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Classical Pseudonyms as Rhetorical Devices in Response to Jay's Treaty

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Presented to the faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Texas at El Paso in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master Of Arts in History.

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CLASSICAL PSEUDONYMS AS RHETORICAL DEVICES IN RESPONSE TO

JAY'S TREATY

NANCY ANNE HILL, BA, AMLS

EXTENDED PAPER

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

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Dedicated to

Betty Hill

and

Rima Afifi

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Classical Pseudonyms as Rhetorical Devices in Response to Jay's Treaty

Mythology, literature, and social customs show that there is significant power in bestowing, discovering, and invoking names. The first intellectual action of humankind as described in Genesis is the naming of creatures, and God gives Adam dominion over them.¹ The folk tale of Rumpelstiltskin illustrates the idea common in some cultures that to know a person's name is to have power over him or even to steal his power.² Many Muslims give their children names that link them to an attribute of God, in the pattern of Abd al-Karim, for example, "the slave of the generous one," thus invoking that blessing of God on the child. Authors and performers can avail themselves of the power of naming by using pseudonyms that may conceal their identities, such as the children's author Lemony Snicket, whose name conceals a federally protected witness, or project a desired image based on the perceived attractiveness of an assumed name: Archie Leach, for example, doesn't sound quite so sophisticated as Cary Grant. Political writers in the Early Republican era of the United States often adopted classical pseudonyms not so much to conceal their identities as to identify themselves with admirable lawgivers and republican leaders of ancient Greece and Rome. This paper examines the use of classical pseudonyms by American writers and politicians to "honor and evoke the memory" of role models of the past.³

Between the 1760s and 1820s, many American leaders wrote political and social commentary under pseudonyms, often taken from figures in classical history. Eran Shalev examined this practice and showed that particular pseudonyms were chosen to

¹ Thomas J. Gasque, *The Power of Naming* (Vermillion, S.D.: University of South Dakota, 2001), 7.

² Gasque, *The Power of Naming*, 5.

³ Gasque, *The Power of Naming*, 17.

enhance the rhetorical weight of the author's argument.⁴ That is, a pseudonym would be carefully chosen to link the modern writer with a classical figure whose writings, deeds, or policies supported the ideas advocated by the modern writer. Douglass Adair provided a convincing case study showing that Alexander Hamilton chose his pseudonyms deliberately to relate to issues about which he was writing. After the American Revolution, for example, Hamilton appealed for the restoration of the civil rights of Tories in publications signed Phocion, recalling the Athenian general whose policy was to deal magnanimously with defeated enemies.⁵ Perhaps the best known work of this period that was written under a pseudonym was *The Federalist Papers*, which originally appeared in 1788 as a series of letters by Publius, supporting the ratification of the Constitution of the United States. The authors were Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison, and Publius refers to Publius Valerius Publicola, one of the legendary Roman leaders who deposed the last king of Rome and established the republic.⁶ This popular hero, portrayed by Plutarch as just, merciful, humble, brave, and resolute, was chosen as an alter ego by several authors, as noted below. In *The Federalist Papers*, the authors advocated a republican system of government ruled by elected officials and founded on just laws which would protect all citizens and which all citizens would obey. Thus, it was appropriate to invoke a lawmaker and founder of the Roman Republic to argue in favor of the Constitution.

⁴ Eran Shalev, "Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms during the American Revolution and Early Republic," (*Journal of the Early Republic* 23, no. 2, Summer 2003): 151-172.

⁵ [Douglass Adair], "A Note on Certain of Hamilton's Pseudonyms," (*The William and Mary Quarterly, Third series* 12, no. 2 (April 1955)): 285.

⁶ *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, Plutarch; John Dryden, transl., rev. by Arthur Hugh Clough. (New York: Modern Library, [1900?]), 117 ff.

This paper examines some pseudonymous works criticizing or supporting the *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation Between the United States and Great Britain, 1794*, commonly known as Jay's Treaty. The primary question addressed is whether the pseudonyms were selected to evoke specific ideas or actions of the eponymous classical persons, thus reinforcing the writer's authority and position, or whether they were selected to claim, in a sense, the authority of the Greek and Latin heroes. In exploring this question, we will gain insight into a common rhetorical device used by political writers of the period and confirm the widespread influence of the Greek and Roman classics on the ideas of American Revolutionary leaders.

The paper begins with a brief examination of the typical education of political leaders in the early American Republic, followed by a brief examination of partisan newspapers of the era. Then there is a review of the relations of the United States and Great Britain leading up to the Jay Treaty, the negotiation of the treaty, and the terms settled upon. The paper then examines more closely the terms that led to vehement arguments in the press in the period leading up to the ratification of the treaty in 1795 and explores some of the newspaper articles and other documents published pseudonymously about these issues. Where the authors can be identified certainly or tentatively, there is a comparison between the authors and the classical figures they chose as alter egos. Where the authors cannot be identified, there is a comment on the classical figure and why he might have been chosen to represent the views of the anonymous author.

Sources

A good deal has been written about Jay's Treaty. Samuel Flagg Bemis' study, first published in 1923 and revised in 1962, details the political and diplomatic situation leading up to the treaty, the specific issues addressed, and the text of the treaty, as well as a draft and other documents relating to its development.⁷ *Jay's Treaty*, for which Bemis was the first to examine original documents in British archives as well as American sources, was awarded a Knights of Columbus prize for studies in American history.⁸ Bemis (1891-1973), a distinguished scholar of early American diplomacy, spent the latter part of his career at Yale University after teaching at several other institutions, including ten years at The George Washington University. He was awarded two Pulitzer Prizes, one in 1927 for his study of Pinckney's Treaty and the other in 1950 for his biography of John Quincy Adams.

Two databases have been particularly useful in locating the full text of documents that discuss Jay's Treaty. *Sabin Americana, 1500-1926* contains pamphlets and books in facsimile, and is searchable by multiple parameters. Documents are listed under the authors' real names, even if written under pseudonyms, so when a pseudonym is found through a keyword search, the real author can be identified if it was known to the bibliographer. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1* is also a rich source of contemporary material. Again, classical names in the text, and thus as pseudonyms, can be found with a keyword search, since pseudonyms are not listed as authors. True names of authors are not identified in citations. Unfortunately, since the images are

⁷ Samuel Flagg Bemis, *Jay's Treaty: A Study in Commerce and Diplomacy*, Rev. ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962).

⁸ "Samuel Flagg Bemis," *Current Biography Illustrated*.

taken from the original newspapers, some of which are in poor condition, many of the documents are challenging to read.

Since pseudonyms are alternate identities, biographies were a key element in this research. Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* provides detailed biographies of important classical figures.⁹ More than historical accuracy, these accounts demonstrate ideals of character and behavior attributed to semi-legendary heroes. Educated Americans, including the writers examined here, would certainly have been familiar with Plutarch and would have understood the honorable traits expected of a public servant. The Founding Fathers would have read Plutarch's *Lives* in the original Greek, but they would also have had access to the translation by John Dryden, a revision of which has been used here. Most of the heroes whose names were adopted as pseudonyms are found in Plutarch, but Scipio's biography is found in Polybius' *Histories*, Agricola's was written by Tacitus, and the story of Curtius is recounted in Livy's *History of Rome*.

Biographies of the known and supposed American authors of pseudonymous works provided valuable background information and confirmation of the identities of pseudonymous writers. Scholarly biographies of Robert R. Livingston, Noah Webster, Alexander Hamilton, and Edmund Randolph provided valuable context for the mid-1790s and elucidated the relationships among the leading men of the period.

⁹ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, John Dryden, transl., rev. by Arthur Hugh Clough. (New York: Modern Library, [1900?]).

Public Education and Personal Libraries

In her chapter “Antiquity in the New Nation,” Caroline Winterer noted that American colleges all followed a curriculum that was based on Greek and Latin studies. When Robert R. Livingston attended King’s College (now Columbia University) in the 1760s, for example, the entrance requirements included knowledge of Latin and Greek, the ability to read selections from Cicero and the *Aeneid*, and the ability to translate the first ten chapters of the *Gospel of John* from Greek into Latin.¹⁰ In the mid-eighteenth century, classics were employed for the training of political and civic leaders as well as for clergy, and “colleges ... served as training grounds for the ideological architects of the American Revolution and its aftermath.”¹¹ Although college graduates were a small minority in the colonies and then the new nation, they formed a disproportionate majority of civil servants. Henry Steele Commager commented that, in the Early Republican period, opportunities for educated, ambitious men were limited, so that “almost the only opportunities it did offer were in the public arena.”¹² American notions of egalitarianism notwithstanding, most American leaders of the time believed that the “best men” could and should provide enlightened government, and “a formal classical education formed an essential ingredient in the alchemy of the gentleman.”¹³ Winterer reinforced Shalev’s idea of a connection of the Founding Fathers with the Greeks and Romans when she said that “Americans of the Revolutionary generation believed they

¹⁰ George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746-1813* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), 45.

¹¹ Caroline Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism: Ancient Greece and Rome in American Intellectual Life, 1780-1910* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 16.

¹² Henry Steele Commager, “Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today,” (*Daedalus* 90.4,(Fall 1961), 653. *JSTOR*.

