From Royal to Republican: The Classical Image in Early America

Caroline Winterer

The discovery of the New World in the fifteenth century triggered a flood of pictorial representations of a new land that few Europeans had ever seen but that they could now imagine as an earthly paradise populated by luxuriant plants, bizarre animals, and hungry cannibals. Yet once resident in that new world, transplanted Europeans maintained a lively interest in the old, especially the ancient classical world. Seen by few but known by many, Greece and Rome were ancient places as fascinating to both Europeans and Americans as the Western Hemisphere was to homebound Europeans. Educated colonial Americans not only read deeply in classical texts, they also looked at pictures of the ancient world in engravings and illustrated books. They not only sought an intellectual grasp of the classical world but also craved a sense of its palpable physicality. Here was a realm of wrestling Greeks, plundering Romans, soaring goddesses, of grand triumphal arches and lowly captives, the whole festooned with foldout maps and lavish title pages.

The classical art of the late eighteenth century (usually called "neoclassical," a term coined in the late 1800s) bulks large in our understanding of republican ideals in the new United States. Many associated the austere neoclassical images that burst upon the scene in the American colonies beginning in the early 1770s with such modern republican ideals as liberty, commercial prosperity, and bucolic simplicity. Neoclassical themes, embodied most memorably in such classical goddesses as Liberty and Minerva, appeared in a staggering variety of places in late eighteenth-century America: paintings, newspapers, journals, broadsides, coins, paper currency, seals, almanacs, punch bowls, flags, wallpaper, architecture, furniture, and fashion. Classicism in printed material was not entirely new, for colonists had seen classical motifs in seventeenth-century mannerism and in the rococo classicism of the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century. But against the ornate, classicized motifs of those styles, the

American neoclassical prints of the late eighteenth century stand out as strikingly new and strikingly political. Peppered with temples and goddesses, eagles and triumphal arches, they announce the new nation as a Rome reborn. But by classifying the neoclassical prints as political, rather than classical, we obscure their roots in the flourishing culture of classical imagery that preceded republican revolution in America. In this article I would like to shift the analytic category and to put the neoclassical prints into an earlier and specifically classical context, the better to see what was kept and lost of an ancient tradition when Americans built their new Rome.[1]

The illustrated classical texts of the 1600s and 1700s, along with engravings sold in the shops of colonial printers and booksellers from Boston to Charleston, presented a notably different view of antiquity than did the later icons of republicanism, a flamboyant spectacle of aristocratic, energetic, and combative activity. The reach of such prints was not, of course, universal: the audience for classical books tended to be elite and educated, but that audience increased significantly as the eighteenth century progressed. Whatever the limitations of their circulation, such classical images did much to shaped Americans' sense of what Greece and Rome were like. Aside from such books and engravings, little in the way of classical imagery was available in the seventeenth century and much of the eighteenth, although the truly wealthy could afford classical paintings in the heroic, mythological style and might pose for their own portraits against such vaguely classical backgrounds as columns. Classical engravings and lavishly illustrated classical texts, published in the 1600s and 1700s and purchased, read, and looked at by colonists, would have figured prominently in educated early Americans' perceptions of ancient societies.

One of the most immediately striking things about such illustrations is their preoccupation with war, their zest for showing arresting details of ancient battle. That interest should become less surprising when we recall how ideals of good citizenship had long incorporated military service. Among the ancient Greeks, the ideal citizen was the soldier-farmer; for Romans martial prowess was a critical prerequisite for service in the upper ranks of government; and modern political philosophers in the republican tradition, such as Niccolò Machiavelli, likewise reconciled ideals of civic virtue with the demands of soldiering. The classical texts most frequently read and cited in colonial America focused on societies that seemed to be in a perpetual state of strife. Homer, Thucydides, Caesar, Livy, Plutarch, and Sallust were just a few of

[1] Robert F. Trent, "The Concept of Mannerism," in *New England Begins: The Seventeenth Century,* vol. III: *Style,* by Jonathan L. Fairbanks and Robert Trent (Boston, 1982), 368–79; Kevin M. Sweeney, "High-Style Vernacular: Lifestyles of the Colonial Elite," in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, 1994), 1–58; Morrison H. Heckscher, *American Rococo, 1750–1775: Elegance in Ornament* (New York, 1991); Phillip M. Johnston, "The William and Mary Style in America," in *Courts and Colonies: The William and Mary Style in Holland, England, and America,* by Reinier Baarsen et al. (New York, 1988), 62–79; Jules David Prown, "Style in American Art: 1750–1800," in *American Art: 1750–1800: Towards Independence,* ed. Charles F. Montgomery and Patricia E. Kane (Boston, 1976), 32–39; Joan D. Dolmetsch, ed., *Eighteenth-Century Prints in Colonial America: To Educate and Decorate* (Williamsburg, 1979). On American neoclassicism, see Graham Hood, "Early Neoclassicism in America," *Antiques,* 140 (Dec. 1991), 980–85; Wendell Garrett, *Neo-Classicism in America: Inspiration and Innovation, 1810–1840* (New York, 1991); Wendy A. Cooper, *Classical Taste in America, 1800–1840* (New York, 1993); Stuart P. Feld, *Boston in the Age of Neo-Classicism, 1810–1840* (New York, 1999); Newark Museum Association, *Classical America, 1815–1845* (Newark, 1963); and Peter Thornton, *Authentic Decor: The Domestic Interior, 1620–1920* (New York, 1984).

the authors routinely read by Americans who focused on the wars of the Greeks and Romans. Popular secondary works such as Charles Rollin's *Ancient History* (1729–1750), a colonial best seller, also treated war in gory detail. Read together, such classical works were practically handbooks for combat ancient Mediterranean style, touching on a variety of useful topics: armor and weaponry; armies and navies; strategy and logistics; conspiracies and sieges; generals and infantry; valor and cowardice; diplomacy, hostage taking, and slave uprisings; the role of conquest in founding cities; and even human suffering on the home front. The belligerence of the ancients would have appeared particularly relevant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to readers in Britain and its North American colonies. The expansion of Britain's commercial empire during that period required a huge navy and army to protect mercantile interests. Britain's territorial and commercial gains in North America came at the price of almost constant warfare.[2]

The bellicose images are all the more striking because they formed part of an emerging ideal of gentlemanly politeness that took root in France and England in the later seventeenth century, in which knowledge of the classical past became part of the behavioral and cultural equipment of the nobility and rising middling classes. Lawrence E. Klein has shown that in England the ideal of politeness reached well beyond the nobility, especially as it was conveyed through such widely accessible institutions as the theater and the coffeehouse and in classical books and engravings. "Politeness," explained Klein, "tended to bring all modes of apprehension—spiritual, cognitive, aesthetic—within the horizon of gentility and cast all such spiritual, intellectual, or creative endeavour as a species of gentlemanly accomplishment."[3] Images of ancient war were thus not necessarily at odds with emerging ideals of gentility and decorum.

The engravings and illustrated classical books that circulated in early America locate the icons of republican revolution in the older visual context in which educated colonists would have viewed them and thereby underscore how new and revolutionary those icons were. In contrast to the warlike images in many of the older pictures, republican icons suggested that the new American republic was a peaceful

    [2] Doyne Dawson, *The Origins of Western Warfare: Militarism and Morality in the Ancient World* (Boulder, 1996), 65–78, 123–42; J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, 1975), 196–204; John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688–1783* (London, 1989), 29. Charles Rollin, *The Ancient History of the Egyptians, Carthaginians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Medes & Persians, Macedonians, and Grecians* (New York, 1729). On Charles Rollin in colonial libraries, see Walter B. Edgar, "Some Popular Books in Colonial South Carolina," *South Carolina Historical Magazine,* 72 (July 1971), 178; Joseph Towne Wheeler, "Booksellers and Circulating Libraries in Colonial Maryland," *Maryland Historical Magazine,* 34 (June 1939), 131; Joseph Towne Wheeler, "Books in Williamsburg [in 1775]," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine,* 15 (Oct. 1906), 106; George K. Smart, "Private Libraries in Colonial Virginia," *American Literature,* 10 (March 1938), 39; Marcus A. McCorison, ed., *The 1764 Catalogue of the Redwood Library Company at Newport, Rhode Island* (New Haven, 1965), 31; James Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers: Transatlantic Literary Community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748–1811* (Columbia, S.C., 2002), 370; and W. H. Bond and Hugh Amory, eds., *The Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723–1790* (Boston, 1996), 154, 232.
    [3] Lawrence E. Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *Historical Journal,* 45 (Dec. 2002), 889. On the connection between classicism and gentility in England, see Charles Saumarez Smith, *Eighteenth-Century Decoration: Design and the Domestic Interior in England* (New York, 1993), 83–85. On France, see Thomas E. Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, 1985), 66–68.

