’Wretched Petitioners’: Jamaican Maroon’s Petitions/ Catiline and Caesar in Early American Insults and the Whiskey Rebellion

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'Wretched Petitioners': Jamaican Maroon’s Petitions/ Catiline and Caesar in Early American Insults and the Whiskey Rebellion

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Bachelor of Arts, Christopher Newport University, 2016

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Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

The ‘Wretched Petitioners’: Jamaican Maroon’s Petitions, 1795-1800

In 1795 the Jamaican Maroons from Trelawney Town revolted against the British. The rebellion was short lived but sent shockwaves across the Island that saw the British Governor, Lord Balcarres, gather the Assembly of Jamaica and order the removal of the rebellious Maroons. The Jamaican Maroons responded to Barclarres, not with renewed violence, but with British legal strategies by employing petitions in order to try and salvage their stay on the Island.

Sic Semper Tyrannis: Catiline and Caesar in Early American Insults, Allusions, and The Whiskey Rebellion, 1789-1804

The use of classical allusions in Early America was commonplace amongst elites. But the way these allusions were employed as insults during the Whiskey Rebellion helps to better understand what was at stake for both the rebels and the government trying to crush them.
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This M.A. is dedicated to my mother and father who always helped pick me up when I was down.
Intellectual Biography

Charting the creation of my two papers is not difficult, connecting them into any
sense of a coherent story is nearly impossible. This lack of a linear trajectory, rather than
creating unnecessary confusion in my progress as a scholar, has helped me to expand the
questions that I ask, and the places I go to find them. While my two papers are on vastly
different people, in different places, with different sources, they do share a
methodological similarity: an intensely deep reading of a few sources. Working on these
two research papers has taught me numerous lessons but certainly a key one being how to
take whatever few lines you can find in the archive and spin them into a story. The fear of
speculation, once ever-present and suffocating, was forced to subside to the need for
clarification. While answers, in a purely factual and objective manner may prove elusive
to modern historians, this desire to tap into the archive for everything it is worth and use
that knowledge to tell untold stories was incredibly fulfilling and enlightening. Thus, my
journey into academia was really two separate thrusts connected by the methodology.

My first paper was written in Guillaume Aubert’s Atlantic World and the Law
Seminar. A class that was both focused in space and topic forcing me to negotiate new
aspects of an Atlantic World I foolishly thought I was beginning to understand. The legal
aspect of the class forced me to challenge my typical topical interests and engage sources
in a new manner. For my undergraduate thesis I had written on the Jamaican Maroons.
They were part of a larger project on the ways that the British managed, digested, and
then presented surrender ceremonies throughout the Atlantic World. The Maroons
fascinated me, and I realized there was more to the story of the 1795 rebellion than just
how the British presented the surrender ceremony back in the metropole. To this end, I
reexamined the Jamaican Maroon rebellion of 1795, this time from the Maroon’s vantage point, and discovered a fascinating tale of Maroon resistance to the British. This was no longer armed resistance, in fact, in many ways it wasn’t resistance at all but calculated manipulation of the legal system that sought to control them. In this way, the Maroons accepted their role within the empire in order to exploit the legal advantages that accompanied their status as subjects. Thus, my paper “‘Wretched Petitioners’: Jamaican Maroons’ Petitions 1795-1800” was created.

This paper was a dedicated source analysis of the Maroon petitions themselves and how they used these documents to their advantage to operate within the British system. I had never worked with such limited sources but it made for a good challenge. A challenge that was worthwhile as British history is easy to tell but it’s relationship to Maroon history is much harder to access, but no less important. In fact, at least in my reading of the Maroon’s successful coopting of the British legal system to their advantage all sorts of interesting questions about subjecthood, empire, subalterns, and legal systems are raised. Because of these implications this paper is one I would be interested in moving forward with in the future.

In order to do that I believe there are three big areas I need to explore further. The first is to more deeply and thoughtfully engagement with the historiography of the Jamaican Maroons, but also of the British legal and imperial system they chose to operate within. Secondly, undertake a more nuanced and researched exploration of Maroon society. The Maroons, due to the limitations of the paper and myself as a historian, were not explored enough as a cultural or social group in order to fully understand how or why they ended up accepting British subjecthood in order to use the legal system to their
advantage. By further exploring Maroon culture and identifying their history with the British on Jamaica the papers’ focus on their ability to use British legal channels will be greatly improved. Finally, an expansion of sources is necessary to fully develop this paper into an article or dissertation chapter. There are some great sources, the Ross diary, letters from Governor Balcarres or General Walpole, as well as letters from Maroons themselves that need to be incorporated into the story to better situate the petitions and their role within Maroon and British relations.

My second paper came out of Josh Piker’s Colonial America class and took a very different topic on than the Maroons, or law, or empire. Linked topically at best by its connection to rebellion, it is really the methodology that fits these papers together. The paper is “Sic Semper Tyrannis: Catiline and Caesar in Early American Insults, Allusions, and the Whiskey Rebellion, 1789-1804.” The goal of the paper is to examine the ways that Early Americans used classical allusions to Caesar and Catiline not just as simple insults, but also as historic warnings of the very real danger of rebellion and civil war. The methodological similarity comes from the fact that the sources were scarce for this project. While I have no further ambitions with this paper I do believe with further research and more sources its argument could be made even stronger.

The paper for Piker’s class attempted to distance itself from the historiography of classicism that focuses on high political culture, like republican systems of government and values. Rather, the intention was to look at low or personal politics and the way that classics permeated a much wider swath of society in order to influence how Early Americans viewed their world. To do this, I attempted to tell the narrative of the Whiskey Rebellion through the classical allusions drawn by Early Americans with Caesar and
Catiline. The small source base once again forced me to think creatively and engage with the archive in a way that was not disingenuous but still stretched the source material. In order to accomplish this, I also had to engage heavily with the classical material itself, a topic of deep personal interest. To further this project a stronger engagement with the progression from ancient times to Early America is necessary to better connect the role of classics within the framework of the Whiskey Rebellion.

By working on these two papers I was able to explore two topically vast ideas, both of which I am personally interested in as a historian. Thus, these papers allowed me to continue to refine my desired historic expertise by engaging broadly rather than narrowly. The methodology of both is linked in the small source base and need to read between the lines of the archive to create an argument. By working on these papers I developed research skills, like reading between the lines of the archive and creatively connecting, what at first appears disparate like Jamaican Maroons and British law or Early Americans and Caesar and Catiline.
The ‘Wretched Petitioners’: Jamaican Maroon’s Petitions, 1795-1800

On October 1, 1800 a party of sixty Maroons, or free blacks, landed in Sierra Leone, under a “violent Tornado,” and proceeded to spend the next few days subduing rebels in the area.¹ Thus, began the final leg of an odyssey that spanned almost more places than years. For these Maroons, used so quickly as agents of empire in Sierra Leone by helping police the colony, came by way of Nova Scotia. Halifax, however, was not their port of origin, that was a different Atlantic Island thousands of miles away, Jamaica. What led a group of free blacks from Jamaica, to Nova Scotia, and eventually to Sierra Leone?² The Jamaican Maroons from Trelawney Town were forced into exile by war and forced to survive in an Atlantic world that was growing more crowded and connected in the long 18th century. The Maroons were not wandering lost and alone but within a British Imperial and Atlantic framework. A framework they were willing and able to exploit through legal channels to maintain as much autonomy as possible. This paper will explore how the Jamaican Maroons used legal channels to confront British Imperial aims that threatened their freedom, and through legal posturing, presented themselves as both autonomous and loyal subjects of the Crown. The Maroons of Trelawney Town used varied strategies to achieve their aims, focusing heavily in Jamaica on military exploits and family tropes they turned to petitioning to a wider range of white intermediaries, like General Walpole, in Nova Scotia to better promote their goals.

When Oliver Cromwell sent his troops on the ‘Western Design’ in 1655 Jamaica was not the destination. The Spanish, however, proved resolute in their defense of

² In 1841 the Maroons would eventually return to Jamaica by way of Petitions as well but this last leg of their journey is beyond the scope of this paper.
Hispaniola leaving the English commanders desperate for redemption. Jamaica offered an
easier target and was quickly conquered, the Spanish abandoning the island without
offering any major resistance. The Spanish left behind a sizeable group of escaped slaves
and free blacks that “overmatched…submitted” to the English forces. This marked the
first meeting of Jamaican Maroons and English forces and was quickly followed up by an
agreement between the English and these Maroons who “craving English
protection...[are] authoriz’d to prey upon, and hunt their fellows.” This early agreement
marked the first, and often overlooked, example of Maroon cooperation with English
authorities in order to safeguard their own autonomy.\(^3\)

The Maroons, however, did not submit as easily as Edmund Hickeringill, who
wrote an early treatise on the status of Jamaica, hoped but fought on. Sporadic bursts of
violence erupted between the Maroons and English until the violence became too much
for both communities. Unable, or unwilling, to continue such a costly war the British first
approached the Maroons offering terms of peace in 1738. The subsequent treaty of 1739
had two important clauses: first, the Maroons were formerly recognized as free and
legally protected from harm under British Law. Second, they were conscripted into the
slave society in the role of slave hunters.\(^4\) In this way they were isolated in a middle
ground between white Britons and enslaved blacks. In addition, while the Maroons were
given land to call their own, some of which was Trelawney Town itself, named after the
Governor at the time, they were not totally independent.\(^5\) A British superintendent was

\(^3\) Edmund Hickeringill, *Jamaica Viewed* (1661), 42-44.
stationed in each town to act as an intermediary between the two groups. While this obviously limited the freedom of the Maroons it also exposed them to British systems of law and order in a very real and practical way. Therefore, crucially for the Maroons they were able to navigate legal channels to preserve their freedom in the face of imperial encroachment.

Surviving in relative peace for the next fifty years after the treaty, the Maroons and British lived in some state of harmony. Then in 1795 the first large scale insurrection by Maroons since the 1739 treaty broke out in Trelawney Town. Furious over the treatment of two Maroons who had been found guilty of a crime and whipped by a slave, the Maroons saw their rights infringed upon. They saw rebellion as their only facet of action to protect their fervently guarded freedom. As Mike Kofhal recently argues the Maroons “were seeking a redress of their grievances and not contesting the terms of their relationship to the British Empire.” Thus, he sees Maroon violence as merely another attempt to situate themselves within a British Atlantic rather than break from it. It seems clear that by 1795 the Trelawney Maroons were well versed in dealing with British Imperial agents and understood how to situate themselves within this Imperial framework in order to promote their own interests. When their armed insurrection failed they were marked for deportation, seen as too threatening to the Island by Jamaican Governor, the Earl of Balcarres.

