

Week Seven: Reason and Revolution Part II

OLAUDAH EQUIANO

(1745?–1797?)

As a child of eleven, Equiano was captured by slavers. His sister was taken at the same time, but they were soon separated, and he was to be haunted the rest of his life by his inability to save her and by his fears about her fate. Born in what is today Nigeria, he probably spoke the Ibo language and was able to learn several other African dialects as he traveled westward, passing through the households of several masters over a six-month period. Finally he arrived on the shore of a large river, probably the Niger, which took him to a seaport where he was sold to white slave traders bound for the West Indies.

The young slave served several English and American masters who gave him Western names, including Gustavus Vassa, the name he used most often and included in the title of his book: *Equiano's Travels: The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African*. Even more important, his various masters acknowledged his intelligence by training him to read and write and by teaching him the navigation and business skills he needed to prosper. After ten years of servitude he earned the money needed to buy his freedom by investing in cargoes traded by his last master, a Philadelphia Quaker named Robert King.

Equiano's cosmopolitan experience both as a slave and as a free man took him to Canada, where he served Captain Pascal, a soldier with General Wolfe during the French and Indian War, to the Arctic, where he was icebound on a ship, to Italy, where he saw an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, and to the United States, where he observed events leading up to the American Revolution. After the war, he helped focus the energies of a diverse antislavery movement into an organized force, connected with its British counterpart.

Although he was active in advocating justice for slaves and former slaves in both countries, Equiano's cherished dream was to return to Africa and regain title to his ancestral lands, where he promised to entertain his abolitionist friends with "luxuriant pineapples and the well flavoured virgin palm wine." His hopes of returning were dashed, however, when the expedition he was appointed to supervise fell victim to corruption and political intrigue.

In 1788 Equiano settled down in the home of a London friend to write his autobiography. It appeared in print in England the following year and in the United States two years later. From his earliest days of literacy, Equiano had made a habit of noting details of his experience in his journals. As a convert to Christianity and a spokesperson for the antislavery movement, he mingled regularly with educated English speakers. It is not surprising, therefore, that at the age of forty-four he was able to write the first great African-American slave narrative in a clear and pleasing style. With his autobiography—an international best-seller widely distributed by the abolition movement—and his speaking tours, he campaigned for an end to the slave trade and encouraged the repatriation of freed slaves.

Citing Old Testament approbation of racial intermarriage, Equiano advocated it as one possible solution to racial problems, arguing in a letter to a friend that marriages between whites and blacks would strengthen the British nation and urging the practice as "a national honour, national strength, and productive of na-

tional virtue.” Disappointed with his plans for repatriation, he stayed in England, married an English woman, Susan Cullen, in 1792, and fathered two daughters who were orphaned by his wife’s death in 1795 and his own two years later. His daughter Anna Maria soon followed her parents in death, and the epitaph on her tombstone, describing her as “a child of colour” and expressing the hope that she has gone to a place where “some of every clime shall joy in God,” suggests that Equiano’s faith in intermarriage was in some measure warranted by public opinion in late-eighteenth-century England.

Although Equiano did not live to see the abolition of slavery either in Britain or in the United States, his own contributions—both as a writer and as a speaker—clearly added to the social and political pressures that finally led to emancipation in both countries in the century following his death.

Equiano’s narrative has been edited by Paul Edwards, *Equiano’s Travels*, 1967, and Robert J. Allison, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, 1995. A two-volume facsimile edition of the *Narrative*, edited by Paul Edwards, appeared in 1969, and a modernized version, edited by Vincent Carretta, in 1995. Studies are Angelo Costanzo, *Surprizing Narrative: Olaudah Equiano and the Beginnings of Black Autobiography*, 1987, and James Walvin, *An African’s Life: The Life and Times of Olaudah Equiano*, 1999.

OLAUDAH EQUIANO

*From The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*¹*Chapter 2*
[Horrors of a Slave Ship]

* * * The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast, was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew, and I was now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions, too, differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke (which was very different from any I had ever heard), united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed, such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too, and saw a large furnace of copper boiling and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little, I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who had brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and long hair. They told me I was not, and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass, but being afraid of him I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this, the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair.

I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables,

1. The text is that of the first American edition, New York, 1791, with minor emendations.

and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across, I think, the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced anything of this kind before, and, although not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet, nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water; and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself.

In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us. They gave me to understand we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought if it were no worse than working my situation was not so desperate; but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty, and this not only shown towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more, and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen; I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place (the ship). They told me they did not, but came from a distant one. "Then," said I, "how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?" They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their women? had they any like themselves? I was told they had. "And why," said I, "do we not see them?" They answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? They told me they could not tell, but that there was cloth put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked, in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they would sacrifice me; but my wishes were vain—for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape.

While we stayed on the coast I was mostly on deck, and one day, to my great astonishment, I saw one of these vessels coming in with the sails up. As soon as the whites saw it they gave a great shout, at which we were amazed; and the more so, as the vessel appeared larger by approaching nearer. At last, she came to an anchor in my sight, and when the anchor was let go I and my countrymen who saw it were lost in astonishment to observe the vessel stop—and were now convinced it was done by magic. Soon after this the other ship got her boats out, and they came on board of us, and the people of both ships seemed very glad to see each other. Several of the strangers also shook hands with us black people, and made motions with their hands, signifying, I suppose, we were to go to their country, but we did not understand them.

At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not

see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air, but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died—thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, [which] now became insupportable, and [by] the filth of the necessary tubs,² into which the children often fell and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women and the groans of the dying rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily, perhaps, for myself, I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful and heightened my apprehensions and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites.

One day they had taken a number of fishes, and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat, as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity when they thought no one saw them of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings.

One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea; immediately, another quite dejected fellow, who on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However, two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air,

2. Latrines.

which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many.

During our passage, I first saw flying fishes, which surprised me very much; they used frequently to fly across the ship, and many of them fell on the deck. I also now first saw the use of the quadrant; I had often with astonishment seen the mariners make observations with it, and I could not think what it meant. They at last took notice of my surprise, and one of them, willing to increase it as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it. The clouds appeared to me to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder, and I was now more persuaded than ever that I was in another world, and that everything about me was magic.

At last we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout and made many signs of joy to us. We did not know what to think of this, but as the vessel drew nearer we plainly saw the harbor, and other ships of different kinds and sizes, and we soon anchored amongst them, off Bridgetown. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us, and when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much. And sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages.

We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together, like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. As every object was new to me, everything I saw filled me with surprise. What struck me first was that the houses were built with bricks and stories, and in every other respect different from those I had seen in Africa, but I was still more astonished on seeing people on horseback. I did not know what this could mean, and, indeed, I thought these people were full of nothing but magical arts. While I was in this astonishment, one of my fellow prisoners spoke to a countryman of his about the horses, who said they were the same kind they had in their country. I understood them, though they were from a distant part of Africa, and I thought it odd I had not seen any horses there, but afterwards, when I came to converse with different Africans, I found they had many horses amongst them, and much larger than those I then saw.

