

militia and fugitive slave acts that first articulated the United States as a “white man’s country.” His decision to end his narrative in 1800 is defensible, although making its end point the suppression of Gabriel’s conspiracy in Virginia seems odd, given Jefferson’s election that year on the basis of the “federal ratio” counting slaves for the purposes of electoral representation. But recognizing the specific breaks in this era, such as the departure of British troops in 1783 accompanied by thousands of freed slaves, or the ratification of a Constitution protecting slavery, would have strengthened his book.

Egerton’s problem, which all scholars addressing black people’s relation to the Revolution must confront, is the question of when the Revolution betrayed its promises that “all men are created equal.” This is no simple matter; ever since Quarles brought black people back into the Revolutionary narrative, historians have evinced a profound confusion. Some, like Gordon Wood, continue to assert that the question need not be asked, since black people were outside of, and irrelevant to, the republican body politic. Others, like Holton, see their presence as crucial in the South, where British hopes for defeating the Americans rested on slave defections. Egerton refuses to commit, and one can see why, given the extreme pluralism of Revolutionary ideology and practice across the thirteen colonial statelets. He shows how an explicitly pro-slavery politics surged in the lower South as early as the mid-1780s, led by men like Robert Goodloe Harper and William Loughton Smith, and refers at another point to “the counter-revolution of the 1780s” (247). Later, however, he states that it is impossible to specify the Thermidorean moment, only that “perhaps” it came “when white Patriots utterly and completely crushed any remaining hopes that the first republic in the Americas would actually put into practice the belief that its inhabitants were ‘endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights’” (271). Here is where a more emphatic periodization might have helped. Yet one would still have to recognize that the most ardent emancipationists, such as those Massachusetts judges and jurymen who enacted the American version of *Somerset v. Stuart* in the early 1780s, felt no evident difficulty in forging a constitutional state in league with slaveholding elites just a few years later. Any definitive conclusions about “the black presence in the American Revolution” may be impossible, other than that they began as they would remain for two hundred years: a destabilizing element inside the republic, challenging the possibility of any imagined community.

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Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love Between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009, \$35.00). Pp. 254. ISBN 9780 8018 9120 5.

John Gilbert McCurdy, *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2009, \$35.00). Pp. 268. ISBN 978 0 8014 4788 4.

As a young man, Daniel Webster wrote passionately about “the friend of my heart, the partner of my joys, griefs, and affections, the only participator of my most secret

thoughts.” The “dearly beloved” that Webster described was not a woman, but a man: James Bingham, his Dartmouth classmate. The ardent friendships between women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have long been studied as sites of intense emotional connection, but in *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic*, Richard Godbeer reveals that men, too, engaged in loving and socially acceptable relationships that could be physically demonstrative.

The importance of these relationships went beyond the emotional sustenance they provided individuals; Godbeer argues that after the American Revolution sympathetic friendship undergirded republican citizenship. The ideal of the independent republican citizen, so familiar to students of Jeffersonian America, in fact relied upon ties of affection that would bind them all together into an “enlightened political culture” (161). The language of citizenship, at least among men of learning and refinement, rested upon and mirrored that of friendship.

In *Citizen Bachelors: Manhood and the Creation of the United States*, John Gilbert McCurdy also focusses on the intersection between masculinity and citizenship in the era of the American Revolution, but where Godbeer emphasizes the individual and societal benefits of male friendships, McCurdy is most interested in the effect of the Revolution on what it meant to be a man. Focussing upon unmarried men, McCurdy argues that through the colonial period bachelors did not have the same rights and privileges as married men. In many places they were subject to higher tax rates, more stringent penalties for crimes, and greater obligations for civic service, especially in militias. In the heady days of the American Revolution bachelors parlayed these civic obligations into an argument for commensurate citizenship. Single men thus became “the first disfranchised group to gain equal rights,” but, in so doing, they helped connect citizenship all the more firmly with (white) masculinity (8).

Both authors organize their material thematically, though McCurdy’s in fact hews more closely to a chronological narrative beginning in the seventeenth century and progressing through the earliest years of the American Revolution. In the seventeenth century, young bachelors were not seen fully to be men because they had not yet acquired mastery over property or dependents. McCurdy maintains that colonial governments compelled bachelors, in common with women and children, to live under the direction of a master who would ensure their good behavior. However, as soon as he makes this point McCurdy undermines it by demonstrating that in practice most New England towns proved unwilling to hinder the freedom of single men, especially as the seventeenth century progressed. Meanwhile, the Chesapeake, which receives minimal treatment, also undermines McCurdy’s argument. With its radical gender imbalance, McCurdy himself admits Chesapeake governments made little serious effort to control their bachelors.