¹³ Winterer, 1 *The Culture of Classicism*, 8.

shared with the ancients what Joseph Levine has termed an ‘imagined affinity,’ which made classical example crucial for anyone devoted to public affairs.”¹⁴

The newspaper articles and pamphlets examined below are full of references to classical authors such as Plutarch, Tacitus, Cicero, Horace, Homer, Polybius, and Pliny. It is not unusual to find a Latin quotation in the text or at the head of the article. Joe W. Kraus, in an examination of private libraries in colonial America, noted that the Bible, sermons, practical books, classics, and books of history, politics, and science made up the bulk of colonial libraries.¹⁵ One study showed that “nearly sixty percent of the free white population during the years 1720-1770 had books,” but even a large personal library would contain only 50-200 books.¹⁶ John Thomson, who criticized Jay’s Treaty under the name of Gracchus, listed 374 books in his will.¹⁷ The libraries of eminent men such as Cotton Mather, John Adams, and William Byrd, collected over a lifetime, had three thousand or more books.¹⁸ In all the libraries Kraus mentioned, Greek and Latin authors were well represented. Educated American men would have been familiar with and would have taken to heart the advice of Polybius in his *Histories* that “the soundest education and training for a life of active politics is the study of history and that the surest and indeed the only method of learning how to bear bravely the vicissitudes of fortune is to recall the calamities of others.”¹⁹

Another book popular among educated Americans in the eighteenth century was *Letters on the Study and Uses of History* by Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke.

¹⁴ Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 17.

¹⁵ Joe W. Kraus, “Private Libraries in Colonial America,” (*The Journal of Library History* (1974-1987) 9.1, Jan. 1974), 32.

¹⁶ Kraus, “Private Libraries in Colonial America,” 33.

¹⁷ Edward A. Wyatt, “John Thomson, Author of ‘The Letters of Curtius’ and a Petersburg Contemporary of George Keith Taylor,” (*The William and Mary Quarterly, Second Series* 16.1, Jan. 1936), 25.

¹⁸ Kraus, “Private Libraries in Colonial America,” 47.

¹⁹ Polybius, *The Complete Histories of Polybius*, transl. W. R. Paton (Digireads.com Publishing, 2012), 3.

Although Bolingbroke cautioned the reader often that history must be read with critical skepticism as regards the factuality of accounts, he stated that “the true and proper object of [studying history] is a constant improvement in private and public virtue.”²⁰

We can learn from our own experiences, Bolingbroke said, but we are not able to see our own situation from the perspective of history, and don’t know all the ramifications and results of our actions. He clearly addressed those who aspired to be leaders of their countries when he said that “we must fit ourselves for the society and business of mankind by accustoming our minds to reflect and meditate on the characters we find described [in histories] and in the course of events we find related there.”²¹

Bolingbroke reiterated several times that “the perfection of our nature” should be the goal of studying history and philosophy, so that a man should be “better and wiser for himself, for his family, for the little community of his country, and for the greater community of the world.”²² Americans would perhaps have appreciated particularly Bolingbroke’s admonition that the study of history should not be limited to the upper classes and rulers. “In free governments ... the care of the state is in the care of the multitudes,” men of all ranks may be called to public service, and they are “not only answerable to [the prince], but like him and before him, to the nation, for their behaviour in their several posts.”²³

²⁰ Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, Vol. 1 (New York: Garland, 1970), 14.

²¹ Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 58.

²² Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 147.

²³ Bolingbroke, *Letters on the Study and Use of History*, 194.

Pseudonyms and Political Discourse

In his “Letter IV”, Bolingbroke said that a person who reads without digesting what he reads “will not be able to think, without which it is impertinent to read; nor to act, without which it is impertinent to think.” The Founding Fathers read and absorbed the lessons of ancient history, then thought about and acted upon them. They served as elected or appointed officials at the local and state levels; they participated in the Revolutionary War; they debated in public and in the newspapers the fundamental issues pertaining to the establishment of the new republican nation; and they were the first generation of elected officials of the new nation. Harking back to the lessons of history and to the moral and political principles they admired in the ancients, many of them adopted classical pseudonyms in these debates. Henry Steele Commager addressed this question in an article about how their environment, political circumstances, and education influenced the leadership style of these men.²⁴ He emphasized that “what is important are the lessons that this generation drew from its study of the classics of Greek and Roman literature and of the literature of English liberty,” noting their common grounding in the works of Plutarch, Tacitus, Cicero, Plato, Demosthenes, and other classical authors, as well as of John Milton, John Locke, and Viscount Bolingbroke. They learned to value virtue, honor, magnanimity, and freedom, and “they learned that the first duty of the good citizen was service to the commonwealth.”²⁵ The works of Greek and Roman authors were not read for historical facts, but for “general truths,” for insight into the unchanging laws of God and nature, and for the moral lessons to be found in them. The ancient figures portrayed in the

²⁴ Commager, “Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today,” (*Daedalus* 90.4, Fall 1961), 652-673. *JSTOR*.

²⁵ Commager, “Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today,” 660.

classical works were not seen as individuals, but as types, and American leaders “were always putting contemporaries into some historical niche.”²⁶ Not only did they identify their political allies and rivals with classical figures, they “[modeled] themselves on the examples they supposed – sometimes mistakenly – to be history.”²⁷ The Founding Fathers recognized clearly that they were participating in historic events, and “saw themselves as characters in history.”²⁸ How natural, then, that they should have chosen to identify themselves in writing with the legendary heroes they admired.

Robert Palmer noted that “it was in the controversy over the Jay Treaty that the democratic movement grew into a Republican party, and that the Federalists closed ranks to obtain the goodwill of Britain, which was necessary both to their practical program and to their view of life and society.”²⁹ Other scholars agree that this was a key issue in the formation of political parties in the early Republic. Some aspects of this situation are pertinent to the examination of pseudonymous writings about the Jay Treaty. First, “the United States had not yet developed a concept of ‘loyal opposition’,” so people were vehemently opposed to “factions.”³⁰ This was most likely an attitude they imbibed from their classical reading, perhaps reinforced by the factionalism that was leading revolutionary France into turmoil. Plutarch’s life of Cicero noted that the orator, “perceiving the commonwealth running into factions and from faction all things tending to an absolute monarchy,” withdrew from public life until the political situation

²⁶ Commager, “Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today,” 663.

²⁷ Commager, “Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today,” 668.

²⁸ Commager, “Leadership in Eighteenth-Century America and Today,” 656.

²⁹ Robert R. Palmer, “The French Revolution in American Politics,” In *The Federalists vs. The Jeffersonian Republicans*, ed. Paul Goodman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), 38.

³⁰ Carol Sue Humphrey, “The First Political Party System,” In *The Press of the Young Republic, 1783-1833* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), 41.

was more stable.³¹ Thus, political writers were often passionate, sometimes vitriolic, in their criticism of those who disagreed with them, fearing that faction would lead to tyranny. Second, this era saw a proliferation of new newspapers. Only a few newspapers from Revolutionary times continued, but around 450 new ones were started in the 1790s. Moreover, while newspapers had previously been produced by printers who provided commercial news and selections from other sources, they were increasingly produced by editors who had clear political sympathies. Many newspapers became outlets for the rhetoric of one political faction or another.³² Indeed, “support of a partisan cause became the primary reason for a newspaper’s existence.”³³

Among the many partisan newspapers of the era, some were particularly influential. A major Federalist newspaper was John Fenno’s *Gazette of the United States*, founded in New York and then moved to Philadelphia, a quasi-official outlet for news and documents of the Federal government. Fenno was encouraged by Alexander Hamilton and other Federalists to set up this newspaper, and he was steadfastly loyal to the Federalist program.³⁴ Fenno made an effort to be even-handed in his reporting and the writings he published, but criticized those whose “intemperate attacks on elected representatives corroded public trust in the political system and prevented the growth of popular loyalty to the new government.”³⁵ William Cobbett and Fenno’s son Jack later gained more control of the newspaper and published more passionately partisan material. The oldest Federalist paper was the *Columbian Sentinel* (previously the

³¹ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, John Dryden, transl., rev. by Arthur Hugh Clough (New York: Modern Library, [1900?]), 1042.

³² Frank Luther Mott, “Federalists and Republicans,” In *American Journalism, A History: 1690-1960*. 3rd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 113-114.

³³ Humphrey, “The First Political Party System,” 43.

³⁴ Mott, “Federalists and Republicans,” 122.

³⁵ Marcus Daniel, *Scandal & Civility: Journalism and the Birth of American Democracy* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2009), 33.

Massachusetts Sentinel), published in Boston by Benjamin Russell. This highly regarded journal generally avoided extreme ideas and language.³⁶ Noah Webster's *American Minerva* was another eloquent voice on the Federalist side.³⁷

In the other camp was the *National Gazette*, firmly anti-Federalist, established by Philip Freneau, a Princeton classmate of James Madison, who brought Freneau to Philadelphia to start the paper.³⁸ The *Aurora and General Advertiser* was virulently anti-Federalist, even publishing scurrilous personal attacks on George Washington. This newspaper was run by Benjamin Franklin Bache, the grandson of the great Revolutionary leader. When Bache died in a yellow fever epidemic, William Duane married his widow and continued to publish the *Aurora*.³⁹ Thomas Greenleaf's *New-York Journal* was another anti-Federalist paper.⁴⁰ All of these newspapers published articles and letters written by government officials, party leaders, and the general public. Articles and letters were widely copied in many newspapers throughout the states. Editors also wrote articles themselves under their own names, anonymously, and pseudonymously. Noah Webster, for example, used several pseudonyms, including Tom Thoughtful, A Citizen of America, and Amicus Patriae.⁴¹

Jay's Treaty

In 1794, the year Jay's Treaty was negotiated and signed, the peace treaty between the United States and Great Britain was eleven years old, but there were several issues

³⁶ Mott, "Federalists and Republicans," 131.

³⁷ Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), 63.

³⁸ Mott, "Federalists and Republicans," 125.

³⁹ Mott, "Federalists and Republicans," 127.

⁴⁰ Daniel, *Scandal & Civility*, 31.

