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A Case of Identity: *Massachusettensis* and John Adams

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Few Revolutionary-era Americans knew the identity of the author of *Massachusettensis*, perhaps the most articulate and widely read loyalist essays.¹ John Adams (1735-1826) alone seemed convinced, commencing his patriot masterpiece *Novanglus* in reply believing his adversary to be his close friend of fifteen years, Jonathan Sewall (1729–96). Adams imagined the friendly rivalry to be emblematic of the imperial crisis. Published pseudonymously in weekly instalments, “*Massachusettensis*” rationalized American subordination to British imperial sovereignty, equating patriot resistance with rebellion, while “*Novanglus*” advanced colonial autonomy within the empire, both intent on preventing escalation before literary combat gave way to hostilities in April 1775.² A brief enquiry in 1851 pronounced Adams “*entirely mistaken*”

¹ We are grateful to Liam Riordan and anonymous reviewers for astute comments on drafts of this paper.

² Roman type denotes the pseudonym; italics, the published letters. “*Massachusettensis*” [usu. attr. Daniel Leonard], “To the Inhabitants of the Province of Massachusetts Bay,” *Massachusetts Gazette; and the Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser*, December 12, 1774–April 3, 1775 (hereafter *Bos. Post-Boy*); “*Novanglus*” [John Adams], “To the Inhabitants of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay,” *Boston Gazette*, January 23,–April 17, 1775 (hereafter *Bos. Gaz.*). There were seventeen letters in the *Massachusettensis* series, twelve in *Novanglus* with more planned. Reprints and four pamphlet editions gave *Massachusettensis* greater reach than other loyalist polemics: Nos. 1–4 reprinted in *Rivington’s New-York Gazetteer*, December 22, 1774–January 26, 1775; No. 1 in the *New-Hampshire Gazette*, December 30, 1774, with extracts of Nos. 2–6 up to April 7, 1775; No. 2 in the *Virginia Gazette*, February

in identification, accrediting sole authorship to fellow lawyer, former political ally, and lesser friend Daniel Leonard (1740–1829).³ Thereafter, historians uncritically endorsed Leonard, by default assuming Sewall contributed nothing to *Massachusettensis*. This article reopens the case of *Massachusettensis*'s identity to consider how Adams's presumption of Sewall's authorship and the authors' actual friendships influenced the writing of *Novanglus* and *Massachusettensis*.

First, questions of authorship are of historiographical not antiquarian interest because acquiescence in Leonard's attribution has eased textual analysis. Leonard's belated anti-

9, 1775; Thomas R. Adams, *American Independence, The Growth of an Idea: A Bibliographical Study of the American Political Pamphlets Printed Between 1764 and 1776 Dealing with the Dispute Between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (Providence, RI: Brown University Press, 1965), 135–36. Selected *Novanglus* letters were reprinted in two New England newspapers and in abridged editions (London, 1775 and 1784). The first full reprint was in *Novanglus, and Massachusettensis; or, Political essays, published in the years 1774 and 1775, on the principal points of controversy, between Great Britain and her colonies. the former by John Adams, . . . the latter by Jonathan Sewall, . . .* (Boston: Hews and Goss, 1819). For the authoritative modern version and commentary see Robert J. Taylor, et al., eds., *Papers of John Adams*, 18 vols. to date (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977–), 2:216–387.

³ Samuel G. Drake argued for Sewall; Lucius M. Sargent, for Leonard. “Novanglus Redivivus” [Samuel G. Drake], “Who Wrote Massachusettensis?” *Boston Daily Evening Transcript*, February 13, 1851 (hereafter *Bos. Eve. Trscript*); “Sigma” [Lucius M. Sargent], “Jonathan Sewall or Daniel Leonard?” and “Daniel Leonard or Jonathan Sewall?” April 15 and 18, 1851 respectively, *Bos. Eve. Trscript*. Sargent's articles were reprinted in “The Author of Massachusettensis,” *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 18 (1864), 291–95, 353–57, quotation at 294. Sargent's research is filed in “Authorship of the Letters of Massachusettensis: Being the correspondence of L. M. Sargent, Esq., with various persons upon this subject,” R. Stanton Avery Special Collections Department, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston. We are grateful to collections manager Timothy Salls for providing copies.