While seventeenth-century Americans occasionally tried to regulate the behavior of bachelors, they did not inquire deeply into what it meant to be a bachelor. Eighteenth-century Americans, by contrast, were “fascinated” by bachelors (51). A rising stress on companionate marriage and a desire to see the “empty” North American continent peopled led commentators to focus a harsher scrutiny on the hearts, manhood, and patriotism of men who chose not to marry. At the same time, however, increasing emphasis on personal freedom discouraged state intervention

or punitive measures against bachelors; rather, single men benefited from greater latitude personally and sexually to enjoy their bachelorhood. The single life was not all about free license, however. Concerned that married men were unduly burdened by the cost of raising children, provincial legislatures revised tax codes and other civic obligations for single men. McCurdy finds, for example, that because of the so-called bachelor taxes, single men in Concord Township, Pennsylvania constituted 15 percent of all taxpayers, but paid 26 percent of the taxes (65). Furthermore, some sex crimes or debt laws mandated harsher penalties for single men than for married men.

McCurdy is particularly anxious to document the evolution of “a sense of group consciousness” among bachelors over the course of the eighteenth century (5). He argues that civic obligations politicized bachelors while negative portrayals in the press gave them a group identity. By the American Revolution, bachelors argued that their civic and tax obligations entitled them to full political participation in the new nation.

Godbeer’s treatment of friendships between men is less chronologically focussed. It opens with a beautifully sensitive micro-history of the 1780s friendship of John Mifflin with Isaac Norris and James Gibson. The relationships Godbeer describes in this and the next chapter might be termed “friendships” from a modern perspective, but they allowed space for a much more romantic, loving discourse than is commonly used between male friends today. Men from this period enjoyed great scope in the kinds of affection and love they might socially acceptably express to and about one another. In a period where family, friends, and even strangers commonly shared sleeping quarters, physical intimacy among friends did not necessarily imply an erotic component. Whether male friendships progressed to a sexual relationship is a question Godbeer handles with delicacy, arguing that in most cases with evidence so scant, it would be “presumptuous to assume either that they did or that they did not” (56).

Having treated the emotional valences of individual friendships, Godbeer turns to a consideration of the role friendship played in religious thought, in the Continental Army, and in rhetoric of citizenship in the new nation. For the most part he traces continuity rather than change, finding, for example, that seventeenth-century Puritans, Great Awakening revivalists, and early national evangelists shared a belief that male friendships enhanced virtue and prefigured the community of the saved. Godbeer does see change over time in the philosophical discourse on friendship, catalyzed through the writing of Scottish thinkers, especially Adam Smith and David Hume. These authors argued that the rise of the free market allowed commercial society to perform the more “interested” functions of friendship (such as collaboration on a project), leaving men of sensibility free to form relationships based purely on disinterested affection. This amity, in turn, had profound political implications for the structure of early American civil society.

Godbeer’s reliance on Smith and Hume raises the question, however, of what was distinctively American about the perception of friendship in the new republic. What, if anything, of this phenomenon transformed male friendships on the other side of the Atlantic? Furthermore, the emphasis on disinterested friendship to the exclusion of the “interested” relationships of business partners, political collaborators, and neighbors is, in the end, limiting, and should not be taken as a full exploration of

what early American notions of friendship might entail. Godbeer offers, however, a thorough and perceptive account of one very important strain especially resonant among middle-class and elite men. His greatest contribution may be to elucidate the range of vivid and loving expression available to early American men in their relationships with one another and to show that, just as it recast familial connections, the American Revolution invested the ties of friendship with increased significance.

McCurdy makes a compelling argument for attending to a long-neglected group in American history, both for what we learn about the men themselves, and for what they in turn reveal about mainstream society. His approach, however, reduces the richly textured identities of men who were rich and poor, farmers and merchants, and, yes, often eventually husbands, down to one distilled identity, “the bachelor,” to the obfuscation of other aspects of their lives. The strength of that single element of men’s identities takes on perhaps too much importance in McCurdy’s analysis. For example, he posits that in at least one social club, the famous Tuesday Club of Annapolis, latent hostility manifested between single and married men, creating “two mutually exclusive groups” separated by “a degree of animosity or at least distrust” (150). This argument ascribes a fixed and antagonistic group identity for men now shorn of all other characteristics but marital status. The same limits manifest in McCurdy’s political analysis. For example, he points to the radical Pennsylvania constitution of 1776 which extended suffrage to 90 percent of that state’s white male population. Most historians focus on the class implications of this move; McCurdy ignores them, emphasizing instead that most of the Pennsylvanians affected were single men. Contemporaries debated hotly the social and political ramifications of the enfranchisement of propertyless men, but McCurdy himself admits that not one comment survives about the enfranchisement of so many bachelors. He uses this negative evidence to conclude that a revolutionary shift had occurred, prioritizing masculinity rather than marital status in giving full political rights. McCurdy’s work is suggestive, but as he does not convincingly demonstrate that bachelorhood was nearly as significant a barrier to full political participation as economic or social status, his conclusion comes across as somewhat one-dimensional.

Both works’ subtitles are revealing. They each announce their intention to demonstrate the link between their subject and the “creation” of the new American republic. Together, they insist on a serious interrogation of men’s lives and masculinity in that creation.

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Lawrence A. Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen: Barbary Slavery and the American Public, 1785–1816* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009, \$55.00). Pp. vii + 256. ISBN 978 0 8018 91839 7.

After 11 September 2001, many books have explored the clash between the United States and the Barbary States in the years bridging the eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, seeking the traces of early national engagement in the