Norcross has embodied the image of the American loyalist with quite the same panache as Peter Oliver, the last royally appointed chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court and the author of The Origin and Progress of the Tory Rebellion. Other prominent loyalists, such as Pennsylvania lawyer and politician Joseph Galloway, the Massachusetts governor Thomas Hutchinson, and the Anglican preacher Jonathan Boucher of Maryland, have had their moments in the historical spotlight, but none of them have captured the imagination the way Oliver has. His provocative and wonderful history of the American Revolution from the point of view of a loyalist is the only loyalist text (recognized and marked specifically as a loyalist text) to remain in print for the past fifty years.1 We might say that Oliver has become the stereotype of the American loyalist. Wealthy, entangled in the British imperial machinery, strident, angry, and unrepentant, Oliver is easy to demonize. But Oliver was no more representative of the loyalists than Tom Paine was of the patriots.

The vast majority of American loyalists did not resemble Oliver in the least. Most loyalists were ordinary Americans who, for a variety of reasons that often had very little to do with politics and the grand ideals of the American Revolution, wished to remain connected to the British Empire. Over the past two centuries, estimates of the numbers of loyalists have varied widely, from roughly 20 percent of the population of the colonies up to 33 percent.2 Scholars have often struggled to determine the exact number of loyalists for the simple reason that many loyalists found it necessary to conceal their political allegiances, or their allegiances were too shifting and mutable to count. The most conservative estimates tend to count only those who openly declared their loyalty to the British Crown by either signing a written document, taking official passage back to England or other outposts of the British Empire, or filing a claim with the British Loyalist Claims Commission after...
the war." There is ample evidence, however, that many loyalists chose to remain in the newly independent United States and weather the conflict. These loyalists often kept their political leanings to themselves, tried to declare themselves neutrals, or signed oaths of allegiance to the United States as a way to protect their property and their families. Ever since the Revolution, it has also proved convenient for American nationalists to take the smaller estimates at face value, to make the Revolution appear more consensual and unanimous than it was.

 Scholars have often struggled to acknowledge and account for internal resistance to the Revolution, but Americans at the time were well aware of the significant number of dissenters among them. Perhaps the most intriguing early estimate of the numbers of loyalists comes from John Adams, who placed the figure at one-third of his fellow colonists. Adams made this observation in two different letters. First, in an 1833 letter to Thomas McKean, he asserted that two-thirds of the people of the colonies supported the Revolution. Adams wanted to impress upon his correspondent the idea that there was significant opposition to the Revolution in the colonies. He cited John Marshall's view, stated in his biography of George Washington, that the South had been "equally divided," and pointed to evidence of major dissent in New York, Pennsylvania, and even Boston. Two years later, in a letter to James Lloyd, Adams "calculates the divisions among the people of America," setting the proportions at "one third ... averse to the revolution," with an "opposite third" for it, and a "middle third, composed mainly of the yeomanry," who "wavered in their allegiances." What is perhaps most striking about Adams's assessment of the situation is how very undecided he recalled the Americans being. Not only did loyalists "averse to the revolution" constitute 33 percent of the population, but only half of the remaining population had been, in Adams's estimation, fully committed to the cause of independence.

 Whether or not Adams's numbers are precisely correct, his historical overview allows us to see loyalty in a much different light. From this point of view, loyalty ceases to be an extreme position held by an intractable minority of colonists. Instead, we can begin to understand it as a reasonable response to the conflict. In so doing, we gain a much better understanding of the complicated internal politics that shaped the Revolution, an event we must now view as a civil war as well as an international conflict. Indeed, many Americans at the time of the Revolution and in the decades immediately following perceived it as a civil war that divided the American family metaphorically and literally.

 The notion that the American Revolution is best understood as a civil war is not new. A number of contemporary observers were keenly aware of the extent to which the conflict between the American colonies and the British mother country resembled a civil war. One remarkable instance of this perspective is the penultimate paragraph from the Declaration of Independence, which calls the colonists' "British brethren" to account for their complicity with the Crown's policies. The most striking example of a writer who insisted that the Revolution ought to be understood as a civil war is James Fenimore Cooper, who, ironically, has often been seen as a nationalist invested in a narrative of American exceptionalism. Yet Cooper promoted an understanding of the Revolution that emphasized the strong ties Americans had to Great Britain. For the novelist who had married Susan DeLancy, a woman from a prominent New York loyalist family, and was modeling his career on Sir Walter Scott, the social and aesthetic ties to the mother country ran deep. In the 1820s Cooper began his career with a series of novels that featured loyalist characters in a variety of major roles, some villains, some heroes, and some simply ordinary individuals struggling to decide how they felt about the Revolution. Throughout these novels we see two major themes that attach themselves insistently to the loyalist characters: the tension between social or familial bonds and political choices, and the permeability of the line dividing loyalists from patriots.

 Cooper would discuss his approach to the Revolution in the introduction to a new edition of The Spy published in 1831: "The dispute between England and the United States of America, though not strictly a family quarrel, had many of the features of a civil war." With the analogy to a family quarrel, Cooper recasts the dispute between loyalists and patriots from a political one into a domestic one. Questions of liberty, democracy, rights, and other political philosophical concerns aren't relevant to this version of the Revolution and are rarely addressed in the novel. Instead, the novel focuses on the tensions the war generates within the community, within families, among friends, and within individuals, all of whom struggle with their allegiances. Seduction, marriage, friendship, honor, and honesty are the key terms of the novel in which patriot and loyalist characters alike demonstrate heroic as well as less laudable characteristics.

