*, had for more than an Hundred Years, carried on a very extensive Commerce with Great-Britain, which gave a quick Progress to the Population of America, and advanced greatly the Strength, Wealth and Grandeur of *Great-Britain*."[29]

While the commercial model assumed balance and fairness within the empire, the colonists—even before the crisis over parliamentary taxation—routinely betrayed a sense of their own vulnerability. American rhetoric often sounded more anxious than descriptive. Writers seemed overly eager to persuade the British—perhaps their fellow colonists also—that trade did in fact benefit the metropolitan core as well as the distant peripheries. The key to any positive assessment of imperial trade was the Americans' rising consumption of manufactured goods. In 1764, for example, Governor Thomas Fitch lectured the people of Connecticut that "the Colonies and Plantations in *America* are, indeed, of great Importance to their Mother Country and an Interest worthy of her most tender Regard." The provinces were partners, not competitors. "The more they prosper and increase in Number, Riches and Commerce," Fitch noted defensively, "the greater will be the Advantage not only to them but also to the Nation at Home." The colonies provided an ever-expanding market for "almost all Sorts of *British* Manufactures, and of many and various Kinds of Goods of the Produce of other Countries, first imported into *Britain*."[30] In Massachusetts, Oxenbridge Thacher asserted that it was common knowledge "that the greatest part of the trade of Great-Britain, is with her colonies." As the Americans prospered, so too would the British. Thacher observed that "doubtless even the luxury of the colonists is the gain of G. Britain."[31]

Colonial observers understood something fundamental about the imperial connection that modern historians have generally ignored: mid-century Americans confronted a situation that was genuinely new. Before the 1740s, few would have described their relation with Great Britain within the framework of a rapidly expanding consumer marketplace. After that date, the commercial connection became much more invasive, more manifest—a development demanding adjustment and accommodation and one that touched the lives of people living in all parts of America.

Contemporaries were fully aware of the changes that had dramatically transformed the face of a provincial material culture. A quotidian world had taken on a different appearance. People dressed more opulently and more colorfully. They purchased more manufactured items that made them feel hap-

pier, warmer, or better looking.[32] As William Smith observed in his *History of the Late Province of New-York*, "In the city of New-York, through our intercourse with the Europeans, we follow the London fashions. . . . Our affluence, during the late war [Seven Years' War], introduced a degree of luxury in tables, dress, and furniture, with which we were before unacquainted."[33] Other Americans testified to the suddenness of the change. "I am now forty-four years old," a "Countryman" told the readers of the *Boston Gazette* in 1769, "and to see the difference in the times really astonishes me. I never had, Mr. Printers, believe me, nothing better to go to meeting in, than a pair of sheepskin breeches, a felt hatt, and homespun-made coat with horn buttons." According to the Countryman, his neighbors now demanded "English-made cloth that cost . . . a guinea a yard."[34]

Statistical evidence abundantly supports contemporary impressions. Trade figures compiled for the eighteenth century reveal that England's exports to the mainland colonies increased over 50 percent between 1720 and 1770. The sharpest rise occurred between 1750 and 1770, and the per capita expenditures on British manufactures equaled, perhaps even exceeded, the phenomenal rate of growth of the American population. Cloth of various types was the major item for sale, but judging from analyses of colonial probate records, men and women also rushed to purchase household amenities such as clocks and china that were just then becoming available at prices that most middle-class families could afford.[35]

Increasing opportunities to consume triggered intense print controversies about the character and limits of luxury, the moral implications of credit, the role of personal choice in a liberal society, and the relevance of traditional status hierarchies in a commercial world that encouraged people to fashion protean public identities.[36] Heated debates on these issues represented an initial effort by large numbers of Americans throughout the colonies to gain intellectual control over the marketplace, to make sense of their new experiences, and to bring ideology into line with a commercial system that they found inviting as well as intimidating. These controversies were facets of a more general struggle to reach accommodation with a particular form of preindustrial capitalism. Similar debates occurred in eighteenth-century Scotland, Ireland, and France, for in those nations a flood of manufactured goods also forced ordinary people to rethink the meaning of traditional cultures. The market compelled a response, and even without political revolution, Americans would inevitably have had to adjust to its demands.[37]

This developing commercial mentality was neither premodern nor anticapitalist. Americans welcomed improved living standards, and they would have regarded calls to restore an earlier, largely subsistence economy as sheer lunacy.[38] By the mid-eighteenth century the simple life had come to be associated with a dull, savage existence. James Otis, the Massachusetts lawyer, who may have been the most radical democrat in America before Thomas Paine, dismissed market asceticism out of hand. Writing in the *Boston Gazette* in 1761, Otis observed that "luxury is a very vague & loose term, [and] if by it is meant the importation of many foreign commodities, the more we have the better. . . . I know it is the maxim of some, that the common people in this town and country live too well; however I am of a quite different opinion, I do not think they live half well enough."[39]

During the 1760s, Parliament revised the rules of empire in an effort to reduce a huge national debt. For Americans, the revenue acts came as a shock. They could see no compelling reason to tinker with a commercial system that seemed to be working well enough. To be sure, both sides grumbled from time to time about specific trade problems—smuggling, breaches of the Navigation Acts, inadequate supplies of currency, and the like—but new parliamentary taxes were certainly not the proper solution. As "A Friend to this Country" explained in the *Boston Evening-Post*, "it is an argument in the mouth of almost everyone, 'that the whole profit of our lives center in Britain, & that 'tis folly for them to tax us to gain in themselves what they already secured by a trade, the balance of which is wholly in their favor.' "[40]

The escalating dispute raised fundamental constitutional issues, and while Americans passionately defended their positions on rights and representation, they also worried about their continued participation in the consumer marketplace. In their attempts to comprehend the sudden shift in British policy, they drew as much on their own recent commercial experience as they did on abstract theories of republican governance. The stories they told themselves about prodigal American consumers entertaining British soldiers were a part of this general response. So, too, were decisions about specific forms of political mobilization. The colonists evolved instruments of protest within a mental framework that was largely a product of living in a commercial empire.[41]

The most striking aspect of the Revolutionary boycotts is their utter novelty. No previous popular rebellion had organized itself so centrally around the consumer. That the Americans did so is an additional indication of their modernity. Yet historians have not viewed the boycott movement as problematic: it just happened; it was a reflexive response to taxation without representation.[42] And so it must have seemed to most colonial Americans. While they defended their constitutional goals, fiercely affirming their rights, they seldom bothered to consider the rationale of nonimportation. Shared consumer assumptions and experiences flowed smoothly into the taken-for-granted of resistance. As a Philadelphia broadside declared, "the Stopping the Importation of Goods is the only probable Means of preserving to us and our Posterity . . . Liberty and Security."[43]

The first boycotts of 1765–1766, contested the Stamp Act. Similar protests occurred in 1768–1770 and 1774–1776. Over time, the nonimportation movement grew larger, more successful, and more democratic. Groups of local merchants usually planned and executed the initial efforts, but the driving force behind the various committees and associations gradually passed to the people. Throughout the colonies, extralegal bodies seized control of the boy-

cott movement; as they did so, their members increasingly spoke in the name of a newly constituted American public.