⁴¹ Harlow Giles [Unger, *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* \(New York: Wiley, 1998\), 66, 118, 136.](#)

outstanding that caused friction between the new nation and her former parent country. The northwestern frontier was one sore spot. Although the peace treaty stipulated that the British should evacuate their forts along the Canadian border, they had failed to do so. To justify their continued occupation, the British held up the issue of non-payment of American debts to British creditors, but protection of the fur trade and close alliances with Indian allies were two major reasons they were reluctant to abandon the posts.⁴² For some years, the British were hopeful of establishing an Indian buffer state between the United States and Canada, and didn't fully relinquish that idea until Jay's Treaty was signed.⁴³ Some of the American settlers in the trans-Appalachian region were not deeply committed to American nationality and in this area, as in Vermont, the British were hopeful that separatists might seek to include their territories in Canada rather than the United States. Since the Appalachian and Green Mountains hindered trade with the eastern coast, western settlers needed access to the rivers, especially the Mississippi. When George Washington was elected president in 1789, one of his chief tasks was to "fasten to the central government the allegiance of these remote communities."⁴⁴

Trade with Europe and the West Indian colonies of Europe was another area of contention. The United States and Great Britain had no commercial treaty, and there was no unity or coordination among the states, which made their own commercial laws.⁴⁵ Free trade with the West Indies was particularly important to the United States and to West Indian planters, but the British placed severe restrictions on trade with

⁴² Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 109.

⁴³ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 147 ff.

⁴⁴ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 27.

⁴⁵ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 33.

their West Indian colonies.⁴⁶ The vast majority of American trade was with Great Britain, and the United States was the largest importer of British manufactured goods, so maintaining trade relations was vitally important to both countries. In addition, American merchants depended heavily upon the credit they received from British suppliers.⁴⁷

A particular aspect of commerce that occasioned conflict was the interpretation of neutral shipping rights. International law on neutrality was neither clearly defined nor uniformly observed at this time.⁴⁸ Still, in all the treaties that the United States had with other countries, and in the usual understanding of the law of nations, free ships made free goods and the definition of contraband was strictly limited. When the British entered into war with Napoleonic France, however, they unilaterally redefined contraband on a much wider basis and exercised such stringent control over what was considered neutral shipping that Denmark, Sweden, and Russia, as well as the United States, discussed an Armed Neutrality treaty in response.⁴⁹ Although all political leaders of every party in the United States favored neutrality in regard to European wars, most people were sympathetic to France, since she had supported the American Revolution, and distrusted Great Britain, the imperial power from which the United States had just won independence. British Orders in Council in 1791 and 1793, which targeted American shipping, were clearly designed to cut off all trade with France and her colonial possessions, including those in the West Indies. In November 1793, about 250 American

⁴⁶ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 40.

⁴⁷ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 45-49.

⁴⁸ George C. Herring, *From Colony to Superpower: United States Foreign Relations Since 1776* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008): 69.

⁴⁹ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 185 ff.

ships were seized by British privateers and, in many cases, their crews were treated cruelly.⁵⁰

In 1794, the British arranged a truce between their ally Portugal and the state of Algiers. Americans and others were gravely concerned that the Barbary pirates, hitherto confined to the Mediterranean Sea, would now be free to roam the Atlantic and prey on shipping.⁵¹ The measure would threaten French shipping, as the British intended, but the broad interpretation of contraband and the reluctance of Britain to respect neutral shipping to France would cripple American trade.

Two further issues raised the indignation of Americans. The British had carried off about three thousand slaves when they withdrew after the American Revolution, and slave owners insisted on compensation for their property. The British refused to countenance this claim under any circumstances.⁵² During the American Revolution, the British had invited slaves to join their army; those who did so were considered free as soon as they entered the British lines. Therefore, they did not recognize the continuing enslavement of these people and would not consider compensation.⁵³ The impressment of American seamen into the British Navy was another volatile matter upon which many writers commented.⁵⁴

John Jay, at that time serving as Chief Justice of the United States, was selected by George Washington and Alexander Hamilton to negotiate the treaty. He was a highly respected national leader, having been a delegate to the Continental Congress, drafter of the New York constitution, a colonel in the New York militia, minister to Spain, and

⁵⁰ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 210 ff.

⁵¹ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 256.

⁵² Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 290.

⁵³ Numa, "For the Providence Gazette; Letter II on the Treaty," (*Providence Gazette*, 32.32, Aug. 8, 1795), 1.

⁵⁴ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 327.

Secretary of Foreign Affairs.⁵⁵ His counterpart was William Wyndham Grenville, Baron Grenville, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the government of William Pitt. He had many years of experience in foreign relations and was responsible for the complex matters of a country at war, so the American treaty was “incidental to Grenville’s daily work of handling a foreign business the ramifications of which involved affairs of the greatest moment in the chancelleries of all Europe.”⁵⁶ Jay officially reported to Edmund Randolph, Secretary of State, but his instructions actually came mostly from Alexander Hamilton, the leader of the Federalist Party. Although there were several points on which Hamilton advised Jay to seek solutions, only two firm instructions were given: that no agreement should be made that was contrary to previous American treaties with France, and that no treaty should be signed that did not allow for American trade in the West Indies. ⁵⁷

The Federalists, led by Hamilton, sought peace at almost any price, since they recognized the military and naval weakness of the United States and the American dependence on British credit for the operation of trade. At that time, the United States had no navy, and an army of just 500 men.⁵⁸ The Jeffersonian Republicans⁵⁹, for whom James Madison was a major spokesman, were sympathetic to France, suspicious of Great Britain, and indignant over the treatment of the United States by Britain in the matters discussed above.⁶⁰ In early 1794, in fact, Madison submitted resolutions to Congress imposing retaliatory restrictions on British shipping following the seizure of

⁵⁵ Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty*, 279-280.

⁵⁶ Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty*, 286-287.

⁵⁷ Bemis, *Jay’s Treaty*, 289-291.

⁵⁸ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 57.

⁵⁹ The name of the party had not yet been firmly established, but Republican is used to distinguish the Jeffersonian party from the Federalists.

⁶⁰ Todd Estes, “Jay Treaty,” *Encyclopedia of U.S. Political History*, ed. Michael A. Morrison, vol. 2: *The Early Republic, 1784 to 1840* (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2010): 201-204.

American ships by British privateers. Convinced by Hamilton that retaliation would lead to war, Washington effectively suspended debate on Madison's proposals by sending Jay to negotiate with Great Britain.⁶¹

The *Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation Between the United States and Great Britain, 1794*, was widely perceived in the United States as a humiliating surrender to Great Britain, and there is no denying that the terms were more favorable to Britain than to the United States. It did, nevertheless, secure the peace for another eighteen years, during which time the new country could establish itself more firmly. Bemis concluded that the treaty "could have been better, but before 1810 it was extraordinarily significant" for its "recognition of the existence of American nationality."⁶² After heated debates, the treaty was finally ratified by the Senate and President Washington signed it in August 1795. After the dust settled and people saw the economic gains that ensued (American exports tripled between 1792 and 1796), opposition to the treaty subsided.⁶³

Responses to Jay's Treaty

Let us turn now to the treatment of these issues in contemporary sources by authors using classical pseudonyms or referring to classical examples. During the debates over Madison's resolutions for retaliatory measures against Great Britain, Henry Lee (1756-1818) opposed sequestration of British debts and the imposition of trade restrictions.⁶⁴ "Light-Horse Harry" Lee was educated at the College of New Jersey (later Princeton) and, following a brilliant military service during the Revolution, held several offices,

⁶¹ Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 265.

⁶² Bemis, *Jay's Treaty*, 370.

⁶³ Herring, *From Colony to Superpower*, 80.

⁶⁴ "Federal Legislature, House of Representatives, January 10, Debate on Mr. Madison's Resolutions Continued. Mr. Lee's Speech Concluded from Our Last" (*General Advertiser* [Philadelphia] 981: January 29, 1794), 2.

including governor of Virginia and member of the United States Congress.⁶⁵ Lee argued that if his compatriots refused to trade with Great Britain, she would develop other trading partners. He thought it “the wisest policy for a nation which is in its infancy, in strength, in arts and manufactures, to leave things in that course, in which the existing circumstances of the world have placed them, and which continually adds to its prosperity.” In addressing those who favored France over Britain, Lee reminded his audience to “witness the wars between Carthage and Rome, the jealousies and wars between the different Republics of Greece,” as well as strife between our own states prior to adoption of the Constitution. “The truth is, nations ... regard nothing but their interest.” France helped the United States during the Revolution not out of pure altruism, but to weaken its enemy, Britain. Our debt to Britain is strong, on the other hand, because the British kept alive the knowledge of liberty in the Dark Ages. “Caesar and Tacitus tell us people were always jealous of their liberties,” Lee said, so while Americans may resent the actions of the Cabinet, they must admire the British people. While he resented the British depredations as much as anyone, Lee asserted that peace was essential to our safety and prosperity.

Brutus, however, favored punitive measures against Great Britain.⁶⁶ The identity of Brutus is not certain, as several men wrote under this pseudonym. One was William Cranch (1769-1855), a nephew of Abigail Adams and a classmate of John Quincy Adams at Harvard. In 1794-95 Cranch was a young lawyer, and accounts of his life do not record political activism at this time. He became a jurist and one of the first to record

⁶⁵ Frank E. Grizzard, Jr., “Lee, Henry,” *Encyclopedia of the American Revolution: Library of Military History*, ed. Harold E. Selesky, vol. 1 (Detroit: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 2006), 613-614.