 Cooper was not alone in his assessment of the Revolution as a family struggle. Both of his great literary rivals, Lydia Maria Child and Catharine Maria Sedgwick, wrote novels set during the Revolution that produce a similar sense of the complex domestic politics of the time. Although Child's The Rebels (1845), set in the polarized city of Boston, tends to present loyalists in a less generous light, its plot is organized around the social ties between loyalists and patriots, and it frequently adopts the language of civil war. Sedgwick's representation of loyalists in The Limwoods (1835) is more in keeping with Cooper's. Set mostly in New York City, The Limwoods also features divided families, disputes, and spying (as well as George Washington, who also figures prominently in The Spy). Perhaps even more than The Spy, The Limwoods focuses on the way the political dispute of the Revolution divides a family. Parents and siblings take different sides. This recurring trope of the marriage of former loyalists to patriots suggests that in looking back at the Revolution from the vantage point of the 1850s and 1860s, for Cooper, Child, and Sedgwick one of the most pressing ongoing problems of the Revolution remained the reconciliation with the loyalists and their descendants. Cooper and Sedgwick would enact that reconciliation at the end of their respective novels. Cooper returned to this same question in his next novel, The Pioneers (1823), which ends with the marriage of an exiled loyalist to the daughter of a family friend who sided with the Revolution.

 In spite of Cooper and Sedgwick's efforts to recover a less polarized and more humanized version of wartime allegiances, loyalists would remain marginal figures
in the story of the Revolution, whose arguments would be mostly dismissed if not
demonized by scholars. In recent years, loyalists have begun to attract more atten-
tion from scholars seeking to recover the complex and porous political identities
that John Adams knew so well. I will explore the reasons for this shift of focus,
and then present the cases of four loyalists, Michæl Martha Moore, Boston King,
Jonathan Boucher, and J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur, whose careers and writ-
ings are especially pertinent to the current scholarly treatments of the American
Revolution. Each of these figures challenges the dominant patriot narrative of the
Revolution. They are not easily dismissed as shrill, vindictive, or self-interested.
Instead, a careful reading of their respective texts invites a reconsideration of
the essential terms of the Revolution, including freedom, sovereignty, individual
agency, and nationality. Ultimately, I hope to show how a closer attention to these
loyalists and the varied contours of their respective loyalisms will yield a much
more nuanced and complex understanding of the social, cultural, and political
dimensions of the American Revolution.

The narrative of the American Revolution that has so successfully alienated
and excluded loyalists has been a nationalist narrative. This story of the Revolution
equates the decision to break with the British Empire with the emergence of a dis-
tinct (and enviable) American identity that for much of the past 230 odd years
has been understood to be unique to the United States. In the last decade, with the end
of the Cold War and the rise of globalization, that exceptionalist narrative has lost
much of its force. Instead of seeing the American Revolution as a national “found-
ing,” scholars have begun to situate the Revolution in the context of the global
transformations of the eighteenth century. Empire, imperialism, colonialism,
transatlantic, hemispheric, and circumatlantic have become the key words for this
new approach. The displacement of the national framework in favor of a global
narrative of empire and circumatlantic cultural and economicflows has rendered
the loyalists a relevant, perhaps even indispensable, population to understand.

One of the crucial transformations enabled by this new circumatlantic perspec-
tive has been the dissociation of the geographic space of British North America with
a particular identity. North America now becomes a contested space where a host
of peoples, including British, French, Native American, Spanish, and, of course,
African, entered into contact and conflict. Once we decenter the national narrative
of the United States, it is possible to perceive a multiplicity of American identities,
racially, ethnically, culturally, religiously, and politically inflected. Moreover, if
“American” does not refer exclusively to the white settlers who successfully revolted
against British imperial authority to create the United States of America, we can
begin to see a variety of other American peoples and identities spread across a
geography that now includes Canada and the Caribbean.

These shifts in the paradigm have also made it possible for scholars to see
loyalists as something other than un- or anti-American. Once loyalists are no
longer reduced to the role of foil to the good Americans, the binary between loy-
alists and patriots breaks down to reveal that British North Americans in the thir-
teen colonies comprised a much more internally conflicted population for whom

nationality and nationalism were infant and protean concepts. At a fundamental
level, loyalists and patriots alike thought of themselves as Americans; they admired
British culture; and they believed that an empire would make the ideal model for
their government. But loyalists opposed independence. The most concise and least
politically charged way to define loyalism in British North America would be to
say that a loyalist was an American who preferred the colonies to remain a part
of the British Empire rather than become a separate country. Loyalism, by this
definition, was not a political party position. Of course some loyalists—such as
Peter Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson—fit that party narrative, but, on the whole,
loyalists shared no common set of political beliefs about the nature of government
or the proper order of society. For most loyalists, the decision had less to do with
great political ideals than it did with more personal and local matters. As the
hero of J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur’s Letters from an American Farmer puts
it, “I am conscious that I was happy before this unfortunate revolution. I feel that
I am no longer so; therefore I regret the change. This is the only mode of thinking
adapted to persons in my situation.”