While the boycott was rapidly becoming the distinctive signature of American political protest, colonists began to resituate themselves in an evolving commercial discourse. Their focus shifted away from reciprocity, away from a mutually beneficial exchange with Great Britain, to outright claims of American preeminence. "I think it may justly be said," boldly declared a Philadelphia writer, "that THE FOUNDATION OF THE POWER AND GLORY OF GREAT BRITAIN ARE LAID IN AMERICA."[44]

Although this booster may not have believed that the American tail really wagged the British dog, he and others made a strong case for Britain's economic dependence on American consumers. Thacher, for example, likened commerce within the British empire to "a grand chain" and concluded that Parliament could not remove the American links "without greatly endangering the whole."[45] In 1769, the *South-Carolina Gazette* suggested that consumption of imported goods was really a source of political empowerment. Americans, the editor argued, "know themselves to be the best customers Great-Britain has, for her wares." They did not have to pay the oppressive taxes. Britain's rulers should learn that "every American has an indisputable right to lay his money out [on goods] as sparingly as he pleases." If Americans supported the boycott, then no one could predict what might happen. British merchants might suffer large losses; British workers might find themselves out of work. "Must not such a number of idle hands, in the heart of the country, be extremely alarming?" inquired the South Carolinian.[46]

If riots in the Midlands of England failed to win parliamentary concessions, Americans had another card to play: they could go into manufacturing themselves. This had not been a topic of broad colonial interest before the passage of the Stamp Act, but once it became part of a general commercial conversation, it opened up new creative possibilities. Insistence that Americans were capable of satisfying their own consumer demand—something that they would not achieve for many decades—made it easier for people to imagine genuine economic independence. In any case, there is not much evidence that Revolutionary Americans wanted to roll back the commercial progress of the eighteenth century. If a recalcitrant Parliament forced their hand, explained a letter in the *Boston Chronicle*, "the people of America, must from necessity, if not from motives of interest, set up manufacturers of their own: which must gradually diminish, and in consequence put an end to that mutual beneficial commerce, that has hitherto subsisted between us."[47]

Such plausible, though exaggerated, economic claims fed the boycott movement, continuously strengthening the political resolve of individual consumers. Local associations organized to promote nonimportation and manufacturing represented initial, often tentative steps toward a radical reconstitution of civil society.[48] For in point of fact, Americans of the time were experimenting with new forms of community, founded not on traditional religious affiliations but on shared commercial interests. Only those who insist that preindustrial capitalism inevitably sparked destructive individualism will be surprised by popular attempts to construct interpretive communities around a temporary withdrawal from an Atlantic marketplace.

The truth of the matter is that a liberal market ideology proved capable of sustaining interpretive communities—indeed, of mobilizing ordinary men and women into associations unequivocally dedicated to the common good. As a "Tradesman" writing for the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* in 1770 well understood, civil society in America could develop from sources other than republicanism. He explained that "as we form a considerable, independent, and respectable Body of the People, we certainly have an *equal Right* to enter into Agreements and Resolutions *with others* for the public Good, in a sober, orderly Manner, becoming Freemen and loyal Subjects. . . . [L]et us determine, *for the Good of the Whole*, to strengthen the Hands of the Patriotic Majority, by agreeing not to purchase *British Goods*."[49]

The link between commerce and community energized a pamphlet published in Boston in 1762. The anonymous author of *Debtor and Creditor* launched his argument with an observation to which few American readers would have objected. God's blessing, he observed, is the "Foundation of Happiness to any Community." He moved quickly to less familiar intellectual ground; other factors merited consideration. "The Number, Riches, and Unanimity of the People are the secondary Constituents of this Happiness," and these elements were in turn a function of "Commerce and Government." "Extensive Commerce and an happy Government will soon introduce a flourishing Nation," he noted in the expansive language of the Scottish Enlightenment. The "Commerce" that the writer had in mind strengthened community, stimulated cooperation, and in these respects, "is like our spiritual Race. In the Spiritual Race we labour for Happiness hereafter, and should not only press towards Heaven ourselves, but, likewise, give all possible Assistance to others in their Labours therein." The analogy with commerce was obvious. In this sphere, too, the individual would work for the common good. "In the Race of Commerce," the writer explained, "not only our own private Advantage, but also that of the Body of which we are Members, should be in View." He imagined a powerful self-regulating community in which "it is our Duty to look on every Addition to our Fortune as an additional Obligation on us to assist and forward the Designs of those who, perhaps, are more indigent, tho' equally industrious."[50]

The nonimportation movement—in effect, a communal experiment in applied ideology—exposed a radical egalitarian strand within the commercial discourse. To appreciate this development one must remember that the consumer market of the mid-eighteenth century was open to almost any white person able to pay the price. Generous credit, paper currency, and newspaper advertisements encouraged broad participation.[51] Usually, free producers were also consumers. And on the eve of Revolution, the success of the colonial boy-

cotts depended on all these consumers temporarily deciding to become nonconsumers. The argument for the liberating possibilities of agency in the new Anglo-American marketplace is not intended to mitigate the exploitative and oppressive effects of eighteenth-century capitalism. The development of an Atlantic economy meant that African-American slaves and indentured servants—indeed, unfree people of all sorts—worked very hard, often under extremely harsh conditions. New forms of self-fashioning were built on the suffering of laborers in England and America who made mass consumption possible.

Since in the politicization of private economic choice every free voice counted, it is not surprising that the promoters of the boycott movement tried to legitimate their activities through appeals to the popular will. They presumed to speak for the majority, however defined. Exclusiveness ran counter to the spirit of this powerful mobilizing discourse, and it was a happy moment when a town could report—as did Norwich, Connecticut, in September 1770—that "there was as full a Town Meeting as [was] ever known when the Town voted, almost unanimously, to adhere to their . . . Non-Importation Agreement."[52]

The so-called subscription lists also testify to the egalitarian thrust of eighteenth-century commercial thought. These instruments extended the boycott movement to large numbers of people who normally would not have had a voice in public affairs. The lists presented individual consumers with a formal declaration of purpose, followed by an oath or pledge. The goal of subscription was in part indoctrination. The forms reviewed a growing catalogue of grievances and announced that in the short term only nonimportation could preserve liberty and property. More significant, the ritual of signing gave birth to new collectivities. The ordinary consumer who accepted the logic of the argument and signed the paper thereby volunteered to support a community protest.