⁶⁶ Brutus, “For the Virginia Chronicle,” (*Virginia Chronicle* [Norfolk] 1:30 (July 17, 1794)), 2.

and collect Supreme Court decisions.⁶⁷ Robert Yates (1738-1801), however, was a leading Anti-Federalist who was, in the 1790s, Chief Justice of the New York Supreme Court. In 1788 he had been a delegate to the New York State Ratifying Convention, where he voted against ratification of the United States Constitution. He also wrote a series of very influential letters against ratification under the name of Brutus.⁶⁸ That Yates is the Brutus who wrote against the Jay Treaty is not certain, but he is a likely candidate. Which Brutus is referred to is not clear, either. Lucius Junius Brutus, the consul who “liberated Rome from monarchy” by leading the ouster of the Etruscan king Tarquin, would have been known to Americans who had read Livy.⁶⁹ A more likely candidate is Marcus Junius Brutus, one of the leaders of the assassination plot against Julius Caesar, who was “revered by many as the last defender of Roman freedom,” despite being “arrogant, rapacious, calculatngly ambitious.”⁷⁰ So says a modern scholar, but Plutarch portrayed Marcus Junius Brutus as grave, gentle, and “having a temper exactly framed for virtue.”⁷¹ Our pseudonymous Brutus was responding to an article by Fabius (probably John Dickinson) who “advises his countrymen to wait with patience before they draw the sword ... His assertions of a ruinous war without an effort of peace, discovers his timidity and fear in the first instance, and in the next, injustice and falsehood.” Strong and immediate measures were required to redress American citizens’ “daily suffering in the West Indies and Algiers from the policy and dishonesty of

⁶⁷ Craig Joyce, “Cranch, William,” *American National Biography*, eds. John A. Garraty, Mark C. Carnes. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶⁸ Dennis J. Mahoney, “Yates, Robert (1738-1811),” *Encyclopedia of the American Constitution*, 2nd ed., vol. 6 (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2000), 2938.

⁶⁹ Alain M. Gowing, “Brutus, Lucius Junius,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. Ed. Michael Gagarin (Oxford University Press, 2010) *Oxford Reference*. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

⁷⁰ Ernst Badian, “Brutus (Marcus Iunius Brutus),” *The Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*. Eds. Simon Hornblower and Antony Spawforth (Oxford University Press, 2003). *Oxford Reference*. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

⁷¹ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 1186.

Britain.” This seems to echo Brutus’ opposition to Cicero in the contest between Marc Antony and Octavian: Plutarch said that Brutus criticized Cicero for “wanting an easy slavery rather than freedom.”⁷² The American Brutus believed that an envoy was sent to Britain to prevent the enactment of punitive measures. “Can such men wish America to submit to the arbitrary definition of the law of nations by that government, or shall it be said that we humble ourselves to wrest from a fiend of injustice that which nature has independently given us the means to effect?” Believing that Jay’s Treaty signaled a submission to British tyranny, the author’s identification with Marcus Junius Brutus was clearly in keeping with the opposition to tyranny that Brutus represented.

Two substantial pamphlets by Camillus and Cato, actually collections of letters first published in newspapers, presented opposing views of Jay’s Treaty. Camillus was a joint pseudonym of Alexander Hamilton (1755-1804), the real power behind the negotiation of the treaty, and Rufus King (1755-1827).⁷³ Hamilton, born illegitimate in the West Indies, rose to high position through intelligence, skill, and a towering ambition. Some businessmen who recognized his promise financed his education at King’s College, and the young man became General George Washington’s aide-de-camp, joint author of *The Federalist Papers*, delegate to New York’s Constitutional Convention, and Secretary of the Treasury in Washington’s administration. He continued to wield a great deal of influence even after his retirement.⁷⁴ Rufus King was a Harvard graduate and close Federalist ally of Hamilton. He served as a legislator and senator from his home state of Massachusetts and then from his adopted state of New York. During the Jay Treaty

⁷² Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 1199.

⁷³ Humphrey, “The First Political Party System,” 50.

⁷⁴ “Hamilton, Alexander,” *American Eras*, vol. 4: *Development of a Nation, 1783-1815* (Detroit: Gale, 1997), 236-237.

debate, King was a senator from New York.⁷⁵ Camillus was a hero of the early fourth century B.C. whom legend depicts as restoring Rome after it was sacked by the Gauls in 390 B.C. Livy called him the second founder of Rome and father of his country.⁷⁶ Plutarch depicted Camillus as a self-made man, which would explain part of his appeal to Hamilton. He was a man of judgment, wisdom, moderation, and honor. The rebuilding of Rome after it was sacked by the Gauls was a most difficult task, but Camillus kept the people on task and prevented them from abandoning Rome and going to conquer another city in which to establish a home. Camillus was dedicated to rule by law, and ruled only at the will of the senate; he never tried to usurp power from the people.⁷⁷ This image would fit Hamilton's and King's purposes of restoring the economic strength of the United States after the Revolutionary War by maintaining peace with Britain and upholding the right of the President and Senate to enact treaties as specified in the Constitution. The choice of Camillus as a pseudonym emphasized the constructive role of the ancient model.

Cato was Robert R. Livingston (1746-1813), scion of a prominent New York family, who represented New York at the Second Continental Congress, was one of the key managers of the war effort during the Revolution, and worked with John Jay and Gouverneur Morris to draft the New York state constitution. He had considerable experience with foreign affairs and the negotiation of commercial treaties, and later negotiated the

⁷⁵ "Framers of the Constitution," *The U.S. Constitution A to Z*, Robert L. Maddex, ed., 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: CQ Press, 2008), 232.

⁷⁶ Andrew Drummond, "Camillus (Furius Camillus, Marcus)," *Who's Who in the Classical World*. Ed. Simon Hornblower and Tony Spawforth. (Oxford University Press, 2003). *Oxford Reference*. Web. 4 Dec. 2013.

⁷⁷ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 155 ff.

Louisiana Purchase.⁷⁸ Livingston graduated in 1765 from King's College, where he was a close friend of John Jay. The two remained good friends for many years, and Jay married a cousin of Livingston's.⁷⁹ The Livingston family owned large estates and several family members, Robert R. among them, were leaders of the Federalist Party who supported peace with Britain in order to ensure credit and the protection of trade on which the great mercantile families depended.⁸⁰ Livingston was a loyal Federalist until 1791, when he supported anti-Federalist George Clinton for governor of New York. The Federalists were talking about land reform at that time, and the Livingstons were among the largest landholders in the state. He was also a friend of James Madison, who brought Thomas Jefferson to visit him and help bring him into the Republican fold. Livingston, although he had an eminent position as Chancellor of the State of New York, hoped to be appointed Chief Justice in the Washington administration or have another appointment, and when Washington passed him over, the Chancellor resented John Jay for not assisting him and deserted the Federalists without much regret.⁸¹ When Jefferson became president, Livingston was appointed minister to France.⁸² Livingston's alter ego, Cato the Younger, was a staunch opponent of Julius Caesar's imperial program. Plutarch described him as serious, resolute, a student of philosophy, and intellectually curious. He was a military commander respected and loved by his troops, since he trained and cared for them well.⁸³ Plutarch said that Cato not only sought public offices, but studied to prepare himself for them; he was steadfast against

⁷⁸ "Livingston, Robert," *American Eras, vol. 4: Development of a Nation, 1783-1815* (Detroit: Gale, 1997), 104-105.

⁷⁹ George Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746-1813*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), 45 ff.

⁸⁰ Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York*, 221-222.

⁸¹ Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York*, 256 ff.

⁸² Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York*, 298.

⁸³ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 920 ff.

corruption and reformed the operations of the treasury. Such an honest man was he that “great men ... thought themselves reprov'd by his virtue.”⁸⁴ When the Catiline conspirators were convicted, Julius Caesar argued for clemency, but Cato supported their execution, as demanded by law and the people of Rome. In the civil wars, after Julius Caesar’s triumph, when it was clear that the city of Utica, which Cato was defending, would fall to imperial forces, Cato allowed the Uticans to surrender, while he himself committed suicide rather than live under tyranny.⁸⁵ Livingston’s adoption of the pseudonym Cato suggests that he believed himself to be defending the American Republic from once more falling under the tyranny of monarchist Great Britain, especially as he must have known that this particular battle against Jay’s Treaty was doomed to failure.

Camillus (Hamilton and King) acknowledged the widespread disappointment with the terms of the treaty and noted that some people would “be prepared to acquiesce only in a treaty which should present advantages of so striking and preponderant a kind as it was not reasonable to expect.”⁸⁶ He deplored the fact that an incorrect and misleading copy of the treaty was leaked (deliberately) by its opponents, and believed that calm and rational examination of the correct text would convince “every man who is not an enemy of the national government” that the treaty “is in the true interest of the United States.” Camillus asserted that the treaty “makes no improper concessions to Great Britain” and that “the too probable result of a refusal to ratify is war, or what would be worse, a disgraceful passiveness under violations of our rights, unredressed and unadjusted.” He defended the treaty point by point, noting that some of the stipulations had time limits

⁸⁴ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 944.

⁸⁵ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 958.

⁸⁶ Camillus, *A Defence of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation Entered into Between the United States of America and Great Britain*. (New York: s.n., 1795.)

of twelve years or until the end of the war between Britain and France, and stated his key objective: “If we can avoid war for ten or twelve years more, we shall then have acquired a maturity which will make it no more than a common calamity, and will authorize us in our national discussions to take a higher and more imposing tone.”