Loyalism, as Farmer James’s reaction testifies, was not a class position.
American loyalists cut across the economic, ethnic, and racial spectrum. It is
certainly true that wealthy and influential loyalists stood to lose the most in the
Revolution and were sometimes vociferous opponents of independence. But here
again, it is a mistake to cast Thomas Hutchinson and Peter Oliver as representative
figures. On the contrary, Hutchinson and Oliver were extraordinary in virtually
every respect. Their wealth and power made them easy targets for patriot agitators
during the Revolution, and for nationalist historians later.

Even the most fervently anti-patriot loyalists, such as Hutchinson and Oliver,
felt themselves to be Americans and were proud of their American roots. On the
whole, loyalists had no desire to return to England. They shared a conviction that
separation from the British Empire would be a mistake. The causes of that belief
varied. For example, many still had close kin in Great Britain, and they feared
the consequences a breach with the mother country might have for their personal
relationships. Some were convinced the colonies could not win a war with the
powerful British armed forces. Others were dismayed at the economic impact that
breaking ties with British commercial power might have on the states. Most loyal-
ists, of course, were great admirers of English culture and felt secure as part of the
mighty British Empire, which they believed was the apex of military, naval, as well
as commercial, scientific, literary, and cultural power. To loyalists the advantages
of remaining a part of the British Empire were thus multiple and outweighed—to
varying degrees—the prospects of a new government and severing ties with the
mother country.

Loyalists were not alone in that perception. Most patriots admired British
culture and imperial power—so much so, that they set out to extend upon and
revise it in their conception of an American empire. The choice to support or
oppose independence from Great Britain was often determined by a complex set
of factors that included affective ties and cultural leanings as much as economic
calculations and political ideals. At the level of political ideals, the differences between loyalists and patriots become very difficult to navigate, because both camps claim the inheritance of the rights of Englishmen and British political thought.

**LOYALIST SUBJECTIVITY**

The best way to begin to reckon with loyalists in a serious way is to listen to their voices and try to understand their point of view. Milich Martha Moore, Jonathan Boucher, Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, and Boston King each produced texts that describe different aspects of the loyalists' experiences of the American Revolution. I have chosen these four writers because their texts offer some of the most compelling and sympathetic loyalist critiques of the Revolution. Boucher and King both wrote memoirs that require the reader to see the conflict through their eyes. Moore compiled a remarkable commonplace book that collects the poetry and letters of a coterie of Philadelphia loyalists, and Crèvecoeur published an episodic novel based partly on his experiences leading up to the Revolution. Although the discussion below mixes poetry, fiction, and autobiographical narratives, all these textual forms constitute ways of representing the experience of the Revolution that come to us from writers whose allegiance lay not with the cause of the American rebels, but with the mother country.

Milich Martha Moore's commonplace book includes materials that span the eighteenth century, with some items dating back as far as the 1730s. But, as Karin Wulf notes in the edition of Moore's commonplace book that she edited with Catherine LaCourreye Blecki, it was assembled formally as a coherent unit during the Revolution. Moore was a Quaker from a prominent family in Philadelphia. Although not all Quakers were loyalists, almost all Quakers in Philadelphia opposed the Revolution, as they opposed war in general. Moore's family and friends were among the most prominent loyalists, almost all Quakers in Philadelphia opposed the Revolution, as they opposed war in general. Moore's family and friends were among the most prominent loyalists, including the radical Timothy Matlack and the more moderate John Dickinson. Moreover, Moore and her family remained in Philadelphia for the duration of the war. Although much has been made of the numbers of loyalists, especially among the elite, who migrated to other parts of the British Empire or returned to England, the grand majority of loyalists weathered the storm and integrated themselves into the new United States. Moore's commonplace book offers a glimpse into the world of a group of loyalists who decided to remain in Philadelphia through the conflict.

The majority of the texts compiled in Moore's commonplace book were authored by Susanna Wright, Elizabeth Graeme Ferguson, and Hannah Griffits, three women who were close friends of the Moore family. Moore, so far as we can tell, did not include any of her own writings in her commonplace book. Her talent, not unlike that of a skilled editor or anthologist, lay in her ability to discern works of value and place them in dialogue with other texts. Although her commonplace book was not published until 1997, it circulated among her friends and family in Philadelphia. This kind of manuscript or scribal publication was common at the time and especially useful for loyalist and other texts that could be perceived as controversial. For example, Peter Oliver and Thomas Hutchinson both circulated their respective accounts of the Revolution among friends, many of whom were eager to read their narratives. The same was true of Moore's book, which was widely known among her network of friends and associates. In this sense Moore functioned as a kind of tastemaker and educator for the men and women who consumed and sometimes contributed to her book.

In addition to writings that directly engage the conflict between Great Britain and the thirteen colonies, Moore's book is full of many of the themes that we have come to associate closely with the Revolution, including friendship, death, liberty, and women's rights. Moore includes a number of poems by Hannah Griffits, who also kept her own commonplace book, that directly address the Revolution. In those poems we can see the complexity of these women's loyalties. If we can assume that Moore and her chief contributors shared a more or less contiguous view of the Revolution, we would have to say that theirs was not a fanatical and radicalized loyalty. Instead, as a selection of Griffits's poems reveal, they sympathized with the patriots and found much to dislike in British imperial policies.