Figure 1. *America Guided by Wisdom*. Artist: John James Barralett. Engraver: B. Tanner. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1820. *Courtesy Winterthur Museum.*

one, resting on small markets and farms, expanding by gentle commerce and planting rather than aggressive acts of war. Such narratives are clearly visible in the iconography of Minerva (Athena), the goddess of wisdom and war. (See figure 1.) In late eighteenth-century American renditions, she appears not in combat but after it, gently beckoning to literature, science, the arts, and commerce, the embodiment of a prosperous republic peacefully achieved. Her great shield leans next to her, as untested by war as her spotless armor, tidy tresses, and snowy robes. Before her stretch the forests and fields of the vast new United States, awaiting settlement. The same was true of another major icon of the new nation, Liberty. Though she might daintily trample oppression underfoot (crushing symbols of monarchy), Liberty was a symbol of serene stasis, not vigorous struggle. Whereas neoclassicism used Liberty and Minerva to represent republicanism as a gentle, peace-loving woman, baroque classicism, in the earlier illustrated books and engravings, had depicted antiquity in an authoritarian idiom, featuring naval battles, massed armies, captured prisoners, desperate slaves, carts of booty, and muscular wrestlers. No serene arcadia of reason, peace, markets, and liberty, this Greece and this Rome were alive with conflict and conquest. Placed in the context of a tradition of representing ancient virtue through military action, the revolutionary-era icons stand out more clearly as signs of a new emphasis within the republican tradition: A focus on virtue achieved through milita-

rism gave way in eighteenth-century America to a focus on virtue achieved through ostensibly more peaceful means, especially small-scale farming.[4]

Classical imagery in and of itself did not point to revolutionary ideology, but that imagery was reinvented to suit the ends of a new political program. The classical world, whether in words or pictures, was no more inherently republican, peaceful, and enlightened than it was monarchical, violent, and ornate. Rather, Americans deliberately made the classical past represent republicanism in the hope of using the moral authority of Greek and Roman antiquity to convey new meanings. Historians of French revolutionary iconography have paid attention to the promotion and active circulation of republican icons such as the female Liberty and their different reception by different social classes. Lynn Hunt has suggested that the image of Hercules, adopted by French radicals in the 1790s, may have appeared different to the educated than to the unschooled. While classically educated elites plugged Hercules into a familiar ancient context of a gigantic people taking control from monarchy, the less educated saw him as a more generic giant from folktales and saints' lives.[5] In America too, artists such as Paul Revere self-consciously created the revolutionary iconography that represented classicism as republicanism. They were influenced by classically learned men who looked to the symbols of the ancient world to promote a modern political program. One example is Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn, a wealthy radical English Whig, religious dissenter, and generous patron of the library of Harvard College after most of its books were destroyed in a 1764 fire. Hollis played an important role in forging America's republican iconographic lexicon. Deeply learned and disillusioned by England's deteriorating relationship with the colonies in the late 1760s, Hollis began doing whatever he could to promote what he called a "spirit of Liberty" in the colonies by printing and disseminating pro-republican medals, prints, books, and book bindings. For this program, he could turn not just to original coins and art acquired on his grand tour but also to his well-stocked library of antiquarian books. It was not just the originals of antiquity, then, but the renderings of them in early modern books and engravings that helped fuel the turn toward neoclassicism. In his books Hollis would have found, for example, an icon of Liberty recruited, not from an actual coin or vase, but from Antonio Agostini's *Intorno alle medaliè, inscrittioni, & altre antichita* (1625). Similarly, Hollis could have acquired ideas for his simplified, classicized "republican" typefaces and layouts not only from genuine inscriptions but also from such books as Raphaelis Fabretti's stout *Inscriptionum*

⁴ Drawn by John J. Barralett, engraved by Benjamin Tanner, *America Guided by Wisdom: An Allegorical Representation of the United States, Denoting Their Independence and Prosperity,* 1815–1824, engraving reproduced in *Two Centuries of Prints in America, 1680–1880: A Selective Catalogue of the Winterthur Museum Collection,* ed. E. McSherry Fowble (Charlottesville, 1987), 460; Edward Savage, *Liberty,* 1796, engraving reproduced *ibid.*, 458. For the rise of Liberty in America's revolutionary and early national iconography, see E. McClung Fleming, "From Indian Princess to Greek Goddess: The American Image, 1783–1815," *Winterthur Portfolio,* 3 (1967), 37–66; and Nancy Jo Fox, *Liberties with Liberty: The Fascinating History of America's Proudest Symbol* (New York, 1986). For the pastoral strain in American republicanism, see Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (Chapel Hill, 1980), 69–75.

⁵ Lynn Hunt, "Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution," *Representations,* 1 (Spring 1983), 95–117; Joan Landes, *Visualizing the Nation: Gender, Representation, and Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Ithaca, 2001); Maurice Agulhon, *Marianne into Battle: Republican Imagery and Symbolism in France, 1789–1880,* trans. Janet Lloyd (Cambridge, Eng., 1981).

Antiquarum (1681).[6] Let us now turn to this early period, to look at the variety of images colonial Americans could see.

Ancient Greece and Rome in Colonial Images

Why did colonial Americans read about ancient Greece and Rome and gaze at the pictures of those distant places and times in their books and engravings? The so-called classical reading of early Americans often seems so pious and starchy a political and literary activity that it is difficult to grasp why they appeared so enthusiastic about antiquity. Yet that perception is perhaps our fault more than theirs, for we have thoroughly investigated early Americans' classical *reading* at the expense of the more tangible, impassioned *aesthetics* of their classicism. Classical engravings and illustrated classical texts suggest that early Americans' engagement with Greece and Rome was not only an intellectual but also an emotional, sensual exercise undertaken in an age when few images were available to Americans. Books to which they had access included histories of Greece and Rome, English translations of ancient prose and poetry, and catalogs of antiquities. They appear in the inventories of private individuals, booksellers, and colleges up and down the colonies (though on the whole they were not central to the formal college curriculum). They helped sustain a widespread interest in the classical past in both America and Europe. In some well-stocked colonial libraries, classical texts ranked in numbers close to the ever-popular Christian devotional works. Also important in shaping Americans' perception of Greece and Rome were engravings of classical subjects such as views of Roman ruins, portraits of Caesar, and images based on paintings of classical themes produced by such late eighteenth-century English engravers as John Boydell.[7]

Such engravings and classical texts are not strictly American in the sense of having been engraved or written by colonists themselves. Like many colonial religious texts, they were imported to the colonies from England and the Continent, a situation that persisted until the mid-1700s. There were several reasons for Americans' dependence on Europe for classical engravings and books. First, in the seventeenth century, there were few printers in the colonies, and printing was an expensive and cumbersome

[6] Clarence S. Brigham, *Paul Revere's Engravings* (New York, 1969); on Thomas Hollis, see David D. Hall, "Learned Culture in the Eighteenth Century," in *A History of the Book in America,* vol. I: *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World,* ed. Hugh Amory and David D. Hall (Cambridge, Eng., 2000), 414; W. H. Bond, *Thomas Hollis of Lincoln's Inn: A Whig and His Books* (Cambridge, Eng., 1992), 97; Frank H. Sommer, "The Metamorphoses of Britannia," in *American Art: 1750–1800,* ed. Montgomery and Kane, 40–49; and Frank H. Sommer, "Thomas Hollis and the Arts of Dissent," in *Prints in and of America to 1850,* ed. John D. Morse (Charlottesville, 1970), 111–59. Antonio Agostini, *Dialoghi di D. Antonio Agostini, arcivescovo di Tarracona, intorno alle medaglie, inscrittioni, & altre antichità* (Dialogues of D. Antonio Agostini, archbishop of Tarracona, about ancient coins, inscriptions, and also antiques) (1625; Rome, 1698), 82 (Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University, Durham, N.C.); Raphaelis Fabretti, *Inscriptionum Antiquarum* (Book of ancient inscriptions) (Rome, 1699).