Cato (Livingston), on the other hand, asked whether the treaty was “a friendly beacon to point out a secure harbour in political storms, or ... a light perfidiously hung out to lure our unsuspecting barks on rocks and quicksands.”⁸⁷ He said that a treaty may be good or bad depending on the circumstances, and gave the example of Carthage, which gave up everything after the Second Punic War. An unfavorable treaty was acceptable at a time of utter defeat when Carthage had to rely on Roman justice and humanity, but it would have been unacceptable after the battle of Cannae, where Carthage was victorious. The United States was prosperous and strong, he said, and had recently beaten Britain in a war, while Britain was overextended and at war with “the bravest people in Europe.” Thus, the United States should not have accepted a humiliating treaty as if negotiating from a position of utter defeat. Cato criticized the treaty point by point and charged that it “damages our national character.” What made the world admire Americans? It was “bold resistance, not tame submission.”⁸⁸

Cinna also responded to Camillus’s *Defence of the Treaty*. Robert R. Livingston identified both Cinna and Decius (see below) as Brockholst Livingston.⁸⁹ A cousin of Robert R. Livingston and brother-in-law of John Jay, Henry Brockholst Livingston (1757-1823) was a member of the Assembly of New York in 1794-95. He had been a

⁸⁷ Cato, *Examination of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation Between the United States and Great Britain*. (New York: s.n., 1795.)

⁸⁸ Cato, *Examination of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation Between the United States and Great Britain*, 59.

⁸⁹ Dangerfield, *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York*, 272.

friend of James Madison since they were at Princeton University together, and was a supporter of Thomas Jefferson. His political service and connections resulted in his appointment to the New York Supreme Court and later, by Thomas Jefferson, to the U.S. Supreme Court. Brockholst Livingston's specialty was commercial law, and he was an expert in prize law, which dealt with the capture of ships and cargo during wartime, which was a topic addressed in Jay's Treaty.⁹⁰ Given the high feelings occasioned by the Jay Treaty, a wryly appropriate eponym for Livingston may have been "one Cinna, a friend of Caesar's," whose story Plutarch recounted. This Cinna went to see what was going on in the marketplace the day of Caesar's assassination. The crowd mistook him for another Cinna, who had been one of the conspirators, and "tore him limb from limb."⁹¹ Perhaps a better eponym for Brockholst Livingston was Lucius Cornelius Cinna, a Roman general, consul, and the father-in-law of Julius Caesar. The name of this character may have been chosen as a pseudonym because his attempts at "debt relief and the fixing of exchange rates" were relevant to the author's interests.⁹² The modern Cinna's main point was that the claims of British creditors in the United States were already being dealt with fairly under the laws of each state, and by allowing the British to include an article in the treaty on this matter Jay had allowed the honor of the American legal system to be impugned.⁹³ American judges and courts had always upheld laws and treaties, Cinna said, and Camillus was wrong in his estimation of violations of the peace treaty in the matter of debt repayment. "Every enlightened American ... cannot but regard the pretended apprehension of our envoy to meet so

⁹⁰ "Livingston, Henry Brockholst," *Gale Encyclopedia of American Law*, ed. Donna Batten, 3rd ed., vol.6 (Detroit: Gale, 2011), 382-383.

⁹¹ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 894.

⁹² John Alexander Lobur, "Cinna," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. Ed. Michael Gagarin. (Oxford University Press, 2010.) *Oxford Reference*. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

⁹³ Cinna, "Miscellany: for the Argus," (*Argus* [New York, NY]: 74 (Aug. 4, 1795), 2.

plain a question, as a base dereliction of his country's honor ... as a sacrifice of her rights – as an ill-timed delicacy – and as a most unwarrantable concession to Great Britain.”

Brockholst Livingston also wrote as Decius in a series of articles reviewing the provisions of Jay's Treaty in detail. This pseudonym was likely borrowed from P. Decius Subulo, a supporter of the Gracchi who, in an attempt to avenge the murder of C.

Gracchus, brought an unsuccessful lawsuit against the leader of the opposing faction.⁹⁴

This Decius staunchly defended the republican cause despite persecution and public humiliation inflicted upon him by his enemies. The careful legal analysis of the treaty provisions and the concentration on commercial issues support the identification of Brockholst Livingston as Decius, since he was an expert in commercial law.

Decius reviewed the treaty article by article, voicing his indignation over the many concessions Jay had accepted.⁹⁵ One of the points regarding commercial issues was Great Britain's claim to compensation for estates of loyalists confiscated during the war, but Decius pointed out that “Congress were only bound to recommend to the different states a restitution of confiscated property. This recommendation was not binding on the states ... This claim was without foundation and yet it was placed upon an equal footing ... with our demands for negroes wantonly stolen – ships most wickedly plundered – and a great extent of territory wrongly detained.” Decius addressed trade in regard to Article III, which allowed British traders free access to American waterways but restricted American access to the St. Laurence. He objected that “the whole fur trade, which we might have secured to ourselves, will now not only be participated by, but probably fall altogether into the hands of the British traders ... that part of this

⁹⁴ E. Badian, “P. Decius P. f. Subulo: An Orator of the Time of the Gracchi” (*The Journal of Roman Studies* 46: 1-2 (1956)), 92.

⁹⁵ Decius, “Treaty. From the Newyork Journal &c.” (*Vermont Gazette* 13:10 (July 31, 1795)).

article which interdicts the laying of duties on peltries bro't by land or inland navigation, is also highly unequal and disadvantageous to America." Another financial matter was Article IV, dealing with funds due to British creditors. The plan was for the U.S. government to assume the debt and collect the funds by taxation, which was very unpopular with some people. Decius considered that it "will be unjust towards those States which have interposed no lawful impediments in the way of recovering such debts, as they must all bear part of the burden and suffer for the delinquency of others ... If then no lawful impediment exists in the way of these debts, why not leave British creditors to the ordinary course of law, and why fix the stigma on the United States by providing for an infraction of the treaty of peace on her part, which at present does not exist?"

For Decius' commentary on Article VII, which addressed compensation for spoliation of shipping, Brockholst Livingston drew on his specialty, prize law. It was "wholly exceptionable. It places at too great a distance, the compensation to which our citizens are entitled, for the most unheard of and atrocious acts of piracy." Indeed, compensation was to be decided on by a commission in London made up of three British and two American commissioners. Article IX, which allowed foreigners to acquire property in the United States, "infringes the rights of the different states and impairs the obligations of private contracts; nor is it reciprocal except in appearance and on paper." In a continuation of his series on the treaty, Decius discussed the infamous Article XII, which placed crippling restrictions on American trade with the West Indies.⁹⁶ When the treaty was ratified after long debate, this article was excepted in the ratification. Although Decius commented that "we cannot ... suppress our astonishment that an

⁹⁶ Decius, "From the Argus: Art. XII," (*American Mercury* [Hartford, Conn.] 12: 580 (August 17, 1795)): 2.

American ambassador should have set his signature to an article so pernicious and disgraceful to America,” he acquitted John Jay (Livingston’s brother-in-law) of bribery and corruption, although others had accused him of these crimes.

A further letter in the series discussed Articles XIV, XV, and XVII, which addressed the right of British citizens to trade and reside in the United States, without reciprocal rights for Americans to trade and reside in Canada and the West Indies, and issues of neutral shipping and the definition of contraband.⁹⁷ In the first case, Decius commented that “our envoy, ever true to the principle of Inequality ... has brought it into conspicuous action in this [i.e. these] places as if anxious to circumscribe our commerce.” He said of Article XV that it “unnecessarily shackles the government in regulating our commerce with foreign nations ... in time of British wars.” Expressing a very common sentiment, Decius said that “we should have insisted, even at the risque of war, especially when making a treaty, that free vessels make free goods.” The British were defining foodstuffs, grain, hemp, and other materials as contraband if they were being shipped to France, and required that the major American goods such as cotton and molasses must be exported to the West Indies or Britain in British ships, imposing “unheard of restrictions upon our commerce.” In discussing Article XVII, Decius compared Jay’s Treaty with American treaties with France, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands, all of which stipulate that free vessels make free goods and that only soldiers in active duty may be taken from free ships. Finally, if we let the British follow “Mr. Pitt’s Treaty,” Decius wondered what the French would do in retaliation.

⁹⁷ Decius, “For the Argus: Article XIV,” (*Argus* [New York, N.Y.] 58 (July 16, 1795)): 2.

One of the most eloquent and effective responses to Decius' series of letters was the "Vindication of the Treaty" by Curtius, the pseudonym of Noah Webster (1758-1843). Of the twelve letters, six were signed Curtius and the others unsigned.⁹⁸ Webster was educated at Yale and practiced law for a short time before turning to writing and publishing. His famous spellers, readers, and dictionary were developed to replace the British books commonly in use that perpetuated British forms and usage. He "sought to instill patriotism" in his school books, using readings that "dealt with the events of the Revolution and the lives of American heroes." Webster believed that the new nation needed a "culture of its own", and his dictionary incorporated American spellings, usage, and expressions, which "helped free American writers from the straitjacket of European classicism."⁹⁹ The *American Minerva*, which Webster published in the 1790s with the encouragement and support of Federalist leaders, was the first newspaper to publish the details of the treaty, since John Jay was a close friend of Webster's who partially underwrote the paper.¹⁰⁰ Webster's eponym may have been the legendary Marcus Curtius, whose story was recounted by Livy.¹⁰¹ A sinkhole opened up in the middle of the Forum in Rome, and the soothsayers advised that only a sacrifice would allow the Republic to endure after this catastrophe. The young warrior Marcus Curtius, "questioning whether any blessing were more Roman than arms and valor," rode his splendidly caparisoned horse into the chasm, sacrificing himself for Rome. Noah Webster had supported other Federalist measures in his newspaper, and had been the

⁹⁸ Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture*, 87.

⁹⁹ Norman K. Risjord, "Webster, Noah," *American National Biography*. Eds. John A. Garraty, Mark C. Carnes, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.)