Although they opposed the independence movement, what is most striking about the poems and prose pieces by Griffits that Moore includes in her commonplace book is the degree to which they don't single out either side for blame. Instead, they suggest that both sides are at fault. In "The Sympathetic Scene"—a 1776 occasioned by the unnatural contest at Long Island August 27 & 28 by the same," Griffits, writing under her usual pen name Fidelia, surveys the human cost of that early battle of the Revolution:

*In the sad Chambers of retir'd Distress*

The Scenes of speechless Woe, where Widows mourn

The tender Husband lost,—where Orphans weep

Th' indulgent Friend & Father known no more,

Where the sad Sister faints beneath the Stroke

That rend th' associate Brother from her Heart,

Here clad in sympathetic sorrows Gloom

My soul returns, to share my neighbors' Grief.

Give Sigh for Sigh, & mingle Tears with Tears.

Neither the title of the poem nor these opening lines offer a partisan view of the causes, ideals, or political context of the war. Griffits focuses instead on the conflict's human cost. The emphasis on sympathy in the poem's title and in the scene represented in these lines cuts across political allegiances. Given their long-standing friendships with families who differed with their politics, the sharing of neighbors' grief suggests losses on both sides. Focusing on the commonality of the experience
of women who have lost husbands, parents, and siblings, the poem underscores the social bonds that unite these neighbors. The rupture of these bonds is what makes the war unnatural, a common theme for both loyalists and patriots at the time. Its pits families, neighbors, and friends against each other.

Nowhere does the poem mention loyalists and patriots or otherwise characterize the two sides of the conflict. When it comes time to lay blame, Fidelia instead describes a particular attitude rather than a set of political goals:

---But you, whose mad Ambition lawless Grasp
Of proud Dominion, & tyrannic Power
Have spread the Flames of War around the Shores
Where Peace once small'd & social Union dwell;

You—have dissolve'd the tender Bonds of Nature
And torn asunder (by ruthless Hand
Of horrid War) the dear; the soft Connections
Which Heaven had join'd & blest, till you arose
The scourge of Desolation on their Peace..."

It would be easy to read these lines to signify that the patriots are principally at fault, especially because the reference to "mad Ambition" was a common accusation loyalists leveled against the patriot leadership. But the poem resists such easy characterization. The reference to "tyrannic Power" would appear, for example, to exonerate the common patriot refrain about British imperial policies. The narrative force of the poem is directed at the destruction of "social Union" and the "soft Connections" that implicitly gain ascendancy over the putative ideals of the war. The use of the pronoun "you" and the refusal to identify the agents of war with a particular political position, thus leaving the pronoun without a defined referent, ensure that the blame falls on both sides.

The poem ends with a wish for reconciliation that can easily be identified with a loyalist perspective: "O! speak contending Bretheren into Peace / Bid the sweet Cherub bless our weeping Shores / And Friends again in her soft Bands unite..." But even here the poem resists being turned into a political allegory. The reference to "Bretheren and "Friends" in these lines reminds readers of the specific Quaker community that supplies the context for the poem. The narrator yearns for a mending of the largely Quaker social network to which Griffiths and Moore belonged. By bringing the poem back to this very specific context, the verses foreclose larger political questions and instead remind readers of the primacy of local friendships and kinship networks that have been disrupted by the war. From this point of view, any reader can relate to the losses occasioned by war and thus to the poem. We might call the poem's stance antia war more than pro-loyalist. For Quakers, profoundly committed to pacifism, the war presented an especially horrifying prospect. And while Moore and Griffiths were loyalists in their inclinations, they also objected to the war on religious and ethical grounds. From that point of view, they could not condone the Crown and its loyalist allies any more than they could the patriot opposition. Griffiths would write more emphatically and obviously loyalist poems, but "The Sympathetic Scene" illustrates the social cost of the war, with a special emphasis on its impact on the women at home who would feel its losses so pointedly.

Like Moore and Griffiths, Jonathan Boucher focuses in his writings on the disruption to civil society caused by the Revolution. Born in England in 1718, Boucher was an Anglican minister who had migrated to Maryland in 1759, where he would become an influential adviser to the governor. He returned to England in 1775 after being chased out of Maryland for his loyalist politics. Boucher argued against the Revolution from the pulpit and in print. During his lifetime he published a series of his sermons opposing the Revolution, under the title A View of the Causes and Consequences of the American Revolution, in London in 1792. His autobiography was not published until 1876, when his grandson Jonathan Boucher sent excerpts to the London journal Notes and Queries, where they appeared in serialized form. The first stand-alone edition of the entirety of Reminiscences would not be published until 1915.

One of the most interesting episodes in Boucher's Reminiscences focuses on his friendship with George Washington and several exchanges, written and oral, that they had during the early phases of the conflict. Boucher uses his friendship with Washington to gloss what he sees as the central problem with the Revolution. Washington first appears in the narrative when he is on his way to "take command of the Continental Army," Boucher happens to be crossing at the same bridge in Maryland when the two men recognize one another. The meeting is cordial, if tense. Boucher takes the opportunity to share his view of the course events are taking:

The General [then only Colonel] Washington beckoned us to stop, as we did, jest, as he said, to shake us by the hand. His behavior to me was now, as it had always been, polite and respectful, and I shall for ever remember what passed in the few disturbed moments of conversation we then had. From his going on the errand he was to assume the leadership of the Continental Army, I foresaw and approved him of much that has since happened; in particular that there would certainly then be a civil war, and that the Americans would soon declare for independency.