Surviving subscriptions resonate with religious as well as contractual language. A Boston agreement drafted in 1767 announced that all signers: "DO promise and engage, to and with each other, that we will encourage the Use and Consumption of all Articles manufactured in any of the British American Colonies, and more especially in this Province; and that we will not . . . purchase . . . Articles from abroad."[53] A 1773 South Carolina subscription sounded remarkably similar to that of Boston. After reviewing a decade of oppressive parliamentary acts, persons collectively known as "We the undersigned" declared that they "DO hereby solemnly promise and agree, each for him or herself, that we will not, either directly or indirectly import, buy or sell, or any way encourage or countenance the importation, buying or selling, any teas. . . . And this we do, because we conceive, that the payment of . . . duties, will be acknowledging a power which the British Parliament hath assumed, and which we deny them to have under our excellent constitution."[54]

The subscription campaign caught the public interest. Numbers provide an index of political success. In 1767, the *Boston Evening-Post* reported that "the Subscription Rolls are daily filling up at the Town Clerk's Office."

Charlestown, Dedham, and Providence had launched efforts of their own, and there, too, the forms were "filling up fast."[55] The publisher of the *South-Carolina Gazette* established a central register where the separate subscriptions could be tabulated, and he urged "Gentlemen in the country possessed of these Forms . . . to transmit the names subscribed thereto, as frequently as possible."[56] The *Maryland Gazette* informed its readers that 840 people had already signed the local lists; many more were expected.[57]

One person's signature seems to have been as desirable as another's. In 1767, Boston town officials specifically urged "Persons of all Ranks" to come forward, and in Annapolis, Maryland, people circulating "our Association-Paper" predicted that colonists of "every Degree" would sign it.[58] The *South-Carolina Gazette* even reported that in New York, "The Sense of the People was taken by Subscription, and near 800 Names got, about 300 of the People without a single Shilling Property."[59]

Even more significant, the subscription movement actively involved women. It was as consumers participating in new interpretive communities that American women first gained a political voice. Although men may have pushed women to the margins of formal protest, so that they had to organize their own subscriptions, women made the most of this opportunity. In 1770, for example, a group of Boston women drew up an agreement "against drinking foreign TEA." One hundred twenty-six "young Ladies" announced: "We the Daughters of those Patriots who have and now do appear for the public Interest . . . do with Pleasure engage with them in denying ourselves the drinking of Foreign Tea, in hopes to frustrate a Plan that tends to deprive the whole Community of their all that is valuable in Life."[60] Another Boston subscription gained the signatures of 300 "Mistresses of their respective families." The next week, 110 more names appeared.[61] In 1774, the women of Charleston, South Carolina, formed an association and, according to the local newspaper, "are subscribing to it very fast."[62]

These innovative efforts to bring people into the boycott remind us that consumer-based actions were inherently more open than were the traditional political ones accessible only to white males with property. Peter Oliver, the Boston loyalist who later penned a caustic history of the Revolution, immediately spotted the radical thrust of the market protest. Recounting what he had witnessed during the late 1760s, Oliver claimed that agitators had circulated "A Subscription Paper . . . Enumerating a great Variety of Articles not to be imported from *England*, which they supposed would muster the Manufacturers in *England* into a national Mob to support their Interests. Among the various prohibited Articles, were *Silks, Velvets, Clocks, Watches, Coaches & Chariots*; & it was highly diverting, to see the names & marks, to the Subscription, of Porters & Washing Women."[63] Oliver ridiculed such activities. How could persons outside politics ever hope to have their opinions on important issues taken seriously? But the poor laborers of Boston—women as well as men—knew what they were doing. Their "names & marks" testify to

their membership in a new volitional community that people of Oliver's status could never comprehend.

Subscription should be seen, therefore, as an instrument through which the colonists explored the limits of democratic participation. Appearing on the margins of mainstream political discourse, the popular lists raised the issue of political exclusivity.[64] Did the men and women who signed the papers, for example, necessarily represent the people? If they did not, then for whom did they speak?

These were the sorts of questions that "Cato" addressed in the *Pennsylvania Chronicle* in 1770. For him, the colonial political crisis was too important to be left in the hands of a minority pretending to speak for a majority. "This is a point," he wrote, "in which every freeholder of this province is highly interested, and in which every one of them has a right to a voice." He was irritated by inflated claims to political authority advanced by a select group of local "subscribers to the non-importation." These people assumed "an exclusive right to determine this matter." If they did possess such a privilege, Cato warned, "it follows that the subscribers to the non-importation have the sole right to determine a question of liberty, that most nearly concerns every freeman of this province. For if it is the only mode of opposition of any force, and those two or three hundred subscribers have a right to make the agreement void whenever they please, it is a plain inference that they have a right to decide on a point which affects the liberties of the people of this province." Cato wanted to open up the process. Votes, not signatures, reflected the popular will, and he trusted that "every freeman, whether he be farmer, merchant, or mechanick, will insist upon his right to a vote in so important an affair."[65]

The question of political inclusion flared dramatically in New York on the eve of Independence, when a small group of wealthy merchants seized control of the local boycott. These men did not want to consult about politics or trade with people whom they regarded as social inferiors. Their expressions of public arrogance mocked new popular notions of an open, egalitarian commercial community. In a 1774 broadside, *To the Free and Loyal Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New-York*, "Brutus" spoke out for the political rights of ordinary men and women. "Nothing can be more flagrantly wrong," Brutus declared, "than the Assertion of some of our mercantile Dons, that the Mechanics have no Right to give their Sentiments about the Importation of *British* Commodities." The great merchants of New York failed to appreciate that ordinary colonists interpreted political events within ideological frameworks every bit as complex and compelling as those of their more privileged contemporaries. "For who," asked Brutus in the distinct language of eighteenth-century commercial capitalism, "is the Member of Community, that is absolutely independent of the rest? Or what particular Class among us, has an exclusive Right to decide a Question of general Concern?"[66]

The key element of the developing argument was the rejection of *exclusiveness*. From Brutus's perspective, the common good was a public responsibility.

There was no celebration here—as one finds in the republican literature of that time—of the man of wealth and leisure, the independent property holder who rises above grubby commercial interests and contemplates with marvelous objectivity the general welfare. Legal standing did not define citizenship. After all, Brutus insisted, "We are all equally free." With equal freedom went equal responsibility. During the boycott movement, "Every Man saw, that between an Importation of Goods . . . and the Sacrifice of our inestimable Rights as Englishmen, there was no Medium." Political resistance within the consumer marketplace had to be open to people of all "Ranks." Otherwise it was an empty promise. Ignore those merchants, urged Brutus, "who dare to affirm . . . that the Mechanics, or in other Words, the Majority of the Community, are not to be consulted on a Point of universal, of dreadful Concern."[67]

During the summer of 1770, the New York boycott movement hotly debated the issue of democratic participation. After Parliament repealed the Townshend duties, thus dropping all taxes except that on tea, the major import merchants of the city agitated to renew trade as soon as possible. Delays in reestablishing English contacts might give competitors in Philadelphia or Boston a huge advantage. But however much the New York merchants wanted to turn a profit, they could not bring themselves unilaterally to break the local nonimportation agreement. What they needed at this decisive moment was authorization from the people, and this they determined to obtain through a public opinion poll of consumers—perhaps the first such effort conducted in America. If they could demonstrate with quantitative evidence that the public wanted to rescind the boycott, the merchants knew they would be safe. The tactic worked. Polling papers carried though the city wards revealed that a majority of the people of New York supported a greatly modified boycott that allowed the merchants to import virtually everything except British tea.