The rebellion itself was short lived. Starting in the summer of 1795 the Maroons, incensed by the public humiliation of the flogging of their men, began to show signs of

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rebellion. Unwilling to take any chances Governor Balcarres sent the militia to Trelawney Town to prevent escalation. Balcarres himself was an American Revolutionary War veteran who had field experience. He also was a known hater of the French Revolution and saw the consequences of it unraveling in the Caribbean as one of the greatest threats to his rule in Jamaica.\(^8\) The Maroons for their part refused to bow down in the face of Balcarres aggression and burned their homes in Trelawney Town and moved into the jungle and mountains of the cockpit country. What followed was a few months of guerrilla warfare and small scale skirmishes that failed to see victory in sight for either side. The Maroons, however, were not fighting for total independence but more for the reestablishment of the status quo as it had been in 1739. That is why when General Walpole approached them with treaty terms, in December of 1795, that promised they could remain on the island they quickly agreed. Governor Balcarres ratified the treaty on December 28, 1795 but gave the impossibly short date of January 1, 1796 for the Maroons to come in and accept the treaty. With no easy lines of communication, a strong mistrust between the two parties, and the difficulty of traversing the terrain this deadline proved unattainable for most Maroons. Instead what followed was a slow trickle of Maroons over the coming months. Balcarres and the Jamaican Assembly decided to use the January 1 deadline as a hard stop though and proceeded to arrest everyone who came in after. The decision to deport them was made and they were boarded on ships sometime in April of 1796 while waiting to find out where they would go.\(^9\)

The Maroons immediately contested the legality of this deportation by sending petitions to the governor. Failing to succeed in preventing their removal they were not

\(^8\) Fortin, “Blackened Beyond Our Native Hue,” 10.

\(^9\) Kofahl, Colour of Freedom, 1-3.
totally disheartened and arrived at Halifax “expressed willingness to work for ‘Massa King.’”\textsuperscript{10} This willingness to work was not an abject surrender to British sovereignty but legal posturing\textsuperscript{11}. The Jamaican Maroons were masters of engaging the British enough to always exist in that quasi-sovereign state that saw them maintain their autonomy while still allowing for them to use British legal channels. This they quickly did in Nova Scotia, after the winter left them desperate to leave, they once again chose legal action to voice their grievances. This time they left the island of their own legal impetus and headed to Sierra Leone, where this paper began. It is a tale of a community of Maroons existing in a shadow space between free and subject. Navigating not just the waters of the Atlantic but the legal channels of the British empire.

The Jamaican Maroons have received hefty scholarly attention for their bold resistance to British rule. First subjected to British histories written quickly after the rebellion the Maroons were treated as dangerous enemies. This narrative was continued by several late nineteenth and early twentieth century scholars whose biases lay in the imperial camp. It was really thanks first to Mavis Campbell that the Maroons became more than a savage enemy for the British to battle in the whigish narrative of progress. Her work, spanning mostly from the 1970s to 1990s, serves to establish the Maroons as a historic community both worthy of study in their own right and having agency in the decisions made dealing with the British. The Anthropologist Kenneth Bilby, who lived with the Jamaican Maroons for decades, also serves as a useful insight into Maroonage


\textsuperscript{11} For more on legal posturing see Lauren Benton, \textit{A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900} (Cambridge University Press: NY, 2010), 24-25. Where Benton uses the term to describe how in a pluralistic legal tradition different groups used the law, in its reality or idea, to position themselves in different frameworks in order to gain an advantage.
through oral histories. More recent scholarship has looked at the Maroons as legal actors who used petitions to combat the British system. These include James Lockett, who uses the petitions sparingly in his surprisingly short article on deportation. Jeffery Fortin, who has the best examination of the use of the petitions but focuses on racial issues and fails to intensely integrate the documents. Finally, Mike Kofahl’s recent dissertation includes a useful chapter outlining the Maroon use of petitions but like Fortin fails to fully integrate the legal aspects and language of the documents into his argument.  

In order to better expose the Maroon’s use of legal posturing this paper will focus heavily on a textual analysis of the petitions themselves. The petitions, though often short, offer a wealth of detail that merits a microscopic interrogation. The hope being that this intense investigation will tie into many of the themes of empire, subjecthood, identity, and law in the British Atlantic. The Maroons petitions show a marginalized group who existed in a quasi-sovereign state organizing legal channels and playing on British identity to control their own fate. For it was in this tepid, monster sized bath tub

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that the fate of the Maroons was to be decided, and these petitions prove it was not a fate uncontested.

“The Maroons, to the Number of Five Hundred, surrendered themselves” in December of 1795 reported the Jamaican Governor, Earl of Balcarres to the London public in a letter published in the London Gazette. The rebellion of 1795 had its roots in the terms of the peace treaty of 1739, and concluded with a new peace established between acting field commander General Walpole and the Maroons. But if 1739 saw peace made possible for the first time between the British and Maroons than winter of 1795 saw a different wind blowing. Desperate to rid the island of the danger of the “savage and ferocious Enemy,” and unable to trust in their “Sincerity,” the Maroons were marked for deportation. Removal was seen as the only way to maintain the strenuous slave society that proved so profitable when run efficiently. The Maroons had served a purpose within that slave system by acting as a police force to catch runaways. But the planters had grown increasingly uneasy with the Maroon presence which coupled with fears of French revolutionary aftershocks made removal logical to the Britons in Jamaica. The Maroons continued autonomy in Jamaica depended on the 1739 treaty and legal relations with Britain. Thus, law served as a double edged sword that threatened at the same time to cut the Maroons and be used by them. Eager to resist British oppression the Maroons actively engaged the British legal system through petitions in order to voice their grievances and reclaim any lost agency from surrendering. If tragic in its outcome, the deportation of the Maroons of Jamaica is an incredible example of indigenous

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13 Balcarres, London Gazette, April 23, 1796.
populations exploiting the legal system of a colonizing power in order to navigate the murky waters of empire.

The question of how to handle the Maroons was left suspended for only a few short months. A time when many Maroons were still surrendering themselves under the auspices of the treaties stipulations that included being promised by General Walpole they would be safe from removal.\(^{16}\) By April 20, 1796 the Maroons were dealt a shocking blow when the Assembly recommended deportation for those “who surrendered after the first of January.”\(^ {17}\) The rebellion had failed is the usual story. But a more nefarious, and honest, reading suggests that the rebellion itself succeeded. The treaty, like in 1739 was made much more between equally desperate parties for peace than a dominant Britain. The Maroons surrender was beneficial to the British in terms of safely resuming their hugely profitable exploitation of slave labor for the empire on the island. In fact, the British were spared huge amounts of manpower and the accompanying cost by the Maroons surrender. General Walpole estimating “treble the number of troops would not have brought in so many marrons in twelve months” as the treaty did.\(^ {18}\) If the rebellion succeeded, in the sense it forced some resumption of the status quo pre bellum it failed miserably in being upheld. This failure to adhere to the treaty led to countless legal debates and petitions spanning three continents. For the Maroons were versed in British law beyond just the terms of surrender. The petition replaced the musket in their battle for autonomy in the British empire.

The first Maroon petition was sent directly to Governor Balcarres on April 27, 1796. The petition is subdued and humble. Addressing the governor as “His Honor, the

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\(^{16}\) Kofahl, *Colour of Freedom*, 3.

\(^{17}\) Anon, *Proceedings of the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica*, London, 1796, 100.

\(^{18}\) Ibid, 87.
Earl of Balcarres” the Maroons clearly understand the proper formalities to avoid offense. This point, obvious to any European or Creole, is important to understanding the legal aptitude of the Maroons. They were free blacks who existed in a quasi-autonomous space in Jamaica that saw them brush up with British law and these petitions would be their first real legal battleground. Therefore, the simple formalities of language cannot be overlooked as expected but should be seen as deeply profound. For the Maroons, a powerful warrior culture who “were a people jealous of their liberty” the ability to suspend claims to total freedom in order to seek legal redress was a major undertaking.\(^{19}\)

The Earl of Balcarres became the great enemy of the Maroons, a ghost haunting their dreams, but in the face of deportation they were willing to engage him as their only hope of avoiding removal.

To this end the Maroons next brought up the fact that Balcarres in his “Great Goodness and Marcy rat[i]fied the acceptance of certain Proposals” made by the Maroons.\(^{20}\) This refers to the fact that Balcarres originally agreed to the terms settled by the Maroon leader, Colonel Montague James, and General Walpole. By bringing up the original stipulations of the 1795 treaty, and even more importantly Balcarres acceptance of its terms, the Maroons offered a subtle, but firm, reminder of the breach of trust Balcarres would be complicit in by deporting them. A breach he would become all too familiar with after the fact when he often found the need to defend his actions.\(^{21}\)

The Maroons, however quickly tempered this statement by admitting they were

\(^{19}\) George Walpole, House of Commons, May 1, 1796, in Mavis Campbell *Nova Scotia and the Fighting Maroons: A Documentary History*, 267. *** Maybe a discussion of masculinity if I can find sources? Or warrior culture? Tie into submission essay I already wrote?  
\(^{20}\) Maroon Petition to Balcarres. 27\(^{th}\) April 1796: C.O. 137/96 in Campbell *Fighting Maroons*, 3.  
\(^{21}\) As proven by the work of Bryan Edwards written in 1796 that is clearly a defense of Balcarres and the Assembly’s decision to deport the Maroons.
“conscious how much they have offended” the British and how they feared staying on the “Island might be attended with fatal Consequences to themselves and Families.”

This statement has three important points: first, it admits the Maroons have done something wrong, second, it addresses the idea of removal as a safety precaution and while failing to endorse deportation acknowledges one of the British justifications for it, finally, it brings up Maroon families as a key aspect beyond just the warrior men. The admittance of wrong doing is done in intentionally vague language. The message panders to the British desire to be vindicated as the moral and correct party but the Maroons really only admit to how they have “offended” the British. In this sense they are allowing for the British perception of their actions without officially endorsing the British position itself. In this way they are able to accept responsibility through British eyes, which makes their petition more effective, but not actually admit explicitly anything they have done is wrong.

As to removal the Maroons continue by asking to be moved to any other part of “his Majestys Dominions” so they might “obtain an opportunity of proving he Sincerity of their Repentance.” Removal, therefore, is not outright accepted by the Maroons. This petitions real goal was to keep the Jamaican Maroons on the island. The Maroons, however, were aware of the difficulties of their position and made use of the petition to also present an alternative if removal became inevitable. By staying within the empire the Maroons could maintain their connections to Britain and importantly to its legal code. This proved extremely beneficial later in Nova Scotia where the Maroon were able to continue their process of legal posturing through petition in order to secure transportation.

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22 Maroon Petition to Balcarres, 3.
23 Ibid.
to Sierra Leone. In order to exploit these legal channels, the Maroons needed to have established relationships and understandings of the working of the laws, both of which they possessed with the British. Not to mention a shared language. That is why they were “anxious…to prove themselves faithful subjects.”

The mention of their families serves as a reminder that this deportation was not just of fighting men but of an entire community. In fact, of the “568[Maroons], of whom only 167 were arms-bearing men, the remaining 401, being women, children and the aged.” A whole society was being removed then not just the warriors. The cause of deportation was the rebellion but the aftershocks expanded beyond the purely military. By including their families in the petition the Maroons reminded Balcarres of the cost of this removal and the fact that he was punishing women and children as well. That not all Maroons were armed and dangerous and that many needed protection. Protection became an even more important aspect later in the petitions sent from Nova Scotia.

The petition ends with the Maroons “humbly” asking for Balcarres to “take their Melancholy Situation into Consideration” and offer them “relief.” The Maroons style themselves as victims needing help from the British. In this sense, they are launching a propaganda campaign to make their cause sympathetic rather than dangerous. They are “melancholy” rather than “savage” in their own explanation. The British offer the solution to that sadness by offering “relief” from the fear of deportation. Never mind the messy reality that both parties realize the Maroons only face deportation because of rather duplicitous decisions by the Governor and Assembly of Jamaica. Both parties were aware of this but the Maroons were clever enough to avoid whining about the state of

24 Ibid.  
25 Campbell, Fighting Maroons, xii.  
26 Maroon Petition, in Campbell Fighting Maroons, 3.
their deportation. Instead they use legal channels to present the best case they can by making themselves sympathetic law abiders instead who were sorry for “offending” the British.

