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Patriots in the Court of Pandæmonium: People, Paradox, and the Making of American Zealots

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Abstract: Political theorists often interrogate the constitution of "the people" as a formal theoretical problem. They have paid less attention, however, to how this problem confronts actors directly engaged in political crises, not as a problem of formal theory, but as an urgent problem of practice. Between 1771 and 1783, prominent Bostonians delivered passionate orations to memorialize the Boston Massacre on the annual observance of "Massacre Day." Rather than focusing abstractly on the people as a formal problem, I turn to this neglected political holiday, examining it through the lenses of affect, performance, and narrative, to demonstrate how orators confronted the pressing problem of making a people. Using public rituals and speech to promote an identity that united powerful emotions with political principles, orators negotiated the paradoxical nature of the people by constructing a model of subjectivity, the patriotic zealot, that intensified political differences and motivated extreme political action.

Political theorists have often interrogated the constitution of "the people" as a formal theoretical problem, questioning its composition, formation, boundaries, and legitimacy. They have paid less attention, however, to how this problem confronts actors directly engaged in political crises, not as a problem of formal theory, but as an urgent and practical problem of politics. Whether it is framed as a formal paradox of political founding,[1] democratic

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[1]Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*, in *The Basic Political Writings*, ed. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2011), 153–252.

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politics and popular sovereignty,[2] or politics in general,[3] the problem of constituting or determining who constitutes the people is a subject of continuing debate.

Rather than dwelling in the realm of formal paradox, I adopt a historically situated approach to the problem of the people, focusing on a series of orations delivered in late eighteenth-century New England to memorialize the Boston Massacre. I demonstrate that moments when political actors are confronted with the need to constitute a people can provide theoretically illuminating insights into the negotiation of popular indeterminacy, a concern at the center of contemporary democratic theory.[4] I suggest that the Boston Massacre orations provide a singular historical moment in which a theoretical paradox was clearly articulated as both a pressing problem of political thought and an urgent problem of political praxis. Focusing on the practical negotiation of a theoretical paradox helps to reorient democratic theory from a potential fixation on formal logic to an engagement with concrete politics.[5] Shifting focus from the former to the latter further invites us to redirect attention from the common concern of theorists with legitimacy to the pressing concern of actors with constituting collective identity and empowering agency.

Beginning in 1771, orations "To Commemorate the Bloody TRAGEDY" of the Boston Massacre by speakers chosen by the Board of Selectmen were delivered on or around the March 5th observance of "Massacre Day" in Massachusetts. Recurring yearly until 1783, the Massacre Day orations served both to memorialize the victims of the Massacre—as well as subsequent victims of Anglo-American hostilities after 1775—and to give an account of the causes that had led to the tragedy. By calling attention to a tragedy of personal and public dimensions, the annual oration imposed a painful recollection on its audience, spurred action, and promoted a kind of political education through an appeal to the passions, emotions, and experiences of a zealously patriotic—or would-be zealously patriotic—people. Examining the neglected political holiday of Massacre Day through the lenses of affect, ritual, performance, and narrative, I argue that orators

[2]Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2009); Jason Frank, *Constituent Moments* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Sofia Näsström, "The Legitimacy of the People," *Political Theory* 35, no. 5 (2007): 624–58.

[3]William Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); Bonnie Honig, "Between Decision and Deliberation: Political Paradox in Democratic Theory," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1 (2007): 1–17; Paul Ricoeur, "The Political Paradox," in *Legitimacy and the State*, ed. W. E. Connolly (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 250–72.

[4]For similar approaches, see Frank, *Constituent Moments*; Paulina Ochoa Espejo, "Paradoxes of Popular Sovereignty: A View from Spanish America," *Journal of Politics* 74, no. 4 (2012): 1053–65; Adam Dahl, "Nullifying Settler Democracy: William Apess and the Paradox of Settler Sovereignty," *Polity* 48, no. 2 (2016): 279–304.

[5]Cf. Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 33–34.

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promoted an affective model of zealous patriotism on the eve of the American Revolution, a model of political identity and subjectivity that united powerful passions, emotions, and faculties of political reason.[6] By trying to shape audiences at the level of individual experience and collective identity, Massacre orators thereby took up the complex and pressing task of making a people.

In their use of memorial to promote identity and action, the Massacre orations belong to an ancient tradition of political eulogy, including Thucydides's funeral oration of Pericles and Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Political eulogies often wed the promotion of a national identity and the celebration of an idealized communal image with the need to compel the self-sacrifice of citizen-soldiers. Yet, whereas the eulogies of Pericles and Lincoln have been celebrated for the withholding of detail in the service of conveying a powerful message of civic sacrifice, the sheer complexity of the Massacre orations sets them apart as distinct contributions to this ancient rhetorical tradition.[7]

After introducing the theoretical problem of constituting a people and historically contextualizing the Massacre orations, I demonstrate the dynamic and complex process of subject formation accomplished through the orations, focusing on narratives presented in those orations given by John Hancock,[8] Joseph Warren,[9] and Peter Thacher.[10] First, I consider how the orators' accounts of the early revolutionary struggle worked to narratively substantiate the emotions and experiences of a particular subject. I then demonstrate how these narratives served to draw their audience into the experience and emotions presented, regardless of whether the person addressed actually experienced the events. Audiences who listened to the orations were primed to be the subjects of a kind of interpellation, a process whereby they were called by the orators' political and ritualistic authority to act and identify as patriotic zealots, recognizing themselves as the subjects of each oration.[11] Studying the performance of the Massacre Day orations helps us,

[6]Though scholars have discussed individual Massacre orations, the orations as a complete body of texts and the annual rite itself have received little extended attention. For a rare exception, see Sandra M. Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 171–99.

[7]Simon Stow, "Pericles at Gettysburg and Ground Zero: Tragedy, Patriotism, and Public Mourning," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 2 (May 2007): 202.

[8]John Hancock, *An Oration; Delivered March 5, 1774* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1774).

[9]Joseph Warren, *An Oration Delivered March Sixth, 1775* (Boston: Edes & Gill and Joseph Greenleaf, 1775).

[10]Peter Thacher, *An Oration Delivered at Watertown, March 5, 1776* (Watertown: Benjamin Edes, 1776). Though I pay special attention to these three orations, my analysis focuses on all orations performed until 1778, after which the orations began to move away from the affective, performative, and narrative approach of those performed during the years of increasing tensions and violent hostilities in Boston.

[11]On the concept of interpellation, see Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism* (London: Verso, 2014), 190–97, 261–70.

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then, to understand how political actors employ public rituals and speech to shape collective identities and promote models of passionate subjectivity that intensify existing political differences, motivate extreme political action, and enact a people.