revolutionism was not untypical of early critics of British policy while Sewall, as the provincial government's attorney general and ablest propagandist, epitomized Tory interests.⁴ Thus Massachusettensis's identity appeared irrelevant to discussions of loyalist ideology,⁵ Adams's republican political thought,⁶ and *Novanglus*'s argument.⁷ However, while pseudonyms provide concealment for polemicists vying for converts, identification was integral to Adams's rationale and Novanglus's reasoning, conferring tactical advantage over a familiar opponent. We proffer

⁴ Carol Berkin, *Jonathan Sewall: Odyssey of an American Loyalist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Leonard in Ralph Davol, *Two Men of Taunton, in the Course of Human Events, 1731–1829* (Taunton, MA: Davol Publishing Co., 1912).

⁵ See Janice Potter, *The Liberty We Seek: Loyalist Ideology in Colonial New York and Massachusetts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 30–31, 80–81, 133, 136, 165. See also, William H. Nelson, *The American Tory* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1961), 69–72; Robert M. Calhoon, *The Loyalists of Revolutionary America, 1760–1781* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1973), 90; Philip Gould, *Writing the Rebellion: Loyalists and the Literature of Politics in British America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 9–13, 154.

⁶ See C. Bradley Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 66–79; Richard A. Ryerson, *John Adams's Republic: The One, the Few, and the Many* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 134–57. Convoluted digressions deny *Novanglus* canonical reputation having been omitted from the Bernard Bailyn's seminal *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁷ Albert Furtwangler tentatively considered Adams's apparent misjudgment while accepting Leonard's authorship, in *American Silhouettes: Rhetorical Identities of the Founders* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 53.

the probability *Massachusettensis* was coauthored by Sewall and Leonard—that is, devised and written by them—while Adams wrote *Novanglus* with Sewall in mind.

Second, investigation enabled exploration of the interpersonal dimension of political discourse. Authorial narration was informed by the politics of friendship—by the dynamics of Adams’s and Sewall’s relationship (and, to a slighter extent, of theirs with Leonard). Friendship is defined by degrees of intimacy, reciprocity, and trust arising from shared experience; and while close friends consciously seek mutual emotional well-being, the politics of friendship intuitively creates primary bonds against which friends judge all other friendships.⁸ Adams’s and Sewall’s authorial relationship—already beset by intrigue and rivalry—exemplifies these tendencies, and in writing *Novanglus* Adams hoped to save Sewall from loyalism by winning the political argument. Reading *Novanglus* and *Massachusettensis* as a testament to friendship reveals a new side to John Adams: the attentive friend, attuned to the personal tragedy behind the Revolution, and whose own radicalization turned on discourse with Sewall. We proffer the possibility of authorial intrusion—a private dialogue within the public debate, largely between Adams and Sewall—without categorical judgements about who was addressing whom and when.

I

Who was *Massachusettensis*? Initial Patriot ripostes afford few clues.⁹ Allusion to “Philalethes on Philanthropy, with an appendix by *Massachusettensis*” in Mercy Otis Warren’s

⁸ See Jacques Derrida, *Politics of Friendship* (1997; repr., New York: Verso, 2005).

⁹ The first reply by “A Tory” lamely accused *Massachusettensis* of “displaying the Beauties of Passive Obedience and Non-Resistance, the Divine right of Kings—the Excellency of Despotism—the Divinity of Popery—and the glory of the STUART Reigns”—likely a ruse to let *Massachusettensis* kick these Filmerian stones from his

The Group noticed *Massachusettensis* as a prolongation of works commonly ascribed to Sewall, thus proclaiming Sewall's leadership and authorship. Sparing Sewall caricature, Warren's comedy mocked Leonard for abandoning the "patriotic path" upon nomination to the governor's Royal Council: "Beau Trumps" was a foppish gambler, a follower not a leader, seduced by former governor Thomas Hutchinson and beguiled by "The false Philanthrop."¹⁰ Abigail Adams sought Warren's advice in identifying the "Miscreant" *Massachusettensis* before her husband continued with *Novanglus*.¹¹ Only John Trumbull, who clerked for Adams 1773–74, named Leonard ("My *Massachusettensis* L----d") with Sewall in charge ("Scribbler-gen'ral").¹² Generally, patriots acknowledged Sewall as *Massachusettensis* and the loyalists' chief writer.

path. *Bos. Post-Boy*, December 19, 1774. "Plebeius" claimed to be "one of those WHIGS" accused of rebellion and invited *Massachusettensis* to inveigle his identity from the printers, reminding him of "real Experience of a particular Friendship on former Occasions." *Bos. Gaz.*, January 16, 1775.