We were not many days in the merchant's custody before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this: On a signal given (as the beat of a drum), the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamor with which this is attended and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers serve not a little to increase the apprehension of terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again.

I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots, and it was very moving on this occasion, to see and hear their cries at parting. O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you—Learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Are the dearest friends and relations, now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery with the small comfort of being together and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely, this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.

Chapter 3
[Travels from Virginia to England]

I now totally lost the small remains of comfort I had enjoyed in conversing with my countrymen; the women, too, who used to wash and take care of me were all gone different ways, and I never saw one of them afterwards.

I stayed in this island for a few days, I believe it could not be above a fortnight, when I, and some few more slaves that were not saleable amongst the rest, from very much fretting, were shipped off in a sloop for North America. On the passage we were better treated than when we were coming from Africa, and we had plenty of rice and fat pork. We were landed up a river a good way from the sea, about Virginia county, where we saw few or none of our native Africans, and not one soul who could talk to me. I was a few weeks weeding grass and gathering stones in a plantation, and at last all my companions were distributed different ways, and only myself was left. I was now exceedingly miserable, and thought myself worse off than any of the rest of my companions, for they could talk to each other, but I had no person to speak to that I could understand. In this state, I was constantly grieving and pining, and wishing for death rather than anything else.

While I was in this plantation, the gentleman to whom I suppose the estate belonged, being unwell, I was one day sent for to his dwelling-house to fan him; when I came into the room where he was I was very much affrighted at some things I saw, and the more so as I had seen a black woman slave as I came through the house, who was cooking the dinner, and the poor creature was cruelly loaded with various kinds of iron machines; she had one particularly on her head, which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak, and could not eat nor drink. I was much astonished and shocked at this contrivance, which I afterwards learned was called the iron muzzle. Soon after I had a fan put in my hand to fan the gentleman while he slept, and so I did indeed with great fear. While he was fast asleep I indulged myself a great deal in looking about the room, which to me appeared very fine and curious. The first object that engaged my attention was a watch which hung on the chimney and was going. I was quite surprised at the noise it made and was afraid it would tell the gentleman anything I might do amiss; and when I immediately after observed a picture hanging in the room, which ap-

peared constantly to look at me, I was still more affrighted, having never seen such things as these before. At one time I thought it was something relative to magic, and not seeing it move, I thought it might be some way the whites had to keep their great men when they died, and offer them libations as we used to do our friendly spirits. In this state of anxiety I remained till my master awoke, when I was dismissed out of the room, to my no small satisfaction and relief, for I thought that these people were all made up of wonders.

In this place I was called Jacob, but on board the African snow,³ I was called Michael.

I had been some time in this miserable, forlorn, and much dejected state, without having anyone to talk to, which made my life a burden, when the kind and unknown hand of the Creator (who in every deed leads the blind in a way they know not) now began to appear, to my comfort, for one day the captain of a merchant ship called the *Industrious Bee* came on some business to my master's house. This gentleman, whose name was Michael Henry Pascal, was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, but now commanded this trading ship, which was somewhere in the confines of the county many miles off. While he was at my master's house, it happened that he saw me and liked me so well that he made a purchase of me. I think I have often heard him say he gave thirty or forty pounds sterling for me, but I do not remember which. However, he meant me for a present to some of his friends in England, and I was sent accordingly from the house of my then master (one Mr. Campbell) to the place where the ship lay; I was conducted on horseback by an elderly black man (a mode of travelling which appeared very odd to me). When I arrived I was carried on board a fine large ship, loaded with tobacco, &c., and just ready to sail for England.

I now thought my condition much mended. I had sails to lie on, and plenty of good victuals to eat, and everybody on board used me very kindly, quite contrary to what I had seen of any white people before; I therefore began to think that they were not all of the same disposition. A few days after I was on board we sailed for England. I was still at a loss to conjecture my destiny. By this time, however, I could smatter a little imperfect English, and I wanted to know as well as I could where we were going. Some of the people of the ship used to tell me they were going to carry me back to my own country, and this made me very happy. I was quite rejoiced at the idea of going back, and thought if I could get home what wonders I should have to tell. But I was reserved for another fate, and was soon undeceived when we came within sight of the English coast.

While I was on board this ship, my captain and master named me *Gustavus Vassa*.⁴ I at that time began to understand him a little, and refused to be called so, and told him as well as I could that I would be called Jacob; but he said I should not, and still called me Gustavus, and when I refused to answer to my new name, which I at first did, it gained me many a cuff; so at length I submitted, and by which I have been known ever since.

The ship had a very long passage,⁵ and on that account we had very short allowance of provisions. Towards the last, we had only one pound and a half of

3. A small sailing ship.

4. After Gustavus Vasa (1496–1560), a Swedish king celebrated at the time of Equiano's capture in an English play by Henry Brooke.

5. A voyage on this occasion of thirteen weeks, much longer than was usual.

bread per week, and about the same quantity of meat, and one quart of water a day. We spoke with only one vessel the whole time we were at sea, and but once we caught a few fishes. In our extremities the captain and people told me in jest they would kill and eat me, but I thought them in earnest, and was depressed beyond measure, expecting every moment to be my last. While I was in this situation, one evening they caught, with a good deal of trouble, a large shark, and got it on board. This gladdened my poor heart exceedingly, as I thought it would serve the people to eat instead of their eating me, but very soon, to my astonishment, they cut off a small part of the tail and tossed the rest over the side. This renewed my consternation, and I did not know what to think of these white people, though I very much feared they would kill and eat me.

There was on board the ship a young lad who had never been at sea before, about four or five years older than myself: his name was Richard Baker. He was a native of America, had received an excellent education, and was of a most amiable temper. Soon after I went on board, he showed me a great deal of partiality and attention, and in return I grew extremely fond of him. We at length became inseparable, and, for the space of two years, he was of very great use to me, and was my constant companion and instructor. Although this dear youth had many slaves of his own, yet he and I have gone through many sufferings together on shipboard; and we have many nights lain in each other's bosoms when we were in great distress. Thus such a friendship was cemented between us as we cherished till his death, which, to my very great sorrow, happened in the year 1759, when he was up the Archipelago, on board his Majesty's ship the *Preston*, an event which I have never ceased to regret, as I lost at once a kind interpreter, an agreeable companion, and a faithful friend; who, at the age of fifteen, discovered a mind superior to prejudice; and who was not ashamed to notice, to associate with, and to be the friend and instructor of one who was ignorant, a stranger, of a different complexion, and a slave! * * *

Chapter 7
[*He Purchases His Freedom*]

Every day now brought me nearer my freedom, and I was impatient till we proceeded again to sea that I might have an opportunity of getting a sum large enough to purchase it. I was not long ungratified, for, in the beginning of the year 1766, my master bought another sloop, named the *Nancy*, the largest I had ever seen. She was partly laden, and was to proceed to Philadelphia; our captain had his choice of three, and I was well pleased he chose this, which was the largest, for, from his having a large vessel, I had more room, and could carry a larger quantity of goods with me. Accordingly, when we had delivered our old vessel, the *Prudence*, and completed the lading of the *Nancy*, having made near three hundred percent by four barrels of pork I brought from Charleston, I laid in as large a cargo as I could, trusting to God's providence to prosper my undertaking. With these views I sailed for Philadelphia. On our passage, when we drew near the land I was for the first time surprised at the sight of some whales, having never seen any such large sea monsters before, and as we sailed by the land one morning I saw a puppy whale close by the vessel; it was about the length of a wherry boat, and it followed us all the day till we got within the Capes. We arrived safe and in good time at Philadelphia, and I sold my goods there chiefly to the Quakers. They always ap-

peared to be a very honest, discreet sort of people, and never attempted to impose on me; I therefore liked them, and ever after chose to deal with them in preference to any others * * *.