Paradox and People-Making

Contemporary democratic theorists have often sought to interrogate the legitimacy and constitution of the people as a collective subject of democratic authority. This concern with the problem of how a democratic people can be legitimately constituted resembles Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concern with the paradoxical problem of founding articulated in book 2, chapter 7 of *The Social Contract*.[12] Framed as a problem of origins, Rousseau suggested that for a people to be virtuous enough to appreciate good laws, there must already be good laws to shape the people into virtuous citizens. This led Rousseau to the conclusion that citizens would have to be, "prior to the advent of laws, what they ought to become by means of laws."[13] Though Rousseau presented this paradox as a problem of founding, relegating it strictly to the origins of political life where the figure of the Legislator was proposed as its solution, contemporary democratic theorists have argued that the problem persists. William Connolly suggested that by restricting this paradox to the founding, Rousseau concealed both the fact that it goes unresolved and, even more concerning, the continued use of force to create and shape citizens. For Connolly, "if the free, unconditioned political will is to function as the regulative ideal of politics as such, the violences upon which its perpetual pursuit rests must be artfully concealed."[14] Likewise, Bonnie Honig has noted that "the problem that Rousseau seems to cast as a problem of founding recurs daily" because the need to shape and reshape individuals into democratic citizens, often against or without their free will, is unending.[15]

In their critiques of Rousseau, Connolly and Honig read the paradox of founding in terms of a more general "paradox of politics," in which political authority and acts always suffer from a legitimacy gap. For political acts to be legitimate, they must reflect the prior will of a sovereign authority, but "no political *act* ever conforms perfectly to such a standard," and therefore such an act "always lacks full legitimacy at the moment of its enactment."[16] On this account, legitimate political authority and acts require prior authorization though authorization is always incomplete, arbitrary, or self-authorized, suggesting an "element of arbitrariness that cannot be eliminated from

[12]Rousseau, *Social Contract*, 181–83.

[13]Ibid., 182.

[14]Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 138.

[15]Honig, "Between Decision and Deliberation," 3.

[16]Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 139. Ricoeur, "Political Paradox."

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political life," and catching theorists in what Honig described as a "chicken-and-egg circle that presses us to begin the work of democratic politics in *medias res*."[17] The theoretical paradox of politics points to the reality that in political life, there is always a gap between the dictates and requirements of theory and the reality of praxis. Theorists should recognize the unavoidable gap between the theoretical requirement that political authority and acts be legitimated by a temporally prior and independent authority and the reality that political praxis always takes place *in medias res* without a discrete and linear temporal ordering.

The paradox of politics, with its presentation of legitimate political authority as an irresolvable problem, closely resembles the self-referential paradox of the *demos* or people. As Paulina Ochoa Espejo has succinctly stated, "in a democracy, by definition, the *demos*, or people, is sovereign, but it is impossible to define democratically who precisely the people are."[18] This self-referential paradox of popular sovereignty or popular indeterminacy endures as a subject of continuing debate in democratic theory, where it has been variously reformulated as the "boundary problem,"[19] the "paradox of constitutional democracy,"[20] the "democratic paradox,"[21] the "dilemma of constituency,"[22] and the central paradox of democratic legal authority.[23]

The paradox of popular sovereignty concerns the constitution of the people as a subject of legitimacy and echoes the paradox of politics because it simultaneously suggests the need for a *prior* authority to authorize the constitution of the people and the need for that authority to be *of* the people. Interrogating this paradox, Sofia Näsström suggested that there must be an authority prior to the citizens themselves that is "powerful and freestanding enough to induce a plurality of individuals to go together and form a common people. Or else, [the people's] legitimacy is compromised. . . . On the other hand, this authority cannot precede the individuals who join the people. In order to be legitimate, the authority in question must be simultaneous with the citizens themselves." For Näsström, "we cannot first stipulate who the people are only then to go on doing democratic politics as usual." Instead of relegating people-making to founding moments, forces of arbitrary

[17]Connolly, *Ethos of Pluralization*, 139; Honig, "Between Decision and Deliberation," 2.

[18]Ochoa Espejo, "Paradoxes of Popular Sovereignty," 1053.

[19]Frederick G. Whelan, "Prologue: Democratic Theory and the Boundary Problem," in *Liberal Democracy*, ed. J. Roland Penncock and John W. Chapman (New York: New York University Press, 1983), 13–48; David Miller, "Democracy's Domain," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 37, no. 3 (2009): 201–28.

[20]Jürgen Habermas, "Constitutional Democracy: A Paradoxical Union of Contradictory Principles?," trans. William Rehg, *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001): 766–81.

[21]Mouffe, *Democratic Paradox*.

[22]Frank, *Constituent Moments*, 19.

[23]Joshua Foa Dienstag, "A Storied Shooting: Liberty Valance and the Paradox of Sovereignty," *Political Theory* 40, no. 3 (2012): 290–318.

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power, essentialist identities, or historical accident, Näsström holds that "people-making is what legitimacy is all about. . . . The criteria of legitimacy are such construed that they cannot be fulfilled. We have always to begin again."[24] What Rousseau construed as a paradox of founding is, as Connolly, Honig, and Näsström suggest, a recurrent process that gives rise to new and contested claims to the constitution of the people. Thus, the need to constitute a people appears as a continual and practical problem in political life, one that can be productively examined on the plane of real politics. When the theoretical paradox of the people appears as a problem of practical politics it often appears less as a problem of legitimacy than as a concern to constitute a people. If the identity of the people is legitimated by its being derived from the exercise of popular authority, then the exercise of the people's agency is the source of its identity and legitimacy. A shift in focus from theoretical paradox to concrete practice should therefore parallel a shift from a concern with legitimacy to a concern with the constitution of a people possessed of agency and identity.

Examining the use of performative and passionate speech that intensified political differences and actively united ardent devotion with republican principles, I demonstrate how Massacre Day oratorical performances engendered a distinct political subject: the zealous patriot—a model of political identity and subjectivity that confronted audiences, eliciting both empathetic and antipathetic responses. I argue that to shape New Englanders into a people of zealous patriots at the level of personality, Massacre orators promoted a shared political identity to which audiences could look for guidance as a heroic model of virtue, and in which they could recognize themselves as the subjects of common experience and identity.[25] In so doing, orators marshaled affect and emotion to engender a model of political subjectivity and constitute a people possessed of collective identity and agency.

The Backdrop of Massacre Day: Corruption and Civic Virtue

The story of the Boston Massacre and its use as a unifying tool of political propaganda is well-known. What had started as a small gathering of colonial Bostonians verbally harassing a British private on guard duty grew violent as the evening of March 5, 1770, unfolded. As church bells rang, drawing British reinforcements and a larger and increasingly hostile crowd, the

[24] Näsström, "Legitimacy of the People," 641.