[7] Joan Dolmetsch, "Prints in Colonial America: Supply and Demand in the Mid-Eighteenth Century," in *Prints in and of America to 1850,* ed. Morse, 53–74; Gerald W. R. Ward, ed., *The American Illustrated Book in the Nineteenth Century* (Winterthur, 1987), vii; Museum of Graphic Art, *American Printmaking, the First 150 Years* (New York, 1969); Arthur M. Hind, *A History of Engraving and Etching from the Fifteenth Century to the Year 1914* (New York, 1963); Sinclair H. Hitchings, "New York's Pioneer Printsellers," *Print Collector's Newsletter,* 4 (March–April 1973), 4–6.

process. No New England printer or bookseller in the 1600s produced learned books or school books for use in grammar schools or at Harvard College (the only college in the colonies until the late 1600s). James Otis speculated to John Adams that as late as the 1760s either there were no Greek typefaces in the country, or no printers knew how to use them. Because Latin and Greek were required in the curricula of the first grammar schools and colleges, colonists relied on imported or borrowed books and even on handwritten copies of textbooks. Similarly, the first datable print in the colonies was made in 1670. Despite such barriers, colonial library inventories show that early Americans kept scrupulously up-to-date on their classical reading.[8]

The convention of textual illustration developed during the Middle Ages, when illumination—magnificent visual embellishment—of religious manuscripts served a variety of functions. Emerging with the rise of the printing press in the fifteenth century, illustrated books carried those conventions over into the age of widely disseminated print. As part of the intellectual project of reading, illustrations accentuated important moments in the narrative; explicated difficult or contradictory passages in the text; preserved the fame and essential character traits of great men (including the modern author, whose head was frequently shown in classical-style bust on the frontispiece); and made other times in history more appealing and more convincingly real to modern readers. As illustrators of plot, pictures could help the semiliterate or illiterate participate in a culture of classical learning, much as the salons and card tables of the eighteenth century opened the world of belles lettres and classical erudition to women. Artists and craftsmen relied on illustrated books to learn about new styles of embellishment or illustration. Lace makers and stained-glass cutters, for example, looked in such books to find inspiration for their own projects. Illustrated books also served a social function. In the luxury goods market, they were given as gifts and displayed as signs of social status. As such, they formed part of the belletristic ideal shared by elites in colonial America. Some colonial portraits feature books, along with wineglasses, wigs, and elegant furniture, as signs of their owners' literary and economic attainments. Certain lavishly illustrated classical books, such as John Ogilby's and Alexander Pope's translations of Homer, were explicitly aimed at a genteel audience of those who were not necessarily conversant in Greek and Latin. Yet the genteel market was not necessarily small: Some of the first books in Europe sold by the new method of public subscription were classical—in France, Bernard de Montfaucon's *Antiquité expliquée* (1716), and in England, Pope's *Iliad* (1715–1720).[9]

[8] Stephen Botein, "The Anglo-American Book Trade before 1776: Personnel and Strategies," in *Printing and Society in Early America,* ed. William L. Joyce et al. (Worcester, 1983), 48–82; David Lundberg and Henry F. May, "The Enlightened Reader in America," *American Quarterly,* 28 (Summer 1976), 262–71; David D. Hall, "Readers and Writers in Early New England," in *History of the Book in America,* I, ed. Amory and Hall, 133. For the statement of James Otis, see Meyer Reinhold, "Introduction," in *The Classick Pages: Classical Reading of Eighteenth-Century Americans,* ed. Meyer Reinhold (University Park, 1975), 7; Richard B. Holman, "Seventeenth-Century American Prints," in *Prints in and of America to 1850,* ed. Morse, 23. The inventory of the library of John Harvard, who died in 1637, shows that 25% of the contents had been printed in or after 1630; see Alfred C. Potter, "Catalogue of John Harvard's Library," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts,* 21 (March 1919), 192.

[9] Sandra Hindman, *Text and Image in Fifteenth-Century Illustrated Dutch Bibles* (Leiden, 1977), 20, 26, 27; Alain Boureau, "Books of Emblems on the Public Stage: *Côté jardin* and *côté cour,*" in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe,* ed. Roger Chartier (Princeton, 1989), 261–89; Elizabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern*

Illustrated classical texts published in the 1600s and 1700s reveal several preoccupations and dilemmas faced by early modern Europeans who wanted to depict the ancient world in pictures. The first, oddly enough, was the inaccessibility of that world. Although the classical past was exceedingly familiar from literature, its material culture remained elusive in the seventeenth century. Aside from merchants, few Europeans had been to Greece, then part of the Ottoman Empire, and seen its antiquities. One of the first Europeans to get up and go there was George Wheler, in 1675; he returned to publish *A Journey into Greece* (1682), a book filled with primitive renderings of cities and monuments such as the Parthenon, "the most beautiful piece of Antiquity remaining in the World." Rome, of course, was more accessible, but much of the classical city—*Roma nobilis*—had been abandoned or obscured by mud and debris. One had to pry away the medieval barnacles or to dig intrepidly into latrines to get at the actual ancient city, and even then popular legend so distorted reality that it was difficult to sort out what went where (travelers complained that the locals called every large ruin a bath). That was in part why the unearthing of the ancient Roman cities of Herculaneum (which began in 1736) and Pompeii (which began in 1748) was so exciting: They revealed pristine scenes of ancient Roman life in its totality.[10]

A second preoccupation of classicism at this time was antiquarianism. Today, we use the term "antiquarian" disparagingly to mean a person who collects trivial objects, but well into the 1700s the lovers of antique objects flourished happily alongside the scholarly readers of classical texts, and their researches had urgent, practical political uses for the modern state. The ancient Roman antiquarian Varro, who lived in the first century BCE, was among the first—and certainly the most influential—to create a systematic survey of Roman life from evidence in both texts and such material remains as inscriptions and monuments. Varro helped inaugurate what became know as *antiquitates:* recovering a civilization by recovering its relics. Renaissance humanists happily adopted this idea and added their own, for example, the classifying of such relics into four major categories: *antiquitates publicae, privatae, sacrae,* and *militares.* As scholars from the fifteenth century onward became more convinced of the merits of communing with the dead through relics, the popularity of books of antiquities spread. Some collections swelled into veritable museums of classical antiquities, assembling in astonishing quantity the relics from many aspects of antique life, such as coins, armor, and inscriptions, forming a precious supplement to

Europe (2 vols., Cambridge, Eng., 1979), I, 67–70; Lucien Fèbvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450–1800,* trans. David Gerard (London, 1976), 94, 96; Francis Haskell, *History and Its Images: Art and the Interpretation of the Past* (New Haven, 1993), 71; Lisa Jardine, *Worldly Goods: A New History of the Renaissance* (New York, 1996), 135–80; H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven, 2001), 59–60; Katherine S. Van Eerde, *John Ogilby and the Taste of His Times* (Folkestone, Eng., 1976), 36; Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, 1994), 176. Bernard de Montfaucon, *Antiquity Explained and Represented in Sculptures,* trans. David Humphreys (10 vols., plus 5-vol. supplement, London, 1721–1725); Alexander Pope, *The Iliad of Homer* (1715–1720; 6 vols., London, 1750) (Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill).

[10] George Wheler, *A Journey into Greece* (London, 1682), 360 (Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University); Joseph M. Levine, *The Battle of the Books: History and Literature in the Augustan Age* (Ithaca, 1991), 167; Anthony Grafton, *Bring Out Your Dead: The Past as Revelation* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 33.

the textual study of antiquity. Among the best-known antiquarians was the French cleric Montfaucon (1655–1741), whose *Antiquité expliquée* (published in English in 1721–1722) is stuffed with images of every conceivable physical remain of the ancient world, from monuments and sculptures to keys and sandals. Montfaucon believed that material remains were an invaluable supplement to verbal descriptions, which tended to be so long-winded and inaccessible that they could "scarce be read over in a Man's Life." Montfaucon's work, by contrast, reproduced what he called "Objects of the Sight" in such compact form that someone could learn about "all Antiquity" in less than two years.[11]

Modern historians have attacked the seventeenth-century antiquarians for paying little attention to chronology. Most obviously, such books as Montfaucon's jumble together piles of artifacts with little enthusiasm for sorting by date. Early modern authors and illustrators were of course fully aware of the chronological distance between the ancient and modern worlds. They often commented on what made antiquity different from modernity and debated the degree to which Homer, for example, had distinguished his own time from that of the Greeks and Trojans of roughly two and a half centuries earlier. Yet in visual renderings it was difficult to sort out material artifacts coherently because literary and visual remains were often contradictory and because they were seldom studied together in the systematic way that historians began to insist on in the 1700s. Before the mid-1700s antiquarians and historians also believed that artifacts from antiquity, such as coins or sculptures, faithfully depicted the events conventionally linked with them. Portrait coins and busts, for example, were often literally taken at face value: They supposedly revealed the character of the person they depicted (an ugly person had a bad character and so on). That belief made medallions popular for use in books of Greek and Roman history—they were a simple, easy way to convey essential character information about ancient personages. This explains why books of ancient history such as Temple Stanyan's *Grecian History* (1707) had only medallions as illustrations. (See figure 2.) If the portrait contradicted what was in verbal evidence, however, the latter was taken as the more authoritative. Antiquarians and historians also believed that all important events would generate images and that a lack of imagery somehow detracted from the event's importance. Thus surviving material remains were plugged into known events, with little concern for whether they emerged at the time of the event or depicted anything having to do with the event.[12]

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[11] On the emerging distinction between ancient history and antiquarianism, see Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* 13 (nos. 3–4, 1950), 288–90; and Haskell, *History and Its Images,* 159–200. On antiquarianism as a practical, political pursuit, see Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Europe: Learning and Virtue in the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven, 2000), 76–101. Eighteenth-century American magazines refer to *Antiquity Explained* frequently. Some of the volumes are listed in eighteenth-century library inventories such as those of the Harvard library of 1725 and the Redwood Library Company of Newport, Rhode Island, of 1764. See Thomas G. Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England, 1620–1730* (1920; New York, 1966), 294; and McCorison, ed., *1764 Catalogue of the Redwood Library Company at Newport, Rhode Island,* 10. Montfaucon, *Antiquity Explained and Represented in Sculptures,* trans. Humphreys, I, unpaginated 2, 3.