The petition is then signed by the Maroons to grant it legal status. The components of the signature are worth studying because they reveal the codependent nature of the Maroons and British relationship since the 1739 treaty. First, the Maroons names are Anglo suggesting that they understand the power of othering. Even beyond the petition itself by using Anglo names the Maroons were supplanting themselves into a British system of identity that included access to the law. They, at least on paper, became indistinguishable from any other “James Lawrence” or “John Simpson.” Second, the Maroons added their ranks alongside their marks as well. The ranks were also associated with the British army and may, in some cases, have been direct reflections of their military service to the British. Even if they were assumed titles rather than given the manner of organization was clearly built upon the British system. Just like the Anglo names the military ranks created the sense that the Maroons were just as deserving of attention as any other subject in the empire. In fact, the ranks make them even more valuable, if an empire’s concerns can be judged on such a value system than military service was essential. By including ranks the Maroons were showcasing their martial prowess as a people in the abstract but in the very literal sense were reminding the British of their role as slave captors and militia defending the island. The Maroons presented themselves in this petition as essential members of the empire that were indistinguishable, on paper at least, from any other British subject.27

The first petition failed to secure the freedom of the Maroons. Instead they were

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27 Ibid, 3-4.
left aboard the ships in the harbor bobbing with the sea in anticipation of their journey, but without knowing where that trip would lead them. This was because the British themselves were struggling to determine where the Maroons would be sent. Unwilling to sit idly by the Maroons once again petitioned on their own behalf. This time they went over Balcarres head and addressed their claims to the Duke of Portland, who had been Prime Minister in 1783 and in 1795 was Secretary of the Colonies. This petition had several overlaps with the first but was not entirely a repeat. In fact, there were some large changes worth mentioning. The most startling being the juxtaposition of offering military service but dropping their ranks in the signature section.

The petition starts less formally than the first because it doesn’t immediately draw attention to its nature. Instead the Maroons enact a subtle change by starting with the flowery language meant to flatter, and thus make more amiable, the Duke. While this flattery is obviously expected as discussed earlier its constant usage and primacy of place in this petition made it important. Even more relevant was the relationship of the parties involved. The Maroons were free, but black, and the Duke is not only white, but also, a titled noble. The power relations obviously demand such language but that’s what makes it so meaningful that the Maroons engage so easily and often in flattery. They were aware that humans, unlike laws, were not coded and set in place but movable. That humans have emotions like pride and desires and that through engaging in simple flattery and proper letter conduct the Maroons help their cause. Not just simply by buttering the Duke up but also by showing their understanding of the nature of petitions and British power relations. They are playing the part, acting the story the British expect, but not entirely of

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29 The first Petition begins “The Petition of the Sundry Maroons…” thus immediately establishing its legal relevance. Maroon Petition to Balcarres April 27, 1796, 3.
black to white relations as Fortin suggests but of Britons themselves. The Maroons are even more in the middle than Fortin realizes, they aren’t just sandwiched between black and white society they are actively moving from one to the other in order to facilitate their needs. By inhabiting the tropes of each race, or region, the Maroons are able to manipulate the audience of their petition to view them favorably.

To this end the petition begins with “May it please your Lordship” but the second part is even more important because the petition is being lodged on “behalf of ourselves and families.”30 This turn of phrase serves to engender gender expectations of the British into the petition. The only people who signed the first petition, and this one as well, were men. Thus, “ourselves” refers to the signers of the petition but broadly refers to all the men of fighting age in the Maroons. The leaders of the community and the leaders of the rebellion were linked in their marital status. Therefore, masculinity was key to their identity but some suggest that there was a larger degree of equality among their family norms than in Europe.31 Which makes it all the more important that the fighting men were mentioned first because it establishes their role as patriarchal and protective figures. Then the family was mentioned because as fighting men their greatest concern is the protection of their families. This invocation of traditional British values of the family was important because it once again makes the Maroons seem less different. They are united in their family identity. Even if this ordering was not a long thought out process it hints at the subconscious assumptions the Maroons have of British society and how to manipulate it in order to get their legal aims.

In fact, the Maroon petitions by and large avoid heavy legal language or calls to

30 Second Maroon Petition, May 10, 1796, 5.
31 Fortin, 13.
established precedents. The intricacy of the law itself is not what is really important to them. Rather, the way the law offers an avenue to acquire their aims make it a useful tool. Their appeal to law then is on the pragmatism that legal answers will help them where martial prowess failed them. The manipulation in the petitions then is not so much directly of the laws themselves but the people and society that made them. The Maroons are legal actors because they use petitions and the law to fight, or promote, their movement within the British empire. But the law is simply the manner of achieving this goal while the actual handling of the law is minute. It is by presenting themselves as capable and useful subjects, and even more so as subjects recognizable to the average Briton by things like language, names, ranks, and family values that the Maroons use petitions to promote themselves as legal actors.

The Maroons understand this idea of subjecthood very well too. The appeal is sent to the Duke of Portland, but as he was “representing our King his most Excellent Majesty George the Third.” In a way, the petition was then meant for King George III, or at least recognized him as the top of the imperial hierarchy the Maroons were appealing to. Critically and tellingly they refer to him as “our King” and thus situate their claim within this hierarchy instead of without it. They were not just an indigenous population in contact with the British petitioning for their concerns. They were much more, they were subjects, they were within the same framework as any other Briton who saw George III as “our King.” By maneuvering themselves into this hierarchy they unlocked the legal doors necessary to make their petition meaningful. By becoming subjects, they were forced to submit to certain aspects of the British ‘civilizing’ mission but also gained the rights of those subjects. In this way the Maroons continue their practice of spatially

32 Second Maroon Petition, May 10, 1796, 5.
maneuvering between different conceptions of identity. Wearing whatever hat best suited their purpose. As the rest of the petition demonstrate their current situation in Jamaica on the eve of deportation demanded they use flattery and posture themselves as British subjects in order to access the law for their needs.

Though only a few weeks separates the petitions on the ground the situation had changed dramatically. This is evident when the Maroons say “being sensible that our stay in this Island is impossible from the resentment shewn against us by the whites and people of colour.” The first petition had mentioned the idea of being settled in a different part of the empire in order to prove themselves worthy but still hoped this wouldn’t be necessary and that the Maroons could stay in Jamaica. The second petition sees this is an impossible desire. The “Legislature has declared it a Capital crime for us to reland in Jamaica” the Maroons lament. The Maroons identify why the legislature thought this necessary because everyone on the island wanted them gone. The Maroons ability to drift between the different societies proved to be their downfall in this case. The whites resented them because they rebelled and were seen as a danger to the stability of the institution of slavery in Jamaica. Meanwhile, ironically, slaves hated them because of their complicity in maintaining the very institution of slavery per the conditions of the 1739 treaty that saw the Maroons acting as slave hunters. Therefore, the Maroons recognized they were fighting a losing battle to delay their removal. But they didn’t surrender to their impending fate but continued to actively use legal channels to influence their fate as much as possible.

Unable to remain in Jamaica the Maroons pleaded for the Duke of Portland to

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33 Ibid, 5.
34 Ibid, 5.
“settle us in any Country under His Majestys Government.” This echoes their request made in the first petition but there it was a secondary plan while now it was their goal. It is worth thinking about why the Maroons were so desperate to stay within British rule when the British were the very ones deporting them. Especially at a time when Haiti was locked in a bitter war fought by slaves for their freedom from another European power. The answer lies in two considerations; first, the Maroons were not slaves and thus had no need to fight for their freedom. The rebellion they had just launched in 1795 was never about taking Jamaica over from the British it was about maintaining their sovereignty and privileged status as detailed in the 1739 treaty. The Maroons saw themselves as above all other blacks on the Island enslaved and free. Therefore moving to a country like Haiti, where the revolution had not yet succeeded, or any other place threatened their privileged status. Secondly, the Maroons had a century and a half of contact with the British and over fifty years had passed since the 1739 treaty. They were intimately familiar with their customs, language, military, culture, and law. The most pragmatic way to survive deportation as a community was to do so in a framework they understood and could manipulate. While no indication survives to suggest the Maroons were planning to petition for removal as soon as they arrived in Nova Scotia regardless of the weather or governor this action only became possible because the Maroons knew how to operate within the British empire. In order to protect themselves as much as possible as a community and their futures the Maroons saw staying inside the British empire as essential.

Just as the first petition meant to keep the Maroons in Jamaica but offered the

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alternative option of staying within the empire the second petition also offers another solution to the Maroons plight. Failing to stay within the empire the Maroons ask that the men be allowed to “serve His Majesty as Soldiers” while their “old Men and Women our Wives and Children…may receive such protection and support from Government as may enable them to live comfortably.”\textsuperscript{37} This request plays on the gender expectations of masculinity that sees men as being defined by their martial prowess. This soldiering is even more impressive because it is in service to the King and also a sacrifice so that the Maroons who can’t fight, the elderly and women and children, may live better lives.

The Maroons tie this idea of service, mentioned in the first petition as well, into military service and protection of the family. Service also has the function of legitimizing their place within the British system. The Maroons can only lay claim to British legal action if they can successfully portray themselves as subjects who are guaranteed by right access to the law. This was a difficult enough task given the color of their skin but not impossible. It is, however, made even more daunting by the fact that the reason for their deportation, and subsequent use of petitions, was due to their rebellion. The solution the Maroons find was when they say they will be soldiers to “defend and protect the same as dutyfull and loyal subjects.”\textsuperscript{38} They directly tie the concepts of loyalty and subjecthood to military service. Quite literally this means they see a direct link between being a subject and being a soldier. That in order to secure subjecthood one must be willing to serve as a soldier. By offering to do this the Maroons are positioning themselves to be understood as subjects. But not just regular subjects, loyal ones as well. Doubly important given the state of their recent rebellion. The Maroons masterfully recognize military service as a

\textsuperscript{37} Second Maroon Petition May 10, 1796, 5.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 5.
means to prove their loyalty. They transition the view of them as rebellious, and thus a military threat, into subjects, and a military advantage.

The Maroon petition concludes with them hoping for a quick reply, which highlights their urgent needs as they are literally on the ships awaiting deportation, and how this will give them “grateful satisfaction to know that our humble services are acceptable.”39 They highlight their precarious situation on the ground and the need for swift action in order to rescue them from some horrible fate. This reminds the reader, much like the mention of women and children, of the actual human cost of the deportation. It appeals to their sympathy and highlights the anxiety of the Maroons who can see the hourglass running low of sand. But even in that anxiety they remember, and intentionally so, to use stately language that recognizes the seriousness of the petition, and thus British law, as well as the status of the Duke of Portland in relation to the Maroons. The phrase “humble services” also has a flexible timeline that suggests a future and remembers a past. The future service is the military capabilities the Maroons offer to use in order to secure the comfort of their families. The past being all the evidence the British need to know that the Maroons have that martial ability as they first forced the British to treat with the in 1739 and then worked with them to capture runaway slaves and protect the Island until 1795. Thus, the word “services” is reminding the British of the value of the Maroons. They understand that the British might be moved by sympathy, and certainly make use of this, but at the end of the day the empire is pragmatic and expensive. For the Maroons to be worthy subjects they must be useful subjects. The Maroons define their use in their military service to the empire, past and future.