When we had unladen the vessel, and I had sold my venture, finding myself master of about forty-seven pounds—I consulted my true friend, the captain, how I should proceed in offering my master the money for my freedom. He told me to come on a certain morning, when he and my master would be at breakfast together. Accordingly, on that morning I went and met the captain there, as he had appointed. When I went in I made my obeisance to my master, and with my money in my hand and many fears in my heart, I prayed him to be as good as his offer to me, when he was pleased to promise me my freedom as soon as I could purchase it. This speech seemed to confound him, he began to recoil, and my heart that instant sunk within me. “What,” said he, “give you your freedom? Why, where did you get the money? Have you got forty pounds sterling?” “Yes, sir,” I answered. “How did you get it?” replied he. I told him, very honestly. The captain then said he knew I got the money honestly, and with much industry, and that I was particularly careful. On which my master replied, I got money much faster than he did, and said he would not have made me the promise he did if he had thought I should have got the money so soon. “Come, come,” said my worthy captain, clapping my master on the back, “Come, Robert (which was his name), I think you must let him have his freedom; you have laid your money out very well; you have received a very good interest for it all this time, and here is now the principal at last. I know Gustavus has earned you more than a hundred a year, and he will save you money, as he will not leave you. Come, Robert, take the money.”

My master then said he would not be worse than his promise; and, taking the money, told me to go to the Secretary at the Register Office, and get my manumission⁶ drawn up. These words of my master were like a voice from heaven to me. In an instant all my trepidation was turned into unutterable bliss; and I most reverently bowed myself with gratitude, unable to express my feelings, but by the overflowing of my eyes, and a heart replete with thanks to God, while my true and worthy friend, the captain, congratulated us both with a peculiar degree of heart-felt pleasure. As soon as the first transports of my joy were over, and that I had expressed my thanks to these my worthy friends in the best manner I was able, I rose with a heart full of affection and reverence, and left the room in order to obey my master’s joyful mandate of going to the Register Office. As I was leaving the house I called to mind the words of the Psalmist, in the 126th Psalm, and like him, “I glorified God in my heart, in whom I trusted.” These words had been impressed on my mind from the very day I was forced from Deptford to the present hour, and I now saw them, as I thought, fulfilled and verified. My imagination was all rapture as I flew to the Register Office; and, in this respect, like the Apostle Peter (whose deliverance from prison was so sudden and extraordinary that he thought he was in a vision),⁷ I could scarcely believe I was awake. Heavens! who could do justice to my feelings at this moment! Not conquering heroes themselves, in the midst of a triumph—Not the tender mother who has just regained her long

6. Formal certificate of freedom.

7. *Cf.* Acts 12:7–9.

lost infant, and presses it to her heart—Not the weary hungry mariner, at the sight of the desired friendly port—Not the lover, when he once more embraces his beloved mistress, after she has been ravished from his arms! All within my breast was tumult, wildness, and delirium! My feet scarcely touched the ground, for they were winged with joy; and, like Elijah, as he rose to Heaven,⁸ they “were with lightning sped as I went on.” Everyone I met I told of my happiness, and blazed about the virtue of my amiable master and captain.

When I got to the office and acquainted the Register with my errand, he congratulated me on the occasion and told me he would draw up my manumission for half price, which was a guinea. I thanked him for his kindness, and, having received it and paid him, I hastened to my master to get him to sign it, that I might be fully released. Accordingly he signed the manumission that day, so that, before night, I, who had been a slave in the morning, trembling at the will of another, was become my own master, and completely free. I thought this was the happiest day I had ever experienced, and my joy was still heightened by the blessings and prayers of many of the sable race, particularly the aged, to whom my heart had ever been attached with reverence * * *.

1789

8. Cf. II Kings 2:11.

❖ PHILLIS WHEATLEY ❖

(1753?–1784)

“Phillis was brought from *Africa* to *America*, in the Year 1761, between Seven and Eight Years of Age. Without any Assistance from School Education, and by only what she was taught in the Family, she, in sixteen Months Time from her Arrival, attained the English Language, to which she was an utter Stranger before, to such a Degree, as to read any, the most difficult Parts of the Sacred Writings, to the great Astonishment of all who heard her.”

So writes John Wheatley, her Boston master, in a letter printed in her *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, published in London in 1773, when she was nineteen or twenty. By the time that volume appeared, she had already published at least four broadside poems as well as one poem, “Recollection,” in *The London Magazine*. She had also traveled to London and there met the Countess of Huntingdon, the Lord Mayor of London, and the Earl of Dartmouth. But for her decision to return to Boston to the bedside of Mrs. Susannah Wheatley, who was ill, she would probably have been presented at the court of George III.

Frail when she first arrived in America, and perhaps never of a strong constitution thereafter (she had been sent to England in 1773 at least partly because a doctor had prescribed sea air for her health), she could hardly have been more fortunate in masters. Of Mrs. Wheatley she wrote, “I was treated by her more like her child than her servant.” Mary Wheatley, the daughter of the family, assumed much of the responsibility for her education and was so successful that Phillis must have been among the most learned young women in Boston. Certainly she was an apt pupil. Especially drawn to the neoclassic verse of Pope, but fond also of Milton and the Bible, she apparently read as much as was available to her in English and mastered enough Latin to read some of the classics in the original. A remarkable individual by any standard, she was accorded considerable status in the society of Boston and London from the time of the publication of her elegy on the death of the celebrated preacher George Whitefield, when she was sixteen. After the appearance of *Poems on Various Subjects*, she continued to publish in periodicals and married John Peters and had three children by him. In 1776 she was received by General Washington. She was planning a second volume of verse when she died, aged thirty-one.

The range of subject matter within her poems is small and mostly circumscribed by the geography and mind of New England. Reading them one learns little about her native country (it may have been Senegal or Gambia), her race, or her condition as a slave. Almost always she wrote in heroic couplets and often her sentiments were conventional and her expression stilted. Nevertheless, the best of her poems convey a good deal of the flavor of her time and place and something of the spirit of their maker.

Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral, London was followed by at least five other English and American editions before 1800 and continued to be published in various editions throughout the nineteenth century. The first American edition is Philadelphia, 1786. Early-twentieth-century editions include *Phillis Wheatley (Phillis Peters): Poems and Letters*, edited by Charles F. Heartman, 1915; G. Herbert Renfro, *Life and Works of Phillis Wheatley*, 1916; and *The Poems of Phillis Wheatley*, edited by Charlotte Ruth Wright, 1930. *The Poems of Phillis Wheatley*, edited by Julian D. Mason, Jr., 1966, is drawn mostly from the 1773 edition and includes a helpful introduction. *The Collected Works of Phillis Wheatley* was edited by John C. Shields, 1988. *Phillis Wheatley and Her Writings* was edited by William H. Robinson, 1984.

PHILLIS WHEATLEY

On Being Brought from Africa to America

'Twas mercy brought me from my *Pagan* land,
Taught my benighted soul to understand
That there's a God, that there's a *Saviour* too:
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,
"Their colour is a diabolic die."¹
Remember, *Christians, Negroes*, black as *Cain*,
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

5

1768

1773

1. Dye.

 PHILLIS WHEATLEY

 To His Excellency General Washington¹

Celestial choir! enthron'd in realms of light,
 Columbia's scenes of glorious toils I write.
 While freedom's cause her anxious breast alarms,
 She flashes dreadful in refulgent arms.
 See mother earth her offspring's fate bemoan, 5
 And nations gaze at scenes before unknown!
 See the bright beams of heaven's revolving light
 Involved in sorrows and the veil of night!
 The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,
 Olive and laurel binds her golden hair: 10
 Wherever shines this native of the skies,
 Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise.
 Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates
 How pour her armies through a thousand gates,
 As when Eolus² heaven's fair face deforms, 15
 Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;
 Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
 The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;
 Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
 Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train. 20
 In bright array they seek the work of war,
 Where high unfurl'd the ensign waves in air.
 Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
 Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.
 Thee, first in peace and honours,—we demand 25
 The grace and glory of thy martial band.
 Fam'd for thy valour, for thy virtues more,
 Hear every tongue thy guardian aid implore!
 One century scarce perform'd its destined round,
 When Gallic powers Columbia's fury found;³ 30
 And so may you, whoever dares disgrace
 The land of freedom's heaven-defended race!

1. In 1775 Wheatley sent this poem to Washington with a letter saying that “Your being appointed by the Grand Continental Congress to be Generalissimo of the armies of North America, together with the fame of your virtues, excite sensations not easy to suppress.” Washington replied, praising her “genius” and inviting her to meet him in Cambridge, where she was received in 1776. The poem was first published in the *Virginia Gazette*, March 20, 1776, and by Thomas Paine in the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, April 1776.

2. Roman ruler of the winds.

3. During the French and Indian War.

Fix'd are the eyes of nations on the scales,
For in their hopes Columbia's arm prevails.
Anon Britannia droops the pensive head, 35
While round increase the rising hills of dead.
Ah! cruel blindness to Columbia's state!
Lament thy thirst of boundless power too late.
Proceed, great chief, with virtue on thy side,
Thy ev'ry action let the goddess guide. 40
A crown, a mansion, and a throne that shine,
With gold unfading, WASHINGTON! be thine.

1775

1776, 1834

THE FEDERALIST

(1787–1788)

When the American colonies won their independence, recognized in 1783 in the Treaty of Paris, their future relationship to one another was not immediately clear. The Articles of Confederation, drawn up by the Continental Congress in 1777 and ratified in 1781, had proclaimed a “perpetual union” in which “each state retains its sovereignty, freedom and independence.” Not long afterward, however, doubts had arisen that this “firm league of friendship,” as the Confederation had styled itself, possessed sufficient central authority to deal with the common problems facing the newly independent states. Consequently, in 1787 a Federal Convention meeting in Philadelphia drew up a new Constitution allocating broader powers to the central government. It remained to be seen whether the individual states could be brought to accept the provisions of this new document. The need to convince doubtful voters of the essential wisdom of the Constitution gave rise to *The Federalist* papers, classic statements of American political theory.

Most of the essays that became *The Federalist* (1788) were published in newspapers at the rate of three or four a week between October 27, 1787, and April 2, 1788. Published under the pseudonym “Publius,” they were initiated by Alexander Hamilton (1757–1804), a New York lawyer and statesman who had served as secretary and aide-de-camp to Washington in the Revolution, had been a member of the Continental Congress and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and was to become first secretary of the treasury of the United States. Of the eighty-five *Federalist* papers, Hamilton wrote at least fifty-one. He was assisted in the project by James Madison (1751–1836), later the fourth president, a Virginian who also had been a member of the Continental Congress and a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, and by John Jay (1745–1829), New York lawyer, former president of the Continental Congress, secretary of foreign affairs under the Articles of Confederation, and later first chief justice of the United States. Madison wrote at least fourteen papers, and Jay five, with the authorship of fifteen unclear between Hamilton and Madison.

The immediate aim was to convince New York to ratify the Constitution, but the effect has been much longer lasting than that. All later commentators have remained in debt to the brilliant analysis given by *The Federalist* to the merits of the Constitution. And, in a wider sense, the papers remain important for the fine precision of their discussion of the great American dream, since the late eighteenth century a worldwide one, of immense personal freedoms encouraged and guaranteed by a central government strong enough to ensure their lasting availability.

Important early editions of *The Federalist* are the first, edited by John and Archibald McLean and corrected by Hamilton, 1788; the George F. Hopkins edition, with alterations approved by Hamilton, 1802; and the Jacob Gideon edition, with Madison’s corrections, 1818. Modern scholarly editions are by Jacob E. Cooke, 1961, and Benjamin F. Wright, 1961. Ron Chernow, *Alexander Hamilton*, 2004, is a recent and full biography. For earlier biography and criticism, see Broadus Mitchell, *Alexander Hamilton: Youth to Majority, 1755–1788*, 1957, and *Alexander Hamilton: The National Adventure, 1788–1804*, 1962; Irving Brant, *James Madison*, 6 vols., 1941–1961; Frank Monaghan, *John Jay: Defender of Liberty*, 1935; Gary Wills, *Explaining America: The Federalist*, 1981; H. J. Strong, *What the Anti-Federalists Were For*, 1981; and Albert Furtwangler, *The Authority of Publius: A Reading of the Federalist Papers*, 1984.

THE FEDERALIST

The Federalist No. 1¹*[Alexander Hamilton]**To the People of the State of New York.*

After a full experience of the insufficiency of the existing Federal Government, you are invited to deliberate upon a new Constitution for the United States of America. The subject speaks its own importance; comprehending in its consequences, nothing less than the existence of the UNION, the safety and welfare of the parts of which it is composed, the fate of an empire, in many respects, the most interesting in the world. It has been frequently remarked, that it seems to have been reserved to the people of this country to decide, by their conduct and example, the important question, whether societies of men are really capable or not, of establishing good government from reflection and choice, or whether they are forever destined to depend, for their political constitutions, on accident and force. If there be any truth in the remark, the crisis, at which we are arrived, may with propriety be regarded as the period when that decision is to be made; and a wrong election of the part we shall act, may, in this view, deserve to be considered as the general misfortune of mankind.