The radical leaders of New York found themselves confronted with a quandary that has haunted democratic theorists since ancient Greece. How does a minority respond when it is certain that the majority has made a mistake? The obvious ploy was to declare the poll a fraud, and over several months the supporters of a continued total boycott did just that. They hammered away at the merchants' sham democracy. The author of "A Protest" in the *New-York Mercury* argued that the reported numbers were not credible. "It appears from the Ward-Lists," the writer charged, "that only 794 Persons in this populous City, including all Ranks, and both Sexes; declared for the Affirmative of the Questions."[68] It is particularly significant for my argument that this writer assumed that a true canvass of colonial consumers—even one involving complex political issues—required inclusiveness, full participation by women as well as men, the poor as well as the rich.

"A Son of Liberty" also challenged the merchants' democratic claims. In the *New-York Advertiser* he ridiculed the assertion that "*a majority appeared for importation.*" The merchants had not even approached most of the men and women who composed the consumer public. A Son of Liberty observed that

"there were not quite twelve hundred persons who signed for importing (notwithstanding the diligence and indefatigable industry of those who went about for the purpose), and I am well assured that they do not amount to above one third of the inhabitants of this city (not to mention the counties, who have an undoubted right to give their voices upon this very interesting and important subject)."[69]

During this contest, "A Citizen" produced a pointed defense of open, egalitarian procedures in a politicized consumer marketplace. To appreciate fully his contribution to the liberal discourse, we must remember that A Citizen was discussing civic responsibility within a commercial public sphere of quite recent invention—in other words, within a popular political arena that was just beginning to express itself apart from traditional institutions of governance. The merchant canvass of New York brought theory into contact with events, helping ordinary men and women better to appreciate the interdependence of liberty and commerce. "Will it excuse this City to the rest of the World," A Citizen asked, "if it should appear that a Majority of the Inhabitants concurred in desiring to break thro' the [nonimportation] Agreement?" He argued through interrogation, with hard questions leading to harder ones until the logic of the performance seemed irrefutable. "Supposing there is a Majority, (which is not admitted)," he inquired of the merchants,

> was it fairly and properly obtained? Was that Opinion given and subscribed with due Deliberation, Knowledge and Freedom? Or were not a very considerable Number of the Subscribers, influenced and determined, by your Persuasions and Representations, or by submitting their Opinions to be guided by your Advice and superior Judgment? Can opinions so given and obtained, properly be called the Voice of the People, or given a Sanction to the Dissolution of an Agreement of such immense Weight and Importance?[70]

The breaking of the New York boycott in 1770 came to a curious conclusion that prefigured America's eventual separation from Great Britain. As in the larger imperial contest, the failure of local authorities to expand representation, to listen to a newly empowered "Voice of the People," ended in violence. When "Gentlemen" sought to rationalize the resumption of trade, they were confronted by a group of forty or fifty people who gathered at the "house of Mr. Jasper Drake, inn-keeper." The *New-York Mercury* reported that "they erected a flag, as a signal of the place appointed for their rendezvous, and after carousing and drinking very plentifully . . . they sallied out in the evening, . . . carrying with them music, colours and staffs, upon which were labels fixed with the inscription of, *Liberty and Non-importation.*" The mob marched through the streets "crying out, *No Importation.*" The leading merchants and their allies could not endure the provocation. The popular protest ended when "a Number of principal People . . . applied to an Alderman to go and stop those People, and take the Flag from them, upon which the Alderman headed a considerable Number with Canes and Clubs, and attempted to take their Colours, upon which a Scuffle ensued, and a few got hurt."[71]

Americans of different backgrounds and regions regularly insisted that without "virtue" their cause had no chance whatsoever. Virtue was the social glue that kept the newly formed liberal communities from fragmenting. Colonists who signed the subscriptions, supported the boycotts of British goods and marched the streets carrying banners proclaiming "Liberty and Non-Importation" assumed that their protests mobilized virtuous people.

Eighteenth-century virtue claims two distinguished genealogies. J. G. A Pocock traces it back to the Florentine world of Niccolò Machiavelli, arguing that the virtuous citizen was a man whose landed wealth enabled him to rise above the corrupting influences of commerce and thereby preserve the purity of republican government.[72] Such historians as Edmund S. Morgan associate eighteenth-century virtue with the so-called Protestant Ethic.[73] While both positions possess merit—indeed, political discourse on the eve of the Revolution seems to have drawn on both traditions—the virtue that resonated through the entire boycott movement was closer to what T. A. Horne provocatively labels "bourgeois virtue."[74]

When advocates of nonimportation spoke of virtue, they referred primarily to a personal attribute. A virtuous man or woman was one who voluntarily exercised self-restraint in the consumer marketplace. Such behavior represented a sacrifice. No one denied the desirability of the new manufactured items. But however appealing the British imports were, the virtuous person exercised self-control for the common good. It was in this spirit that the delegates to a New Haven boycott meeting in 1770 declared that "the non-importation agreement come into by the colonies in general, and by this in particular . . . were founded on free, virtuous, peaceable, manly and patriotic principles."[75] In *A Sermon on Tea*, published in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, an anonymous author argued that "if we have virtue enough to disuse every commodity on which they lay a tax," Parliament will soon tire "of cultivating the barren tree that produces no fruit."[76] And "Juris Prudens," writing in the *New-York Mercury*, urged all Americans: "let us import no Goods whatsoever from Great-Britain, and we shall be crowned Virtuous; we shall be free forever."[77]

This rather straightforward sense of market virtue that developed throughout the colonies before Independence had important implications for political mobilization. Anyone who regularly purchased manufactured goods from Great Britain could become virtuous simply by controlling consumption. The concept thus linked everyday experience and behavior with a broadly shared sense of the common good. What one did with one's money mattered very much to the entire community, for in this highly charged atmosphere, economic self-indulgence became a glaring public vice. Unlike Cincinnatus, the bourgeois patriot did not reach immediately for the sword. He first examined the household budget. "I laugh at a man that talks of facing cannon and red coats," explained a Boston writer in 1767, "who cannot conquer his foppish

empty notions of grandeur. What is true grandeur, but a noble patriotic resolution of sacrificing every other consideration to the Love of our Country! And can he be a true lover of his country . . . who would sooner be seen strutting about the streets, clad in foreign fripperies, than to be nobly independent in russet grey!"[78] The *Boston Gazette* translated market virtue into a direct call to action: "Save your Money and you save your Country."[79] Wherever they lived, bourgeois Americans would instruct their "children . . . to practise verture and industry with good economy, which will naturally supply the individuals . . . with abundance, and enable them to improve in all kinds of learning and science and render them useful, respectable and independent."[80]