[12] Levine, *Battle of the Books,* 165–66, 208; Haskell, *History and Its Images,* 86; Temple Stanyan, *The Grecian History, Volume the First, Containing the Space of about 1684 Years, Adorn'd with Cuts* (London, 1707) (Special Collections and University Archives, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.). A copy of *Grecian History* was in the Har-

Figure 2. Portrait medallions of Greek warriors. From Temple Stanyan, *Grecian History* (London, 1707). *Courtesy Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries.*

Whatever its frustrations, antiquarianism and the lavish pictures it generated filled a real need, the yearning to come into authentic contact with antiquity, to speak to the illustrious dead. What did Cleopatra look like? How did a trireme work? As the antiquarians' fourfold classification suggests, their project promised to pry open such topics as ancient religions and families, supplementing the grand, bombastic deeds recounted by a Thucydides with the quieter rhythms of private life. It was here that one could gather information about the ancients on a more human scale: how they played, what they ate, where they slept. Yet, despite the effervescence of antiquarian study, written texts continued to command unrivaled authority in early modern European and colonial American conceptions of antiquity. That fact explains the total lack of illustrations in books with titles that seem to promise pictures, such as Thomas Godwyn's *Romanae Historia Anthologia Recognita et Aucta,* often called *Roman Antiquities* (1628). After getting past the classical columns encasing the title

page, readers were left stranded in a forest of uninterrupted words. Godwyn described Roman civil, political, religious, and military matters, dutifully consulting the ancient authors, with nary a nod to things.[13]

With these pictorial impluses and concerns in mind, let us look at some illustrated classical texts read and viewed by colonial Americans to get a sense of how the classical world appeared to them before the dissemination of republican icons. A good place to begin charting the image of antiquity in colonial America is the popular editions of Homer's *Iliad,* among the classical works most commonly found in colonial libraries. It is frequently listed in colonial library inventories, though often opaquely as, for example, "Homers Illiads," so that the precise edition is impossible to discern. A poem about the long Greek siege of Troy, the *Iliad* had long set the standard for inspiring narratives of wars nobly fought, and the epic also served as a major source of knowledge about Greek mythology and early Greek life. Homer was also a *cause célèbre* at the time, the crux of the battle of the books that raged in England and France in the late 1600s and early 1700s. Was he inferior or superior to the moderns? In this feverish climate of Homeric interest, translating his epics became something of a cottage industry, though reading the works in Greek always remained the badge of the dyed-in-the-wool gentleman (as is clear from the 1709–1712 diary of the intensely status-conscious Virginia planter William Byrd, who repeatedly insisted that he read his Homer in Greek). But translations promised to increase the audience for the classics, enriching publishers and authors alike in an age of expanding literacy.[14]

Among the first translations and visual representations of Homeric society available to Americans was George Chapman's rhyming-verse translation of Homer's *Iliad* (1598–1611). In a five-page tribute, Chapman dedicated his gold-rimmed oeuvre "To the Imortall Memorie, of the Incomparable Heroe, Henrye Prince of Wales." Only the title page has a full-page illustration, but it neatly presents key elements of the *Iliad.* (See figure 3.) Flanking the title, as human columns, stand the chief combatants of the Trojan War distilled to two: the Greek Achilles on the left and the Trojan Hector on the right (labeled for the uninitiated). Plucked from their ancient contexts, they casually await combat among the leaves and fruit of a heavy baroque facade. Their armor suggests their antiquity: helmets, pikes, shields, breastplates. Yet the suggestion of antiquity is quickly nullified by the utter modernity of the details, for these men epitomize the ideal of the seventeenth-century gentleman, with their curling mustaches, feathered helmets, and languid postures, hoisting their heavy shields as though they were empty knapsacks.[15]

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[13] Thomas Godwyn, *Romanae Historiae Anthologia Recognita et Aucta: An English Exposition of the Roman Antiquities: Wherein Many Roman and English Offices are Parallel'd, and Divers Obscure Phrases Explain'd* (Oxford, 1628). On various editions of this work in the British American colonies, see Arthur O. Norton, "Harvard Text-Books and Reference Books of the Seventeenth Century," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts,* 28 (April 1933), 407; Edwin Wolf II, *The Library of James Logan of Philadelphia, 1674–1751* (Philadelphia, 1974), 187; Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England, 1620–1730,* 279; and Bond and Amory, eds., *Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723–1790,* 177.

[14] "Libraries in Colonial Virginia," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine,* 2 (April 1894), 249; Louis B. Wright and Marion Tinling, eds., *The Secret Diary of William Byrd of Westover, 1709–1712* (Richmond, 1941).

[15] George Chapman, *The Whole Works of Homer: Prince of Poetts* (1609; London, 1616), first page after title
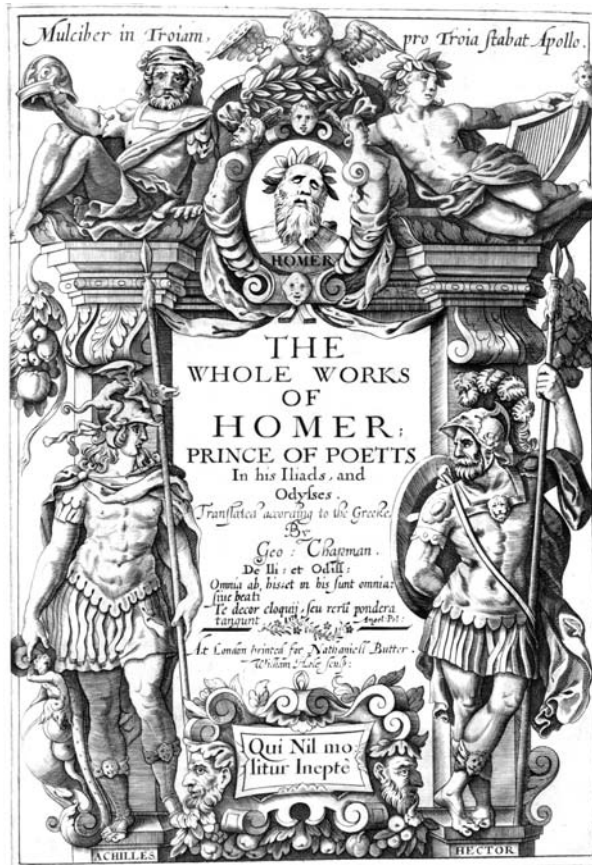
Figure 3. Title page from George Chapman, *The Whole Works of Homer; Prince of Poetts* (1609; London, 1616). *Courtesy Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

Chapman's Homeric heroes reveal the perpetuation of an artistic convention that the art historian Erwin Panofsky identified first among medieval artists, which he called the "principle of disjunction." Artists made little effort to make classical figures seem authentically classical, instead modernizing landscapes, buildings, clothing, and armor so that the figures appeared to be living in a medieval world. Medieval renditions of the goddess Minerva, for example, show her looking a lot like, say, the twelfth-century queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, complete with wimple, a totally different goddess from revolutionary America's chesty blonde warrior. Renaissance artists, influenced by humanists' emendations of classical texts, began to insist on temporal correctness in their paintings and greater verisimilitude, such as focused perspective, unified composition, and plausible costuming. Despite those innovations, however,

page (Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina). There were copies in the libraries of John Carter (1690), John Harvard (1637), and eighteenth-century South Carolinians; see "Libraries in Colonial Virginia," *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine,* 8 (July 1899), 18–22; Potter, "Catalogue of John Harvard's Library," 210; and Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers,* 189.