This idea by adding the inducements of philanthropy to those of patriotism will heighten the solicitude, which all considerate and good men must feel for the event. Happy will it be if our choice should be directed by a judicious estimate of our true interests, uninfluenced by considerations foreign to the public good. But this is a thing more ardently to be wished, than seriously to be expected. The plan offered to our deliberations, affects too many particular interests, innovates upon too many local institutions, not to involve in its discussion a variety of objects extraneous to its merits, and of views, passions and prejudices little favourable to the discovery of truth.

Among the most formidable of the obstacles which the new Constitution will have to encounter, may readily be distinguished the obvious interest of a certain class of men in every State to resist all changes which may hazard a diminution of the power, emolument and consequence of the offices they hold under the State-establishments—and the perverted ambition of another class of men, who will either hope to aggrandise themselves by the confusions of their country, or will flatter themselves with fairer prospects of elevation from the subdivision of the empire into several partial confederacies, than from its union under one government.

It is not, however, my design to dwell upon observations of this nature. I am aware that it would be disingenuous to resolve indiscriminately the opposition of any set of men into interested or ambitious views (merely because their situations might subject them to suspicion): Candour will oblige us to admit, that even such men may be actuated by upright intentions; and it cannot be doubted that much of

1. First published in *The Independent Journal*, October 27, 1787. The text reproduced here is that of the Hopkins edition, 1802, the last with corrections approved by Hamilton.

the opposition which has already shown itself, or may hereafter make its appearance, will spring from sources, blameless at least, if not respectable, the honest errors of minds led astray by preconceived jealousies and fears. So numerous indeed and so powerful are the causes, which serve to give a false bias to the judgment, that we upon many occasions, see wise and good men on the wrong as well as on the right side of questions, of the first magnitude to society. This circumstance, if duly attended to, would always furnish a lesson of moderation to those, who are engaged in any controversy however well persuaded of being in the right. And a further reason for caution, in this respect, might be drawn from the reflection, that we are not always sure, that those who advocate the truth are actuated by purer principles than their antagonists. Ambition, avarice, personal animosity, party opposition, and many other motives, not more laudable than these, are apt to operate as well upon those who support as upon those who oppose the right side of a question. Were there not even these inducements to moderation, nothing could be more illjudged than that intolerant spirit, which has, at all times, characterised political parties. For, in politics as in religion, it is equally absurd to aim at making proselytes by fire and sword. Heresies in either can rarely be cured by persecution.

And yet, just as these sentiments must appear to candid men, we have already sufficient indications, that it will happen in this as in all former cases of great national discussion. A torrent of angry and malignant passions will be let loose. To judge from the conduct of the opposite parties, we shall be led to conclude, that they will mutually hope to evince the justness of their opinions, and to increase the number of their converts by the loudness of their declamations, and by the bitterness of their invectives. An enlightened zeal for the energy and efficiency of government will be stigmatized, as the off-spring of a temper fond of power and hostile to the principles of liberty. An overscrupulous jealousy of danger to the rights of the people, which is more commonly the fault of the head than of the heart, will be represented as mere pretence and artifice; the stale bait for popularity at the expence of public good. It will be forgotten, on the one hand, that jealousy is the usual concomitant of violent love, and that the noble enthusiasm of liberty is too apt to be infected with a spirit of narrow and illiberal distrust. On the other hand, it will be equally forgotten, that the vigour of government is essential to the security of liberty; that, in the contemplation of a sound and well informed judgment, their interest can never be separated; and that a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people, than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us, that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism, than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics the greatest number have begun their career, by paying an obsequious court to the people, commencing Demagogues and ending Tyrants.

In the course of the preceeding observations it has been my aim, fellow citizens, to put you upon your guard against all attempts, from whatever quarter, to influence your decision in a matter of the utmost moment to your welfare by any impressions other than those which may result from the evidence of truth. You will, no doubt, at the same time, have collected from the general scope of them that they proceed from a source not unfriendly to the new Constitution. Yes, my Countrymen, I own to you, that, after having given it an attentive consideration,

I am clearly of opinion, it is your interest to adopt it. I am convinced, that this is the safest course for your liberty, your dignity, and your happiness. I effect not reserves, which I do not feel. I will not amuse you with an appearance of deliberation, when I have decided. I frankly acknowledge to you my convictions, and I will freely lay before you the reasons on which they are founded. The consciousness of good intentions disdains ambiguity. I shall not however multiply professions on this head. My motives must remain in the depository of my own breast: My arguments will be open to all, and may be judged of by all. They shall at least be offered in a spirit, which will not disgrace the cause of truth.

I propose in a series of papers to discuss the following interesting particulars—*The utility of the UNION to your political prosperity—The insufficiency of the present Confederation to preserve that Union—The necessity of a government at least equally energetic with the one proposed to the attainment of this object—The conformity of the proposed constitution to the true principles of republican government—Its analogy to your own state constitution—and lastly, The additional security, which its adoption will afford to the preservation of that species of government, to liberty and to property.*

In the progress of this discussion I shall endeavour to give a satisfactory answer to all the objections which shall have made their appearance that may seem to have any claim to attention.

It may perhaps be thought superfluous to offer arguments to prove the utility of the UNION, a point, no doubt, deeply engraved on the hearts of the great body of the people in every state, and one, which it may be imagined has no adversaries. But the fact is, that we already hear it whispered in the private circles of those who oppose the new constitution, that the Thirteen States are of too great extent for any general system, and that we must of necessity resort to separate confederacies of distinct portions of the whole.² This doctrine will, in all probability, be gradually propagated, till it has votaries enough to countenance its open avowal. For nothing can be more evident, to those who are able to take an enlarged view of the subject, than the alternative of an adoption of the new Constitution, or a dismemberment of the Union. It may therefore be essential to examine particularly the advantages of that Union, the certain evils and the probable dangers, to which every State will be exposed from its dissolution. This shall accordingly be done.

PUBLIUS.
1787, 1788

2. "The same idea, tracing the arguments to their consequences, is held out in several of the late publications against the New Constitution" [Hamilton's note].

THE FEDERALIST

The Federalist No. 10¹

[James Madison]

To the People of the State of New York.

Among the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. The friend of popular governments, never finds himself so much alarmed for their character and fate, as when he contemplates their propensity to this dangerous vice. He will not fail therefore to set a due value on any plan which, without violating the principles to which he is attached, provides a proper cure for it. The instability, injustice and confusion introduced into the public councils, have in truth been the mortal diseases under which popular governments have every where perished, as they continue to be the favorite and fruitful topics from which the adversaries to liberty derive their most specious declamations. The valuable improvements made by the American Constitutions on the popular models, both ancient and modern, cannot certainly be too much admired; but it would be an unwarrantable partiality, to contend that they have as effectually obviated the danger on this side as was wished and expected. Complaints are every where heard from our most considerate and virtuous citizens, equally the friends of public and private faith, and of public and personal liberty; that our governments are too unstable; that the public good is disregarded in the conflicts of rival parties; and that measures are too often decided not according to the rules of justice and the rights of the minor party, but by the superior force of an interested and over-bearing majority. However anxiously we may wish that these complaints had no foundation, the evidence of known facts will not permit us to deny that they are in some degree true. It will be found indeed, on a candid review of our situation, that some of the distresses under which we labor, have been erroneously charged on the operation of our governments; but it will be found, at the same time, that other causes will not alone account for many of our heaviest misfortunes, and particularly for that prevailing and increasing distrust of public engagements, and alarm for private rights, which are echoed from one end of the continent to the other. These must be chiefly, if not wholly, effects of the unsteadiness and injustice with which a factious spirit has tainted our public administrations.