¹⁰⁰ [Harlow Giles Unger, *Noah Webster: The Life and Times of an American Patriot* \(New York: Wiley, 1998\), 205.](#)

¹⁰¹ Livy, *History of Rome, Books V-VII*, transl. B. O. Foster (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1924), 373.

target of acrimonious criticism by political opponents. These attacks and others that came later convinced Webster that the abuse of freedom of the press in the United States was “a frightful evil. The licentiousness of the press is a deep stain upon the character of the country.”¹⁰² Although he was reluctant to get back into the arena, Webster yielded to the urging of Jay and Hamilton, and to his own sense of patriotic duty, to support the treaty. In a sense, then, he may have felt that he was subjecting himself to vilification, sacrificing himself like the hero Curtius, for the sake of his country.

Decius had pointed out the initial negative impression of the treaty, but Webster countered that an erroneous copy had been leaked, perhaps deliberately. “But the clamor of the moment subsided on reading a correct copy of the treaty ... We should all regret that the passions of men outstrip their judgement.” The charge of secrecy in the negotiation of the treaty carried no weight with Webster. “Has not every treaty which we have made with other nations been concluded and ratified in secret? And is there one of those treaties disgraceful or prejudicial to our nation?” Besides, he reminded his readers, “the President was authorized by the public wishes to negotiate a commercial treaty with Great Britain, and he is vested with full powers for the purpose by the Constitution.” While not condoning the despised Article XII, Webster said that “the rejection of that article by Congress because it entrenches [*sic*, infringes?] too much on our carrying trade ... is a proof that the interest of commerce and public good were the motives of their conduct in assenting to every other part of the treaty.”¹⁰³

¹⁰² [Unger, Noah Webster, 205.](#)

¹⁰³ “For the Herald. Vindication of the Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation with Great Britain. No. 1,” (Herald [New York, NY] 2:119 (July 22, 1795)): 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

The proposed sequestration bill would have led to war, and “it was as much [the President’s] right and his duty to interpose negotiation as a means of checking any measures that he deemed inconsistent with our national interest ... as it is to give his negative to a bill ... when he judges the bill unconstitutional or inexpedient.” The President, Webster said, had chosen a good time to send an envoy to Britain, because “the public mind in America was in a violent flame, on account of the seizure of our vessels by British privateers.” Furthermore, when opponents said that Jay should have limited his negotiations to the issues of the frontier forts and compensation for spoliations, they were forgetting that the President had the right to authorize Jay to negotiate any matters he believed to be appropriate.

Responding to other objections raised by Decius, Webster stressed the wisdom of “passing over the first subjects of crimination” – arguing over who was first to break the treaty of peace – in order to deal more amicably with other issues. The free access to waterways for British and Americans would increase trade and help the settlers on the western frontiers who depended on obtaining goods by water rather than over the mountains. As to the fur trade, “the peltry, it must be admitted, is almost all collected within the British territories; the British have command of it by right ... What right, what pretence, have we to a monopoly of that trade? Do we expect that Great Britain would permit us, as Decius says, ‘to secure to ourselves the whole fur trade?’ To demand such a privilege on our part would be extravagant and ridiculous.” Webster’s clear and rational analysis “operated more powerfully than any other publication in calming the

public mind and restoring confidence in the administration,” wrote Rufus King to John Jay.¹⁰⁴

An exchange among A Whig, Publicola, and Anonymous from the *Columbian Chronicle*, reprinted together in the *Independent Gazetteer*, addressed the issue of foreigners on American soil.¹⁰⁵ One article of the treaty provided that British subjects could reside, operate businesses, and own property in the United States, while Americans had reciprocal rights only in British territory in Europe, thus excluding Americans from setting up shop in Canada or the British West Indies. A Whig made the rather surprising statement that “It is by no means true, that commerce is always advantageous to a nation, although under proper regulations it may certainly be made so ... those concerned in it should be friends to the country in which they carry it on; ... they should have some local attachment, as well as an expectation of profit.” Publicola responded that it was legitimate to be suspicious of foreigners. “It is to be feared that the sentiments of our new inhabitants do not always change with their residence ... [we must consider] how far our political principles have been, or may be, changed by our connections with foreigners with whom we trade; and how far their monied influence may wrap [*sic*, warp?] the minds of our citizens.” Anonymous was adamant that “the people of France, whatever error they may have committed, are contending with the best views, and for the noblest purpose that can actuate the breast; ... the combined armies ... of the British government are raised against them on the most villainous principles, and with the most diabolical views that ever disgraced the heart of man.” In this exchange, none of the authors has been certainly identified. Publicola (Greek:

¹⁰⁴ [Unger, Noah Webster, 204.](#)

¹⁰⁵ A Whig, “Miscellany: from the *Columbian Chronicle: The Republican, No. 5 (Independent Gazetteer [Philadelphia] 1561 (May 3, 1791))*, 1.

Poplicola) was a fairly popular pseudonym during the 1790s, since Publius Valerius Poplicola was the wise Roman lawgiver compared with the Greek lawgiver Solon in Plutarch's *Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, each of Poplicola's three names was used as a pseudonym. Plutarch's portrait of Poplicola (which means *lover of the people*) described a republican hero who was one of the leaders who overthrew Tarquinius Superbus, the last king of Rome. Poplicola was known for his mild and just laws, but also for his implacable opposition to tyranny. He supported and protected the common people, reduced the power of the consul, and established a state treasury. Perhaps this commercial function, along with "the relief of poor citizens [by] taking off their taxes, encourag[ing] their labours," prompted the American Publicola to choose this pseudonym in honor of a man who worked for the prosperity of Roman citizens.¹⁰⁷ Caius was another Roman who opposed Jay's Treaty. Two men are possible authors of an open letter to the President.¹⁰⁸ Matthew Carey (1760-1839) was an Irish immigrant, printer, publisher, and political activist. He was imprisoned in Ireland for anti-British activism, and escaped to the United States, where he published a succession of newspapers, became the major publisher of Bibles in the United States, and established the first American book distribution network.¹⁰⁹ He was a Federalist, but broke with the party over Jay's Treaty. Charles Pinckney (1757-1834) is also known to have written under the pseudonym Caius. A member of a prominent South Carolina family, Pinckney held various public offices, was a delegate to the Constitutional Convention in 1787, and

¹⁰⁶ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 117 ff.

¹⁰⁷ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 124.

¹⁰⁸ Caius, "To the President of the United States," (*Aurora General Advertiser* [Philadelphia] 1439 (July 21, 1795): 2.

¹⁰⁹ James N. Green, "Carey, Matthew," *American National Biography*. Eds. John A. Garraty, Mark C. Carnes, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.)

served four terms as governor of South Carolina.¹¹⁰ Although he was a cousin of Thomas Pinckney, who was the United States minister to Great Britain and supported the treaty, Charles Pinckney opposed it. The letter to the president is written in moderate and respectful language, so we might be inclined to favor the aristocratic South Carolinian over the Irish firebrand as the author, but this is purely speculation. Another clue that favors Pinckney as the author is that it mentions cotton as a commodity forbidden to be exported in American ships; this was more significant to Southern planters than to New England merchants. Caius or Gaius is a very common Roman forename, so it's difficult to be sure whether the writer intended to identify with a particular historical figure and, if so, which one. A possible candidate is Gaius (or Caius) Marius (ca. 157-86 B.C.), the Roman general and politician and the uncle of Julius Caesar.¹¹¹ As tribune of the plebs, Marius "authored a popular bill regulating voting procedures." He was the first to remove the property qualifications for soldiers and raise a volunteer army loyal to an individual rather than to the state. Plutarch noted that Marius was from a common background, was admired for his temperance and endurance, and gained the love of his soldiers by sharing their work and hardships.¹¹² He regarded merit over birth and was "odious to all the nobility." These are good republican virtues, but another admired Caius is perhaps a better candidate as an eponym. Plutarch recounted the life of Caius Gracchus, younger brother of the slain hero, Tiberius Gracchus.¹¹³ This Caius was an educated man who was elected tribune with the overwhelming support of the common people. The laws he proposed included land reform, curbing the power of the Senate,

¹¹⁰ Robert M. Weir, "Pinckney, Charles," *American National Biography*. Eds. John A. Garraty, Mark C. Carnes, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.)

¹¹¹ Paul Roche, "Marius," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. Ed. Michael Gagarin, (Oxford University Press, 2010.) *Oxford Reference*. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

¹¹² Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 494 ff.

¹¹³ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 1007 ff.

allowing all Italians to vote, and regulating the courts. In giving speeches, he was the first to face the people rather than the Senate house, symbolizing his support of democracy over aristocracy. Plutarch noted that the example of Caius Gracchus shows “how much a noble nature and education avail to conquer any affliction.”¹¹⁴ In his choice of a pseudonym, the American Caius may have intended to identify with Caius Marius’ strong defense of the rights of the people and the republic, or with Caius Gracchus’ dedication to justice and the rule of law.

In his “Letter to the President,” Caius said that Americans would find “just and solid objections” to the treaty, “too imperious to be resisted by the genuine patriot.” He listed several omissions and commissions of the treaty: it provided no protection for American seamen from impressment, no compensation was provided for slaves carried away, and no exception was made for cotton in the list of American goods that must be exported in British bottoms. Surrender of the frontier forts could not be “construed to mean less than a total and entire evacuation” immediately, and granting the right of the British to use the Mississippi River without the consent of Spain was a “concession to the British without equivalent benefit.” Caius felt that punitive measures should have been enacted; “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Our own negociator seems to have thought that war first and confiscation afterwards was better than sequestration first and peace afterwards. The power of sequestration or confiscation may be regarded as the American weapon of defence.” He was convinced that Jay’s treaty did not match the President’s “sentiments, your opinions, or your instructions,” and requested that the treaty be submitted to both houses of Congress for debate prior to ratification.

¹¹⁴ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 1019.