Renaissance and baroque artists continued to draw on contemporary artistic styles and social mores in depicting costumes, hairstyles, backgrounds, and body postures. Chapman's readers, in other words, would not have been especially jarred by the jumbling of chronological periods in this baroque facade, instead plugging it into their frame of reference, which emphasized the timeless beauties of antiquity rather than its location in a particular historical time.[16]

A second English translation of the *Iliad,* big and sumptuously illustrated, was John Ogilby's *Homer, His Iliads* (1660). Dedicated to the restored Stuart king, "the High and Mighty Monarch Charles the Second," the book pictures a timeless antiquity that glorifies the aspirations of the Restoration aristocracy, ideals dear to America's planter gentry. Ogilby's wealthy subscribers ensured that numerous illustrations festooned the 520-page translation. Often the name of the patron appears somewhere in the picture, but the illustrations also show the concern of seventeenth-century translators of Homer to reach beyond a scholarly or male audience. Thomas Hobbes, for example, had embarked on his own translation of Homer to help women to read classical poetry, which was beyond the grasp of most in the original. Many of Ogilby's illustrations represent the action described in the first few lines of the page; rapid perusers could get a sense of the general trend of the narrative with little reading. But the book also stored treats for the pedantic, marginalia in tiny script supplying a scholarly commentary on the work. Here was a book for many audiences.[17]

Ogilby's vivid battle scenes do not depict a particular historical time, but rather are noble landscapes framing noble, timeless themes. Who could blame him? Ogilby stated flat out that "the Time wherein Homer lived" was of "great uncertainty." One illustration shows Trojan soldiers filing neatly out of the city to meet the attacking Greeks. (See figure 4.) Typically for a monarchist, Ogilby places the leaders abruptly in the foreground, about four times as big as what he calls "th' Auxiliary Band," an army of undifferentiated ants. By contrast, the five muscular aristocrats, dressed in glorious regalia, converse amiably as splendid fluffs sprout triumphantly from their helmets. They are models of gentlemanly politeness, decorous on the cusp of battle. A pastoral landscape of gently rolling hills and leafing trees recedes to the gates of Troy. This Troy is not a particular city, but a generic rendition that appeared in countless illustrations of the time: it could be London, Prague, Rome, Constantinople. What mattered was to capture the essentials of urbanity as depicted in art. Here is a pristinely unruined early modern European city, encircled by medieval walls, capped by rounded turrets. Amid this apparently ancient Trojan scene stands, implausibly, an obelisk, partly obscured by a massive hat feather.[18]

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[16] Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art* (Stockholm, 1966), 84, fig. 50; Eisenstein, *Printing Press as an Agent of Change,* I, 257.

[17] John Ogilby, *Homer, His Iliads. Translated, Adorn'd with Sculpture, and Illustrated with Annotations* (1660; London, 1669), first page (Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina); Van Eerde, *John Ogilby and the Taste of His Times,* 41, 43. Thomas Hobbes was an accomplished classicist, translating a number of Greek texts into English; see Aloysius P. Martinich, *Hobbes: A Biography* (Cambridge, Eng., 1999), 7.

[18] Ogilby, *Homer, His Iliads,* 68.

Figure 4. Trojan soldiers assembling for battle. From John Ogilby, *Homer, His Iliads* (1660; London, 1669). *Courtesy Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

A hodgepodge of time periods that jars the modern viewer, Ogilby's picture of an ostensibly ancient Mediterranean conflict conformed exactly to the conventions of pastoral landscape in the 1600s. The landscape presents a world of nature and civilization unruffled by human passion, even on the brink of battle. The city, the obelisk, and the costumes symbolize, not an actual historical time, but the ideal of life ruled by the orderly workings of society. Nobles calmly lead, soldiers neatly follow, tranquillity is restored. Pictures of actual combat in Ogilby's *Iliad* dwell on similar themes drawn from the pastoral tradition. The gods, described as "the Court," lounge on billowing clouds and gaze down at a scene of shocking carnage, though the combatants wear expressions that display the Christian virtues of compassion and gentleness. (See figure 5.)[19]

The most popular translations of Homer in the colonies were Pope's *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* the sales of which totaled nearly twenty thousand copies in the year 1774,

[19] *Ibid.*, 427.

Figure 5. The gods observe the Trojan War. From John Ogilby, *Homer, His Iliads* (1660; London, 1669). *Courtesy Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

and which were steady sellers before and after. The first of the six volumes of Pope's *Iliad* began to appear in the year 1715, and by 1717, when he was only twenty-five years old, Pope enjoyed a literary celebrity of unprecedented magnitude. In the American colonies, aspiring writers eager to tie themselves to the British mercantile world of polite letters worshiped Pope. "He, wondrous Bard!" exclaimed Mather Byles of Massachusetts in 1726 in a published tribute. Not everyone was blinded by Pope: some charged that he had so "improved" Homer's primitive story with his graceful stanzas that he had distorted the meaning. "In the midst of the elegance and luxuriancy of Mr. Pope's language," charged Hugh Blair in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783), another staple of eighteenth-century American reading, "we lose sight of the old Bard's simplicity." Pope, however, thought his translations out-shone those of his predecessors, calling Hobbes's "too mean for criticism" (though apparently not mean enough to stop Pope from using some of their ideas).[20]

[20] Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer,* trans. Alexander Pope (London, 1771); Frank Luther Mott, *Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States* (New York, 1947), 316. Pope's translations regularly appear in colonial library inventories. See Edgar, "Some Popular Books in Colonial South Carolina," 177; Wolf, *Library of*

Pope worked hard to make sure that the volumes of his *Iliad* were noble monuments in and of themselves. In both quarto and folio editions, they were financed by the subscriptions of wealthy readers and "printed . . . on the finest Paper, and on a Letter new Cast on purpose, with Ornaments and initial Letters engraven on Copper." Their sale made Pope a wealthy man. Pope asked that each chapter be preceded by images that illustrated the Homeric text, and this feature was repeated in subsequent editions sold in the colonies. We know that at least one woman found such images compelling. Maria Bissell, who attended a Connecticut academy, in 1810 made a silk embroidery of the frontispiece of an 1808 Boston edition of Pope's *Iliad,* which depicted the teary parting of Hector and Andromache. The style of these illustrations should not surprise us: they might be straight out of Ogilby, with their soldier-gentlemen poised in a timeless arcadia.[21]

Beyond Homer, another popular genre, the book of antiquities, also focused on military conflict in the ancient world, depicting it as a glorious, violent, and hierarchical activity. The two standard reference works on antiquities at this time in England and America were John Potter's *Archaeologiae Graecae* (1697) and Basil Kennett's *Romae Antiquae* (1696). Small enough to fit into a pocket, they appear in several inventories of colonial libraries and were used even into the nineteenth century. It is easy to see why they were so popular. Text aside, the illustrations are so wonderful and imaginative that it can be difficult to find a copy whose pictures have not been cut out. While the illustrations in books of well-known stories such as Homer's were limited by the story line, the pictures in books of antiquities could freely portray whatever struck the author's fancy. Yet Potter's and Kennett's books reveal the same preoccupations we have traced in the editions of Homer's *Iliad.* They focus on war, they locate the ancients in no particular time, and they lean heavily on written sources even though their ostensible subject is the material vestiges of antiquity. Potter's book, for example, is a collection of slices of Greek life as though little had changed among "the Greeks" over many hundreds of years. His illustration of nude, wrestling Greek men draws on ancient literary sources from Homer to Pausanias, although nearly a thousand years separated the two writers.[22]

James Logan of Philadelphia, 1674–1751, 394–95; Hunter Dickinson Farish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773–1774: A Plantation Tutor of the Old Dominion* (Williamsburg, 1943), 39, 228; Wheeler, "Booksellers and Circulating Libraries in Colonial Maryland," 113, 133; Wheeler, "Books in Williamsburg [in 1775]," 101, 111; McCorison, ed., *1764 Catalogue of the Redwood Library Company at Newport, Rhode Island,* 66, 80; Smart, "Private Libraries in Colonial Virginia," 34; "Catalogue of the Library of Daniel Park Custis [c. 1759]," *Virginia Historical Magazine,* 17 (1909), 407; and Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers,* 370. Mather Byles quoted in David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 246; Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1785; 3 vols., New York, 1970), III, 244; Alexander Pope quoted in Martinich, *Hobbes,* 339.

[21] Pope, *Iliad of Homer,* I, 1; Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: A Life* (New York, 1985), 266; Betsy Ring, *Girlhood Embroidery: American Samplers and Pictorial Needlework, 1650–1850* (2 vols., New York, 1993), I, 215.