By a faction I understand a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.

1. First published in *The Daily Advertiser*, November 22, 1787. The text reproduced here is that of the Gideon edition, 1818, with Madison's corrections.

There are two methods of curing the mischiefs of faction: the one, by removing its causes; the other, by controlling its effects.

There are again two methods of removing the causes of faction: the one by destroying the liberty which is essential to its existence; the other, by giving to every citizen the same opinions, the same passions, and the same interests.

It could never be more truly said than of the first remedy, that it is worse than the disease. Liberty is to faction what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be a less folly to abolish liberty, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.

The second expedient is as impracticable, as the first would be unwise. As long as the reason of man continues fallible and he is at liberty to exercise it, different opinions will be formed. As long as the connection subsists between his reason and his self-love, his opinions and his passions will have a reciprocal influence on each other; and the former will be objects to which the latter will attach themselves. The diversity in the faculties of men from which the rights of property originate, is not less an insuperable obstacle to a uniformity of interests. The protection of these faculties is the first object of Government. From the protection of different and unequal faculties of acquiring property, the possession of different degrees and kinds of property immediately results; and from the influence of these on the sentiments and views of the respective proprietors, ensues a division of the society into different interests and parties.

The latent causes of faction are thus sown in the nature of man; and we see them every where brought into different degrees of activity, according to the different circumstances of civil society. A zeal for different opinions concerning religion, concerning Government and many other points, as well of speculation as of practice; an attachment to different leaders ambitiously contending for preeminence and power; or to persons of other descriptions whose fortunes have been interesting to the human passions, have in turn divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosity, and rendered them much more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to co-operate for their common good. So strong is this propensity of mankind to fall into mutual animosities, that where no substantial occasion presents itself, the most frivolous and fanciful distinctions have been sufficient to kindle their unfriendly passions and excite their most violent conflicts. But the most common and durable source of factions has been the various and unequal distribution of property. Those who hold and those who are without property have ever formed distinct interests in society. Those who are creditors and those who are debtors fall under a like discrimination. A landed interest, a manufacturing interest, a mercantile interest, a monied interest, with many lesser interests, grow up of necessity in civilized nations and divide them into different classes, actuated by different sentiments and views. The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation and involves the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of Government.

No man is allowed to be a judge in his own cause because his interest would certainly bias his judgment and, not improbably, corrupt his integrity. With equal, nay with greater reason, a body of men are unfit to be both judges and parties at

the same time; yet, what are many of the most important acts of legislation but so many judicial determinations, not indeed concerning the rights of single persons but concerning the rights of large bodies of citizens; and what are the different classes of legislators but advocates and parties to the causes which they determine? Is a law proposed concerning private debts? It is a question to which the creditors are parties on one side and the debtors on the other. Justice ought to hold the balance between them. Yet the parties are and must be themselves the judges; and the most numerous party, or, in other words, the most powerful faction must be expected to prevail. Shall domestic manufactures be encouraged, and in what degree, by restrictions on foreign manufactures? are questions which would be differently decided by the landed and the manufacturing classes, and probably by neither with a sole regard to justice and the public good. The apportionment of taxes on the various descriptions of property is an act which seems to require the most exact impartiality; yet, there is perhaps no legislative act in which greater opportunity and temptation are given to a predominant party, to trample on the rules of justice. Every shilling with which they over-burden the inferior number is a shilling saved to their own pockets.

It is in vain to say that enlightened statesmen will be able to adjust these clashing interests and render them all subservient to the public good. Enlightened statesmen will not always be at the helm; Nor, in many cases, can such an adjustment be made at all, without taking into view indirect and remote considerations, which will rarely prevail over the immediate interest which one party may find in disregarding the rights of another, or the good of the whole.

The inference to which we are brought, is, that the *causes* of faction cannot be removed and that relief is only to be sought in the means of controlling its *effects*.

If a faction consists of less than a majority, relief is supplied by the republican principle, which enables the majority to defeat its sinister views by regular vote. It may clog the administration, it may convulse the society; but it will be unable to execute and mask its violence under the forms of the Constitution. When a majority is included in a faction, the form of popular government on the other hand enables it to sacrifice to its ruling passion or interest, both the public good and the rights of other citizens. To secure the public good, and private rights, against the danger of such a faction, and at the same time to preserve the spirit and the form of popular government, is then the great object to which our enquiries are directed. Let me add that it is the great desideratum, by which alone this form of government can be rescued from the opprobrium under which it has so long labored, and be recommended to the esteem and adoption of mankind.

By what means is this object attainable? Evidently by one of two only. Either the existence of the same passion or interest in a majority at the same time, must be prevented; or the majority, having such co-existent passion or interest, must be rendered, by their number and local situation, unable to concert and carry into effect schemes of oppression. If the impulse and the opportunity be suffered to coincide, we well know that neither moral nor religious motives can be relied on as an adequate control. They are not found to be such on the injustice and violence of individuals and lose their efficacy in proportion to the number combined together, that is, in proportion as their efficacy becomes needful.

From this view of the subject, it may be concluded that a pure Democracy, by which I mean a Society, consisting of a small number of citizens who assemble and

administer the Government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischiefs of faction. A common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert results from the form of Government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such Democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention, have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property, and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths. Theoretic politicians, who have patronized this species of Government have erroneously supposed that by reducing mankind to a perfect equality in their political rights, they would at the same time be perfectly equalized and assimilated in their possessions, their opinions, and their passions.

A Republic, by which I mean a Government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect and promises the cure for which we are seeking. Let us examine the points in which it varies from pure Democracy, and we shall comprehend both the nature of the cure and the efficacy which it must derive from the union.

The two great points of difference between a Democracy and a Republic are first, the delegation of the Government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest; secondly, the greater number of citizens and greater sphere of country over which the latter may be extended.

The effect of the first difference is, on the one hand, to refine and enlarge the public views by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations. Under such a regulation, it may well happen that the public voice pronounced by the representatives of the people will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves convened for the purpose. On the other hand, the effect may be inverted. Men of factious tempers, of local prejudices, or of sinister designs, may by intrigue, by corruption or by other means, first obtain the suffrages and then betray the interests of the people. The question resulting is, whether small or extensive Republics are most favorable to the election of proper guardians of the public weal; and it is clearly decided in favor of the latter by two obvious considerations.