[25] Though the zealous patriot may be understood as a precursor to a collective American identity, it is distinct and predates the popularization of national notions of "Americanness." On the significance of performance in the production of a later American national identity, see David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *This Violent Empire: The Birth of an American National Identity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

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crowd began to taunt the soldiers to fire their weapons, pelting them with small objects, heightening the confusion that settled on the scene. By the end of the evening, British soldiers had fired into a raucous gathering outside the Boston custom house on King Street, killing five civilians and wounding at least seven more. Wasting no time, Boston whigs labeled the event a "massacre" and immediately turned it to political purposes, giving rise a year later to the ritual of Massacre Day and its annual memorial oration.[26]

Throughout the 1770s, New England whigs and patriots used a language of personal decay to understand the broad sources and effects of a perceived environment of corruption that had led to the tragedy of the massacre. In 1772, John Adams feared that "the Body of the People seem to be worn out, by struggling, and Venality, Servility and Prostitution . . . eat and spread like a Cancer."[27] Adams lamented the advance of malignant vices that enticed colonial New Englanders, drawing them away from the characteristics and challenging work of a virtuous republican disposition and towards the satisfaction of base passions and private gain. Arguments warning that corruption and vice could penetrate the very souls of Bostonians, enervate their public virtue, and weaken them as a people were a common feature of patriot discourse. In an article from 1772, later attributed to Samuel Adams, "Valerius Poplicola" argued that the corruption of a people's personality and soul was a prerequisite of tyranny, so much so that "it is in the Interest of Tyrants to reduce the People to Ignorance and Vice. For they cannot live in any Country where Virtue and Knowledge prevail. . . . Those who are combin'd to destroy the People's Liberties, practice every Art to poison their Morals."[28] For Samuel Adams, the people were at risk from the corruption that surrounded them, and it was only through resisting tyranny and fostering virtue that they might resist the illicit enticements of vice and the thrall of corruption. Without virtue, New Englanders could not hope to secure the public good and liberty of free republican government,

[26]For scholarly histories of the massacre, see Eric Hinderaker, *Boston's Massacre* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017); Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: Norton, 1996); Frederic Kidder, *History of the Boston Massacre, March 5, 1770* (Albany, NY: Joel Munsell, 1870).

[27]John Adams to Mrs. Maccaulay, December 31, 1772, John Adams Diary 19, *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*, https://www.masshist.org/digitaladams.

[28]Samuel Adams, "Article Signed 'Valerius Poplicola,'" in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing, vol. 2 (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1907), 336–37. Samuel Adams's argument is consistent with John Adams's reasoning in *A Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law*. There, John argued that subordination of the people to canon and feudal law kept them ignorant of the rights they held by divine grace. John Adams, *A Dissertation on Canon and Feudal Law*, in *The Portable John Adams*, ed. John Patrick Diggins (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 209–32.

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for not only would God not raise up a people lacking virtue, but a republic could subsist only with a virtuous constituency.[29]

Echoing the concerns of John and Samuel Adams, the former—and first—judge advocate general of the Continental Army, William Tudor, used his 1779 Massacre Day oration in part to denounce the corruption he observed to be plaguing his countrymen. Tudor drew the audience's attention to the deleterious effects of a "general dissipation of manners and a declension of private virtue, which begets effeminate habits, and . . . a base pliability of spirit" that were symptomatic of corruption.[30] Focusing on luxury, Tudor warned that vice "makes men necessitous, and then dependent," but most frighteningly for the patriot, vice makes people unfit "for patriotic energies, and soon teaches them to consider *public virtue as a public jest*."[31] In the end, Tudor echoed a common refrain, concluding that "before a nation is completely deprived of freedom, she must be fitted for slavery by her vices."[32]

As the writings of John Adams, Samuel Adams, William Tudor, and others suggest, the importance of a people having a virtuous disposition to secure them from corruption was clear to many patriots. However, Boston whigs subscribing to this civic ideal were left with the pressing question of how, in a time of growing political unrest, a patriotic personality might take root in a people and motivate action. While Rousseau confronted the problem of establishing a people in the theoretical speculations of *The Social Contract*, Massacre orators confronted a similar problem on the terrain of political mobilization. For New Englanders to be capable of acting against the threats of corruption, vice, and tyranny, they must possess the virtuous civic disposition of republican citizens and must therefore *become* zealously patriotic republican citizens. Seeking to guide a patriotic public possessed of civic virtue, Massacre orators encountered the need to remake and shape a people. The orations were not, therefore, concerned with establishing a new collective identity ex nihilo, but rather with reshaping audiences and remaking a people into *zealously patriotic* New Englanders.[33] Reading the Massacre orations and their distribution as exercises in myth making and "processes of remembering," Catherine L. Albanese suggested that the orations "aimed at the renewal of mythic innocence, ever under the threat of

[29]Samuel Adams to Elbridge Gerry, October 29, 1775, in *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, ed. Harry Alonzo Cushing, vol. 3 (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1907), 231.

[30]William Tudor, *An Oration, Delivered March 5th, 1779* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1779), 7.

[31]Ibid., emphasis in the original.

[32]Ibid., 8.

[33]The collective identity of New Englanders, which associated New England with homeland, had long been present in the region and conspicuously divided them from other colonial British Americans. See John M. Murrin, "A Roof without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity," in *Beyond Confederation*, ed. Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 341–44.

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corruption."[34] Responding to a perceived plague of corruption, New England whigs used language and performance to promote a model of zealous patriotism resisting corruption and acting in defense of the common good.

Massacre Day: Ritual, Rhetoric, and Remembrance

Examining how language and performance aid in the production of political subjects such as the zealous patriot suggests that we look to both the language itself and the site of its production. That is, we ought to look to the spatial dimension, the "stage" on which performance occurs. With the Massacre Day orations, the site of the zealous patriot's production was a space of public spectacle and sacred political ritual.

Sandra Gustafson has noted the religious dimension of the Massacre orations, suggesting that these performances were based on the "reiteration and interpretation of a sacralized 'text': the causes and consequences of the events of March 5" and that orators "adapted the sacred technologies of the pulpit to patriot political needs."[35] Beyond the influence of pulpit oratory, the Massacre orations took the ritualistic form of a civic ceremony concerned with uniting audiences and instilling them with the virtue and disposition proper to republican patriots.[36] As a somber occasion of public political ritual, Massacre Day sacralized and politicized a communal moment of reflection. It was a memorial day of thoroughgoing zeal and not a day for personal grief, some sort of pure religious reflection, nor dispassionate analysis. It was a moment in which the personal was made public and the public was politicized; a time in which the passions of grief and anger were forged into something unifying, formative, public, and political. Formalized and renewable expressions of grief, especially in eighteenth-century British North America, often transformed sadness and loss understood as subjective and private

[34]Catherine Albanese, *Sons of the Fathers: The Civil Religion of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 73.

[35]Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*, 189.

[36]In his *Letter to D'Alembert on the Theatre*, Rousseau distinguished the capacity of political rituals to cultivate the republican virtue of patriotism from the corrupting effects of theater as spectacle. Theatrical performances could not improve the sentiments or morals of audiences because they relied on false emotionality to satisfy the preexisting passions and tastes of passive spectators. Theater differed from civic festivals because while the former subjected a passive audience to a corrupt emotional conditioning, civic ceremonies could produce an affective response of love for one's country and one's fellow citizens, and required citizens to be engaged and autonomous participants. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Letter to M. D'Alembert on the Theatre*, in *Politics and the Arts*, trans. Allan Bloom (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1960), 18–21, 150–51; Megan Gallagher, "Moving Hearts: Cultivating Patriotic Affect in Rousseau's *Considerations on the Government of Poland*," *Law, Culture and the Humanities* 15, no. 2 (2019): 514, 506–7.