[22] John Potter, *Archaeologiae Graecae; or, the Antiquities of Greece* (2 vols., London, 1697), I, 412 (Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University); Basil Kennett, *Romae Antiquae Notitia; or, the Antiquities of Rome* (London, 1696) (Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina). Many of the illustrations in the University of North Carolina's copy of Kennett have been excised. For an intact 1721 edition, see Basil Kennet, *Romae Antiquae* (London, 1721) (Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University). For holdings of Potter's and Kennett's works in colonial libraries, see Edgar, "Some Popular Books in Colonial South Carolina," 178; Wheeler, "Books in Williamsburg [in 1775]," 104; Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England, 1620–1730,* 189; McCorison, ed., *1764 Catalogue of the Redwood Library Company at Newport,*

Like Potter's book, Basil Kennett's widely used *Romae Antiquae* vividly depicted everyday religious and especially military life among the Romans, with foldout and captioned pictures of the Roman navy and the army's famous insignia. Kennett's dedication of the book clearly revealed an aristocratic, military conception of the role of war in ancient and early modern conceptions of virtue. "There is one Custom which I am apt to fancie YOUR HIGHNESS will read with particular Pleasure; I mean, SIR, the TROJAN GAME, a Martial Exercise, perform'd by the Youth of the first Quality in *Rome,* under such a Captain as Your self." Tying the noble qualities of his modern patron with those of ancient Romans, Kennett described how the armed boys in the game were taken "out of the noblest Families; and the Captain of them had the honourable Title of *Princeps Juventutis;* being sometimes the next Heir to the Empire; and seldom less than the Son of a principal Senator." Such themes of aristocratic and military might in ancient Rome carried over in Kennett's illustrations. One in particular, a schematic drawing of a Roman triumphal march through the city's arches, clearly lays out the benefits of war to Rome and the costs to its conquered peoples. (See figure 6.) The emperor triumphant, trailed by a floating angel, enters the city, flanked by soldiers and led by blaring trumpets. Carts of booty—money, inscriptions—plod along. Directly in the emperor's field of vision stagger the human captives: not just men, the caption reminds us, but families, including women and small children. Kennett's image of the Roman triumphal procession was iconic in the early modern period, part of a small industry devoted to depicting the parallels between triumphant Romans and victorious moderns such as Charles V in sixteenth-century Italy.[23]

From Colony to Empire: The Parable of the Continence of Scipio

What happened to these classical images during and after the Revolution? While iconographers of the Revolution kept generating a small number of formulaic classical images such as Liberties and eagles to convey the political ideals of the new republic, classical books persevered all the while in the older tradition of flamboyant, bellicose illustration. The older pictorial tradition, in other words, did not disappear during the Revolution but rather formed a separate current running next to republicanism's neoclassicism. Many illustrated books of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries shed the obvious padding of the baroque age, such as gaudy costuming, lush greenery, and heavy framing facades. But they continued to feature the kinds of themes that we saw earlier: scenes of battle, private life, and public ritual and medallions, busts, and statuary. Some illustrations were lifted wholly from earlier books, including Kennett's *Romae Antiquae,* showing that the older tradition was alive and

Rhode Island, 31, 81; "Catalogue of the Library of Daniel Park Custis," 408; Wolf, *Library of James Logan of Philadelphia, 1674–1751,* 396; Smart, "Private Libraries in Colonial Virginia," 38; Farish, ed., *Journal and Letters of Philip Vickers Fithian, 1773–1774,* 223, 224; Raven, *London Booksellers and American Customers,* 367, 370; and Bond and Amory, eds., *Printed Catalogues of the Harvard College Library, 1723–1790,* 175–77.
   [23] Kennett, *Romae Antiquae* (1721), 46, 207, 225; Kennett, *Romae Antiquae Notitia* (1696), unpaginated preface, 252; Randolph Starn and Loren Partridge, *Arts of Power: Three Halls of State in Italy, 1300–1600* (Berkeley, 1992), chap. 3.
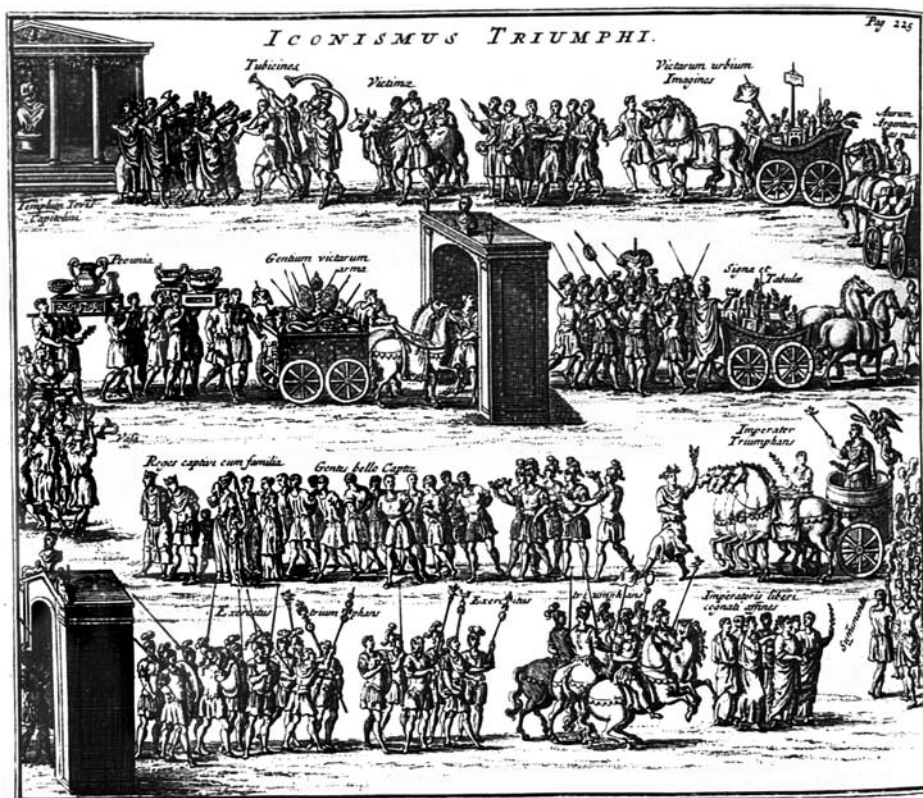
Figure 6. Roman triumphal procession. From Basil Kennett, *Romae Antiquae Notitia: or, the Antiquities of Rome* (1696; London, 1721). *Courtesy Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.*

well and living in the nineteenth century. The backward nod could be literary too. Adopting the redoubtable Homeric suffix "-iad" in early national literature signaled an author's epic intentions, as in Joel Barlow's *Columbiad* (1807), Richard Snowden's *Columbiad* (1795), and the Connecticut Wits' mock-heroic epic, *Anarchiad* (1786–1787).[24]

To those chestnuts were added new scenes derived from the dawning age of archaeological excavation and easier travel: panoramic vistas of modern Greek and Italian landscapes, pictures of Turkish and Italian peasants ambling through the crumbling remains of their glorious predecessors. Such novelties reflected a growing acknowledgment of the time separating ancient and modern societies, the increasing doubts about the relevance of antiquity to modern societies. As illustrated books became more affordable, as literacy rates rose, and as classical reading became part of the formal education of girls and young women, such books, published in England

[24] Charles K. Dillaway lifted the Roman crowns that illustrate the title page of his book from Kennett's *Romae Antiquae Notitia* (1696), 216; see Charles K. Dillaway, *Roman Antiquities, and Ancient Mythology; for Classical Schools* (Boston, 1833). Sacvan Bercovitch, ed., *The Cambridge History of American Literature,* vol. I: *1590–1820* (Cambridge, Eng., 1994), 595–97.

Figure 7. Girls and boys learning about ancient Rome. Engraving opposite the title page of Samuel Goodrich, *A Pictorial History of Ancient Rome* (1848; New York, 1850). *Courtesy Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University.*

and the United States, were aimed at an increasingly diversified audience that explicitly included middle-class women and children. Some were prominently entitled "family" editions of classical texts; one author was listed simply as "A Mother." The title pages of some best sellers, such as Samuel Goodrich's *Pictorial History of Ancient Rome* (1848), now drew attention to the presumed readers—boys and girls of a modern republic. (See figure 7.)[25]

Amid the changes in overt political message and in audience, something deep persisted. Whether in the baroque or the neoclassical mode, the classical images Americans consumed radiated dignity and seemliness even when they showed scenes of war. Hector and Achilles stood poised and balanced; Troy was surrounded by a pasto-

[25] The English "Family Classical Library" included publications that could "with propriety [be] read *by the youth of both sexes*," according to *The Orations of Demosthenes,* trans. Leland Thomas (London, 1830), 4. A Mother [Maria Elizabeth Budden], *True Stories, from Ancient History: Chronologically Arranged, from the Creation of the World to the Death of Charlemagne* (1819; London, 1837). Samuel Goodrich, *A Pictorial History of Ancient Rome* (1848; New York, 1850) (Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, Duke University).

ral landscape. Classicism transformed political struggles, military conquests, and the destruction of peoples into images of inevitability and harmony. Well into the nineteenth century, Americans drew on its resources to address troubling questions about their republic's trajectory.