Another letter to the President, signed by Scipio, was an impassioned objection to the ratification of the treaty.¹¹⁵ Two men who wrote under this pseudonym were Alexander Hamilton and Uriah Tracy (1755-1807), but neither is a likely author of this letter. Hamilton certainly wouldn't object to the treaty he had all but negotiated. Tracy served as a representative from Connecticut in Congress from 1793-1796 and as a senator from 1796-1807.¹¹⁶ He was educated at Yale, so, like his contemporaries, his education was a classical one. However, Tracy was a Federalist and the Federalists in general supported the treaty. Neither Cushing's *Initials and Pseudonyms: A Dictionary of Literary Disguises* nor biographies of prominent Anti-Federalists such as George Clinton, Melancton Smith, Arthur Fenner, and James Winthrop have provided any clue to the identity of this Scipio. Since Alexander Hamilton had used the same pseudonym, the author's choice of it may have been a subtle insult to his rival, claiming that he, and not Hamilton, was a true champion of the republic.

The Roman honored in the pseudonym is either Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the third century B.C. military and political leader who defeated Hannibal in the Second Punic War or his grandson by adoption, Scipio Aemilianus, who conquered Carthage in the Third Punic War.¹¹⁷ Polybius ascribed to Scipio Africanus all the admirable virtues expected of a Roman hero: sound judgment, beneficence, magnanimity, and the ability to inspire confidence and sympathy in his troops.¹¹⁸ Although the Romans offered to proclaim him king, Scipio Africanus refused any other title than general. Polybius was

¹¹⁵ Scipio, "To the President of the United States," (Aurora General Advertiser [Philadelphia] 1534, Nov. 20, 1795): 2.

¹¹⁶ "Tracy, Uriah," *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, 1774 – Present*, (United States Congress). Web.

¹¹⁷ Ryan R. Abrecht, "Scipio Aemilianus," *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, ed. Michael Gagarin, (Oxford University Press, 2010.) *Oxford Reference*. Web. 5 Dec. 2013.

¹¹⁸ Polybius, *The Complete Histories*, 454 ff.

the tutor and mentor of Scipio Aemilianus, so he was closely acquainted with him.¹¹⁹

Scipio Aemilianus sought to lead a virtuous life, was temperate and courageous, and showed “magnanimity and cleanhandedness in money matters.” Although he defeated Carthage, he wept over the utter destruction of the city that he had ordered. “After being wrapped in thought for long, and realizing that all cities, nations, and authorities must, like men, meet their doom,” he feared for his own country “when he reflected on the fate of all things human.”¹²⁰

Scipio’s letter to the President spoke of Washington’s “maladministration as our chief magistrate” and “lament[ed] the hour in which you resolved to leave the dignity of your retirement.” One of his major objections to the treaty was that it included commercial articles, while Congress alone is empowered to regulate the commerce of the United States. “By this treaty,” he said, “they have made fatal divisions between a part of the government and the people.” In urging Washington to recover the respect of the American people by his immediate resignation, Scipio said, “You now, like Caesar, stand on the bank of the Rubicon. Cato gave him good council. Let him ... disband his legions, come and submit himself to the Senate. Had he followed this advice, Rome might now have been free.” He concluded that “if the treaty you have made is consistent with our honor and interests, it will be carried into effect without your aid. If it is ruinous and degrading, neither you nor all the sycophants who attend your levies, nor all the force of your British allies, can rivet its fetters on our necks.”

Other writers took pen in hand to echo the arguments against the treaty and to express their own opinions with more or less vitriol. William Cushing identified Gracchus as

¹¹⁹ Polybius, *The Complete Histories*, 812 ff.

¹²⁰ Polybius, *The Complete Histories*, 887.

John Thomson (sometimes Thompson) of Petersburg, Virginia, only nineteen years old but already a graduate of William and Mary College and a practicing lawyer.¹²¹ This young man, described by his friends as brilliant and profound, went on to write the “Letters of Curtius”, which criticized Chief Justice John Marshall. His early promise was cut short when he died at the age of twenty-three.¹²² Whether Thomson had in mind Caius or Tiberius Gracchus is not stated, but both were heroes of the Republic. Caius Gracchus, it may be noted, began his public career at a young age; this may have been one reason Thomson selected him as an alter ego. In his *Gracchus No. II*, Thomson vilified Alexander Hamilton, saying that “he infatuated the generous and unsuspecting soul of Washington. An inordinate desire to aggrandize himself has been his ruling passion.”¹²³ He singled out for criticism the proposed measures for the funding of the national debt to pay off state debts to Great Britain, saying that “the funding system, the assumption, and the bank are a triumvirate more dangerous to liberty than Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey.”

Another young man who contributed to the debate on the Republican side was DeWitt Clinton, identified by Cushing as Atticus.¹²⁴ In 1794-95, Clinton was in his twenties and had been working for his uncle, George Clinton, governor of New York, since the age of eighteen as a secretary and propagandist. He went on to serve in the New York Assembly and the United States Congress, and is chiefly remembered as the main

¹²¹ William Cushing, *Initials and Pseudonyms: A Dictionary of Literary Disguises* (New York: Crowell, 1885), 118. *GoogleBooks*.

¹²² Edward A. Wyatt, “John Thomson, Author of ‘The Letters of Curtius’ and a Petersburg Contemporary of George Keith Taylor,” (*The William and Mary Quarterly, Second Series* 16.1, Jan. 1936), 19-25.

¹²³ Gracchus, “From the Petersburg Gazette. Gracchus, no. II,” (*Aurora General Advertiser* [Philadelphia] 1482, Sept. 9, 1795): 2, *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

¹²⁴ Cushing, *Initials and Pseudonyms*, 20.

supporter of building the Erie Canal.¹²⁵ Atticus was a close friend of Cicero, whose *Letters to Atticus* survive. His family claimed descent from the great lawgiver, Numa Pompilius. Atticus left the turmoil of Rome during the time of Caesar and Pompey and studied philosophy in Athens.¹²⁶ Although he didn't take sides in politics himself, Atticus was a lifelong friend of Cicero, a champion of republican ideals. DeWitt Clinton's choice of Atticus as a pseudonym is perhaps a delicate compliment from a young man to his uncle and patron, the governor of New York and prominent republican leader: the youth is a loyal supporter of his respected mentor. Also, just as Atticus claimed descent from a distinguished family, DeWitt Clinton belonged to an eminent family. In a series of nine letters, the modern Atticus criticized the various provisions of the treaty. He accused Jay of deserting France, "a generous and magnanimous ally," while "surrender[ing] the rights of an independent nation into the hands of Great Britain."¹²⁷ In his second letter, Atticus accused John Jay of succumbing to the pleasurable temptations of London and forgetting his duty, and charged President Washington with overstepping his authority in bartering away American rights by treaty.¹²⁸ His third letter addressed the matter of the western forts. Atticus wondered whether the British promise to evacuate them could be trusted, since the British had deceived Americans in the past. "The vocabulary of submission," he said, "appears to have been ransacked to

¹²⁵ "DeWitt Clinton," *Encyclopedia of World Biography*, 2nd ed., vol. 4 (Detroit: Gale, 2004), 112-113. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. 9 April 2014.

¹²⁶ Ernst Badian, "Atticus (Titus Pomponius Atticus)," *Oxford Companion to Classical Civilization*, ed. Simon Hornblower and Tony Spawforth, (Oxford University Press, 1998). *Oxford Reference Online*.

¹²⁷ Atticus, "Letter I to the Freemen of the United States," (*Independent Gazetteer* [Philadelphia] 1689, July 8, 1795), 2. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

¹²⁸ Atticus, "Letter II to the Freemen of the United States," (*Aurora General Advertiser* [Philadelphia] 1441, July 23, 1795), 2. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

suit the American part of the Treaty, and the rights which valour gave and blood confirmed, we seem now to receive as a boon.”¹²⁹

Solon and Philo-Solon weighed in against the treaty, also. Their identities are not known, but their alter ego was one of the great lawgivers of Greece portrayed by Plutarch.¹³⁰ Solon taught and embodied the virtues most admired by the Founding Fathers: he was of middle class birth, wealthy but honest, educated, wise, and magnanimous. He loved to learn and believed that there was no shame in manual labor or trade. As archon, he enacted wise laws and debt reform; when offered the kingship, he declined it. The modern Solon argued in favor of an embargo against Great Britain, whose need for imported food and raw materials from the United States were her weakness. An effective embargo would force Great Britain “to acquiesce in a full redress of our sufferings.”¹³¹ Philo-Solon rehearsed the standard objections to the way the treaty addressed the issues of the western forts, payment of debts, British support of the Indians against Americans, and the infringement of neutral shipping.¹³² The works of Solon and Philo-Solon are couched in moderate and respectful terms, recalling Plutarch’s comment that when Solon and his cousin Peisistratus disagreed about political matters, “their enmity never produced any hot and violent passion.” Valerius, on the other hand, was passionate about his opposition to the treaty in a series of letters to the President of the United States published in the *Aurora*. The popular Publius Valerius Publicola was the source of this pseudonym. Although the identity of

¹²⁹ Atticus, “Letter III to the Freemen of the United States,” (*Independent Gazetteer* [Philadelphia] 1690, July 29, 1795), 2. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

¹³⁰ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 97 ff.