The only confusion in the petition to this end was that the Maroons didn’t sign

39 Ibid, 5.
with their ranks. It seems logical that in order to press the point home of their past and future utility as soldiers including British ranks they had acquired would only help. Campbell suggests that perhaps they were well known enough by this time to not need the ranks or their last names.\textsuperscript{40} But this is unsatisfactory for many reasons, mostly, because it contradicts their military prowess and their careful use of etiquette and flattery. A more likely explanation is the Maroon’s were straddling the need to press their ability to prove their loyalty through military service along with humbling themselves in front of the Duke of Portland. Avoiding using ranks that would remind him of their betrayal in their rebellion they offer military service as future proof of loyalty instead.

The Maroon petitions met with little reflection from Balcarres who was determined from the start to remove them. Several locations were discussed though and Nova Scotia may have been chosen due to the black loyalists being sent there after the American Revolution but also in response to the Maroon petitions.\textsuperscript{41} Nova Scotia, after all was well within the empire. So it was that nearly 600 Maroons were shipped, against their will, to Nova Scotia as punishment for their rebellion. It is impossible to escape the foil with other penal colonies that survived off the forced import of labor from various parts of the empire. What is remarkable about the Maroon removal then, is not so much that they were deported, but that they were not enslaved or even jailed and put under labor contracts upon arrival in Nova Scotia. So much more surprising given that they were blacks in a white empire. The best explanation lies in their long status of working with the British since the 1739 treaty. Then in the petitions they worked hard to show that even after rebelling they were loyal subjects. They were desperate to prove their worth.

\textsuperscript{40} Campbell, \textit{Fighting Maroons}, 6.
\textsuperscript{41} Lockett, \textit{Deportation}, 11.
once again and by doing so maintain their rights within the imperial framework. This crafty play by the Maroons distanced themselves from prisoners who were seen as a detriment to society and whose labor was forced as a condition of their penance. The Maroons flipped this and offered their labor as proof of their loyalty and thereby maintained their role as subjects of the empire who were deserving of rights. This posturing would prove crucial in the coming years in Nova Scotia where the Maroons once again took to petitions in order to affect their fate.

The Maroons arrived in Nova Scotia and were eagerly met by Governor Wentworth. He saw them as a happy challenge. A people to be guided by the civilizing principles of the British realm through education and religion.\footnote{Fortin, “Darkened Beyond Our Native Hues,” 18.} The Maroons were willing to comply to an extent in order to prove their loyalty but were not entirely willing to abandon their customs. Especially when it came to religion, only a few were willing to convert to Christianity, and they moved to a separate settlement at Bodyville.\footnote{John N. Grant, \textit{The Maroons of Nova Scotia} (Formac Publishing: Halifax, 2002), 67.} The petitions represent a legal channel accessed by Maroons operating within the British imperial system. The words they used had power and certainly generated images and arguments that proved useful for them in posturing for the ability to decide where they would live. But the petitions alone were not enough and life also was a reflection of their loyalty, the petitions therefore served at once as a promise of future loyalty and a reminder of past service. Thus, upon arrival in Nova Scotia the Maroons were settled close to Halifax and immediately set to work building defenses in case of French attack.\footnote{Grant, Maroons in Nova Scotia, 35-37.} The Maroons were able to make use of their greatest claim to relevance within the empire, their military prowess. They had offered to serve in their petitions sent while in
Jamaica and were quickly put to use, without the musket but still using the shovel as a tool to entrench their loyalty as subjects to the Crown.

Early on it seemed as if the move to Nova Scotia stood a chance of success. The Maroons were eager to prove themselves loyal subjects and the opportunity arose through military fortification projects. They were also accepting of many of Governor Wentworth’s early designs to “civilize” them. The situation quickly changed though, starting with the worst winter on record in Nova Scotia at the time.⁴⁵ This coupled with growing tension between the Governor and the Maroons led the Maroons to seek a solution. The one they came up with was once again the petition. A series of petitions were sent from the Maroons in the few years they were in Nova Scotia as they desperately sought relocation. Unlike the petitions in Jamaica they were not fighting to stay but to go. The Maroons had also learned from their failure in Jamaica and didn’t rely on the Governor to save them. They sent many petitions straight to England, often through General Walpole, in order to seek legal solutions to their issues from the highest court possible.

The Maroons realized after their failure in Jamaica that sending their petitions directly was not working well enough. To fix this they began to use white intermediaries in England, specifically General Walpole who was still smarting over the dishonor done to him by the Jamaican Assembly when they ignored his word and deported the Maroons. By using a high profile and well connected white politician as a spokesperson for their cause the Maroons were better able to advance their cause. In this way their petitions eventually made it to the House of Commons, the King’s Ministers, and through them likely the King himself. The Maroons were well aware they could not hope to be heard at

⁴⁵ Fortin, “Blackened Beyond Our Native Hues,” 17.
these levels without connections and were willing to enter into a sort of client-patron relationship with General Walpole in order to secure what was best for them. General Walpole for his side, not purely motivated by love for the Maroons, was a prideful man who saw an opportunity to further his personal glory by representing these people and restoring his word that was damaged by Balcarres and the Assembly’s betrayal.46

The Maroons too felt betrayed once in Nova Scotia because the climate, both of nature and man, was not to their liking. So it was that in April of 1797, not even a full year since their arrival in Nova Scotia, the Maroons were petitioning to General Walpole. They expressed their “confidence” in him and decried the “late unhappy war” and how they had surrendered to him on the promise of not just “sparing our Lives but our not being removed from the Country.”47 In this way they continued in their tradition of humbling themselves in their petitions in order to promote the importance of those they sought help from and show themselves as loyal subjects who knew their place. But, they did so with a barb this time, reminding Walpole that he had promised they would remain on the island. The petition was sent from Halifax, thousands of miles away from the comfort of the cockpits of Jamaica, where they had once lived. In this way the Maroons manipulate Walpole by extolling their confidence in him and then again by reminding him of his broken promise. They continue this double approach by soliciting his “goodness” and appealing to his power by saying they “doubt not its [the petition] success if aided by your kind interference.”48 They wanted the petition to be presented to “His Majesty’s Minister,” the lack of a name potentially suggesting Maroon ignorance of

47 Maroon Petition to General Walpole, April 1797 in Campbell, *Documentary History*, 55.
48 Ibid.
the actual person they needed to send the petition to.\textsuperscript{49} This highlights, rather than detracts, from Maroon intelligence in legal posturing. They were well aware of their limitations in reaching the necessary channels in the metropole and thus exploited Walpole as their agent in these matters.

Walpole was not a random choice either. He was the General who was responsible for ending the rebellion and most importantly conducting the peace negotiations. His secret promise was an important link between himself and the Maroons because it served as a point of betrayal to both of them. But what really made Walpole important to the Maroons was his position was seen as legitimate. He was the head field commander during operations when the rebellion ended in December 1795. He was in charge when the peace treaty was signed, it was ratified by Balcarres, but it was negotiated and agreed on between the Maroon leader Montague James and General Walpole. To the Maroons then, Walpole was not just any white representative who could help them he was one who held legitimacy in their eyes because of his role in the rebellion. Walpole, for his part refused the money awarded him by the assembly to buy a celebratory sword and resigned his position to return to London and seek political office he was so disgusted by their betrayal of his promise.\textsuperscript{50}

Again, appealing to him was a logical decision that had legitimate legal reasoning behind it. Hardly a white savoir of blacks, Walpole had his own diverse history in terms of treatment of blacks. He was a known opponent to certain abolitionist thinkers and had even suggested a plan to get the Maroons addicted to alcohol to make them useless.\textsuperscript{51} Walpole was clearly motivated by a deep seated resentment for his own personal

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{50} Campbell, Maroons of Jamaica, 237.  
\textsuperscript{51} Campbell, Maroons of Jamaica, 239.
treatment in Jamaica by the Governor and Assembly. To him, his honor, rather than the Maroons themselves were at stake. But the Maroons had little need to care about his motivations as they were desperate to push their cause through legal channels. While in the colonies they could directly access the government, as seen in their writing of petitions first to Governor Balcarres in Jamaica and then Wentworth in Nova Scotia, they didn’t have that access in the metropole. Walpole was their answer, and the two parties developed a mutually beneficial client-patron relationship. Walpole would restore his honor and the Maroons would have their petitions heard due to his political role in the metropole.

The Maroons had proved in Jamaica that they felt no allegiance to only one path for their petitions, in 1796 they had first directed their request to Balcarres and then failing to the Duke of Portland. Again in November of 1797, having already written Walpole and eager to get as much aid as possible, the Maroons sent a petition to the Duke of Portland. Opening with their standard tactic of elevating the person they were addressing while degrading themselves they express it was with “heartfelt distress we presume to trouble you.” They continue by calling themselves “Poor distressed Maroons” who were asking for “Your Grace to use your influence to endeavour” on their part. They use the flowery title of your Grace to elevate the Duke while describing themselves as poor and distressed. By creating such drastic foils, they position themselves as in need of help and only a respected, noble, white man can save them. In this regard they are playing on the racial tropes that Fortin identifies in his article. The racial aspect while clearly intentionally and intelligent was only one stratagem in the

52 Maroon Petition to Portland, 4 November, 1797, in Campbell, Documentary History, 60.
53 Ibid.
Maroon wheelhouse. It was their overall ability to manipulate the legal channels and find workarounds, like white representatives, when they can’t find direct access that eventually make the Maroon’s petitions successful. The petition goes on to cite the cruelty of living in such a cold place that “deprived some of us of existence.”

What really stands out about this petition though, separating it from previous examples, is the Maroons directly challenge the authority of other respected whites. In this case they directly attack Governor Wentworth saying that “whatever information that has been received” by him “is so far void of truth, that the very idea of it makes us shudder.” This is a dangerous, but calculated, move by the Maroons who typically acknowledge their own wrong doings. By standing up to the Governor the Maroons are insisting only their version of events was true. They were demanding the power to speak for themselves. That only Maroon voices could represent Maroon feelings. This very bold decree was immediately tempered by the Maroons asking Portland “most humbly most submissively” to help get them removed to a better climate. By ending the petition by reminding Portland they were humble and submissive the Maroons reinforce that they were still loyal subjects. They were demanding their own voice but still within an imperial framework not outside of it.

The Maroons found success in this use of white representatives and were able to address a petition to “His Majestys Ministers” sent August 12, 1797. This petition was very short and expressed many of the ideas expanded on in the petition to Portland sent in November. There was a chance this petition was sent to Portland as the one the Maroons asked Portland to present to the King’s Ministers. It uses the same official language

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55 Maroon Petition to Portland, 61.
56 Ibid, 61.
57 Ibid, 61.
calling themselves “Humble Petitioners” but removes much of the excess flowery statements of flattery. This could be due to the audience being the ministers and not an individual the Maroons are intimately familiar with. They were using short and bureaucratic procedure rather than personal flattery to position this letter. It, like the one to Portland, was bold though by claiming that Wentworth’s reports were “so far from the truth.” The Maroons, therefore, were not only making these claims in personal correspondence but at a government agent. They were not willing to back down and let the Governor speak for them but demanded their own voice was heard. Only by inserting themselves as their own spokesperson could their petitions be met seriously and successfully. This marked difference from their more docile attempts in Jamaica could help explain their success while in Nova Scotia. First, by better employing white agents as representatives for them in the metropole and then by demanding only their words could be accepted as evidence of their condition.