In the first place it is to be remarked that however small the Republic may be, the Representatives must be raised to a certain number in order to guard against the cabals of a few, and that however large it may be, they must be limited to a certain number in order to guard against the confusion of a multitude. Hence the number of Representatives in the two cases, not being in proportion to that of the Constituents, and being proportionally greatest in the small Republic, it follows that if the proportion of fit characters be not less in the large than in the small Republic, the former will present a greater option and consequently a greater probability of a fit choice.

In the next place, as each Representative will be chosen by a greater number of citizens in the large than in the small Republic, it will be more difficult for unworthy candidates to practise with success the vicious arts by which elections are

too often carried, and the suffrages of the people being more free, will be more likely to center in men who possess the most attractive merit and the most diffusive and established characters.

It must be confessed that in this, as in most other cases, there is a mean, on both sides of which inconveniencies will be found to lie. By enlarging too much the number of electors, you render the representative too little acquainted with all their local circumstances and lesser interests; as by reducing it too much, you render him unduly attached to these, and too little fit to comprehend and pursue great and national objects. The Federal Constitution forms a happy combination in this respect; the great and aggregate interests being referred to the national, the local and particular to the state legislatures.

The other point of difference is, the greater number of citizens and extent of territory which may be brought within the compass of Republican, than of Democratic Government; and it is this circumstance principally which renders factious combinations less to be dreaded in the former, than in the latter. The smaller the society, the fewer probably will be the distinct parties and interests composing it; the fewer the distinct parties and interests, the more frequently will a majority be found of the same party; and the smaller the number of individuals composing a majority, and the smaller the compass within which they are placed, the more easily will they concert and execute their plans of oppression. Extend the sphere, and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other. Besides other impediments, it may be remarked that where there is a consciousness of unjust or dishonorable purposes, communication is always checked by distrust, in proportion to the number whose concurrence is necessary.

Hence it clearly appears that the same advantage which a Republic has over a Democracy, in controlling the effects of faction, is enjoyed by a large over a small Republic—is enjoyed by the Union over the States composing it. Does this advantage consist in the substitution of Representatives whose enlightened views and virtuous sentiments render them superior to local prejudices and to schemes of injustice? It will not be denied that the Representation of the Union will be most likely to possess these requisite endowments. Does it consist in the greater security afforded by a greater variety of parties, against the event of any one party being able to outnumber and oppress the rest? In an equal degree does the increased variety of parties, comprised within the Union, increase this security. Does it, in fine, consist in the greater obstacles opposed to the concert and accomplishment of the secret wishes of an unjust and interested majority? Here, again, the extent of the Union gives it the most palpable advantage.

The influence of factious leaders may kindle a flame within their particular States, but will be unable to spread a general conflagration through the other States; a religious sect, may degenerate into a political faction in a part of the Confederacy; but the variety of sects dispersed over the entire face of it, must secure the national Councils against any danger from that source; a rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other im-

proper or wicked project, will be less apt to pervade the whole body of the Union, than a particular member of it; in the same proportion as such a malady is more likely to taint a particular county or district, than an entire State.

In the extent and proper structure of the Union, therefore, we behold a Republican remedy for the diseases most incident to Republican Government. And according to the degree of pleasure and pride, we feel in being Republicans, ought to be our zeal in cherishing the spirit, and supporting the character of Federalists.

PUBLIUS.
1787, 1788

◀ PHILIP FRENEAU ▶

(1752–1832)

Judged in his own time by his political opponents as “a writer of wretched and insolent doggerel, an incendiary journalist,” Philip Freneau was nevertheless a major poet. His double role as poet and political journalist in the transitional age of the Revolution is consistent with the contradictions of his poetry. Freneau was neo-classical by training and taste yet romantic in essential spirit. He was also at once a satirist and a sentimentalist, a humanitarian but also a bitter polemicist, a poet of Reason yet the celebrant of “lovely Fancy,” and a deistic optimist most inspired by themes of death and transience.

Freneau was born on January 2, 1752, in New York, of French Huguenot and Scottish stock. He was tutored for Princeton (“that hotbed of Whiggery”), where he established close friendships with a future president, James Madison, and a future novelist, Hugh Henry Brackenridge. In collaboration with the latter he produced his earliest work; slightly later, in “The Power of Fancy” (1770), a genuine independence appears. After graduation and an unsatisfactory teaching experience, he gained his first popular success in New York in 1775 as a satirist of the British. In 1776 Freneau made his first voyage to the West Indies, where he wrote “The House of Night,” foreshadowing the Gothic mood of Poe and Coleridge—F. L. Pattee calls it “the first distinctly romantic note heard in America”—and “The Beauties of Santa Cruz,” blending the praise of nature with social protest in his characteristic later manner. This poetry foretold achievement of a distinguished order, but he was soon diverted from literature into the tide of revolution. As passenger on an American ship attacked by the British in 1780, he was taken prisoner. “The British Prison Ship” (1781), a good piece of invective, reveals the rigors and brutality of his captivity. In truth he now could say: “An age employed in edging steel / Can no poetic rapture feel.” In the closing year of the war he became the prolific propagandist, celebrating American victories and leaders while continuing to hurl his vitriol at the British in many poems. “The poet of the Revolution” they called him, a compliment not wholly to his advantage, since its persistence long obscured the fact that his later poems were his best, and these were quite different. The earlier poems were collected (1786) in *The Poems of Philip Freneau Written Chiefly During the Late War*.

For a few years, writing with sporadic fluency, Freneau earned his living variously as farmer, journalist, and sea captain. His *Miscellaneous Works*, essays and new poems, appeared in 1788. In 1790 he married and almost literally flung himself, as political journalist, into the raging controversies between the Jeffersonian Democrats, whom he supported, and Hamilton’s Federalists. In New York he edited *The Daily Advertiser*. In 1791, probably with Jefferson’s support, he established in Philadelphia the *National Gazette* and campaigned against the opinions of the powerful *Gazette of the United States*, edited by John Fenno and supported by Hamilton. Simultaneously he served as translating clerk in Jefferson’s Department of State. He was soon a power in journalism and politics. When Jefferson withdrew from politics temporarily in 1793, Freneau resigned and his paper failed, in the midst of a Federalist tide which ended only with Jefferson’s election to the

presidency in 1801. Freneau's social and religious liberalism, in which he resembled Paine, gave the Federalists a deadly weapon against him; indeed his political enemies so besmirched his reputation that he has only recently been recognized as a courageous champion of American popular government.

Reduced in fortune and political ambition, he settled in 1794 at his plantation homestead, Mount Pleasant, near Freehold, New Jersey, where for a time he edited a New Jersey paper. On his own hand press he published new essays and poems and revisions of earlier pieces. Collections appeared in 1795 and 1799. His poverty drove him at fifty to resume plowing the sea instead of his "sandy patrimony"; he was captain of coastwise trading vessels from 1803 to 1807. Again he turned to his farm for subsistence, but in 1818 his home burned down, and he gathered the remnants of his family and possessions in a little farmhouse nearer town. In 1815 he collected in two volumes the poems of his later period, including the interesting work inspired by the War of 1812, in *A Collection of Poems * * * Written Between the Year 1797 and the Present Time*. After he was seventy, he worked on the public roads; "he went," says Leary, "from house to house as tinker, mending clocks, and doing other small jobs of repairing." He continued almost until his death to send poems to the newspapers. Poor and nearly forgotten, he died of exposure in 1832 at the age of eighty, after losing his way in a blizzard, as he returned, it is said, from a tavern.