We can look very specifically at how Americans reimagined baroque antiquity for use in a modern republic by tracing one image and its attendant allegory over the centuries before and after the Revolution. Let us consider the parable of the continence of Scipio, a story about Roman conquest on the frontier of empire. Mention this parable to any historian of early America and you will likely—and understandably—be greeted by a blank stare, but during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it belonged to the common fund of knowledge about the classical world familiar to educated Americans from such ancient sources as Livy, the *Moralia* of Plutarch, and the *Memorable Doings and Sayings* of Valerius Maximus. The parable of the continence of Scipio appeared in American print and visual culture from the early eighteenth century well into the nineteenth. It not only survived republican revolution, it thrived in its wake. Why?[26]

The Scipio in question was Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (235–183 BCE). To ancient Romans and Americans alike, he ranked high in the pantheon of Roman war heroes. During the Second Punic War, Scipio clobbered Rome's archenemy, Carthage, and its famed general, Hannibal, to the enduring amazement of subsequent generations. A story about war and empire, conquest and tribute, the parable of the continence of Scipio was set in what is now Spain, one of the great battlefields of the epic struggle between Carthage and Rome. Scipio, aged twenty-four, has conquered Celtiberia, a Carthaginian region in the center of Spain. Among his captives is a beautiful young woman, a virgin who Scipio learns is betrothed to a young Celtiberian nobleman named Allucius. As a conquering general, Scipio could have raped the young woman, but instead he returns her inviolate to Allucius, along with the gold ransom that her parents had delivered for her release. Allucius is so grateful that he vows eternal friendship with Rome against Carthage and joins Scipio's army with fourteen hundred of his own men.

The parable proved hugely popular in early modern Europe. Its message that self-control yields political and military rewards appealed to monarchs and political theorists in the age of absolutism and infant empires. By returning his female captive inviolate, Scipio earns the loyalty of the vanquished Celtiberians, who then sign on to help Rome make even more conquests. Roman imperial propaganda was full of such injunctions to clothe conquest in mercy. Later commentators praised especially Virgil's pronouncement in the *Aeneid:* "you, Roman, be sure to rule the world . . . to crown peace with justice, to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud."[27] Whether Rome actually did so was debatable, but generals and monarchs in early modern Europe welcomed the idea that conquest and benevolence might go hand in hand.

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[26] Livy, *Ab urbe condita* (From the founding of the city), trans. F. G. Moore (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 7.193–95; Plutarch, *Moralia III,* trans. F. C. Babbitt (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), 163; Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Doings and Sayings,* trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 2000), II, 366–67.
[27] Virgil, *Aeneid* (6.851–853), trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (12 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1999), I, 593.

Between 1500 and 1800, painters depicted the parable of the continence of Scipio at least twenty times, often flattering the reigning monarch by casting him as Scipio in loosely veiled references to current events.[28] By the 1500s the story had acquired an iconography as distinctive as any Annunciation or Madonna and child. A continence has three central figures: two men and one woman, lined up like crows on a clothesline. The arrangement suggests the nugget of the story: Scipio hands over a fetching maiden to an unarmed Allucius, who is shown in some kind of supplicating stance, either bowing or gazing upward adoringly at Scipio. The figures are usually dressed in the clothing of their own time and place, with some vaguely classical touches (such as Roman armor for Scipio). Around the three figures lies the stuff of artistic fancy: the somewhat Roman architecture, the regal attendants, the odd angel or slave. But the man-woman-man lineup gives the whole away as a continence.

So compelling was the story of the continence of Scipio—and so archetypal had its trio become—that it fueled the enthusiasms of early modern antiquarians, who tripped over themselves trying to prove the story's veracity through archaeological fact. Exhumed from the mud of the Rhone River near Avignon in the mid-1600s was a two-foot-wide silver shield emblazoned with the telltale trio: Was it a continence of Scipio? (See figure 8.) Was the shield perhaps even forged at the moment of the continence itself, nearly two millennia before, and then lost by a negligent Scipio, preoccupied by more pressing matters of state? Here was the early modern antiquarian fantasy of using an image or object to confirm a literary-historical fact. The possibility that the shield was owned by Scipio himself was so exciting that the king of France quickly locked the shield in his royal cabinet while antiquarians and philologists slavishly depicted it in their mammoth tomes. The cryptic legend of the shield of Scipio circulated in American magazines well into the nineteenth century.[29]

Given the indebtedness of colonial Americans to European culture generally, it is not surprising that continences crossed the Atlantic in the early eighteenth century. The Scottish immigrant painter John Smibert, who arrived in Boston in the first half of the eighteenth century, painted a copy of Nicolas Poussin's *Continence of Scipio* and considered it among his best works. He exhibited it in the Boston gallery he established, where it was visited by Dr. Alexander Hamilton, and later by John Singleton Copley and by John Trumbull, who copied Smibert's copy. Engravings were also available. The London publisher and engraver John Boydell commissioned John Miller to engrave perhaps the best-known continence of Scipio, painted by Anthony van Dyck in 1620–1621. In this flamboyant version, featured on the trade card of a

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[28] Here in approximate chronological order is a partial list: Andrea Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, Karel van Mander, Peter Paul Rubens, Anthony van Dyck, Jan Steen, Gerbrandt van den Eeckhout, Nicolas Poussin, Pompeo Batoni, Sebastiano Ricci, François Boucher, François Le Moyne, Giovanni Pellegrini, Giambattista Tiepolo, Jean Restout, Nicolas-Guy Brenet, Benjamin West, and Joshua Reynolds.

[29] Arnold Drakenborch, *Caji Silii Italici Punicorum libri septemdecim* (The seventeen books of the Punic Wars by Gaius Silius Italicus) (Utrecht, 1717), 759 (Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina). The image also appears in Jacob Spon, *Recherche Des Antiquités et Curiosités de la Ville de Lyon* (A study of the antiquities and curiosities of the city of Lyon) (1673; Geneva, 1974), 185–87; and Montfaucon, *Antiquity Explained and Represented in Sculptures,* trans. Humphreys, IV, 31, 35–36. Allusions to the shield of Scipio appear in "The Virtuous Conqueror," *Franklin Minerva* (Chambersburg, Pa.), July 6, 1799, p. 45; and "Scipio's Continence," *Living Age,* Dec. 11, 1852, pp. 526–27.

Figure 8. The shield of Scipio? From Arnold Drakenborch, *Caji Silii Italici Punicorum libri septemdecim* (The seventeen books of the Punic Wars by Gaius Silius Italicus) (Utrecht, 1717). *Courtesy Rare Book Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.*

Philadelphia printer, Scipio is James I himself, magnanimously papering over the marital improprieties of some of his court favorites. The beauty of the continence, like that of so many other classical parables and images, was its flexibility of interpretation.[30]

American magazines and books took up the story of the continence of Scipio beginning in the 1790s. Here was a parable about a conquering general and his fawning subjects that was finding a new audience after a revolution that had repudiated conquering kings and groveling underlings. Clearly the problem of subjection and authority remained a central preoccupation in the new republic, and this particular story represented it at the two levels of the family and the nation: Scipio controls both the creation of a family unit and the administration of an empire. Seen this way, the appeal of the ancient story in the 1790s seems less strange, as Americans gradually tore down the patriarchal family while carving a new role for themselves as an imperial power in the West. Carroll Smith-Rosenberg has argued that we need to trace how Americans in the early national period made new political ideologies and

[30] Richard H. Saunders, *John Smibert, Colonial America's First Portrait Painter* (New Haven, 1995), 210–11; drawn by Richard Earlom, engraved by John Miller, *The Continence of Scipio,* 1766, engraving reproduced in *Two Centuries of Prints in America, 1680–1880,* ed. Fowble, 200.

individual subjectivities from older materials and how they circulated them in the many venues of popular culture, such as magazines, newspapers, popular fiction, and political orations. "To understand American society and Americans we must trace the processes by which America as a concept and the American subject were made as old religious rituals and new political practices, old political rhetoric and the new technologies and genres of popular culture inscribed on the imaginations of disparate groups a common identity and loyalty that they, in turn, worked to internalize and own."[31] The parable of the continence of Scipio was a by-now-familiar story about the explosive belligerence of the Romans dusted off for the empire of liberty. The circulation of the story of the continence of Scipio in the books, magazines, and paintings of the early national period suggests that Americans were using the familiar medium of the classical world to articulate a critical and complex transition in national mythology.