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into social experiences and behaviors of political resistance.[37] Resolutely personal loss was to be a private affair while a loss of social importance was to be observed publicly. In mourning persons, the public presence of the deceased authorized public grief. Such became the case with the Boston Massacre in which the victims of the tragedy, relatively obscure in life, became public figures in death, eulogized in poems, and openly mourned on each March 5th.

Seen as a political ritual of public memorial, a forced remembering, Massacre Day offered a renewed invitation for Bostonians to grieve as a social collective. In the eighteenth century, the act of mourning, be it public or private, was a show of respect for the departed. Yet, as Nicole Eustace has written, "statements of grief conveyed critical social commentary in the eighteenth century. . . . Expressions of grief could also be interpreted as a sign of rebellion."[38] Eustace points tellingly to the common root of "grief" and "grievance," noting that though today the terms are different and distinct, their original synonymy continued through the nineteenth century, suggesting that "any eighteenth-century statement of grief thus held the potential to challenge the standing social order at the very moment it was in its most exposed and fragile state."[39] At the moment of grief, all figures of authority have the appearance of possible targets for the transformation of grief into grievance. The annual invitation for Bostonians to grieve over what had been, and became increasingly, a politicized tragedy took place amid an increasingly bitter and violent political climate between 1774 and 1779. Such an invitation was a particularly politicized spectacle in which public grievability might allow grief to transform into the issuing of grievance, thereby necessitating the pursuit of redress.

Addressing a Massacre Day audience in the thick of Anglo-American civil war, John Adams's former law clerk, Jonathan Williams Austin, spoke of sympathy and sentiment, praising a putatively dutiful and patriotic audience in their proper expression of grief: "To weep over the tomb of the patriot—to drop a tear to the memory of those unfortunate citizens, who fell the first sacrifices to tyranny and usurpation is noble, generous and humane. Such are the sentiments that influence you, my countrymen, or why through successive periods, with heartfelt sensations, have you attended this solemn anniversary, and paid this sad tribute to the memory of your slaughter'd brethren."[40] Part of the performance's power lay in its attempt to revive the memory of something that ultimately eluded words. For Austin, "the shocking scene" of the

[37]Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 289, 293.

[38]Ibid., 286–87.

[39]Ibid., 287.

[40]Jonathan Williams Austin, *An Oration Delivered March 5th, 1778* (Boston: B. Edes and T. & J. Fleet, 1778), 5. Austin's involvement with the Massacre trial is discussed in Zobel, *Boston Massacre*, 186, 253, 271, 283.

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massacre was "beyond description."[41] Likewise, Benjamin Hichborn remarked in his earlier oration that the violence of the massacre "produced a scene of confusion and wretchedness so complicated and compleat, that the power of the richest language must ever fail in describing it."[42] Though the rite of the oration called for each orator to publicly remember the tragedy, such an event was presented as beyond descriptive language; it was an event wherein "no one . . . that was not a spectator, [could] conceive it."[43] Looking back over the horrific vision of "a brutal soldiery, scattering promiscuous death through a defenceless unarmed multitude, till yonder street was crimsoned with the blood of its Citizens, while a tender Mother, frantic with grief, pours forth the anguish of her heart over a beloved son, now incapable of any returns of gratitude," Austin held that such a scene could be *felt* but it could not be linguistically expressed. Obliged to remember, he recalled a "scene, which the distressed heart may painfully feel, but which the tongue cannot express."[44] Before him, Hichborn had similarly remarked, "It is impossible for any who were not witnesses of that shocking event, to conceive the terrors of that dreadful night, and they who *were* must have images of horror upon the mind they never can communicate."[45]

Rhetorically unable to *report* or objectively give an account of the event, the felt experience of the tragedy and the emotions affixed to it served more to arouse a proper affective response than to relate a factual description of the event. Austin's admission of an inability to conceive of the event speaks to the affective and performative nature of the orations, not as a mere annual recitation of events or report of political progress reaching out from a fixed point in time, but as a rite of affective recall. This rite sought to shape an emotionally powerful collective memory to remind Bostonians of the tragedy *they* had experienced and its political source. Thus, Austin declared, "May this Institution, sacred to the memory of your murdered Brethren, be ever carefully preserved. Yes, ye injured Shades! We will still weep over you, and if any thing can be more soothing, WE WILL REVENGE YOU."[46]

The emotionally charged language of experience and action pervading the Massacre Day orations may be described as a form of rhetoric, but only in so far as it resembles language that "does not desire to instruct, but to convey to others a subjective impulse . . . and its acceptance."[47] Though all thirteen orations contain some amount of constitutional argumentation or explication of

[41]Austin, *Oration*, 10.

[42]Benjamin Hichborn, *An Oration, Delivered March 5th, 1777* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1777), 11.

[43]Austin, *Oration*, 10.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Hichborn, *Oration*, 10.

[46]Austin, *Oration*, 10.

[47]Friedrich Nietzsche, "Nietzsche's 'Lecture Notes on Rhetoric': A Translation," trans. Carole Blair, *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 16, no. 2 (1983): 107.

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republican propositions, their occasion of solemn public ritual—steeped in a New England tradition of religious public rituals such as formally proclaimed days of fasting or thanksgiving days of prayer—their form as memorial orations, and their reliance on affect suggests that reasoned exposition and persuasive argument may have had only a secondary function, if any. These spoken, printed, and circulated works—calibrated both to the ear and the eye—served a rhetorical function of communicating a subjective and emotionally laden sense more than purely or primarily communicating reasoned persuasion. In communicating a subjective sense, the very design of the orations was well suited to promote a specific account of subjective experience, one to be modeled and promoted for political purposes.[48]

Twentieth- and twenty-first-century political thought has tended to concern itself with the ways that emotions can be subordinated to their supposed antithesis of reason, or how institutions and communicative procedures may be designed to eliminate or restrain the influence of passions in democratic politics.[49] Many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thinkers, on the other hand, understood human identity and subjectivity in terms that embraced a determinative role for passions, and were more concerned with conscientiously channeling the inescapable pull of passions toward the public good. Moral and political philosophers such as John Locke,[50] David Hume,[51] Montesquieu,[52] and Adam Smith,[53] English republican writers such as John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon (the pseudonymous "Cato" of *Cato's Letters*),[54] medico-political "natural philosophers" such as Benjamin

[48]Commenting on their rhetoric, Albanese described the orators as a "history-making people" who required "as vivid and dramatic telling of the story as could be contrived." Vividly expressing sensation was the orator's "way of establishing a truth: the biggest splash was the sign of the most authentic tale and the means by which one kept the 'real' world in view" (Albanese, *Sons*, 74).