Boucher's characterization of the Revolution as a "civil war" reflects a broader view shared by many loyalists and patriots alike. For Boucher, though, the "civil" in civil war takes on a deeper meaning. "Civil," he soon makes clear, refers both to the national context and the social character of the conflict. Boucher emphasizes that, in spite of their political differences, he and Washington treated each other with politeness and civility. Washington initiates the dialogue, and in the passage that follows, the colonel who would become the leader of the American forces is depicted as a generous and thoughtful conversationalist. Boucher even concludes his account of this meeting with high praise for Washington, calling him "one of the first characters of the age."
values of sociability and politeness that were so important to the eighteenth century. Although Boucher is willing to impugn the character of patriots (as he later does) and to ascribe their political views to a failure in their tempers, his memoir is much more interested in the social cost of the Revolution and the way it fractured communities and friendships among the polite.

Boucher’s emphasis on the social would also be reflected in Crèvecoeur’s Letters from an American Farmer (1782), a semiautobiographical novel that has often been misread as a celebration of American national identity. Although Crèvecoeur’s loyalty has been no secret for a long time now, it is often overlooked by scholars of the Revolution, if for no other reason than the central role his Letters from an American Farmer has played in the nationalist narrative of the American Revolution. As Grantland Rice has pointed out, this nationalist reading of Letters treats Crèvecoeur’s text as an ethnographic or sociological account of the revolutionary United States when it ought to be read as a novel. Rice reminds us that Farmer James is a character in a work of fiction and not simply a substitute for the author. One key difference between the author and his novel’s narrator is that, unlike Crèvecoeur, who depicted the colonies under circumstances parallel to the ones Boucher experiences, Farmer James winds up opting out of the Revolution entirely because he finds it impossible to choose sides. Farmer James’s agony over that decision is, for this reader, one of the most poignant moments in all of early American literature.

The novel culminates in a stunning rejection of the Revolution by its protagonist, Farmer James, in terms that echo Griffith’s poem. Struggling to come to grips with the onset of the war, Farmer James is so distraught that he suffers what appears to be a nervous breakdown, remarking that “I am seized with a fever of the mind, I am transported beyond that degree of calmness which is necessary to delineate our thoughts. I feel as if my reason wanted to leave me, as if it would burst its poor weak tenement.” Recovering his wits but still unable to choose a side, he seeks divine guidance:

Great Source of wisdom! Inspire me with light sufficient to guide my benighted steps out of this intricate maze! Shall I discard all my ancient principles, shall I renounce that name, that nation which I held once so respectable? I feel the powerful attraction; the sentiments they inspired grew with my earliest knowledge and were grafted upon the first rudiments of my education. On the other hand, shall I arm myself against that country where I first drew breath, against the playmates of my youth, my bosom friends, my acquaintance? The idea makes me shudder! Must I be called a partisan, a traitor, a villain, lose the esteem of all those whom I love to preserve my own, be shunned like a rattlesnake, or be pointed at like a bear? I have neither heroism nor magnanimity enough to make so great a sacrifice.

Borrowing not from the language of republicanism or liberalism but from the familial vocabulary of sentimentalism, Farmer James presents the Revolution as a choice between killing his father and killing his brothers. The ideals of the Revolution are irrelevant to Farmer James who, elsewhere in the chapter, dismisses the political debates of the Revolution as an elite game that callously ignores the sufferings of ordinary people. Rather than feeling implicated in the political stakes of the Revolution, Farmer James experiences the conflict as a local matter that potentially pits him against his family, friends, and neighbors, much as the women in Moore’s Philadelphia circle did.

Framed as a prayer, Farmer James’s plea for wisdom revolves around feelings and affective relations rather than social, political, ideological, or economic concerns. By the end of the passage, his feelings of disorientation merge what appear to be two choices into one inevitable result: the apparent binary of patriot and loyalist dissolves. Neither side offers a substantially different outcome, because regardless of which side he chooses, Farmer James will be seen by many as a traitor and a villain. From the point of view of social relations, the political choices of the Revolution are inherently unsatisfactory because they divide and fracture a once peaceful community.

Crèvecoeur’s moving account of the dilemma of the Revolution is a far cry from Paine’s characterization in The Crisis. Instead ofcowering in fear, Farmer James presents the reader with a profound ethical conundrum. The enormous psychological and emotional weight of this decision drives him to temporary insanity, and ultimately he opts to avoid the question altogether by removing his family to the western backcountry. Like Crèvecoeur and his novel’s hero Farmer James, most loyalists were deeply ambivalent about the Revolution. They were torn between their local attachments and their allegiance to the British Empire. The latter had supplied not only an affective and historical connection but also a link to European commercial, political, and cultural centers of exchange.

The poignancy of Farmer James’s dilemma in “Distresses of a Frontier Man” stems from his conviction that the difference between British rule and whatever new government the patriots install will be insignificant. He comments bitterly:

The innocent class are always the victim of the few; they are in all countries at all times, the inferior agents, on which the popular phantom is erected; they clamour, and must toil and bleed, and are always sure of meeting with oppression and rebuke. It is for the sake of the great leaders on both sides, that so much blood must be spilt; that of the people is counted as nothing. Great events are not achieved for us, though it is by us, that they are principally accomplished; by the arms, the sweat, the lives of the people.