For all their insistence on voluntarism, the proponents of nonimportation developed a potentially coercive understanding of political obligation. To be sure, the individual consumer could exercise his or her free will and ignore appeals from those who supported the boycotts. But one thereby surrendered one's right to blame others for the destruction of political liberty. Membership in a commercial society implied responsibilities to the larger collectivity. As "Pro Aris Et Focis" wrote in 1769, "Our merchants have done worthily; but it is the body of the people, who must under GOD, finally save us. For while there are debauched consumers of foreign luxuries, there always will be, in this depraved state, mercenary creatures enough to import the *bane of their country*." The writer refused to let the vicious consumer sit complacently. Victory over Parliament required "the virtue of the people," all of them. "Nay, my fellowmen," warned Pro Aris, painting a vivid commercial portrait:

> the servile emissaries and wicked minions of your inveterate foes have insultingly prophesied and blazed it abroad . . . that the mercantile endeavours would prove utterly abortive;—that no dependence was to be had upon the virtuous stability of the generality among us;—that the common people, or, as they distainfully term it, the herd, were sunk in luxury, intemperate and degrading vice;—and that hence, any *commercial plan* of political salvation would prove, only, an amusing dream—a transitory phantom.[81]

Within the framework of bourgeois virtue, organizers of local boycotts and subscription drives created a new political abstraction that would be of great significance in the coming of the American Revolution. The nonimportation movement constructed a "public," an imagined body of people who demonstrated virtue by renouncing British goods and thus earned the right to judge the behavior of the less virtuous. In the American colonies this may have been as close as people came to creating what Jürgen Habermas calls the "public sphere." For him, this imagined space was an arena in which intellectuals—writers who published largely in the pages of the newly founded urban journals of the eighteenth century—criticized the absolutist state. These independent critics addressed a growing audience of literate men and women in the name of the public. The public—an abstract body that never actually assembled—was composed of reasonable persons, individuals open to liberal argument and hostile to the arbitrary exercise of power.[82]

Despite charges of political oppression, Americans never really confronted absolutist authority—at any rate, nothing on the order of the ancien régime in France and Germany. British colonial government was notoriously weak. In this social and political setting American authors defined what was essentially a commercial public sphere. In newspapers and pamphlets, popular writers assumed separate, though entirely complementary voices. They spoke *for* as well as *to* a reasoning and virtuous public. The bourgeois audience invented by the commercial press was especially skilled at spotting fraudulent patriots. As a South Carolinian explained in 1770, "the non-Importers had long been endeavouring to discover who were true, and who Traitors to the Cause of American liberty, which nothing could so effectually discover as the present Measure: But, since the Sons of Liberty have got all their Names, and every Man who before wore a Mask, now appears with an uncovered Face, they begin to be not a little uneasy."[83]

When vicious consumers were caught with British manufactured goods, it was bourgeois virtue that held them accountable, often demanding full confession and restitution. A New York City merchant, Alexander Robertson, who violated the boycott, had to publish a broadside addressed specifically "To the PUBLICK." A chastened Robertson stated, "As I have justly incurred the Resentment of my Fellow Citizens, from my Behaviour, as set forth in an Advertisement, *of great Importance to the Publick*, assuring them that I am truly sorry for the Part I have acted; declared and promise that I never will again attempt an Act contrary to the true Interest and Resolutions of the People zealous in the Cause of *Virtue* and *Liberty*." He closed with a pathetic appeal to "the Publick in general to believe me."[84]

Such local conversations—however painful for the likes of Robertson—encouraged virtuous consumers to imagine even larger collectivities. The process was slow, halting, punctuated by self-doubt and mutual recrimination, but during the run-up to Independence, Americans living in scattered communities managed to reach out convincingly to distant strangers, to persons not directly known but assumed to share in the development of a new consumer marketplace. The initial boycott experiments of the 1760s persuaded the colonists of the need for broader, more effective alliances. They learned about each other through the weekly newspapers that were themselves both a product and a voice of expanding commerce.[85]

Often the imaginative spark arrived in the form of an invitation. The committees and associations—the local groups that presumed to speak for the public—received requests from other committees appealing for support. The "Gentlemen, Friends, and Fellow Citizens" of Philadelphia were called together in 1768 "to give your Advice and Opinion, what answer shall be returned to our Brethren of *Boston & N. York*, who desire to know whether we will unite with them, in stopping the Importation of Goods from *Great-*

Britain."[86] By voting in the affirmative, the nonimporters of Philadelphia expressed their trust in those about whom they knew very little. Soon after the New Englanders learned that Philadelphians and southerners had joined the boycott, the *Boston Gazette* announced excitedly, "We become one DETERMINED PEOPLE: to pursue Industry and Oeconomy, and encourage our own Manufactures."[87]

Even as they condemned the perfidy of fallen boycotters living in other parts of America, colonists measured their own performance against that of distant strangers. In other words, bitter complaints and charges of betrayal were aspects of an imaginative process that was slowly forcing the colonists to think of themselves as Americans. The broader comparative perspective was apparent when the nonimporters of Philadelphia announced that almost no one else in America could equal their own exemplary virtue in the consumer marketplace. A 1770 broadside published in the City of Brotherly Love seemed intent on demonstrating the existence of a kind of negative union:

> Do not the Importers in that province [Maryland] expect the same quantities this Fall? Have not the Eastern-Governments most shamefully imported, notwithstanding their solemn declarations and resolves? Does not the conduct of the Bostonians sufficiently prove their perfidy, by re-shipping trunks and cases filled with rubbish, after gutting them of their British contents? In what manner have New-York and Rhode-Island behaved? Has Virginia ever entered into any agreement? Are not all the ports to the southward of South-Carolina open?[88]

Although defections angered the champions of liberty and nonimportation, we can appreciate that even in moments of extreme disappointment strangers scattered throughout the provinces had begun to situate themselves within a larger commercial and political union. To describe this mental process as incipient nationalism would suggest that we are anticipating independence long before the colonists did. The claim is rather that even when Americans most feared political fragmentation, they imagined themselves within a commercial and liberal discourse capable of sustaining self-conscious nationalism.[89]

New York's desertion in 1770 was such a moment. Residents of other colonies took the stunning decision to resume trade with Britain as a gratuitous insult to the "cause of American Liberty." A powerful continental association of virtuous consumers had been within reach, but at the instant of patriotic triumph the New York traders compromised "the union of the colonies."[90] Betrayal required explanation. "Why should [New Yorkers]," a South Carolinian asked, "endeavour to weaken that Phalanx which they were so eager to form?" Had they forgotten that patriotism involved acting "in mutual concert, for the good of the whole?" The New Yorkers had shown themselves lacking the necessary bourgeois virtue. According to one colonial newspaper, "The Common Cause of America [has] been most basely and traitorously deserted by a Number of Merchants, Traders, and others, of the City of New-York . . . at a Time, when the Eyes of all the Colonies were more particularly fixed upon them: when their Virtue, to resist every Temptation, and to defeat every attempt of a prevailing Faction, was, relied on." The New Yorkers had certainly demonstrated themselves unworthy of alliance with "the virtuous people of PENNSYLVANIA [who had] received a cordial invitation to import, and . . . treated it just as it deserved."[91]

The collapse of nonimportation in 1770 left Americans in a sour mood. As they assessed the failure to wean themselves from British goods, they momentarily doubted their moral ability to create a truly virtuous state. Their self-deprecatory statements during this period seem to echo the anticommercial rhetoric of republican discourse, persuading some modern historians, at least, that preindustrial capitalism and the public good were in fact incompatible. What, inquired one newspaper essay, can the colonists learn from recent defection from the boycott?