In four renditions of the parable that appeared in illustrated early national magazines from New York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Jersey in the 1790s, Scipio's continence—his self-control—proved him worthy of self-government and imperial conquest. In illustrations, the message is clothed in the republican idiom of neoclassicism. (See figure 9.) Gone are the baroque trappings of the court, the sumptuous clothes, the flock of servants. What remain are the bare bones of the story: the predictable threesome, dressed in unpretentious simplicity, posed against either a simple background or a stark white field.[32] In print, early national writers praise Scipio first for his ability to conquer himself. "Though a youth, a bachelor, a lover, and a conqueror," wrote the *New-York Magazine* contributor in 1793, Scipio "immediately resolved to resign all the invitations of his passion, and the rights of his power, and to restore her to her destined husband." The author also pointed out that "chastity is a nobler quality, and as much to be valued in men as in women." Another writer concurred in an article entitled, "On the Government of Our Passions" in the 1791 *Massachusetts Magazine.* "Scipio is more esteemed for his chastity than his victories, as they did not altogether depend upon himself, but upon many circumstances he could not foresee; but his fortitude in withstanding the charms of one of the finest women ever beheld, proved the real conqueror the conqueror of himself." They also spun out the phantasm of peaceful imperialism. Far from being humiliated and vengeful, the conquered Celtiberians are grateful to the Romans. Says Allucius, "There is come amongst us . . . a young hero like the gods, who conquers all things, as well by generosity and beneficence, as by arms." Scipio is not a conqueror, but a friend. "Though the fortunes of war have made me your master, I desire to be your friend," says Scipio to Allucius in early national variations of the story.[33]

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[31] Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Dis-Covering the Subject of the 'Great Constitutional Discussion,' 1786–1789," *Journal of American History,* 79 (Dec. 1992), 843.

[32] "The Continence of Scipio," *New-York Magazine,* July 1793, tipped-in plate after p. 386 (American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Mass.); Alfred Mills, "The Continence of Scipio," *Pictures of Roman History: In Miniature* (Philadelphia, 1811), 42 (Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pa.).

[33] "Continence of Scipio," 387; "On the Government of Our Passions," *Massachusetts Magazine* (Aug. 1791), 482–83; "The Continence of Scipio Africanus," *Rural Magazine* (Newark, N.J.), Oct. 20, 1798, p. 2; "Virtuous Conqueror," 45.

Figure 9. *The Continence of Scipio. New-York Magazine,* July 1793. *Courtesy American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts.*

It is the silent woman in the parable, however, who best reveals how Americans adapted the Roman model of imperial conquest to their own national exigencies. The role of the Celtiberian maiden—the wife as gift—was archetypal in early societies where familial relations were the primary way of imagining social and political communities. Anthropologists have argued that the exchange of women was a fundamental principle in building and maintaining such groups. As part of a larger economy of reciprocity, the woman was the most valuable of gifts because she established a tie of kinship in her capacity as a wife, though she herself was not an active participant in the transaction. Such transactions, while they might appear voluntary, were in fact obligatory and agonistic because they were struggles to determine hierarchy. It is telling that the Celtiberian virgin never gets a name, in either ancient sources or modern. Instead, she is described repeatedly in early national magazines as a "prisoner," a "present," a "gift," and a "captive." In American images during the early national period, the nameless woman is passivity itself: her eyes modestly downcast, she steps delicately toward her betrothed. But though passive, she enables the most important part of the story: the reconciliation of colony and empire through the

Figure 10. Alfred Jacob Miller, *The Trapper's Bride* (1850). Oil on canvas. *Courtesy Joslyn Art Museum, Omaha, Nebraska.*

transformative act of her exchange. The wife, as a gift, appeases the colonized and aggrandizes the colonizer.[34]

We can conclude with a final image of Americans' fantasy about their empire of liberty, one that invokes—in my view—the archetypal array of the continence of Scipio as reworked for new needs. This is the painting by Alfred Jacob Miller entitled *The Trapper's Bride* (1850). (See figure 10.) It has never been specifically identified as a continence of Scipio, but it is a dead ringer for it, with two men handing off a woman between them. The setting is not the imperial frontier of Rome, but the imperial frontier of America: the West of the vanishing Indian, a place as temporally ambiguous as any of the anachronistic settings in Ogilby and Chapman. Miller

[34] "Continence of Scipio," 397; "Continence of Scipio Africanus," 2; "Virtuous Conqueror," 45; Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies,* trans. W. D. Halls (1950; New York, 1990), 6; Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship,* ed. Rodney Needham, trans. James Harle Belle and John Richard von Sturmer (Boston, 1969), 481–83; Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex," in *Feminism and History,* ed. Joan W. Scott (New York, 1996), 105–51.

believed that the Indians' way of life was "rapidly passing away." Like others in his generation, such as George Catlin, Miller traveled west to capture the Indians before American progress moored them in the mythic past of the nation's memory. Of his many works, *The Trapper's Bride* made Miller proudest. He made at least ten versions in different media in the 1840s and 1850s, including an enormous one in the castle of a Scottish nobleman.[35]

Like some other American painters of his age, Miller viewed the Indians as classical figures, and he posed the Indian maiden in classical *contrapposto.* "American sculptors travel thousands of miles to study Greek statues in the Vatican at Rome, seemingly unaware that in their own country there exists a race of men equal in form and grace (if not superior) to the finest beau ideal ever dreamed of by the Greeks," he wrote. Miller classicized not just the form of the Indians but their place in national destiny. Struck by the noble bearing and features of one Kansa warrior named White Plume, Miller asked to paint his portrait. The warrior agreed, on the condition that Miller be sure to include in the portrait the medallion White Plume had received ten years earlier from President John Quincy Adams, on which the words "peace" and "friendship" flank a tomahawk, clasped hands, and a peace pipe.[36] Here were Livy's and Virgil's counsels of empire emblazoned in metal for the new Rome: clothe conquest in mercy, cloak war in friendship.

For *The Trapper's Bride,* Miller seized on the idea of the wife as gift that was so central to the parable of the continence of Scipio. The Celtiberian maiden has become the Indian maiden, sold by her father to the white trapper seated at the left for a few trinkets and cash. We are witnessing the meeting of two societies, conqueror and conquered, smoothed by traffic in women and goods. Like others of his generation, Miller thought that the trappers led the "march of civilization." The trapper enables the peaceful subjection of the Indians by marrying the Indian maiden. The writer David H. Coyner explained this assumption in his novel, *The Lost Trappers* (1847):

> They [the trappers] take to themselves wives, and domesticate themselves among the different tribes in the west. . . . The result of this intermixing and intermarrying has been the springing up of a numerous hybrid race of beings, that constitute a medium, through which, it is hoped, at no distant day, the laws, arts, and habitudes of civilized life may be successfully introduced among the tribes of the west, and be the means of reclaiming them from the ignorance and barbarities in which they have been so long enthralled.

The metaphors of peaceful economic exchange, of benevolent, gentle commerce— "intermixing and intermarrying"—substitute for the idioms of war.[37]

But the message in Miller's painting is also ambiguous: Who exactly represents the conquering Scipio? Is it the seated trapper—the European colonizer—or the stand-

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[35] Alfred Jacob Miller, *The Trapper's Bride,* 1850, painting reproduced in *Alfred Jacob Miller: Artist on the Oregon Trail,* ed. Ron Tyler (Fort Worth, 1982), pl. 67; see also *ibid.*, 12, 63, 271–72.

[36] Tyler, ed., *Alfred Jacob Miller,* 56; Mae Reed Porter and Odessa Davenport, *Scotsman in Buckskin: Sir William Drummond Stewart and the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade* (New York, 1963), 136.

[37] Alfred Jacob Miller quoted in Dawn Glanz, "The Iconography of Westward Expansion in American Art, 1820 to 1870: Selected Topics" (Ph.D. diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1978), 78; David H. Coyner, *The Lost Trappers,* ed. David J. Weber (1847; Albuquerque, 1970), 82–83.

ing Indian father, the man who controls the exchange of the valuable wife? Miller may not have seen either as a conqueror. He was deeply pessimistic about the trappers' contracts with the fur companies for which they worked, and he wrote about such transactions in discussing his painting of the trapper and his bride. "A Free Trapper . . . is a most desirable match," wrote Miller, "but it is conceded that he is a ruined man after such an investment. . . . For this the poor devil sells himself, body and soul, to the Fur Company for a number of years."[38] We know that the woman is the medium for the peaceful communion between societies, but Miller leaves to the viewer to decide who is the conqueror and who is the conquered.

On the western frontier, a place that symbolized both the Indian past and the national future, vanishing Indians and conquering Romans both made sense as part of America's evolving national mythology about imperial conquest. Icons of republicanism such as Minerva could point the way, stepping miraculously out of Greco-Roman antiquity to assure modern Americans that progress lay in the West. Who could quibble with wisdom and war dressed as a beautiful maiden? But more troubling fossils from the classical world also found their way into the new nation's lexicon of images and stories. Viewed as a variation on the ancient parable of the continence of Scipio, Miller's painting of the trapper and his Indian bride is less an assurance of success Minerva-style than a meditation on the ambiguities of empire. Civilization will come to the Indians, but who in the end has won and lost? Set in the present with an ancient stock of characters, the story was as timeless in its theme as it was timely in its anxieties.

[38] Marvin C. Ross, *The West of Alfred Jacob Miller (1837) from the Notes and Water Colors in the Walters Art Gallery, with an Account of the Artist by Marvin C. Ross* (Norman, 1951), text opposite pl. 12.