If Farmer James’s characterization of “the people” in this passage conflicts dramatically with the mobilization of “the people” in nationalistic rhetoric and in documents such as the U.S. Constitution, it shares with those writings an exclusion of enslaved peoples such as Boston King. Rather than being the agents of their own liberation, as the phrase “We the People” is meant to suggest, ordinary people, Crèvecoeur’s lament in “Distresses” proposes, are instrumentalyzed throughout history. The optimism of the early chapters testifies to a belief that in this new world ordinary people could become the agents of their own destiny. The Revolution leads him to feel powerless in the face of the political events that are reshaping his world.
As a loyalist critique, Crévecoeur's text is thus designed to expose the emptiness of patriot claims to represent a new order of freedom and equality. Instead, he emphasizes that America is already a place of freedom and equality. The patriots, he suggests, don't have an exclusive purchase on those key terms. This underlying narrative implies that even as he criticizes the Revolution, Crévecoeur reinforces the very equation between America and freedom that nationalist patriot rhetoric mobilized on behalf of the argument for independence. This, in turn, partly explains why Crévecoeur's text has often been mistaken for a patriot text.

For the black loyalist Boston King the binary between Britain and America is clear-cut: Britain affords him his liberty, whereas the United States promises enslavement. King would take the opportunity afforded by the Revolution and specifically "Dunmore's Proclamation" to free himself. In his Memoirs of the Life of Boston King, a Black Preacher (1798), which was published in The Methodist Magazine in London, King narrates his journey from slavery in South Carolina to freedom in Nova Scotia, and ultimately Sierra Leone. In his Memoirs, King carefully establishes a parallel between his religious awakening and his freedom, culminating in his eventual success as a preacher and spiritual leader. Scholars have tended to focus on the way a religious narrative structures King's text, but I want to propose that a geographic or spatial logic is at work too. The comparison to Crévecoeur’s text is instructive, because in Letters geography is almost always imbued with a national or ideological character that, in turn, shapes the individual. By contrast, in King’s Memoir the landscape is almost entirely emptied of nationalist inflections.

If the metanarrative of King's text is governed principally by the logic of a spiritual biography, the story of his escape from slavery in the United States is organized around a set of topographical or spatial barriers that he must overcome. Often those barriers are accompanied by the threat of capture, but he refuses to imbue those scenes with the kind of language of liberty and rights that characterizes so much of the white loyalist and patriot writing about the Revolution. The American landscape, in other words, doesn’t function as an ideological space in King’s text. It is emphatically reduced to a set of physical obstacles or markers. The text underscores, by repeated references to distance, this refusal to allegorize the land or the Revolution more broadly. King reports his physical distance from either the British forces or the Americans on multiple occasions. Once Charleston falls to the British, he observes, “My master being apprehensive that Charles-Town was in danger on account of the war, removed into the country, about 38 miles off.” Two paragraphs later, King has fled his master to join the British army. He again notes his position: “When we came to the head-quarters, our regiment was 35 miles off.” And, once more, a few sentences later, “From thence I went to a place about 35 miles off, where we stayed two months.” He constantly situates himself in physical space, but it is a space that is pure materiality devoid of allegorical content. It is just territory, defined by its topography and his relative distance from the military forces moving through it. The major obstacles in King’s way are geographical—rivers, forests, and the ocean—not spiritual or conceptual.

Consequently, its geography is the most vivid aspect of the United States in King's brief account of the Revolution.

His quest begins in South Carolina, where his parents first taught him Christian beliefs, but the early portion of the Memoir emphasizes his physical bondage and the process whereby he learned carpentry. As David Kazanjian has noted, King’s story is also a story about labor and capitalism. The first order of business, after a brief account of his childhood and apprenticeship in Charleston, is the narrative of his escape. The opening sentence of the Memoirs establishes his deliverance from slavery as the precondition for his spiritual development: “It is by no means an agreeable task to write an account of my life, yet my gratitude to Almighty God, who considered my affliction, and looked upon me in my low estate, who delivered me from the hand of the oppressor, and established my goings, impels me to acknowledge his goodness.” King’s spiritual journey thus doesn’t truly begin until after he escapes the United States.

Once he arrives in Canada, the narrative shifts to focus much more intensively on religion. The first sentence of the paragraph after he lands in Nova Scotia reads: "That Winter, the work of religion began to revive among us.” Structurally in his narrative, therefore, the escape from slavery constitutes King’s experience of the Revolution. That experience is not shaped or imbued with any particular political or spiritual dimension. That is, although he connects his escape to a story of his spiritual awakening, the narration of the events of his escape includes surprisingly little religious or spiritual content. Put another way, while his escape is a precondition of his rise as a spiritual leader, the journey to freedom is not cast as a spiritual experience. This strategy of rendering the story of his escape without turning specific scenes into spiritual events or texts contrasts sharply, for example, with the personal narratives of other black loyalists such as John Marrant and David George, both of whom emphasize moments of spiritual transformation during their respective journeys to freedom. Instead, for King the Revolution is almost purely a matter of overcoming a series of physical obstacles. By employing this strategy, King emplaces the American landscape and the American Revolution of the kind of deterministic racial ideology that underwrote patriot rhetoric by enabling the revolutionaries simultaneously to equate the United States with freedom and justify the enslavement of blacks.