That self-interest is irresistible.

That liberty and public good can stand no chance among men when self-interest is its rival.

That self-interest recommends the most underhanded schemes to every man's good conscience.[92]

"Cato" of New York agreed. "The late Conduct of the Merchants of New-York, Philadelphia, &c.," he explained, "sufficiently proves, that no Dependence is to be had upon any Combination or Agreement that can be entered into for the public Good, however well calculated to answer that End—*if it interfers with the private immediate Interest of Individuals.*"[93]

Such statements—and they were common—should not be interpreted as evidence that Americans rejected either preindustrial capitalism or the consumer marketplace. The renunciation of excess in the market made sense only in a society that took consumption for granted. The challenge for Revolutionary Americans was to negotiate between extreme self-indulgence and primitive simplicity. It involved mediation, not repudiation. As Max Weber explained in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, capitalism is not synonymous with greed. In fact, "capitalism *may* even be identical with the restraint, or at least a rational tempering, of this irrational impulse."[94]

In any case, the cries of the pessimists were unfounded. They misread the commercial changes sweeping American society and therefore underestimated the capacity of men and women to translate individual market behavior into mass political protest. The delegates to the First Continental Congress did not make that mistake. They appreciated the centrality of consumption in mobilizing persons of different regions and social backgrounds. On October 20, 1774, Congress authorized the Association, a broad network of local elected committees entrusted with the total enforcement of nonimportation. These bodies became in effect, "committees of public safety." At the moment of decision about ultimate political loyalties, the colonists' friends and neighbors were busy monitoring commercial behavior and enforcing bourgeois virtue in the

name of the common good.[95] "We need only fight our Own selves," announced "A Carolinian" in 1774, "suppress for a while our Luxury and Corruption, and wield the Arms of Self Denial in our own Houses, to obtain the Victory. . . . And the Man who would not refuse himself a fine Coat, to save his Country, deserves to be hanged."[96]

We have traced a complex flow of ideas into actions, of shared assumptions about a commercial empire into forms of political resistance. This was most certainly not the only route from experience and ideology to revolution. Other, more celebrated political discourses helped Americans make sense out of rapidly changing social and economic conditions within the British empire. In this particular exploration, however, we have reconstituted a frame of reference that defined itself around participation in a newly established consumer marketplace. This focus powerfully illuminates how the great shaping forces of history—commercial capitalism, for example—impinged on the lives of ordinary men and women, compelling them to reimagine themselves within a larger polity. For consuming Americans, the mental process had unintended results: the creation of political instruments open to persons of "all ranks," the development of a concept of virtue that included any man or woman capable of economic self-restraint, and the formation of new interpretive communities based on shared, secular interests.

Notes

1. Gordon S. Wood, "Conspiracy and the Paranoid Style: Causality and Deceit in the Eighteenth Century," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., XXXIX (1982), 401–441; Bernard Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets of the American Revolution, 1750–1776*, 1 (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), 20–90; James H. Hutson, "The Origins of The Paranoid Style in American Politics': Public Jealousy from the Age of Walpole to the Age of Jackson," in David D. Hall, John M. Murrin, and Thad W. Tate, eds., *Saints and Revolutionaries: Essays on Early American History* (New York, 1984), 332–372.

2. Hopkins, *The Rights of Colonies Examined* (Providence, R. I., 1765), in Bailyn, ed., *Pamphlets*, 512.

3. *Boston News-Letter*, Sept. 2, 1762.

4. This essay renders problematic accepted chronologies of the American Revolution, especially the temporal relation between causes and effects. I argue that colonists were exploring the radical political dimensions of a commercial discourse before they achieved Independence from Great Britain. Implicit in that interpretative move is the suggestion that the Revolution in itself cannot fully explain late 18th-century radical thought. For a masterly, although quite different, account of these materials see Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992).

5. *Considerations Upon the Act of Parliament* . . . (Boston, 1764), 22. In his *The History of the Late Province of New-York*, 2 vols. (New York, 1829), I, 277, originally drafted in 1762, William Smith confirmed what British military officers had suspected: "Every man of industry and integrity has it in his power to live well, and many are the instances of persons who came here distressed by their poverty, who now enjoy easy and plentiful fortunes."

6. [Dickinson], *The Late Regulations, Respecting the British Colonies on the Continent of America Considered* (Philadelphia, 1765), 23–24. The scholarly Dickinson footnoted his version of the narrative of commerce, citing Malachy Postlethwayt, *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* (London, 1766), who claimed that since Sir Walter Ralegh's time, English writers "have found an interest in *misrepresenting* or lessening the value" of the American colonies. During the 18th century, however, hostile commentators began alleging the Americans "were not *useful enough* to their mother country; that while we were loaded with taxes, they were absolutely free; that the *planters* lived like *princes*, while the inhabitants of England labored hard for a tolerable subsistence" ([Dickinson], *Late Regulations*, 23). To this, he added that especially heavy duties on Chesapeake tobacco in Great Britain were part of a "design to bring down the pride of these PRINCELY PLANTERS" (ibid., 23–24).

7. *The Power and Grandeur of Great-Britain, Founded on the Liberty of the Colonies, and the Mischiefs Attending the Taxing of Them* (New York, 1768), 5.

8. Ibid., 7–8.

9. [William Hicks], *The Nature and Extent of Parliamentary Power Considered* . . . (Philadelphia, 1768), 18–20.

10. *New-London Gazette*, Jan. 20, 1769.

11. *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 2, 1769.

12. *Connecticut Journal, and New-Haven Post-Boy*, Oct. 11, 1771.

13. Ebenezer Baldwin, "An Appendix, Stating the Heavy Grievances the Colonies Labour Under . . . ," in Samuel Sherwood, *A Sermon, Containing Scriptural Instructions to Civil Rulers* (New Haven, Conn., 1774), 50–51.

14. *New-York Gazette and Weekly Mercury*, July 4, 1774, repr. from *Pennsylvania Packet*, June 27, 1774.

15. David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution*, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, Ind., 1990; orig. pub. Philadelphia, 1789), I, 51.

16. Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), vi.