General Walpole also introduced a petition to the House of Commons on March 5, 1798 on behalf of the Maroons. This shows that he was also eager to perform his function within their relationship and took seriously his role as mediator of Maroon claims. The petition was even called into question by Secretary Dundas who challenged its authority by showing it was addressed to Walpole himself and not properly to the King or his ministers. Walpole quickly blamed this on Maroon “ignorance” and was able to convince the House to accept the legitimacy of the petition. This appeal to Maroon ignorance parallels the appeals the Maroons themselves make in many of their petitions. The irony being that far from ignorant the Maroons were using this trope of stupidity in

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58 Maroon Petition to His Majesty’s Ministers, in Campbell, Documentary History, 65.
59 Appendix, in Campbell, Documentary History, 263-264.
order to posture themselves as in need of help.

An undated petition addressed to the House of Commons could be this petition Walpole brought up on behalf of the Maroons. The petition opens as is customary with the Maroons asking the “Honorable the House of Commons of Great Britain” to listen to their “most humbly” presented petition. This petition though is longer than most previous ones and serves as brief chronology of the Maroons relations with Britain through petitions. The “wretched Petitioners are Maroon Exiles” and they admit that this is “just in some degree” but that they have suffered too much and have been represented to “blacken the Maroons beyond his native hue.” The Maroons thus follow their new strategy since arriving in Nova Scotia which is a combination of the humility they used in Jamaica but also a sternness in insisting on representing themselves and a willingness to challenge white British representations of them. Even their removal they acknowledge was just, in some ways, in order to prove their continued loyalty and acceptance of British law. After all, if they didn’t accept their deportation as legal how could they hope to use petitions as a method of legal posturing. It would have been far more difficult to directly challenge the legality of their removal in the face of their rebellion. Therefore, they accept it as just, some degree relaying their bitterness at Walpole’s promise that Balcarres ignored, in order to access British legal channels as proven loyal subjects.

The Maroons, then echoing Walpole’s comments when questioned by Dundas, point out their “ignorance” at addressing so “venerable, and so August a Body as the Commons of Great Britain.” By calling attention to their own ignorance the Maroons situate themselves as awkward members of the British legal system. People who have

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60 Maroon Petition to the House of Commons of Great Britain, in Campbell, Documentary History, 91.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
access to it, but don’t fully understand how to use it. This, no doubt, was the understanding already apparent to Britain’s in the metropole who saw the Maroons as the “wretched” people they eagerly represented themselves as. This was not ignorance on the Maroons part though but intelligence to first know their limits and second how to overcome them. The Maroons further promote the esteem in which they hold this august body by saying they understand that issues of “greater magnitude engross their Attention.” But even so the Maroons with “the profoundest respect and Submission” petition the House in order to “beg leave” to say that the Maroon will never “thrive where the Pine Apple does not.” Here the Maroons use a metaphor for the first time in order to convey in a more literary, and thus esteemed, style their inability to survive in Nova Scotia. They were desperate for removal and had been using different agents and petitions to achieve this goal and finally they have access to the House of Commons. Their use of Pine Apples then was not purely hyperbolic symbolism but a rational plea based on literary metaphor to express their desired home land. A home land they now saw as Africa, not Jamaica, and certainly not Nova Scotia.

Sierra Leone became the mutually beneficial object of the Maroons and British agent’s desires. It was a chartered colony in need of colonists. It had already received many of the Black loyalists from the Revolution but they were acting out. As the Ross Diary entry that started this paper proved the British were looking for a sort of police force to help calm the colony down. Recalling the maroon promise of loyalty through military might the British saw the Maroons as that force. The Maroons, for their part, were eager for warmer climate within the Empire and couldn’t object to Sierra Leone.

63 Ibid, 92.
64 Ibid, 92.
The British, no doubt, saw it, or at least presented it, as altruistic in their returning Blacks once enslaved to Africa. So Sierra Leone became the destination of Maroon removal but the very fact of their removal was still to be contested.\textsuperscript{65}

In order to drive the point home of their existence in Nova Scotia as unnatural they argued that “such Incongruities and such Antipathies do not exist either in the moral or Physical World.”\textsuperscript{66} Fortin is right to use this petition as a key bit of evidence in arguing for the Maroon use of racial tropes to posture their legal claims but fails to accept the other unnatural claim, the moral world.\textsuperscript{67} The Maroons have, since Jamaica, worked ideas of morality into their petitions. They have expressed sorrow at their revolt and devotion to proving their loyalty through military service. Morality to them is evident in the betrayal they felt about Walpole’s promise. Morality is there when they demand only they can speak for themselves as Governor Wentworth is presenting lies about their conditions and happiness. The Maroons clearly value the idea, as abstract as it can be taken here, of morality and believe the British House of Commons will as well. By appealing to this sense of moral justification the Maroons call upon the British to help the Maroons. And by earlier pleading their ignorance of the legal system and throughout their petitions begging humbly and calling themselves wretched the Maroons have positioned themselves as in need of British legal protection. The law in this sense was supposed to uphold the morality. Thus, the Maroon existence in Nova Scotia is immoral and must be corrected as well as unnatural as based on racial theory.

The Maroons further sell this idea of morality and its connection to law and justice by claiming they have sent this petition to the House of Commons because

\textsuperscript{65} Lockett, \textit{Deportation of the Maroons}, 12.
\textsuperscript{66} Maroon Petition to the House of Commons, 92.
\textsuperscript{67} Fortin, “Blackened Beyond Our Native Hue,” 5.
parliament is “the Seat, Fountain head, of Law, Equity, and Justice, whence they humbly trust soon to find Relief.” In this way the Maroons directly link their plea for removal to justice. The means of accomplishing this, law, for what could be more just than that? Much like when they reminded Walpole of his need to help them for failing to keep his promise the Maroons also remind the House of Commons of their duty to uphold justice through the law. The Maroons turn to another literary flourish to completely drive home their point claiming that their first wish is “Removal from Nova Scotia” to any place more “congenial to their natures” but failing this they prefer “Death in its most awful shapes” to having to live another day in what they later call the “Wilds of Nova Scotia.”

Thus, the Maroons are petitioning for moral justice as executed through the law or would rather die. In this way they fully throw their fate into the hands of the House of Commons to protect them. Protection, through legal posturing, being more effective than armed resistance that first got them into this situation. The 1795 rebellion in this light saw the Maroons become more, rather than less, invested in the British empire.

The Maroons change in tactics and abundance of petitions paid off when on August 3, 1800 some five hundred Maroons boarded the Asia for Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was eventually agreed upon as the destination to satisfy the Maroon need for warmer climate and the British need for military personal. Thus, militarism, a theme played on greatly by the Maroons in their petitions in Jamaica that had faded in their calls for justice in Nova Scotia resurfaced as a prime link between the Maroons and British. Ever since the 1739 treaty the Maroons relationship to the British had been defined in quasi-sovereign and militaristic terms. Ironically it was through military terms, or

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68 Maroon Petition to House of Commons, 92.
69 Ibid.
rebellion, this link was damaged. It was then through legal channels, also opened up by
the 1739 treaty, that the Maroons were able to navigate their situation and decide their
own fate. Playing many different cards at once the Maroon use of petitions was ranging
in many ways. Characterized in Jamaica mostly by appealing to military utility and the
idea of loyalty the Maroons attempted to negotiate first their staying in Jamaica and
failing that their staying in the empire. Failing to prevent deportation and quickly coming
to hate Nova Scotia for its weather and overbearing Governor, the Maroons adopted a
slightly different strategy. They appealed to a wider audience and fully endorsed using
white agents in London to promote their goals, namely the distressed General Walpole
who was seeking to honor his word. The Maroons also began to demand only their voice
could speak for their woes and went as far as calling the reports sent by Wentworth and
his agents downright lies. Finally, the Maroons maintained their appeals of loyalty to the
Crown as good subjects but abandoned the talk of military and family so central to their
Jamaican petitions. Instead, as Fortin deals with, they turned to racial stereotypes, but
also moral ones in order to make themselves look like “wretched petitioners” in need of
British protection. In this light the Maroons finally won their petitions and were removed
to Sierra Leone where they acted as a police force for colonial agents. Thus, the military
loyalty of the Maroons was once again on display as the two parties worked to exploit
each other as much as possible. In this light though the Maroons were not defenseless
subalterns totally taken advantage of by the British. Certainly the power structures were
not equal and people like Governor Balcarres moved quickly to exploit this fact. But the
Maroons were a fierce and proud people, but often renowned for this and their militaristic
traditions, they were also incredibly smart. Making use of legal channels opened up to
them through the 1739 treaty the Maroons adopted the role of loyal British subjects in order to manipulate the system and legally posture for their best outcome. In this way the Maroons exercised incredible agency within an Imperial framework that held all the cards against them.

These petitions are clearly thought out pieces of legal writing and must be understood as such. It would be a grave mistake to attribute any aspects to luck because the Maroons were well aware of how their words would resonate with a British audience. They were desperate in their desire to use legal channels to avoid deportation but were not foolish in how they mobilized these channels. They clearly and rationally presented their arguments in order to achieve the best possible outcome for themselves.
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Sic Semper Tyrannis: Catiline and Caesar in Early American Insults, Allusions, and The Whiskey Rebellion, 1789-1804.

The sun was just breaking on the dawn on July 11, 1804 when a single bullet ripped into Alexander Hamilton and ended his life. John Adams said at the time of the event that: “When Burr shot Hamilton it was not Brutus killing Caesar in the Senate—House, but it was killing him before he passed the Rubicon.”\(^{70}\) In Adam’s understanding Hamilton was Caesar reborn to terrorize the American Republic and Burr the hero who stopped him. An ironic interpretation from Adams, at least in Hamilton’s mind, where Burr was not simply a villain he was “an embryo Caesar.”\(^{71}\) Thus, the two men were cast in the same role, but for starkly different reasons, Hamilton for his love of a strong government and military and Burr for his populist leanings. This complicated scale of address, whereby two opposing members, so opposed in fact one killed the other, could be represented by the same figure is crucial to understanding the period.

That is a goal of this paper, to expand beyond just Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr and understand how Julius Caesar and his compatriot Catiline, a Roman who was despised even more than Caesar for his rebellion, operated in the American Republic in the long 1790s. The political discourse around these two figures has not received the needed attention in order to understand their significance to the period. The discourse around Caesar and Catiline was not merely reflective or philosophical ponderings about the past but bore actual political consequence. As Eran Shalev shows, Early Americans

\(^{70}\) Eran Shalev, *Rome Reborn on Western Shores: Historical Imagination and the Creation of the American Republic* (University Press of Virginia, 2009), 224.

were actively engaged in the reenactment of the classics. Therefore, classical modes of discourse surrounding Catiline and Caesar must, be taken seriously as allusions and as powerful political tools in the battle for the very survival of the Early American Republic. Reenactment here does not mean that Early Americans were literally putting on togas and wielding gladii in epic battles. Rather, the term is referring to the active engagement with the classics by Early Americans who did not see the classical past as a road map for what could happen, but saw their allusions to the classical world as offering real examples of the dangers of rebellion and ambition in the early republic. An example of this use of reenactment, as a form of extended classical allusion, was the Whiskey Rebellion that will serve as the primary case study of this paper in order to demonstrate how classical allusions to Caesar and Catiline were deployed by Early Americans as more than just insults, but also as warnings of the real consequences these figures had on Rome, and could have on Early America.