[49]Jürgen Habermas's discourse theory of democracy is a notable example of this tendency. See Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms*, trans. William Rehg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998). Sharon Krause critiques this tendency in normative theories of democratic decision making, particularly those of Habermas and John Rawls, in Sharon R. Krause, *Civil Passions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 1–47. Likewise, Cheryl Hall critically engages the "trouble with passion in liberal political theory" in Cheryl Hall, *The Trouble with Passion* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 21–38.

[50]John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1959).

[51]David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Dover, 2003).

[52]Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, ed. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[53]Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. Ryan Patrick Hanley (New York: Penguin Books, 2009).

[54]John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon, *Cato's Letters, Or, Essays on Liberty, Civil and Religious, and Other Important Subjects*, ed. Ronald Hamowy, 2 vols. (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1995).

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Rush,[55] and other political theorists in the revolutionary Atlantic world understood the inevitable determination of human behavior by what Alexander Pope characterized as the "gale" of passion.[56] Though such views led some to adopt pessimistic ideas of human nature and its reconciliation with social order, such as Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees*,[57] others tackled the central question of how humanity's passions could be reconciled with a just political order by guiding and manipulating rather than subduing the individual's emotions.

Students of early American political thought are most familiar with debates over the place of emotions in politics as they appear in *The Federalist*. There the resolution of the clash of private passions and public goods was pursued in the discussion of faction and the balancing of competing interests.[58] But before the political architectonics of the Constitutional Convention, the power of passion played a central and tension-ridden role in the disruptive politics of colonial reform that led to the conflagrations of 1775, the summer of 1776, and the events that followed. Passion was key in terms of both the theoretical exposition of constitutional liberty and the tactical politics of republican speech and action. Operating with the common precept that passion is determinative of human behavior, radical colonial and revolutionary Americans often employed political speech with strong affective dimensions to marshal the passions and emotional experiences of Americans in support of the cause of "publick liberty" in addition to the reasoned constitutional arguments which have been the subject of much scholarly analysis.

Narrating the Patriot's Experience: Hancock, Warren, Thacher

At the heart of the most dramatic orations are narrative retellings of emotional experience laden with a powerful affective resonance. Intensely expressive, the orations narrate the feeling of colonial Boston life lived among the standing army of a siege, the tragic scene of the Boston Massacre itself, and the trials of armed conflict during the Revolutionary War.[59] More than presenting

[55]Benjamin Rush, "The Influence of Physical Causes upon the Moral Faculty," in *The Selected Writings of Benjamin Rush*, ed. Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, 1947), 181–211.

[56]This fitting description is indebted to Nicole Eustace's aptly titled *Passion Is The Gale*. Alexander Pope, "An Essay on Man in Four Epistles," in *The Major Works*, ed. Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 270–308.

[57]Bernard Mandeville, *The Fable of the Bees and Other Writings*, ed. E. J. Hundert (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1997).

[58]Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay, *The Federalist*, ed. Terrence Ball (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 35–46.

[59]The social and political climate of Boston during and immediately after the siege by British regulars is detailed in Jacqueline Barbara Carr, *After the Siege* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2005).

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a legalistic or cultural snapshot of New England colonial life, or a dispassionate account of the events that transpired the evening of March 5, 1770, these dramatic works utilized a passionate rhetoric of pathos, ethos, and thumos to narratively convey a distinct subjective experience. With a sanguinary and theological rhetoric, these narratives allowed the orators to perform and produce specific subjective experiences and modes of emotional comportment—that is, the outward expression of an apparently inward experience. In so doing, orators conveyed a distinct interpretation of subjective experience associated with patriot political judgments and the patriotic object of attachment. Orators narrated the emotional experience and emotional response to events such as the massacre, not from any recorded account, but from the vantage point of a zealous patriot, a figure presupposed to exist even before its production.[60] These narratives served first to publicly re-present the experience of personal and communal tragedy, populating and shaping the emotional content and subjective experience of a model zealous patriot. Yet they did not merely declare such a model's existence. Rather, they attempted to emotionally transform their audience into the grieving zealots who experienced the tragedy, struggle, and glory of revolutionary events. Beyond simply presenting a zealous subject of patriotism, these orations acted to transform both orator and audience alike, producing and re-producing, forming and re-forming subjects of intense patriotism. In so doing, the orations acted to bring audiences together through the promotion of a common experience and collective identity, transforming them into a people defined by patriotism and zeal.

On Saturday, March 5, 1774, John Hancock addressed a crowded gathering of Bostonians from the pulpit of the Old South Meeting House. In what John Adams described as an "elegant, a pathetic, a Spirited Performance" before a "vast Croud" with "rainy Eyes," Hancock delivered an impassioned oration.[61] Like James Lovell, Joseph Warren, and Benjamin Church before him, Hancock began with an assertion of the most basic premises of republican thought—denouncing corruption, celebrating virtue, and justifying resistance—that amounted to a sort of republican syllogism of resistance and reform common to the New England patriot of the day.[62] But though Hancock began his address from this common point, he proceeded to almost entirely eschew all dedicated discussion of constitutionality and

[60]Judith Butler noted that the presupposition of a subject prior to the subject's formation presents the study of processes of subject formation with a "paradox of referentiality" in which "we must refer to what does not yet exist. Through a figure that marks the suspension of our ontological commitments, we seek to account for how the subject comes to be." Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 4.

[61]John Adams, diary entry, March 5, 1774, John Adams Diary 20, *Adams Family Papers*, http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/.

[62]Hancock, *Oration*, 6.

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legal reasoning that appeared in previous orations and the political works that circulated throughout New England. From its first spoken words and its first printed pages, Hancock's oration focused on passion and affect over the logic of constitutional argument.

As his oration progressed, Hancock "reluctantly" came to an increasingly charged description of the night of the Boston Massacre. In language that evoked the theological passions of heaven and hell, he recounted the "transactions of that dismal night, when in such quick succession we felt the extremes of grief, astonishment and rage; when Heaven in anger, for a dreadful moment, suffer'd Hell to take the reins; when Satan with his chosen band open'd the sluices of New-England's blood, and sacrilegiously polluted our land with the dead bodies of her guiltless sons."[63] Painting an image of tragedy and tyranny, Hancock presented an outward expression of the grief and indignation proper to a patriot, associating himself as a particular patriot subject with a particular mode of emotional comportment and a particular sort of subjective experience. Yet he also associated the emotional experience and behavior of grief with the object of political attachment and patriotic desire. His oration demands of its addressee a specific set of emotional responses to the story of the massacre and affectively sets the tone of patriotic emotional display. In it, Hancock implores his audience, as those who experienced the ghastly horror of British brutality, to emotionally experience and mourn according to a particular mode of affective comportment that combined grief with masculine indignation:

> Let this sad tale of death never be told without a tear; let not the heaving bosom cease to burn with a manly indignation at the barbarous story. . . . Let every parent tell the shameful story to his listening children till tears of pity glisten in their eyes, and boiling passion shakes their tender frames; and whilst the anniversary of that ill-fated night is kept a jubilee in the grim court of pandæmonium, let all America join in one common prayer to Heaven, that, the inhuman, unprovok'd murders of the Fifth of March 1770 . . . may ever stand on history without parallel.[64]

While Hancock's account of the Boston Massacre has the trappings of a personal narrative, it is not *Hancock's* personal narrative.