17. J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), and "Virtue and Commerce in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, III (1972–1973), 119–134; Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic*, 1776–1787 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1969). For a useful review of the historiographic debate see "*The Creation of the American Republic, 1776–1787*: A Symposium of Views and Reviews," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XLIV (1987), 549–640.

18. *Cato's Letters: or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and religious* . . . , 4 vols. (London, 1720), a collection of essays by the English writers Trenchard and Gordon, has become a virtual proof text for interpretations of early 18th-century American political ideology. Recent claims about the authors' anticommercial bias and their high republicanism cannot survive a close reading of their work. Trenchard and Gordon owed much to the insights of John Locke and, like many other political commentators of this period, were troubled by the excesses of commercial capitalism, not by capitalism itself. For an excellent discussion of a problematic republican canon see Ronald Hamowy, "Cato's Letters, John Locke, and the Republican Paradigm," *History of Political Thought*, XI (1990), 273–294. For the enthusiastic reception of "Cato's Letters" in America see Bailyn, *The Origins of American Politics* (New York, 1968), 3–58.

19. Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York, 1984), and *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); Kramnick, *Republicanism and Bourgeois Radicalism: Political Ideology in Late Eighteenth-Century England and America* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1990). The most thoughtful review of pre-Revolutionary political thought remains James T. Kloppenberg, "The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse," *Journal of American History*, LXXIV (1987), 9–33. Also useful are Pauline Maier, "The Transforming Impact of Independence, Reaffirmed: 1776 and the Defi-

nition of American Social Structure," in James A. Henretta et al., eds., *The Transformation of Early American History: Society, Authority, and Ideology* (New York, 1991), 194–217, and James Oakes, "From Republicanism to Liberalism: Ideological Change and the Crisis of the Old South," *American Quarterly*, XXXVII (1985), 568–569. For a splendid statement that may serve to end the increasingly arid debate over republicanism in American thought see Daniel T. Rodgers, "Republicanism: The Career of a Concept," *JAH*, LXXIX (1992), 11–38.

20. In an effort to reconstruct a popular political ideology on the eve of the Revolution, I have examined all the major colonial newspapers of this period as well as the familiar pamphlet and sermonic literature. I do not suggest that what lawyers, clergymen, and planters had to say about theories of governance was not important. Obviously, such figures played central roles in defining the continuing public debate. The weekly newspapers, however, reached a wider audience, and if they failed to entertain and enlighten their readers, they went out of business. The speed with which ideas were taken up, discussed, and frequently rejected in these journals was much faster than that of the pamphlets.

21. On the profound, although generally overlooked, philosophic implications of such interpretive fragmentation see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (London, 1989), 113–118, and "Class Relations, Social Justice, and the Politics of Difference," paper delivered to Wissenschaftliche Jahrestagung der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Amerikastudien, Berlin, Germany, June 12, 1992.

22. Mayhew, *The Snare Broken. A Thanksgiving-Discourse* . . . (Boston, 1766), in Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, 1730–1805* (Indianapolis, Ind., 1991), 233–264, quotations on 239.

23. See Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Background of the American Revolution: Four Essays in American Colonial History* (New Haven, Conn., 1924), Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Polities of the British Empire and the United States, 1607–1788* (Athens, Ga., 1986), and Richard L. Bushman, *King and People in Provincial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1985).

24. *Power and Grandeur of Great-Britain*, 3–4.

25. P. J. Marshall, "The British Empire in the Age of the American Revolution: Problems of Interpretation," in William M. Fowler, Jr., and Wallace Coyle, eds., *The American Revolution: Changing Perspectives* (Boston, 1979), 195–198.

26. *Conn. Journal*, Feb. 2, 1770. See also *Considerations upon the Act of Parliament* . . . (Boston, 1764).

27. *Boston Evening-Post*, Jan. 2, 1764. On this theme see *New-London Gaz.*, Dec. 16, 1763, *Boston News-Letter*, Sept. 2, 1762, and *Observations on Several Acts of Parliament* (Boston, 1769).

28. *Four Dissertations, on the Reciprocal Advantages of a Perpetual Union Between Great-Britain and Her American Colonies. Written for Mr. Sargent's Prize-Metal* (Philadelphia, 1766), 55–71.

29. *The Proceedings of the [Non-Importation Association] Committee Appointed to Examine into the Importation of Goods . . . from London* (Annapolis, Md., 1770), i–iii.

30. [Thomas Fitch], *Reasons Why The British Colonies in America, Should Not be Charged with Internal Taxes* . . . (New Haven, Conn., 1764), 21.

31. [Oxenbridge Thacher], *The Sentiments of a British American* (Boston, 1764), 13.

32. The most valuable summary of these mid-century economic developments is Neil McKendrick et al., *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (Bloomington, Ind., 1985). See also Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1982), 201–268, Paul Langford, *A Police and Commercial People: England, 1727–1783* (Oxford, 1989), 59–122, 461–518, and Carole Shammas, "How Self-Sufficient Was Early America?" *J. Interdis. Hist.*, XIII (1982–1983), 247–272. I have discussed these topics in greater detail in "An Empire of Goods: The Anglicization of Colonial America, 1690–1776," *Journal of British Studies*, XXV (1986), 467–499, and in "The Meaning of 'Likeness': Portrait Painting in an Eighteenth-Century Consumer Society," *Word and Image*, VI (1990), 325–350.

33. Smith, *History of . . . New-York*, 277. See also "Autobiography of John Barnard," Massachusetts Historical Society, III, *Collections*, V (1986), 239–240, *Boston Evening-Post*, June 11, 1753, and *Power and Grandeur*, 5–6.

34. *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, Aug. 28, 1769.

35. Shammas, *The Pre-Industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford, 1990); Lorena S. Walsh et al., "Toward a History of the Standard of Living in British North America," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XLV (1988), 116–170; Jacob M. Price, "What Did Merchants Do? Reflections on British Overseas Trade, 1660–1790," *Journal of Economic History*, XLIX (1989), 267–284; Ralph Davis, "English Foreign Trade, 1700–1774," *Economic History Review*, 2d Ser., XV (1962), 285–303; and John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1985), 277–294.

36. T. H. Breen, "The Meaning of Things: Consumption and Ideology in the Eighteenth Century," in John Brewer and Roy Porter, eds., *Consumption, Culture, and Society* (London, 1993), 249–259.

37. For the comparative dimensions of 18th-century commercial capitalism see the many excellent essays in Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, eds., *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1983). See also R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600–1972* (London, 1988), 167–225; Declan O'Donovan, "The Money Bill Dispute of 1753," in Thomas Bartlett and D. W. Hayton, eds., *Penal Era and Golden Age: Essays in Irish History, 1690–1800* (Belfast, 1979), 55–87; Colin Jones, "Bourgeois Revolution Revivified: 1789 and Social Change," in Colin Lucas, ed., *Rewriting the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1991), 78–96; and Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York, 1987).