John Pocock’s seminal book the *Machiavellian Moment* traces the thread of Classical thought into the Renaissance and into Early America. In this way he sees republican thought through a progression but not in a straight line. He rejects the direct link between Roman ideas and Early American values arguing that the millenniums between them had seen these ideas filtered through several times. Starting with Florence and Machiavelli but continuing on with other English and French authors before settling in America. This masterful insight must be taken into account when grappling with how

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72 Shalev, *Rome Reborn*, 152. My use of reenactment here is not entirely in line with Shalev. I do agree with the term but in a literal sense of playing at the past rather than reliving it. I believe that Early Americans were consciously making the decision to ‘dress up’ figuratively in the togas of the classics (though Shalev shows how some actually went so far as to wear the toga literally). Going beyond just allusion then reenactment captures a more literal exchange between Roman models and Early American events.
Early Americans understood the classics. That being said their modes of thinking may have changed but they were often still reading the original source material. Therefore there was a direct link to Rome that served to inspire Early Americans to make use of Classical allusion.

This direct link is excellently captured by Caroline Winterer in her book, *The Culture of Classicism*. Her argument centers around the way that education, certainly another love shared with the ancients, played into creating an America obsessed with and steeped in the classics. Going so far as to say, “next to Christianity the central intellectual project in America before the late nineteenth century was classicism.” To Winterer then, it was not just that classics were interesting as an area of study but they were an ‘intellectual project’ of almost equal value to Christianity. No one would question the importance of religion to Early America anymore as the plethora of studies dedicated to it attest. And yet, classics remain an isolated mode of inquiry that is not perceived as lucrative in explaining Early America. The political borrowing from Rome and Greece aside, the actual discourse of classics in America was significant. From our modern vantage point it can be “difficult for us to grasp how dazzled Americans were by the ancient Greeks and Romans.” Early Americans were not just eager students of the classics but were avid participants in a reimagined classical discourse.

Eran Shalev makes such an argument in his book *Rome Reborn on Western Shores* where he contends that “we cannot properly understand the political choices and

76 Winterer, *The Culture of Classicism*, 1.
claims made by the American revolutionaries unless we realize that to them, in many ways, the world of the ancient Mediterranean was as vivid and recognizable as the world in which they were living.”

This builds upon the revolutionary argument of his book that sees Early Americans operating within a “distinct mode of historical thought” that saw them living amongst the classics. In essence, Early Americans did not just use classics as allusions but as a way to reenact history. A way for them to engage with history, and in the process make it, was to actively engage in classical discourse. That way, like a phoenix, Rome was reborn in America. It was not just rethought, as Shalev is deliberate in his choice of word. He sees America as literally engaged in the conversations of classics because he argues their mode of historical analysis was actively engaged with the past.

This provocative idea is an important tool to comprehend why classics matter beyond simple allusion. Shalev himself does an excellent job showing the importance of pseudonyms. And while many authors have engaged with the sources explored below, they have failed to fully consider the possibility that the actual use of insults was not merely an insult. Rather, early American politicians deployed these terms in ways that expressed legitimate anguish over the future of the American Republic. This paper follows upon these impressive works, especially on Shalev’s notion of reenactment as a theoretical frame, on classics in America to show how the failure of Rome was not just an allusion but a legitimate fear of Early Americans. Where many authors have looked at classics as a form of high political influence I am concerned with classics as a form of personal or low political influence. By this I do not mean the actual influence was

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77 Shalev, Rome Reborn, 2.
78 Shalev, Rome Reborn, 2.
lessened. The very nature of politics considered are separate. In this case high political
refers to examples of republican values and intellectual theory around classical models.
The sort of discourse only discussed amongst the hallowed Founders. While low or
personal political discourse on the classics here is about the use of Caesar and Catiline as
modes of comparison with Early Americans, low in their nature as insults, but
nevertheless highly important in their effect.

The names, Catiline and Caesar, were symbolic but that mode of analysis alone strips much of the meaning from them. These names were imbued with power; they were not just comparisons but also warnings. To label someone a Caesar or a Catiline was therefore much more charged than to throw an insult away on a classical illusion. To Early Americans the classics were not merely a thought experiment but a direct historical example. Thus, the very fears and dangers that surrounded Catiline and Caesar in Rome were brought to life in the 1790s. In order to understand this period then, Caesar and Catiline must be rescued from being thought of as purely caricatures of evil that held no rhetorical power beyond an insult. Rather, these names were used in calculated terms to present a specific attack upon someone that was not merely an insult but a warning. Those called Catiline and Caesar were not simply identified as a tyrant, ambitious, or a traitor in name but in practice. These insults were imbued with meaning and that meaning must be restored to fully understand the Whiskey Rebellion.

Between the two, Caesar was by far the more complicated character in the eyes of Early Americans. Pocock said of Catiline that he was “a figure one shade darker than Caesar’s on the spectrum of republican demonology.”79 So what made Catiline worse than Caesar? Caesar after all brought about the end of the entire Roman Republic. The

grandest model of virtue and good government that Early Americans had was destroyed not by Catiline but by Caesar. The reason Pocock could claim Caesar was only the second worst Roman then leans on the representation of the two figures in ancient sources. Caesar wrote his own histories of both his campaign in Gaul and the ensuing Civil War. His name was also, to some degree, rescued by the fact his adopted son Octavian won the Civil War that broke out after his death.

Caesar as a name then was reflective of Caesar as a man who lived a full life. Thus, Caesar was a fully embodied life that transcended any singular event. No doubt the Civil War was his defining trait and his dictatorship and subsequent assassination the story most associated with him but he was also much more. Above all this complicated understanding could manifest in military achievements. Something that Early Americans were not sure of how to deal with. Was it appropriate to glorify as a general a man who was also the death of the Republic, especially when considered it was his military abilities themselves that made his destruction of the Republic possible to begin with?

Alexander Hamilton, for example, mockingly acknowledged that many thought the American George Clinton was as “skilled as Caesar” in war but this was “this is mere rant and romance.”

The derision in this comment was not at Caesar but at his comparison to Clinton. In fact, by calling the comparison ‘rant and romance’ Hamilton was endorsing the skill of Caesar. This skill was accepted; it was the translation of that skill to Clinton that was questioned. Caesar, therefore, was not always an insult. In this way Caesar was a complicated character to Early Americans who could be detested and

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admired by the same person for different ends.

Catiline, unlike Caesar, had no voice of his own. The only surviving contemporary sources of his life were from Cicero, the consul who stopped his conspiracy, and Sallust, the historian, who saw corruption as the reason for the fall of the Republic. Thus, both had reason to be overly harsh critics of Catiline. He, therefore was the greater evil because unlike Caesar he was never given the breath to live. He was flattened on the page as a caricature of evil itself. Alive only in the moment of his death Catiline was not a life but an event, his conspiracy that threatened to destroy the Roman Republic. Catiline was from an ancient Roman aristocratic household but had fallen on tough economic and political times. Deeply in debt and failing to secure the consulship, the highest political office in Republican Rome, he helped organize an insurrection of the common sort predicated on the promise to cancel debts. But even as such his name cannot be easily overlooked as a simple insult. Drawing comparison with Catiline was to draw comparison with his treachery and was not just an insult but a warning.

A warning that was all too real in 1794 when rebellion broke out in Pennsylvania over a whiskey tax. The tax had been proposed and eventually passed in 1791 by Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton was a staunch federalist who saw the fate of the republic as dependent on the power of the federal government. He understood that money was necessary to the success of any government and that taxation was a key method of acquiring capital. It was never a popular tax, not that many were, but especially in a new Republic still celebrating its success over the British and their hated taxation. Yet it was a lucrative tax, and Hamilton needed it so he was willing to

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81 Richard, *Greeks and Romans*, 139.
amend, but not repeal it, when it came under attack. The events surrounding what became the Whiskey Rebellion offer an insight into the political value of classics on this lower or personal political level. The rebellion itself has been divorced from classical interpretations, which must be restored because Early Americans understood and discussed the rebellion through classical discourse. Prominent historians like Thomas Slaughter have done excellent work on the Whiskey Rebellion that highlight the frontier and the “inter-regional confrontation” that defined it. While Slaughter makes a compelling argument for the Whiskey Rebellion as an important event that has to be understood in its place and time, he fails to evaluate the role of classics in the rebellion. Other historians like James Kirby Martin argue for the role of class conflict in the dispute. Seeing it as a rebellion that pitted “backcountry farmers” against “Federalist leaders.” The rhetoric around the insurrection was important because, as has been established, the very framework that Early Americans operated in was through a classical lens. The interpretative power of the event then cannot be understood without considering the comparisons drawn with Caesar and Catiline.

When a mob 700 strong and burning with rage at the whiskey tax marched on tax collector John Neville’s home on July 17, 1794, demanding his resignation, they sparked

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83 Slaughter, Whiskey Rebellion, 4. He has also shown in a separate chapter from the year before his book how the rebellion has traditionally been divided into two camps. The first, friends of liberty by which he means those who see the rebels as justified in their desire to resist unfair taxation. The second being friends of order who tend to side with the government and its need to maintain law and order. This binary simplifies the narrative which Slaughter tries to localize and thus complicate in his book. Thomas P. Slaughter, “The Friends of Liberty, the Friends of Order, and the Whiskey Rebellion: A Historiographical Essay,” in The Whiskey Rebellion: Past and Present Perspectives, ed. Steven R. Boyd (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), 9-10.
85 Shalev’s conception of time and history is guiding me here.
a full blown insurrection that would see almost 13,000 militia respond under George Washington. This attack was not a spontaneous event, in fact a smaller mob had attacked Neville’s home just the day before to no avail. But the roots of this conflict can be traced back to the 1791 tax Hamilton put into place. If one wishes, this start date itself could be pushed further back to the American Revolution and the desire to avoid unregulated and unwarranted taxes. An interpretation never before attempted is pushing it back all the way to 63 BC. While, on a literal sense this is not only unnecessary it risks completely missing the historical context of the Whiskey Rebellion itself, it is worth articulating. Not because it should be done, but because the events of 63 BC were being used to frame the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion by contemporaries. Thus, in order to fully comprehend the Whiskey Rebellion, the classical framework that was so natural to Early Americans must be exposed and understood. While there is no evidence that this insurrection was inspired by the ghost of Catiline it would quickly come to be seen in this light by some. Catiline had launched a popular uprising in Rome that had threatened the very fabric of the republic in 63 BC. He was stopped by one of the Consuls, Cicero, someone else of considerable note from the period. A foil to Catiline and so much more, Cicero was a hero in Early America. Catiline was no hero, he was a traitor both to his class and his people. That is why he was worse than Caesar as an insult in Pocock’s eyes. But it was not just about degrees it was also about categories of analysis as Catiline led a populist uprising against debt. The Whiskey Rebellion was seen as a popular uprising about a tax. The comparison was unmissable and Hamilton pounced on it.

Writing under the pseudonym of “Tully” in the Daily Advertiser on August 28, 1794, Hamilton took aim at the insurrection. First he argued, “it would not be difficult to

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86 Slaughter, Whiskey Rebellion, 3.
demonstrate, that a large and well organized Republic can scarcely lose its liberty from any other cause than that of anarchy.”^87 The insurrection then was threatening anarchy because they were ignoring the law by refusing to pay the tax. Hamilton had not mentioned Catiline or Caesar yet, but the implication was there, lurking in the idea that anarchy was the only legitimate threat to a successful republic. This warning was doing double duty though because while Hamilton remonstrated the protesters he also assuaged the fears of those who saw the American Republic in jeopardy. The Republic was only in danger, as Hamilton argued, because of the internal division created by those who resisted the law. If order was preserved, and the law respected then the dangers that knocked at the door of young America would vanish. For respecting the law was the “sustaining energy of a free government.”^88 Only through the law could freedom reign. This comment was again made all the more powerful within the classical discourse it was framed within. For once the law was broken and anarchy reigned freedom was lost.