Now, then, are we to understand the loyalty revealed in King’s Memoir? He is a loyalist only insofar as, by seeking the protection of the British government, he is able to obtain his freedom. He is not interested in the questions of national sovereignty and political independence that dominate the patriot narrative of the Revolution, but rather in personal sovereignty and individual independence. He has no investment in a nationalist correlation between a mythical America and the advent of personal freedom or the modern subject. For King this is a rational calculation, as it was for thousands of other black loyalists. Nowhere is this more apparent than in his matter-of-fact account of his decision to escape. He has borrowed a horse from his employer, which he in turn lends to a friend. His friend takes longer than expected to return the horse, and King knows his employer will
punish him severely. "To escape this cruelty, I determined to go to Charles-Town, and throw myself into the hands of the English [who had captured the city]. They received me readily, and I began to feel the happiness of liberty."" For King, putting himself in "the hands of the English" is a simple matter of what Thomas Paine called common sense. The British have promised freedom to slaves who join their ranks, and King seizes his opportunity.

My purpose here is not to exclude Boston King and his fellow black loyalists from the narrative of American loyalty. Instead, I have wanted to call attention to how different the nature of King's loyalty is from Moore's, Boucher's, or Crèvecoeur's. By opening up loyalty to a broader range of responses and engagements with the Revolution, we can see that we are better off thinking in terms of a spectrum of loyalties. Getting away from the monolithic terms of the binary between patriot and loyalist also has the advantage of reminding us that the patriot camp was no more coherent than the loyalist one. Surely, any number of Americans chose to cast their lot with the patriot cause for a variety of reasons, some ideological, some social, and some pure self-interest. The difficulty is that for far too long, our narrative of the Revolution has identified loyalty with self-interest and patriot cause with idealism.

We can see King's loyalty as the inverse of that coin: King's loyalty consists almost entirely in a rejection or repudiation of American claims to freedom. By studying black loyalists like King, we can develop a more complete account of the deep structural links between the patriot rhetoric of freedom and the culture of slavery. There is no American paradox of slavery and freedom in King's narrative. No tension between ideals and practice. There is only slavery and cruelty; their absence can be sought only beyond the borders of the United States. King's Memoir thus refuses to endow the Revolution with any spiritual or ideological force, to do so would be to allow the patriot language of freedom to contaminate his narrative. This refusal to be interpolated into the patriot metanarrative is why King's spiritual journey cannot begin in earnest until he has left the land where he is dehumanized and reduced to property. In this regard, Boston King's narrative is fundamentally different from the pattern of the American slave narrative that would reach its apotheosis in the figure of Frederick Douglass. Unlike Douglass, King has no investment in American nationality. This is where his loyalty articulates itself positively. In the context of the Revolution he is afforded the choice of another country, another national identity that offers the prospect of freedom.

The case of black loyalists thus speaks to the broader problem with the category loyalist. Historically, it has come to refer to an amorphous group of people whose common tie is that they were not patriots. We need a more positive and constructive definition of loyalty so that it does not always remain a negation. Almost from the moment of the Revolution, the patriots have been defined in terms of a specific (and often overstated) sense of "Americaness" that set them apart from their British contemporaries. Where exceptionalism insisted on a radical difference between Britons and Americans that to a large extent predated the Revolution, more recent scholars, influenced by debates within postcolonial theory, have sought to trace important continuities between British and American identity and culture in the early United States. By emphasizing those continuities we can imagine a definition of loyalty that does not include a rejection of the core concepts of liberty and rights that were so central to the rhetoric of the revolutionaries. If we can unburden loyalty of the baggage that the nationalist narrative of the American Revolution has forced it to carry, we will be able to see how much more similar than different loyalists and patriots were. Loyalists were simply Americans who, for a variety of reasons, wished to retain their formal connection to the British Empire. Although loyalists opposed the decision to declare independence from Great Britain, their political and social commitments were not necessarily opposed to those of their patriot counterparts.

The writings of Moore, Boucher, Crèvecoeur, and King share a sense of an alternative community. In their texts, the new American government does not provide a coherent or cohesive alternative to British rule. This may seem strange, because for the past two centuries scholars and thinkers have spent so much energy trying to identify and locate the origins of a distinct American identity and attach it to the Revolution. However, what is clear from not only loyalist texts, but also in early U.S. literature by writers such as Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and Catharine Maria Sedgwick, is a profound longing for the stable and proud heritage of British cultural forms. From this perspective we can invert the traditional narrative of the Revolution and see that in the 1770s it was possible to see loyalty as a choice for something and the patriot position as a choice against something. Loyalists believed that allegiance to British imperial culture constituted an embrace of their heritage. To loyalists, Great Britain represented freedom, culture, order, and wealth. It was not at all clear to Boucher and Farmer James what the United States had to offer. For King it was all too clear that he would not be included in whatever vision the new American empire had to offer.

We have only begun to scratch the surface of loyalty and the ways loyalists challenge our notions of the Revolution, American democracy, civil society, and the state. With the advent of hemispheric and globalized approaches to the Revolution, we can finally begin to get past the political rationale for marginalizing the loyalists and attend to the archival and scholarly challenges to developing a better understanding of loyalists and their loyalties.