Though it wears the guise of eyewitness account, Hancock was not present at the event nor can the specifics of his narrative account be correlated to the actual experience of any present subject. This perplexing position leaves us with questions of narrative and subjectivity. Given the circumstance of public memorial and the format of oration, the narrative's subject of address is clearly the audience, but it is less clear to whom the emotionally charged and patriotically determined experiences belong. Likewise, the narrative's source is clear given Hancock's delivery—though the oration may

[63]Ibid., 9.
[64]Ibid., 9–10.

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have been the product of more than one hand—but the authority that legitimates this narrative as a believable narrative of experience is unclear.[65] Who is the subject who experienced this massacre and who is now called to experience its memory four years later?

Hancock's account, like those that will follow it, is not to be understood as a report of his singular, unique experience, incommunicable to others. Rather, it is the compelling narration of the personal experience of a subject distinct from that of "John Hancock." Were it simply a narrative of personal experience, an instance of Hancock giving an account of himself as the subject "John Hancock," then it might merely be a report of a singular experience—one that would be far less compelling given his personal absence from the scene. Though an audience might relate to a personal narrative of affectively evocative experience, they could never *know* it, interpreting it as an account they could experience as their own.

The tactic of narrating an emotional experience of the massacre from the standpoint of a subject distinct from the orator, and in a way that audiences could experience as their own, continued with Joseph Warren's 1775 address, one of the clearest and arguably most dramatic narrative re-presentations of the massacre. Warren, the physician and whig leader, reservedly introduces his emotionally fraught and intense account of the massacre as a sad remembrance of an "unequaled scene of horror," a "sanguinary theatre" of "baleful images of terror [that] croud around" him and which bring him and his audience back to the "discontented ghosts with hollow groans" that "solemnize the anniversary of the FIFTH of MARCH."[66] Framing his foray into emotional account as the recollection of a "melancholy walk of death," Warren introduced a cast of characters whom he figuratively leads to walk among the carnage of a memory to be recalled by a presupposed subject whose public grief and personal experience are framed by patriotic desire. The cast of this memory includes the "gay companion" who is called to "drop a farewell tear upon that body which so late he saw vigorous and warm with social mirth"; the "tender mother" who is led to "weep over her beloved son"; the "widowed mourner" who is asked to "behold thy murdered husband gasping on the ground"; and the "infant children" brought in each hand to "bewail their father's fate" but warned "Take heed, ye orphan babes, lest

[65]Historians have speculated that Hancock may not have been the author, or the sole author, of the oration he performed. One biographer has suggested that the oration was a collaborative work with Samuel Cooper and Samuel Adams (William M. Fowler, *The Baron of Beacon Hill* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980], 165). It has also been suggested that the speech was entirely written by Joseph Warren and Benjamin Church (David James Kiracofe, "Dr. Benjamin Church and the Dilemma of Treason in Revolutionary Massachusetts," *New England Quarterly* 70, no. 3 [1997]: 449).

[66]Warren, *Oration*, 14–15.

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whilst your streaming eyes are fixed upon the ghastly corpse, your feet slide on the stones bespattered with your father's brains."[67]

As the narrative subject wades through the gore of patriots and innocents, Warren's address is punctuated by moral rectitude and righteousness. Purposively interrupting a recollection of the horror against Bostonians and nature alike, he interjects "Enough!"[68] And with this, the account pauses and shifts registers from the severe exposition of visceral terror to the shock of awareness of what has transpired. Warren's collective subject, surrounded by the recalled scene of clouded, hellish, and visceral horror, stands amid the violence, wildly staring about,

> and with amazement, ask[s], who spread this ruin round us? . . . Has haughty France or cruel Spain sent forth her myrmidons? . . . Does some fiend, fierce from the depth of Hell . . . twang her destructive bow and hurl her deadly arrows at our breast? No. None of these—but, how astonishing! It is the hand of Britain that inflicts the wound. The Arms of George our rightful King have been employed to shed that blood which freely would have flown at his command when justice or the honour of his crown had called his subjects to the field.[69]

With the ghastly scenes publicly recalled and the tragedy of victimization at the hands of a beloved monarch emphasized, all presupposed distinction between the subject of address and the subject of narrative collapses. Fluidly moving between a collective subject of "we" distinct from the personal subject of Warren's "I" to the second person plural "you" of his audience, Warren first declares how "pity, grief, astonishment, with all the softer movements of the soul must now give way to stronger passions."[70] He then explicitly pulls his audience into the subject of narrative, simultaneously inquiring about and narrating the affective response of his fellow citizens to the tragedy. Warren explicitly places each constituent of his public within the experience of the event, not from the vantage point of his personal experience but from the personal experience of the zealous patriot.[71]

With his public so framed as the narrative subject of the event, each one finds himself in the thick of the tragedy. Spectrally situated as party to the scene, one feels the cobblestones of King Street beneath his feet, smells the acrid scent of spent saltpeter hanging low in the air, hears the groans of the dying, the wails of kith and kin, the rush of air and footsteps on cold ground as witnesses scatter to safety. Emotionally, the audience is hailed to feel the pangs of empathy, the immediate sense of grief and loss, of

[67]Ibid., 15.
[68]Ibid.
[69]Warren, *Oration*, 16.
[70]Ibid.
[71]Gustafson similarly noted the "incarnational logic" of the orations in which the audience "became identified with the orator's body, their voice with his voice" (Gustafson, *Eloquence Is Power*, 187).

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astonishment and confusion that clutches the survivor of tragedy at the inquisitive moment just after shock. Then, such affective experiences descriptively and prescriptively give way to the experience of stronger passions, and most importantly, the audience is called to seethe with rage at the realization of horror perpetrated by a standing army of the Crown. With this scene of displaced temporality set, Warren speaks to his fellow citizens, patriots transported through memory back to King Street, inquiring "what dreadful thought now swells your heaving bosoms" and describing the felt experience of the subject as second person thus, "You fly to arms—Sharp indignation flashes from each eye—Revenge gnashes her iron teeth—Death grins an hideous smile secure to drench his greedy jaws in human gore—Whilst hovering furies darken all the air."[72] Stoking the passionate fury of an audience framed as having experienced the event of the massacre—and in the moment of hearing or reading Warren's words, *re-experiencing* the event—Warren interjects, "stop, my bold adventurous countrymen, stain not your weapons with the blood of Britons."[73] With this, Warren's patriot feels the affective pull of rage and the seductive clutch of vengeance but is stopped by the pull of virtuous patriotism that does not subordinate his passions to the command of reason but restrains them with the empathetic bonds of other sympathetic, innocent, and feeling living beings.