Hamilton continued his attack with the bold declaration that “such a resistance [i.e. The Whiskey Rebellion] is treason against society, against liberty, against every thing that ought to be dear to a free, enlightened and prudent people.”^89 Hamilton was building up to his finale like a musician hitting the crescendo. He explicitly called the rebels traitors whose actions were antithesis to those of enlightened and free men. Again,

the letter was published on August, 28, 1794, roughly six weeks after the initial violent outbreak at John Neville’s home. The situation was tense, with the Supreme Court having officially declared a state of rebellion in Pennsylvania on August, 4 1794. Thus, when Hamilton was calling these actions treasonous he was not being purely rhetorical.

The entire letter is put into context by the final line, the parting shot by Hamilton who said: “to the plausible but hollow harangues of such conspirators, ye cannot fail to reply, How long, ye Catilines, will you abuse our patience.” It is only once this line was delivered that the rest of the letter comes into clear focus. Hamilton was not loosely calling them rebels or traitors but was operating within a specific classical framework – a framework that perfectly drew comparison between the Pennsylvanian rebels and Catiline. In fact, he was literally drawing on this classical tradition as he was paraphrasing a quote from Cicero in his orations against Catiline. Cicero was the hero who stopped Catiline in the eyes of Early Americans. Thus, Cicero was meant to be exemplified while Catiline was meant to be abhorred.

Cicero was not just a model, just as a Catiline was not just an insult, he was a promise of republican values. By summoning his image, Hamilton was not just positioning the rebels as Catiline, he was taking the role of Cicero. He was the solution to the Rebellion, and like Cicero it was only through quick, decisive, and overwhelming military force that this would be achieved. All the evidence of this juxtaposed relationship was in the pseudonym “Tully” which was a nickname for Marcus Tullius

90 Slaughter, Whiskey Rebellion, 196.
92 Cicero, Against Catiline, 1.1 These speeches were created by Cicero in order to defend his actions during the Catiline Conspiracy against his political detractors, especially given his unprecedented legal action to arrest and execute without trial other conspirators.
Cicero. The rhetoric of Catiline, therefore, was taken beyond the purely high political. The rebels and Hamilton were transformed through the currency of allusion into an ancient battle. A battle that already had a winner, Cicero, and a loser, Catiline. Hamilton was very aware of this when situating himself as Cicero, even going so far as to quote him as he cast the doomed rebels as Catiline.

Yet this connection should not be seen as inherent or inevitable. Thus far, it has been overlooked by historians of the Whiskey Rebellion. Rather, this connection is only obvious, and thus powerful, within the context of Early American frameworks that were built upon understandings of the classics. The very real points of comparison between Catiline and these modern rebels holds no significance outside of the realm of discourse that existed and within which Hamilton operated.

A discourse that was centered around their education as classics was part of what Thomas Bender called “civic culture” that permeated beyond formal education to every aspect of life.\(^\text{93}\) In this way, it was not the collegiate educated that could grapple with and understand classics. That being said, the founding generation was well educated in the classics. Perhaps then it was only through reading the ancient authors that this framework was created. As historian, Carl Richard puts it, “they [the Founders] accepted the accuracy of these select sources as an article of faith and remained largely oblivious to the ancient historians’ aristocratic and other biases.”\(^\text{94}\) In this sense the authors were trusted and their history respected. But what does this tell us about who Hamilton was speaking to when he called poor frontier woodsmen Catiline?

Without a doubt to be steeped in the classics required time and literacy. But

\(^{93}\) Winterer, *Culture of Classicism*, 15.
Catiline, and especially Caesar, were not just any classical figures, they were two of the most famous, or infamous, that ever lived. Their stories must have been widely known. As one magazine claimed in 1793, “who knows not that the quarrels of Sylla [Sulla] and Marius, Pompey and Caesar?” These stories were not just the purview of the classically educated. There were only three thousand college graduates out of a population of two and a half million during the period but these college graduates were well placed. Over half the men who attended the Constitution Convention of 1787 had attended college. While these people were certainly well educated in the classics it should not be assumed that only they held knowledge about Rome. These stories were not just for the high political minds but resonated on deeper levels. While class and regional differences cannot be discounted, the very real notion of classics as a worldview for Early Americans, also cannot be thrown out.

To return then to Hamilton calling the rebels ‘ye Catilines’ he was not just throwing away a reference as a literary flourish. He was drawing a direct and easily recognizable comparison with Catiline’s conspiracy. These rebels were thus transformed from a rabble of Pennsylvanians upset over a whiskey tax and recast as the very mob that threatened to destroy the glory of Rome. The comparison then was not just in allusion but a reality. These men were not a perceived threat they were a literal threat. Hamilton was successful in an extraordinary way as well because he collapsed the entirety of the rebellion into a single person. The Whiskey Rebellion, so often seen as a class conflict by historians, was transformed then because it was no longer a faceless mob. It was Catiline.

95 Political.: MISERY THE COMPANION OF EMPIRE. The Massachusetts Magazine; or, Monthly Museum. Containing the Literature, History, Politics, Arts, Manners & Amusements of the Age (1790-1796); Boston 5.8 (Aug 1793): 478.
96 Winterer, Culture of Classicism, 16-17.
unlike a man for man comparison though it was the entire rebellion dressed as Catiline. In this way Hamilton used the concept of reenactment that Shalev points to in his work. Catiline then, was no longer a word, a name, but an entire historical drama. He was the event and the event was apocalyptic in its potential consequence. This was certainly how the Romans, like Cicero saw it when they responded, and certainly how Hamilton and other Federalists saw it.

Hamilton wondered how long ‘will you abuse our patience’ because the government under Washington was committed to “a peaceful solution” and would not begin serious military operations until October. This letter then, was after the initial outbreak of armed insurrection but before a significant government response. In this light Hamilton was evoking Catiline at the rebels but also to his own government. By comparing the rebels to Catiline he stripped them of being an unorganized rabble of upset frontiersmen who just hated unwanted taxation, like so many Americans had in 1776. Recast as Catiline they were treacherous conspirators who were not an idle threat but a serious one. Hamilton was not just insulting these rebels then but was aiming at evoking a specific reaction. He was playing on the fears of all Americans, across political parties, whose “common denominator was the fear of conspiracy.”

This irony was not lost on his political opponents who took the opportunity to attack him as well. By the end of October Washington had lost interest in leading the expedition himself. He left Hamilton behind as leader, along with Virginia Governor Henry Lee. A man Hamilton once declared “an officer of great capacity” but was worried

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98 Richard, *Greeks and Romans*, 160.
that he had a “little spice of The Julius Caesar.” Here he was surely referencing the
dangerous ambition associated with Caesar who toppled the Roman Republic through his
own lust for power. Caesar was a complicated figure to evoke in a military setting then
because he could be a compliment, a great general, but also his ambition as a general was
seen as a constant danger. With these two men in charge of the militia the Republican
Press was quick to lambast them.

One detractor questioned Hamilton if he was leading the army “not for the
promotion of the country’s prosperity, but the advancement of his private interests.”

This attack, while not directly using classical imagery certainly plays on the same
themes. A suggestion that is not just wild speculation, but fits with the classical education
of Early America. Even without saying Caesar or Catiline this author calls Hamilton’s
love for military glory and his own ambition into question. It was an easy link then for
Hamilton to be seen as Caesar or Catiline himself. Even without the use of the names.
From the beginning “Hamilton… made public his support for strong military measures to
 crush the rebels.” In fact, the names themselves were the insult, it was everything they
represented that proved so dangerous beyond just a cheap insult. This linkage of Caesar
and Catiline with greed, ambition, and military power then would have been easily made
by Early Americans. So that it could be understood by the reader without even being fully
articulated by the writer. In this way Hamilton was portrayed as possessing similar traits

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to those he detested in the rebels he labeled Catiline.

About the only thing that both sides of the political aisle could agree on was that “may every Catiline meet a watchful Cicero, and every Caesar a determined Brutus.” This was part of a toast given on Washington’s birthday in 1795, just a year after the Rebellion was put down. The sentiment was universal in Early America, the lines clearly drawn with Cicero and Brutus as the heroes and Catiline and Caesar the villains. The point of contention was over who would successfully embody whom? The fact that Hamilton was called Caesar by Adams upon his death, and seen as an ambitious military man during the Whiskey rebellion did not stop him from casting himself as Cicero defending the republic from the destructive Catiline. The Roman figures themselves were well developed tropes but were also well worn. Either intentionally, as Cicero was, or forced on like Catiline, different Americans were constantly using these names to represent personal or low politics that were easily translatable to everyone in Early America. In many ways the political battle to determine who would be America’s Cicero and who America’s Catiline defined, albeit in a simplified form, the political struggles of the Early Republic.

Hamilton, however, was not alone in characterizing the rebellion akin to Catilines some nineteen hundred years before. Writing in January 1795 in the *Gazette of the United States* an unnamed author attacked Robert Mickle, the secretary of the Republican Society of Baltimore. While the insurrection started in Pennsylvania it spread into Maryland by August of 1794. This letter was written only months after the insurrection started.

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had spread, but it was also written after the rebellion had failed, as it had by Christmas 1794.⁹⁴ So it was that months latter writing only as “One of the People” Robert Mickle was addressed.⁹⁵ The attack begins with a classical allusion, with “downcast looks, and humble supplicating voice of Catiline, when attacked in the Senate by Cicero, you throw yourselves upon the people and claim their protection.”⁹⁶ This was in reference to when Cicero, the Roman Consul, ousted Catiline in the Senate. Catiline rejected the charge of conspiracy placed against him and defended his honor. Cicero was eventually proven correct and Catiline was forced to leave the city for his safety and took command of his army.

It was easy to see the personal insults being cast on Mickle through comparison to Catiline. On a surface level he was being called deceitful, cowardly, and worst of all treacherous. But those words could be used directly, rather, the author deemed it worthwhile to directly link him to Catiline. These characteristics were amplified by comparison. The old rule for writing held, show don’t tell. By linking Mickle with Catiline he was not just calling him a coward or traitor he was demonstrating exactly how he was a traitor and exactly what the consequences of that treachery could be.

The concerned citizen does not stop there but continues saying, “like Bradford in the Insurrection, would you have fled your country had you not more than Catiline’s

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impudence and Caesar’s ambition.” Again, Catiline was brought up and this time he was connected with Caesar. Mickle was accused of his cowardice being only outweighed by his arrogance and ambition. While these traits were dangerous on their own by attaching each to an ancient villain the author goes beyond just implying the Mickle was ‘impudent’ or ‘ambitious’ and actually directly ties his actions to their historical consequences. Ambition, to early Americans was a massive charge. “Most of the founders attribute the downfall of the Roman republic to ambitious individuals like Caesar,” argues Richard. Thus, the simple insult of cowardness was overshadowed by the historic association of ambition and arrogance directly linked to Catiline and Caesar. The very republic was in danger because of actions by men like Mickle. They were not just random cogs, not just rabble, they were the engineers of the destruction of the American Republic as Caesar and Catiline had been for Rome.