¹³¹ Solon, “From the Aurora,” (*Federal Intelligencer* [Baltimore] 3:547, Aug. 5, 1795), 2. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

¹³² Philo-Solon, “For the Independent Gazetteer. No. I & II,” *Independent Gazetteer* [Philadelphia] 1687 & 1689, July 18 & 25, 1795). *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

the modern Valerius is not known, it's reasonable to speculate that it was Benjamin Franklin Bache, editor and publisher of the *Aurora*, who is known to have written much of the copy that appeared in the paper, to have used multiple pseudonyms, and to have been radically anti-Federalist. His choice of Valerius as a pseudonym illustrates the common learning and ideals among Americans of opposing political parties. They all knew the stories of heroes such as Publicola; they all subscribed to the ideals of liberty, justice, law, and republicanism; and they all believed that they, and not their opponents, most upheld the standards of the ancient models. "It will not be affirmed with a shadow of reason," said Valerius, "that even this Treaty ... will protect us in the unenvied state of degradation and submission, in which we shall be placed by it."¹³³ Valerius railed against the provisions of the treaty and said to President Washington, "We are determined to remain free. Your voice may have been heard when it called to virtue and glory, but it will be lost in the tempest of popular fury whenever it shall speak the language of lawless ambition. The American people, Sir, will look to death the man who assumes the character of an usurper."¹³⁴ In a letter published after the President had signed the treaty, Valerius urged the members of the House of Representatives to repudiate it. "Measures which have kindled the most awful alarm, will submit themselves to your ratification or annihilation. It will be yours to dissipate or to hasten

¹³³ Valerius, "By Particular Desire. From the *Aurora*. No. I, to the President of the United States," (*Greenleaf's New York Journal* 49.67, Aug. 25, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

¹³⁴ Valerius, "From the *Aurora*. No. III, to the President of the United States," (*Argus* [New York]109, Sept. 14, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

the storm which ambition has begun to raise ... If you agree to obliterate our Constitutional land-marks, we cease to be freemen – we are slaves!”¹³⁵

An eloquent and well-reasoned defense of the treaty came from the pen of Marcellus, whom Cushing identified as John Quincy Adams.¹³⁶ Marcellus refers to Marcus Claudius Marcellus, who was a leader of the Roman army under Fabius Maximus in the Second Punic War. He generally supported Fabius’ strategy of caution and a war of attrition against Hannibal, but his eagerness for action and glory sometimes led him into ill-advised battles with the Carthaginian. In this case, the selection of the pseudonym Marcellus might symbolize the support of a younger man for an older, wiser, more cautious leader. Although Adams was abroad at the time the letters were published, it is likely that he was the author. In September 1794, on his way to take up the post of ambassador to The Netherlands, Adams stopped in London to deliver dispatches to John Jay. His consultations with Jay convinced him that the terms of the treaty, while not ideal, would be the best obtainable at the time, and over the months “he conveyed his reflections back home.”¹³⁷ The letters published in August 1795 were written in response to criticism of the treaty by “Constitutionalist.” Marcellus addressed the criticisms methodically and pointed out Constitutionalist’s errors in understanding. In one case he noted that Constitutionalist had added a phrase to the Constitution in order to build his argument that the President was not authorized to negotiate this treaty: “The Constitution does vest ... a power in the President, in conjunction with the Senate, to make treaties *of a certain extent* ... The restrictive clause ‘of a certain extent’

¹³⁵ Valerius, “No. VIII, to the Members of the House of Representatives of the United States,” (*Aurora General Advertiser* [Philadelphia] 1515, Oct. 29, 1795), 2. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1*.

¹³⁶ Cushing, *Initials and Pseudonyms*, 188.

¹³⁷ *A Companion to John Adams and John Quincy Adams*, David Waldstreicher, ed., (Chichester, Eng.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 283.

is an insertion of the Constitutionalist.”¹³⁸ In another letter, Marcellus focused on a positive aspect of the treaty, the 13th Article, which opened up the East Indian trade to American shipping. “By this stipulation,” he said, “the direct trade between America and British East-India possessions becomes our right, and is no longer a sufferance.”¹³⁹ Numa was another defender of the treaty who wrote dispassionately and appealed to his readers to respect the law. Plutarch’s portrait of this legendary lawgiver described a virtuous, disciplined scholar to whom “true bravery ... was regarded as consisting in the subjugation of our passions by reason.”¹⁴⁰ He was an honest judge and eschewed luxury; although he preferred to live a quiet life on his farm, his relatives persuaded him that “government itself is a service of God.” Numa was credited with enacting laws of benefit to the people and with dividing the people into guilds by trade to obliterate the divisive earlier distinction by tribes. Plutarch said that Numa exemplified the virtuous ruler whose good example inspired his citizens “to a conformity with that blameless and blessed life of good-will and mutual concord, supported by temperance and justice, which is the highest benefit that human means can confer.”¹⁴¹ Numa’s modern namesake is unknown, but he clearly identified with his ancient model when he said that “In proportion as passion prevails, reason is silent.”¹⁴² This letter was addressed to the people of Boston who had met at a riotous town meeting to protest the treaty. Numa pointed out that the meeting presumed to criticize a treaty duly executed according to

¹³⁸ Marcellus, “Miscellany. For the Columbian Centinel,” (*Columbian Centinel* [Boston] 23.43, Aug. 5, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

¹³⁹ Marcellus, “Miscellany. For the Columbian Centinel. To the Constitutionalist, no. III,” (*Columbian Centinel* [Boston] 23.47, Aug. 19, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

¹⁴⁰ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 74 ff.

¹⁴¹ Plutarch, *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans*, 91.

¹⁴² Numa, “For the Providence Gazette. Letter I,” (*Providence Gazette* [Providence, R.I.] 32.30, July 25, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

the provisions of the Constitution; by violent protest, the people of Boston had tried to wrest power from the government. He went on to discuss all the objections to the treaty methodically and rationally, noting that the people of Boston didn't have access to all the pertinent documents, that the British had legitimate complaints against the Americans, that John Jay was a highly respected and qualified diplomat, and that Jay was not dealing with a weak nation unaware of its self-interest, but with "a powerful nation already in arms." In his second letter, Numa addressed the question of recompense for slaves carried off by the British after the Revolutionary War, and explained the British point of view that the "slaves" were actually free men, since freedom had been granted to them as soon as they joined the British army.¹⁴³ Pouring oil on troubled waters, Numa advised that if there had been danger of a war with Great Britain, and if there had been further background information against the treaty, the Congress would have known more about it than those at the Boston protest meeting; Congress had ratified the treaty.¹⁴⁴

Agricola also deprecated the effect of unruly town meetings. The right to assemble was acknowledged, but Agricola noted that "this right is held out as justification for the most tumultuary and precipitate decisions on subjects which demand a long and temperate investigation."¹⁴⁵ The people elected the government, and they should trust the government to do its work honestly; if errors are made, "we have orderly ways provided to rectify all mistaken policy." Agricola pointed out that trade was flourishing and the country was prosperous, thanks mostly to good government policies and management,

¹⁴³ Numa, "For the Providence Gazette. Letter II on the Treaty," (*Providence Gazette* [Providence, R.I.] 32:32, Aug. 8, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

¹⁴⁴ Numa, "For the Providence Gazette. Letter III on the Treaty," (*Providence Gazette* [Providence, R.I.] 32:34, Aug. 22, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

¹⁴⁵ Agricola, "For the Vermont Journal," (*Spooner's Vermont Journal* 13:637, Oct. 12, 1795), 1. *Early American Newspapers, 1690-1926, Series 1.*

and “the great body of the people are too well satisfied with their situation wantonly to abandon it and rush into the horrors of either foreign or civil war.” The moderate and practical attitude of this unknown author recalls the solid virtues of the ancient Agricola, whose life was recounted by his son-in-law, the historian Tacitus.¹⁴⁶ Cnaeus Julius Agricola was born into the equestrian order, but through education, diligent performance of his various offices, modesty, wisdom, and honesty was raised to the patrician rank by the emperor Vespasian, who, like Agricola himself, valued competence over high birth. Among other assignments, Agricola served as military tribune in Britain during the time of the Boudiccan revolt, and was later appointed governor of Britain. Returning to Rome after many victories and successes, Agricola entered the city at night so as not to excite an outpouring of praise which would annoy the vain and jealous emperor Domitian. He didn’t seek glory, for “those true blessings, indeed, which consist in virtue, he had fully attained.”¹⁴⁷

Summary

It is clear from the foregoing examples that prominent leaders of the Early Republican era shared a knowledge of and respect for the classics that shaped their ideas and their rhetoric. Their choices of pseudonyms suggest, first, that by using classical pseudonyms the authors sought to place themselves in the coterie of the “best men.” They were educated, loyal citizens who upheld the republican virtues and were exercising their civic duty. Second, they positioned themselves on the side of liberty. Many famous Greeks and Romans are conspicuous by their absence from the list of pseudonyms of

¹⁴⁶ Cornelius Tacitus, *The Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola*, Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, eds. (New York: Random House, 1876). *Perseus Project*. 10 April 2014.

¹⁴⁷ Tacitus, *The Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola*, 44.

both Federalists and Republicans. There are no letters by Agamemnon or Menelaus, by Tarquin or Julius Caesar, by Octavian or Augustus, Hadrian or Constantine; tyrants and emperors are not appropriate models for leaders of a democratic society. Men on both sides of the controversy subscribed to the ideals prescribed for republican leaders by Plutarch, Livy, Tacitus, Polybius and others: education, honesty, humility, selfless service, justice, magnanimity, courage, egalitarianism, hard work, and respect for the law.

Use of any of the pseudonyms examined allowed the authors to claim the ideal republican virtues. In individual cases, however, we can sometimes discern reasons for deliberate, subtle choices, as noted above. Noah Webster's identification with Curtius, who sacrificed himself for Rome, expressed his willingness to enter into the acrimonious debates that he abhorred for the sake of his country. The anonymous Solon followed his ancient model in using moderate language to address those with whom he disagreed. Nineteen-year-old John Thomson signed himself Gracchus, most probably referring to the youthful Caius Gracchus. For these men and their readers, who would have been familiar with the ancient models, classical pseudonyms had a rhetorical power that lent – or was intended to loan – authority, and in many cases added meaning, to the arguments of the writers.

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