As a poet, Freneau heralded American literary independence; his close observation of nature (before Bryant) distinguished his treatment of indigenous wildlife and other native American subjects. In contrast with the ornate style of Freneau's early couplets, he later developed a natural, simple, and concrete diction, best illustrated in such nature lyrics as "The Wild Honey Suckle" and "The Indian Burying Ground." Freneau did not establish trends, but he represented qualities that were to be characteristic of the next half century. He has been called the "Father of American Poetry," and it is ultimately in a historical estimate that Freneau is important. In the main, as Harry H. Clark remarks, "he is worthy of study as a cross section of an intensely significant period in our political and literary history rather than as an intrinsically wise political theorist or a profound creator of poetic beauty."

The standard edition of the poetry is *The Poems of Philip Freneau*, 3 vols., edited by F. L. Pattee, 1902–1907. Selections are *Poems of Freneau*, edited by H. H. Clark, 1929; and Philip M. Marsh, ed., *A Freneau Sampler*, 1963. Additional poems are found in *The Last Poems of Philip Freneau*, edited by Lewis Leary, 1946. Judith R. Hiltner edited *The Newspaper Verse of Philip Freneau*, 1986. Philip M. Marsh edited *The Prose of Philip Freneau*, 1955. H. H. Clark has published a facsimile of the 1799 edition of *Letters on Various Interesting and Important Subjects*, 1943. An authoritative critical biography is *That Rascal Freneau: A Study in Literary Failure*, by Lewis Leary, 1941. More recent is Jacob Axelrad, *Philip Freneau: Champion of Democracy*, 1967. Another biography is that of Pattee, in Volume I of his edition of the *Poems*, while H. H. Clark's edition contains a penetrating critical introduction. Additional studies include Philip M. Marsh, *Philip Freneau: Poet and Journalist*, 1967; Philip M. Marsh, *The Works of Philip Freneau: A Critical Study*, 1968; and Richard C. Vitzthum, *Land and Sea: The Lyric Poetry of Philip Freneau*, 1978.

 PHILIP FRENEAU

 To the Memory of the Brave Americans¹

 UNDER GENERAL GREENE, IN SOUTH CAROLINA, WHO FELL
 IN THE ACTION OF SEPTEMBER 8, 1781.

At Eutaw Springs the valiant died;
 Their limbs with dust are covered o'er—
 Weep on, ye springs, your tearful tide;
 How many heroes are no more!

If in this wreck of ruin, they 5
 Can yet be thought to claim a tear,
 O smite your gentle breast, and say
 The friends of freedom slumber here!

Thou, who shalt trace this bloody plain,
 If goodness rules thy generous breast, 10
 Sigh for the wasted rural reign;
 Sigh for the shepherds, sunk to rest!

Stranger, their humble graves adorn;
 You too may fall, and ask a tear;
 'Tis not the beauty of the morn 15
 That proves the evening shall be clear.—

They saw their injured country's woe;
 The flaming town, the wasted field;
 Then rushed to meet the insulting foe;
 They took the spear—but left the shield. 20

Led by thy conquering genius, Greene,
 The Britons they compelled to fly;
 None distant viewed the fatal plain,
 None grieved, in such a cause to die—

But, like the Parthian,² famed of old, 25
 Who, flying, still their arrows threw,
 These routed Britons, full as bold,
 Retreated, and retreating slew.

Now rest in peace, our patriot band;
 Though far from nature's limits thrown, 30
 We trust they find a happier land,
 A brighter sunshine of their own.

1781

1781, 1786

1. General Nathanael Greene's fine generalship in the South in 1781 was crucial. Although he lost several hundred men at Eutaw Springs, he prevented the relief of Cornwallis, who surrendered at Yorktown October 19. The poem appeared in the *Freeman's Journal*, November 21, 1781.

2. The Parthians, famous cavalymen of ancient Persia, destroyed their enemies by feigning flight, then suddenly wheeling to discharge their arrows.

 PHILIP FRENEAU

 On Mr. Paine's Rights of Man¹

Thus briefly sketched the sacred RIGHTS OF MAN,
 How inconsistent with the ROYAL PLAN!
 Which for itself exclusive honour craves,
 Where some are masters born, and millions slaves.
 With what contempt must every eye look down 5
 On that base, childish bauble called a *crown*,
 The gilded bait, that lures the crowd, to come,
 Bow down their necks, and meet a slavish doom;
 The source of half the miseries men endure,
 The quack that kills them, while it seems to cure. 10

Roused by the REASON of his manly page,
 Once more shall PAINE a listening world engage:
 From Reason's source, a bold reform he brings,
 In raising *mankind*, he pulls down *kings*,
 Who, source of discord, patrons of all wrong, 15
 On blood and murder have been fed too long:
 Hid from the world, and tutored to be base,
 The curse, the scourge, the ruin of our race,
 Theirs was the task, a dull designing few,
 To shackle beings that they scarcely knew, 20
 Who made this globe the residence of slaves,
 And built their thrones on systems formed by knaves
 —Advance, bright years, to work their final fall,
 And haste the period that shall crush them all.

Who, that has read and scanned the historic page 25
 But glows, at every line, with kindling rage,
 To see by them the rights of men aspersed,
 Freedom restrained, and Nature's law reversed,
 Men, ranked with beasts, by monarchs willed away,
 And bound young fools, or madmen to obey: 30
 Now driven to wars, and now oppressed at home,
 Compelled in crowds o'er distant seas to roam,
 From India's climes the plundered prize to bring
 To glad the strumpet, or to glut the king.
 COLUMBIA, hail! immortal be thy reign: 35

1. *The Rights of Man*, Part I, ran serially in the *New York Daily Advertiser*, May 6–27, 1791, and Freneau's poem appeared at the end of the concluding installment. The poem was popular; it reappeared in three other papers within a month. Freneau had been attracted, during the Revolution, by Paine's emphasis on "natural rights"; and like Jefferson, he believed that the new work might offset the current conservative reaction in America.

Without a king, we till the smiling plain;
Without a king, we trace the unbounded sea,
And traffic round the globe, through each degree;
Each foreign clime our honoured flag reveres,
Which asks no monarch, to support the STARS: 40
Without a *king*, the laws maintain their sway,
While honour bids each generous heart obey.
Be ours the task the ambitious to restrain,
And this great lesson teach—that kings are vain;
That warring realms to certain ruin haste, 45
That kings subsist by war, and wars are waste:
So shall our nation, formed on Virtue's plan,
Remain the guardian of the Rights of Man,
A vast Republic, famed through every clime,
Without a king, to see the end of time. 50

1791 1795