The letter concluded with an ultimatum of sorts beseeching Mickle to “amend your ways” “before it was too late.” This author, like Hamilton, and other Early Americans did not use classics lightly as cheap insults but as historic examples with real world consequences that could be reborn in America and spell its doom. The rebellion was over, but if traitors, as this citizen saw Mickle, maintained their wicked ways like Catiline they still threatened the Republic. They took these threats seriously, and marked them with classical allusions as such. By comparing the rebellion to Catiline the author also hinted at how it was doomed to failure, and it had failed, thus it was Catiline reborn.

Caesar was successful in his civil war but was then assassinated, but then his adopted son gave birth to the Roman Empire. Caesar was in many ways a success story in all the worst ways to Early Americans. He managed to destroy the republic. Catiline, however, was a failure. His rebellion was crushed by Cicero and the government and the Republic endured, for another thirty years. Thus, by comparing rebels, or suspected rebels, with Catiline, Hamilton and this author also highlighted the inevitable failure of the rebellion. In this way the use of Catiline or Caesar as insults operated on two levels, at the surface they represented ideas like ambition, cowardice, and vice but on a deeper and more meaningful level they represented history, consequence and the very real fear of anarchy and the failure of the American Republic.

The next month “One of the People” returned to address Mickle once more. The fact he signed so simply was important in of itself. It denoted an understanding that this was not a personal insult but a concern of a good American citizen against one who would betray the country. It also suggested that anyone could understand the fears he had. That the classical allusions he was making were not matters of high politics, of deep political thought on republican values, but were personal stories that permeated deeply throughout society. This personal politics, or low politics, made his allusion powerful. Catiline was not a random choice, he was a universal example in Early America. One that any “one of the people” could comprehend and use as political currency. In the January letter he even quotes part of Sallust, the historian who wrote the Catiline War. He claims after the quote that “every body has read in Sallust” the story of Catiline.110 The author, in a widely disseminated and read newspaper, then expected every reader to be intimately

familiar with Sallust. Not an arbitrary suggestion either as historian Julie Hedgepeth Williams noted that “Americans of all classes and rank” could be literate. But be including the lines, the author suggests, in fact, not everyone had literally read Sallust but that they, nevertheless, knew the story anyways. This widespread knowledge of classics was not abnormal for the time, then, but expected.

In the February edition he once again leveled the charge of Catiline at Mickle, “You carry your impudence so far, as to claim a merit in that some of your members joined the army of the president. After the defeat of Catiline, many of his friends in the city joined the government.” Once again Catiline operates doubly in this statement, first as a character reference and second as a historic lesson. What was so interesting about this statement was the potential for the implication of Caesar as among ‘his friends.’ At the time of the conspiracy Caesar was not the political or military titan he would become. The first triumvirate didn’t form until 60 BC and it was only in the 50s that Caesar really rose to dominance in Rome. In fact, it was shocking to many Romans when Caesar won the civil war against Pompey. The suggestion of Caesar is powerful in this February article given the nature of the failed rebellion. Mickle is attempting to placate his detractors by showing he worked with the government not against it but this concerned citizen saw his defense as flimsy. For even Catiline’s friends turned their back on him in his failure.

When Catiline was in the process of launching his revolt, Caesar was still a rising politician without the support of Pompey and Crassus and he had incurred massive debts.

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111 Julie Hedgepeth Williams, The Significance of the Printed Word: Colonists’ Thoughts on the Role of the Press (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 9.
Because of the promise to cancel debt by Catiline, charges of conspiracy were also addressed to Caesar, but no evidence was ever found and he didn’t actively partake in the rebellion once Catiline led his army on Rome. Whether Caesar’s political enemies were just taking advantage of the opportunity to attack him or there was something more substantial to their claim could not be proven at the time. It, however, seems unlikely Caesar would have been involved in such a plot, for his political career was still young and promising unlike Catilines. This background though opens the possibility that among the many ‘friends’ of Catiline who returned to the government fold that Mickle is being compared to one could be Caesar. In this way the author discredits these men as not just past traitors but also future ones. This idea of being a future traitor was incredibly powerful because it showed how even after the failure of the rebellion the fear that inspired Hamilton to call the rebels Catiline remained. Even in defeat the rebels and their supporters were Catiline’s and Caesars who threatened the stability of the American Republic.

It is worth noting the power of omission, then as well in dealing with classical allusions. They formed a strong bond linking the past Romans with the current Americans, and thus were only useful so far as the structure of classical understanding in Early America allowed them. Beyond the implication of Caesar in the Catiline Conspiracy, which was never directly stated but potentially hinted at, two important omissions from the ancient story existed when Early Americans talked about Catiline.

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Sallust, *Catiline War*, 49. Sallust himself dismissed these accusations as “false accusations.” That being said Sallust had a soft spot for Caesar after having served as one of his lieutenants. Sallust had served Caesar for years when he was appointed governor of a province in North Africa where he quickly used his status to extort his subjects. The Catiline War was most likely written after Caesar’s death which is interesting because it clearly articulates Sallust belief in the decline of Rome due to corruption, something that Early Americans were quick to pick up on. Less talked about is the irony of this position given his time as governor and his love for his former patron Julius Caesar.
The first was that Catiline died in battle, a noble trait by Roman standards. In fact, Sallust even compliments his death turning his treachery in life into nobility in death.\textsuperscript{114} He acted uncharacteristically in life but in a sense redeemed himself by dying properly. This was never mentioned by Early Americans who saw Catiline as the Republic’s great enemy. While an argument could be made that death was still a noble concept in the eighteenth century, the story of Nathan Hale captures this sentiment, Catiline’s death was not noble because he was a traitor.\textsuperscript{115} There was no room for a complicated view of his treachery to Early Americans his conspiracy was simplified to a binary of just and unjust and Catiline was firmly in the latter.

This binary helps explain as well the second great omission from the story, that of Cicero. Not Cicero the hero, but Cicero the law breaker, the tyrant if you will. Cicero was Consul during the conspiracy and took extraordinary actions to prevent the destruction of the Republic. For this most Americans idolized him as a beacon of what true Republican virtue was supposed to look like. The ancient story, however, is more complicated, Cicero did defeat the rebellion but in the process he arrested and executed several conspirators without trial. He broke Roman custom and stretched Roman law, all in the name of the Republic according to Cicero. Interestingly enough it was Julius Caesar who was most opposed to the dire actions taken by Cicero and suggested something more akin to house arrest for the traitors, a novel idea at the time, instead of execution. This more complicated narrative whereby Cicero bends, if not breaks, the law and Caesar defends it didn’t fit into the linear story of Rome that Early Americans had. They had constructed a simple Rome that had heroes and villains. While Caesar, through his pure majesty as a

\textsuperscript{114} Sallust, \textit{Catiline War}, 60.7-61.1
\textsuperscript{115} Who it should be noted was paraphrasing Addison’s Cato with his dying words.
character and abilities as a general, managed to conjure up something of a complicated life in the eyes of Early Americans he was still not much more than a typecast villain. He could be used as a compliment, but only under the right circumstances. Catiline and Cicero though were two opposing points on a binary, the former was evil and the latter a hero. Early Americans had read Sallust, and Cicero, whose speeches against Catiline were really propaganda, attempting to defend his drastic actions. They had the knowledge necessary to come to more complex conclusions about the classics but as Shalev noted their unique perspective of history made it easier to see the Roman world simply. And in this simplicity they found fear of rebellion, a fear they shared all too well.

The Whiskey Rebellion then was redressed if not literally in togas, then mentally it was wrapped in them. It occupied one leg in Rome and one in Early America, straddling the two temporally distant but ideological linked polities. The comparison to Catiline, and Caesar, were not simple insults but historical warnings that carried deeper meanings that demand further exploration in order to understand the event. The uprising has often been seen as class driven, creating a rift between aristocrats and the common frontiersman. This narrative has made it difficult for classics to be used as a mode of analysis for understanding the rebellion. It, however, was understood by many Early Americans in distinctly classical terms. While the narrative offered is skeletal in its details and fails to actually outline the event of the Whiskey Rebellion in specific detail what it does, or hopes to do, is show how the entire event can be restructured in historic analysis as one massive classical allusion that was imbued with meaning through the discursive process of comparison with Catiline and Caesar. It was no longer an isolated rebellion in the frontier of America, it was Catiline at the gates of Rome. This classical
narrative, while not the only available and not the only necessary, has been overlooked and is important to conceptualizing how Early Americans conceived of and thought about their world.

The two primary pieces of evidence for this paper are colonial newspapers and letters within the Founders online archive. This limited study has some serious faults, especially in limiting the purview of who can be talked about to almost exclusively literate white men. And not just any literate white men but the Founders, as posterity knows them, as problematic and happily Roman as that may be. Certain figures, like Alexander Hamilton appear disproportionally. This is mostly due to his enormous influence in the 1790s and the fact that he was so in the public spotlight during the decade, especially concerning the Whiskey Rebellion as he proposed the tax in 1791 and led the military expedition in the fall of 1794. Other Early Americans, however, were also engaged in the use of classical insults and allusions during this period. They took to newspapers just as Hamilton did to attack their enemies and express real concerns over the fate of the Early American Republic. This is not just a story of a Founder, or the Founders then, but of Early Americans in full.

Caesar, did not die at the foot of Pompey’s statue in 44 BC. He also did not die in the sunlight of New Jersey in 1804 with Hamilton. Rather he lived on, bodiless but no less impactful. In fact, he lives on as just last year a classics professor, Philip Freeman, who published a popular history of Caesar wrote an article titled “Rome had Caesar, America has Trump. The People Were and Are Desperate.” He captures a sentiment that Early Americans would have found baffling when “Caesar crossed the Rubicon River and
took over the state as dictator for life, the crowds cheered and welcomed him.\textsuperscript{116} Caesar was complicated and his representation in Rome was not the concern of this paper. But his classical story was not linear and even if he was vilified in Early America he was still read, he was still begrudgingly admired for his leadership and martial prowess. Caesar found a way, even among the fears of Early Americans to be a challenging figure to understand. But in the end, he was always an ambitious man who despite any worthwhile characteristics destroyed the republic. Thus, this modern desperation and turn towards Trump is a sentiment the founders would have understood as not just an insult but a warning, one the American people failed to heed.

Then there was Catiline, even worse than Caesar to many Early Americans he has become less known in the modern world. He didn’t die draped in valor in the Whiskey Rebellion like he did outside of Rome in 63 BC. His death in America was slow, subsiding as the fear of internal rebellion fell away. Catiline failed to retain the spotlight he held within a country terrified it was about to be destroyed by treachery from within. But our modern gaze cannot be tricked into missing his importance. During the Whiskey Rebellion Catiline was not just another Roman name to be dusted off by intellectuals and thrown about with reckless abandon. He was not solely in the purview of a high political discourse of classics. Rather, he was a perfect representation of classics in personal or low politics. The Whiskey Rebellion has been treated in a myriad of ways, often as a class struggle. Classics needs to be added as a mode of discourse in order to properly understand the world view of Early Americans. The class struggle is not rejected by Catiline either, if anything it is enhanced by the complications of a Roman context that

saw an army of debtors and other rabble threatening the Republic. Catiline, and Caesar for that matter, must be addressed because the history of early America is a history that cannot be divorced from classics. A history of America, just like a history of Rome cannot exist without a history of Catiline and Caesar.
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