Warren's oration moves to form his audience not merely in the image of a battered survivor, but in that of a virtuous patriot, a figure that lacks "not zeal or fortitude."[74] Warren's patriot is a subject of severity, piety, sensitivity, faith, and above all, zeal, a figure whose love of country girds him against corruption and vice. Moving beyond the endeavor of shaping the ghastly memories of persevering New Englanders, he hails a starkly severe and devoted figure:

> You then, who nobly have espoused your Country's cause, who generously have sacrificed wealth and ease . . . refused the summons to the festive board, been deaf to the alluring calls of luxury and mirth . . . keep your vigils by the midnight lamp, for the salvation of your invaded country, that you might break the fowler's snare, and disappoint the vulture of his prey, you then will reap that harvest of renown which you so justly have deserved.[75]

In this concluding address, we see the emergence and formation of a zealot, one who not only is formed as having a distinct memory of tyrannous horror, but who possesses a particular patriotic experience of the present, as well as a descriptive mode of practical political judgment and, as we will see, a prescriptive imperative of political action.

[72]Warren, *Oration*, 16.
[73]Ibid., 16–17.
[74]Ibid., 22.
[75]Ibid.

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Evident in the orations of Hancock and Warren, the pattern of using narratives of tragedy and subjugation to call audiences to identify with the affective experiences of the zealot persisted in Peter Thacher's oration of 1776, almost a year from the Battles of Lexington and Concord. Like Warren's address the previous year, Thacher's narrative slips fluidly between "we" and "you," the subject of experiential narrative and the subject of address. Addressing the subjects of which he gives an account, the Congregationalist minister Thacher laments, "We experienced the most provoking insults; and at length saw the streets of Boston strewed with the corpses of five of its inhabitants, murdered in cool blood, by the British mercenaries." Collapsing the subject of narrative into the subject of address, he speaks to "the indignant rage which swelled your bosoms upon this occasion [the massacre], the fortitude and humanity which you discovered, the anguish of the friends and relatives of the dead and wounded," and "all the horrors of that memorable night." Persisting with the collective reminiscence of deep psychic and material trauma by speaker and audience as one singular subject, Thacher's narrative seamlessly moves from the memory of six years prior to a more recent history of the present, lamenting that "the past year hath presented us with a Tragedy more striking. . . . A Tragedy, which more plainly proves the fatal effects of keeping up standing armies in time of peace, than any arguments whatsoever: We have seen the ground crimsoned with the gore of hundreds of our fellow-citizens . . . and heard our savage enemies breathing out thirstings for our blood."[76] This lamentation inaugurates a shift in Thacher's narrative from involving the audience in the experience of the massacre and the siege of Boston toward their joining in as the subject of a patriotic struggle *in medias res*. Where the previous years' orations had begun to substantiate the memories and means of experiencing the massacre, from 1776 on, memorialization shifts more and more to the re-presentation of a contingent memory of the present conflict.

Turning to recent events, Thacher presents the patriot's experience of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, doing so from the standpoint of a collective personal subject, one that was "AROUSED by the unprovoked injury," which, "like a lion, awaking from his slumber . . . sprang to arms!" Pulled into the sense of triumph and virtue, Thacher's audience is confronted by a *we* that "felt ourselves inspired with the spirit of our ancestors," that "heard our bretherens blood crying to us for vengeance," that "rushed into the midst of battle."[77] Though granted the "favour of heaven," Thacher's subject is, like Warren's, a passionate, feeling one, who is viscerally possessed of sentiment and sense and plagued by a deeply felt sense of pain and loss even at the moment of patriotic victory. The recent past of victory, felt as that "elation of spirit," is "damped by our feeling the calamities of war." The patriot is pained "to hear the expiring groans of our beloved countrymen;

[76]Thacher, *Oration*, 9.
[77]Ibid., 10.

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to behold the flames of our habitations, once the abodes of peace and plenty, ascending to Heaven, to see ruin and desolation spread over our fruitful villages, must occasion sensations in the highest degree painful."[78]

Such sensations of grief and loss, the pains of mourning felt in the midst of both victory and hellish struggle, are particularly acute where the loss is sensed as the loss of a model patriot. Joseph Warren, who had delivered the previous year's oration, fell at the Battle of Bunker Hill on June 17, 1775. The pain of Warren's death imputed to Thacher's subject of narrative demonstrates both how the subject's patriotic desire ought to determine the emotions felt and the depth of such sensations. Offering a panegyric to Warren's patriotic memory, Thacher extolled that potent mix of sympathetic sentiment and righteous indignation that had served Hancock's oration so well. Implored to recollect both the vision of Warren's patriotism and the reported desecration of his body at the hands of the British, Thacher spoke as the zealous patriot, crying aloud that "when we reflect upon the manner of his death; when we fancy that we see his savage enemies exulting o'er his corpse . . . when we remember that destitute of the rites of sepulture [burial], he was cast into the ground, without the distinction due to his rank and merit; we cannot restrain the starting tear, we cannot repress the bursting sigh!" Marrying an expression of collective grief to the celebration of a model patriot Thacher declared, "We mourn thine exit, illustrious shade, with undissembled grief," and assured Warren's spirit that "we will erect a monument to thy memory in each of our grateful breasts, and to the latest ages will teach our tender infants to lisp the name of WARREN, with veneration and applause!"[79]

Narrating the Patriot's Volition

These narratives of experiential memory populate the internal emotional life of the patriot. Yet the production of a subject or model of subjectivity must, if it is to be an active subject, entail some attribution of agency in addition to the development of a framework of internal subjectivity and experience. To say that the Massacre Day orations produced and re-produced a zealous patriot as a kind of subject requires us to go beyond demonstrating the way in which this subject's affective inward experience was performed and represented. It necessitates a demonstration of the subject's supposed agency.

On one level, such agency reveals itself in the patriot's narrated external emotional comportment, for example, in the tears that are wept over the bodies of those martyred on King Street or in the imperative to shed tears when recalling the tragedy while preserving one's indignation.[80] With the

[78]Ibid., 11.
[79]Ibid., 12.
[80]E.g., Austin, *Oration*, 5; Hancock, *Oration*, 9.

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Massacre Day narratives, the patriot does not simply feel the pain of tragic loss when confronted by American deaths. Rather, he or she wails, cries, and exhibits the grief and anger of a patriot confronted with the public loss of fellow countrymen. In this way, this figure has both internal subjective experience and its external expression.

The agentic capacities of our zealot are not restricted to the shedding of patriotic tears but are also observed in the narrative accounts of the political actions the patriot was said to have taken, not to have taken, and implored to take. After linking the feeling of loss to the behavior of mourning, Austin explicitly joined the experience of pain with the militant pursuit of patriotic ideals of liberty and virtue. Remarking that "it is not sufficient to drop a transient tear to the memory of departed Heroes," Austin contended that "the best way to *express our affection* for such great and good Men, is to rouse and revenge them."[81] With these words, Austin explicitly linked the patriot's affection for personal models of civic virtue and patriotism—such as the martyred Joseph Warren—to the volitional act of vengeance. Austin's remarks should be understood as an imperative not only to allow one's mind to be influenced by patriotic bloodshed and express the feeling of patriotic grief through outward behaviors such as weeping, but also to express one's patriotic emotions through external political acts of willful volition, such as vengeance.