38. Shammas, "How Self-Sufficient Was Early America?" 247–272; McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 277–294; James T. Lemon, "Spatial Order: Households in Local Communities and Regions," in Jack P. Greene and J. R. Pole, eds., *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era* (Baltimore, 1984), 86–122.

39. *Boston Gaz.*, Dec. 28, 1761. Unlike most of his contemporaries, Otis signed his newspaper essays. The best biography of Otis is John J. Waters, Jr., *The Otis Family in Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1968). There is a great need for a careful reexamination of Otis's political thought.

40. *Boston Evening-Post*, Dec. 7, 1767. See also ibid., Dec. 28, 1767.

41. Breen, " 'Baubles of Britain,' " 73–104.

42. Arthur Meier Schlesinger, *The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763–1776*, Columbia University Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, LXXVII, No. 182 (New York, 1918); Andrews, "The Boston Merchants and the Non-Importation Movement," *Transactions of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts*, XIX (1916–1917), 182–191; Edmund S. Morgan, "The Puritan Ethic and the American Revolution," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., XXIV (1967), 3–43; J. E. Crowley, *This Sheba, Self: The Conceptualization of Economic Life in Eighteenth-Century America* (Baltimore, 1974), 125–146; Gary B. Nash, *The Urban Crucible: Social Change, Political Consciousness, and the Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 321–378.

43. *The Following Address Was Read At A Meeting of the Merchants . . . , 25th of April, 1768* (Philadelphia, 1768).

44. [Dickinson], *Late Regulations*, 31.

45. [Thacher], *Sentiments of a British American*, 15.

46. *South-Carolina Gazette*, Oct. 26, 1769.

47. *Boston Chronicle*, Feb. 13, 1769.

48. See Judith N. Shklar, *American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991).

49. *Pennsylvania Chronicle, and Universal Advertiser*, May 14, 1770.

50. *Debtor and Creditor, or A Discourse on the Following Words, Have Patience With Me, and I Will Pay Thee All* (Boston, 1762).
51. Breen, "An Empire of Goods," 467–499.
52. *New-York Mercury*; Sept. 10, 1770.
53. *Boston Evening-Post*; Nov. 2, 1767.
54. *S.-C. Gaz.*, Dec. 6, 1773.
55. *Boston Evening-Post*, Nov. 9, 23, Dec. 7, 1767.
56. *S.-C. Gaz.*, June 29, 1769.
57. *Maryland Gazette*, May 11, 1769. See Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York, 1976), 49–52.
58. *Boston Gaz.*, Nov. 30, 1767; [Broadside], *Annapolis, May 23, 1769* (Annapolis, Md., 1769).
59. *S.-C. Gaz.*, [Supplement], Aug. 20, 1770.
60. *Boston Gaz.*, Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26, 26 [Supplement], 1770.
61. Ibid., Feb. 12, 1770.
62. *S.-C. Gaz.*, Sept. 19, 1774. For a misogynist critique of these organizing efforts see *Boston Evening-Post*, Feb. 7, 1774. See also Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1980), 37–41; Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, " 'Daughters of Liberty': Religious Women in Revolutionary New England," in Ronald Hoffman and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Women in the Age of the American Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va., 1989), 211–243; Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1988); and Breen, "Liberalism and Luxury: Eighteenth-Century American Women in a Revolutionary Political Discourse," Society of the Cincinnati Annual Lecture, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Apr. 20, 1992.
63. *Peter Oliver's Origin and Progress of the American Revolution: A Tory View*, ed. Douglass Adair and John A. Schutz (Stanford, Calif., 1961), 61.
64. On the "contagion of liberty" see Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, 230–319.
65. *Pa. Chronicle*, June 4, 1770.
66. [Broadside], *To the Free and Loyal Inhabitants of the City and Colony of New-York* . . . (New York, 1774).
67. Ibid.
68. *N.-Y. Mercury*, Aug. 6, 1770. See also *New York or General Journal; The Advertiser*, Aug. 2, 1770.
69. *N. Y. or General Journal*, June 21, 1770.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid., Sept. 27, 1770; *N.-Y. Mercury*, July 23, 1770; *New-London Gaz.*, July 20, 1770.
72. Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 462–552.
73. Morgan, "Puritan Ethic," 3–43.
74. T. A. Horne, "Bourgeois Virtue, Property, and Moral Philosophy in America, 1750–1800," *Hist. Pol. Thought*, IV (1983), 317–340. See also Jeffrey C. Isaac, "Republicanism Vs. Liberalism? A Reconsideration," ibid., XI (1988), 349–377, and Kramnick, *Republicanism*, 260–288.
75. *N.-Y. Mercury*, Sept. 24, 1770.
76. (Lancaster, Pa., 1774).
77. *N.-Y. Mercury*, Aug. 6, 1770. See also *New-London Gaz.*, Nov. 2, 1770.
78. *Boston Evening-Post*, Dec. 7, 1767.
79. *Boston Gaz.*, Nov. 9, 1767.
80. *Conn. Journal*, Oct. 11, 1771.
81. *Boston Gaz.*, Sept. 11, 1769.
82. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, Mass., 1989), 1–88. See also Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).
83. *S.-C. Gaz.*, [supplement], Aug. 20, 1770.
84. Robertson, *New-York, June 23, 1769. To the publick* (New York, 1769).
85. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983), 80–148.
86. *The Following Address Was Read at a Meeting of the Merchants.*
87. *Boston Gaz.*, Nov. 23, 1767.
88. [Broadside], *To the Freeholders, Merchants, Tradesmen and Farmers, of the City and County of Philad.* (Philadelphia, 1770).
89. Breen, "A Ploughjogger's Complaint: Ideology and Nationalism in Anglo-American Context, 1740–1790," paper given at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, Washington, D. C., Dec. 29, 1992. See also Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992), 397–484; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707–1837* (New Haven, Conn., 1992); and Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740–1830* (New York, 1987).
90. *New-York Journal; or the General Advertiser*, Sept. 20, 1770.
91. *N.-Y. Mercury*, Sept. 24, 1770; *S.-C. Gaz.*, Aug. 14, 1770; *Connecticut Courant*, Sept. 10, 1770; *New-London Gaz.*, Oct. 5, 1770; *Massachusetts Spy*, Sept. 29, 1770.
92. *Conn. Courant*, Jan. 8, 1771.
93. *N.-Y. Journal*, Sept. 27, 1770; *New-London Gaz.*, Oct. 5, 1770.
94. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York, 1958), 17. See also Ignatieff, *The Needs of Strangers* (London, 1984), esp. chaps. 3, 4; Isaac, "Republicanism vs. Liberalism," 349–377; David E. Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York, 1985); and John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollet* (Baltimore, 1977).
95. Breen, " 'Baubles of Britain'," 97–104; Jerrilyn Greene Marston, *King and Congress: The Transfer of Political Legitimacy, 1774–1776* (Princeton, N. J., 1987); David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: The American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (Charlottesville, Va., 1974).
96. *S.-C. Gaz.*, June 27, 1774.