Loyalists, furthermore, have a lot to teach us not only about the Revolution, but about the early United States. One ongoing problem with the perception of loyalists is the idea that they all left during the Revolution. But what if we really account for the fact that most loyalists stayed? Or, what if, like Crèvecoeur and Tench Coxe, to name just two notable examples, they returned to the United States after the conclusion of the war? Currently, we simply don't know enough about the demographics and thinking of the vast numbers of loyalists who persisted through or returned after the war and how they helped to shape the culture and politics of the new United States. We do know, however, that several of the
major artists of the early United States who have often been taught as the exponents of an American style had deep ties to loyalty. Crèvecoeur and Cooper provide two compelling examples, but we might also consider the cases of John Singleton Copley and Charles Brockden Brown. Copley was a loyalist who left the colonies in 1774 and spent the rest of his life in England working at the Royal Academy of Art. Brown's father was a loyalist who was arrested and banished from Pennsylvania for his views. American literary and cultural history has done very little to account for the role loyalty may have played in the work of these artists, yet it stands to reason that their vision of the United States was deeply influenced by a loyalist perspective. Loyalty was not anti- or un-American. It too would become a part of how the United States came to constitute itself politically, culturally, and imaginatively.

Notes

1. I have qualified this point about the way the text is presented as a loyalist text because J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's Letters from an American Farmer has been in print longer, but it has not generally been understood to be a loyalist text. The current edition of Oliver's Origin and Progress, edited by Douglas Adair and John A. Schutz, was first published by Stanford University Press in 1996. Other loyalist texts have been published in the interim, but they have almost all gone out of print. Ironically, the most widely available loyalist texts in circulation today are the narratives of black loyalists, which are often anthologized and readily available on the Internet in fine digital editions.


3. For the most thorough accounting of loyalists who migrated from the thirteen colonies during the immediate aftermath of the war see the appendix to Jasanoff, Liberty's Exiles.


5. Ibid., 69.


7. Cooper's first novel, Precaution (1818), was a novel of manners set in England with no American characters. His next five novels would all include loyalists in various guises.


11. In recent years we have seen a spate of books and essays on loyalty by major authors, including most notably Philip Gould, Alan Taylor, Cassandra Pybus, and Maya Jasanoff. At the same time, a number of scholars in Canadian studies have been generating a body of work on the loyalist exiles who relocated to the Maritimes in the aftermath of the Revolution. The June 2009 conference on "Loyalty in the Revolutionary Atlantic World," hosted by the University of Maine, and the 2011 Summer Seminar in the History of the Book at the American Antiquarian Society on the topic "Encountering Revolution, Print Culture, Politics, and the British-American Loyalists" are further signs of the growing interest in the subject.


19. Dickinson presents a fascinating case since he opposed independence strongly during the Continental Congress and refused to sign the Declaration of Independence, but fought with the patriots in the war. We might say that he was a patriot who would have preferred reconciliation with Great Britain to independence.

20. By Jasanoff's meticulous count about sixty thousand loyalists emigrated from the United States in the 1780s and 1790s. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of the United States in 1780 was about 2.8 million, and the general view among historians is that in 1775, some 2.5 million people resided in the colonies. Using the 1780 figure as a baseline, if 30 percent of Americans were loyalists, then there should have been a total of about 750,000 loyalists. Even if we take the most conservative estimate of 20 percent of the population, the total number of loyalists would be half a million. By any count, then, the vast majority of loyalists remained in the United States after the war. Jasanoff's tally of the loyalist migration can be found in the excellent appendix to Liberty's Exiles.
21. For a more extensive account of the relationships and careers of these remarkable women see Karin Wall’s introductory essay, “Documenting Culture and Connection in the Revolutionary Era,” to the edition of Mihliah Martha Moore’s Book.


24. Ibid., 273–274.

25. Ibid., 275.


27. The brief excerpts appeared beginning in vol. 6, no. 150 of the fifth series of Notes and Queries. In all, five excerpts were published across issues 150–159. The 1925 book edition, which I use for my citations here, is Jonathan Boucher, Reminiscences of an American Loyalist (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925).


29. Ibid., 110.

30. Ibid., 115.

31. Ibid., 118.


34. Crèvecoeur, Letters from an American Farmer, 201.

35. Ibid., 204–205.

36. Ibid., 204.

37. Dunmore’s Proclamation was issued on November 7, 1755, and declared that all slaves of American patriots who joined the British military would be granted their freedom. John Murray, fourth Earl of Dunmore, was at the time the royal governor of Virginia.

38. For the most comprehensive account and influential account of the way a particular religious narrative shapes much of black writing in the early United States see Joanna Brooks, American Luritas: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).


42. Ibid., 356.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


CHAPTER 17

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR AND EUROPE’S GREAT POWERS

PAUL W. MAPP

In one oddity of international affairs in the two decades after the Seven Years’ War was the sight of recently loyal Anglo-American subjects rather quickly discovering their antipathy to monarchy, another was the spectacle of two European monarchical empires reluctantly but substantially assisting the republican independence of thirteen European colonies. France and Spain risked much by aiding the United States. As Britain had its George III, Spain had Charles III and France Louis XV; and, like their British counterparts, these Bourbon kings reigned over American possessions. Helping British possessions to escape the grasp of an empire and flout the will of a monarch could easily provide a model unwelcome to the agents of French royal power or Spanish imperial administration. This danger was evident to observers in the 1770s and 1780s. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see also that the expenditure of French funds to help the United States achieve independence contributed to the fiscal crisis that precipitated revolution in France, and that the formation and survival of an independent Anglo-American republic in North America left the Spanish Empire and its Latin American successor states with a neighbor as greedy for New World territory as the British Empire from which it had separated. In supporting the nascent United States, the French and Spanish governments encountered just the kinds of perils they hoped to avoid. Viewing French and Spanish aid in this light, the United States seem to have been unaccountably fortunate, the French and Spanish governments inexplicably foolish.