Similarly, Thacher prodded his audience to be animated by the felt experience of corruption and subjugation and to "strain every nerve in the service of our country!" asking "What are our lives, when viewed in competition with the happiness of such an empire! What is our private interest, when opposed to that of three millions of men!" Looking within to the "warmth" of patriotism, Thacher implored, "let us sacrifice our ease, our fortunes and our lives, that we may save our country." This patriotic call for self-reflection and sacrificial action matched the agency Thacher identified has having already been exercised by his patriot public. For Thacher, Bostonians had already and clearly manifested the public virtue that "may transcend every private consideration." Giving an account of how such patriots had acted, he extolled their sacrifice, "firmness," and resistance against "every attack of arbitrary power!" and with the rhetoric of triumphant martyrdom, declared, "With zeal let us exert ourselves in the service of our country, in life: And when the earthly scene shall be closing with us, let us expire with this prayer upon our quivering lips, O GOD, LET AMERICA BE FREE!"[82]

The actions and emotions of this figure are presented as expressions of commitment to the central object of desire; they are signs of the patriot's zealous devotion. Just as the patriot's internal emotional experience is shaped by the intensity of his or her devotion, the patriot's outward emotional behavior is likewise a social expression of this devotion, giving a public account of his or her zeal and identity. It is the inevitable social expression of the zealot's

[81]Austin, *Oration*, 11, my emphasis.
[82]Thacher, *Oration*, 15.

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devotion wherein we most clearly see the political implications of zeal, for it is not simply that the zealot feels things intensely and sufficiently emotes them, but that he or she acts from intensely experienced devotion. Grieving the present, recalling the past, the orators move beyond presentations of the experiences of the patriot and its figured models. Beyond what is felt, seen, or thought, these narratives describe, prescribe, and perform what is done by the patriot. The patriot does not just inwardly experience anger, he or she seeks vengeance and justice driven by passional volition, tempered by political principle, and forged in the furnace of patriotic desire.

In such passional volition, passion serves as a catalyst while volitional judgment directs the catalyzed energy of emotion. In the passional volition of the political zealot, passion motivates action. Yet, what and how the zealot feels is framed by his or her attachment to a political object of desire. With the patriotic zealot, one acts because one feels, and what or how one feels is framed by one's attachment to country or homeland. This model of passional volition and subjective experience, explicitly framed in terms of zealous devotion, confronts patriot and loyalist, friend and enemy alike, eliciting sympathy, empathy, antipathy, and revulsion.

Conclusion

Questions about the constitution and legitimacy of the people are important for theorists of democracy and democratic practice, in part because they are questions of authorization: who or what is capable of legitimately authorizing political action or exercising political agency—a question made no less difficult in democratic politics where the legitimate subject is presumed to be "the people." Studying the Massacre orations cannot provide insights that fully resolve the paradoxes of popular authorization, founding, or politics that take shape when theorists interrogate the people. However, the orations provide an illuminating instance in which concrete political action constituted a people and productively negotiated the theoretical requirements that must be met for popular legitimacy. As noted earlier, Näsström isolated criteria for a people to be legitimate: that which constitutes the people must be both (1) powerful enough to induce a plurality of individuals to form a common people, and (2) simultaneous with the people themselves.[83] First, Massacre orators used the power of passions, affects, and subjective experience to reorient a plurality of individual audience members toward a common collective identity as patriotic zealots, thereby affectively constituting a people. Second, the performative dynamic of interpellation, in which audiences were addressed as the patriotic zealots they were presumed to be, navigates the legitimation criteria of simultaneity. The experiences and emotions that legitimate and help to constitute the agency and identity of the zealot may

[83]Näsström, "Legitimacy of the People," 641.

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originate in the orators' performances, but they are rooted in the subjective emotional experience of those that see themselves in the zealot. In the Massacre orations, then, we see orators rallying emotions as a way to constitute and legitimate collective political identity and agency. The sources of the people's identity as zealous patriots is, therefore, their exercise of the zealous patriot's agency. Audiences who saw themselves through the eyes of the patriotic zealot and who recognized their own passions and emotions in the narrated experiences and outlook of the zealot became popular sources of political agency united by a shared collective identity as a people.

Civic humanists and Atlantic republican theorists of the eighteenth century consistently stressed that republics rose and fell in proportion to the virtuous dispositions of their citizens.[84] Though the civic personality normatively ascribed to ideal citizens was defined in part by its reasoned defense of republican principles, its support for republican institutions, and its commitment to active participation in political life, this ideal personality also included passions, sentimental affections, and bonds shared between citizens.[85] Maintaining civic virtue in a citizenry was thought to be central for a republic because it could bind republican citizens together in support of their political order and the common realization of the *vita activa*.

In what ways might the personal bonds of civic virtue and patriotic passion be instilled in a people? How might a people be shaped to develop the emotional, sentimental, and affective constitution of the civic ideal, the political subjectivity and identity—i.e., the personality—secure from corruption? These questions are pressing concerns in a time of political crisis, and the Massacre orations reflected a potential and partial answer to them, one similar to the tactic of promoting heroic models of republican virtue in Trenchard and Gordon's *Cato's Letters*.[86] In the Massacre orations, we see

[84]J. G. A. Pocock noted the prevalence of this trend in civic humanist thought, which was "overmasteringly concerned with the ideal of civic virtue as an attribute of the personality." J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 316.

[85]That republican theorists conceptualized citizenship and civic virtue partly in terms of affect, passion, and sentiment is clear from Montesquieu's *The Spirit of the Laws*. In the author's foreword, Montesquieu informed his reader that "*virtue* in a republic is love of the homeland, that is, love of equality. It is not a moral virtue or a Christian virtue; it is *political virtue*, and this is the spring that makes republican government move. . . . Therefore, I have called love of the homeland and of equality, *political virtue*." See Montesquieu, *Spirit of the Laws*, xli. Trenchard and Gordon so strongly believed passions to be determinative of people's political behavior that they understood "knowledge of politicks" as the "knowledge of the passions," and governing as "chiefly the art of applying to the passions" (*Cato's Letters*, 276).

[86]Acknowledging the difficulty of shaping passions, Trenchard and Gordon celebrated Brutus, Cato, Regulus, Timoleon, Dion, and Epaminondas as models of virtuous public-oriented passions to be emulated. See Trenchard and Gordon, *Cato's Letters*, 276–77.

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efforts to shape audiences into the civic ideal of virtuous patriots by constructing common experiences and political identity, and by performing the recollection of these experiences in a way that audiences could recognize as their own, understanding these common experiences, emotions, and sentiments as shared, public, and political. In so doing, the orations provide an example of how New England whigs and radical patriots sought to constitute and legitimate a people by shaping the civic personality of citizens at the level of affect, emotion, and subjectivity. In more general terms that extend beyond the context of the American Revolution and democratic theory, this case offers a concrete look at how actors engaged in political crises use the political mobilization of experience to shape identity, motivate action, and frame the terms of political conflict.

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