¹⁰ [Mercy Otis Warren], "The Group," *Bos. Gaz.*, January 23, 1775. Later editions also asserted Sewall's authorship. *The Group, A Farce* (Boston: Edes and Gill, 1775; New York: John Anderson, 1775.)

¹¹ Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, [January 25, 1775], in *Adams Family Correspondence*, 12 vols., ed. Lyman H. Butterfield et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1963–), 1:180. Perhaps John Adams piqued Warren's curiosity upon reading a draft of *The Group* (published in the same issue as *Novanglus* No. 1).

¹² [John Trumbull], "A [burlesque on a] Proclamation [by Thomas Gage] *Connecticut Courant*, August 7 and 14, 1775; John Trumbull, *M'Fingal: A Modern Epic Poem Canto First, Or, the Town Meeting* (Philadelphia, 1775), 17–18. Living in Connecticut since late 1774, Trumbull (1750–1831) did not discuss *Massachusettensis* in his correspondence with Adams. He removed the attribution to Leonard from *M'Fingal*'s second edition and, in retaining the reference to Sewall, remained open to the possibility of Sewall's authorship or coauthorship. *M'Fingal* (Hartford, CT, 1782), 18–19. See also Lenox Grey, "John Adams and John Trumbull in the 'Boston Cycle,'" *The New England Quarterly* 4 (1931), 509–14. Daniel at Belshazzar's feast foretelling Babylonian doom written on "the

Indubitably, patriot reception was influenced by Novanglus's imputation of knowing the author.¹³ The first *Massachusettsensis* essay Adams read was the third in the series (December 26, 1774), from which, he explained in the first *Novanglus* (January 23, 1775), he deduced a writer "In the character of Philanthrop . . . [and] Philalethes." Adams knew Sewall was "Philanthrop"¹⁴

wall" (Daniel, 5.11-31) was an obvious if loose analogy for any writer linking *Massachusettsensis* to Leonard. The prophet's rewards were a scarlet cloak, gold chain, and power. (The king was killed the following night.) No-one made a satirical connection in print at the time, though Adams later derided Leonard's "indulgence" for gold lace trimmings on apparel. John Adams to Jedediah Morse, Quincy, December 22, 1815, in *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, 10 vols., ed. Charles F. Adams (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Co., 1850–56), 10:185.

¹³ Sewall's authorship is noted in Samuel Adams to Arthur Lee, March 4, 1775, *The Writings of Samuel Adams*, 4 vols., ed. Harry A. Cushing (New York: G. P. Putnam's & Co., 1904), 3:197.

¹⁴ Attribution of *Philanthrop* to Sewall derives from statements by John Adams in 1763 and 1783, in *Adams Papers*, 1:59–60, 174–76. "Philanthrop" [Jonathan Sewall], *Boston Evening-Post*, December 1–29, 1766; January 5–26, February 9, March 2, July 27, and August 3, 1767; December 24, 1770; January 14 and 28, February 4 and 18, 1771 (hererafter *Bos. Eve. Post*). Governor Francis Bernard rewarded Sewall with appointments in 1767 as advocate general of the Vice Admiralty Court at Boston and province attorney general, an unsalaried position. Colin Nicolson, ed., *The Papers of Francis Bernard, Governor of Colonial Massachusetts, 1760–69*, 6 vols. (Boston: Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 2007–), 3:310–12. In quantity and quality, the only comparable Tory writings were by "N.P."—who might have been Sewall—whose ten "Letters in Answer to the Farmer," *Bos. Eve. Post*, February 6–27, March 6–27, April 3–29, and June 5, 1769, tackled John Dickinson's *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1768).

and believed him “Philalethes,”¹⁵ and though “Massachusettensis” was a new creation,¹⁶ Novanglus declared it “not very material to inquire, as others have done, who is the author of the speculations in question.” He suggested two theses for Massachusettensis’s motivation, implying familiarity: self-interest and altruism. In 1819, Adams depicted Sewall fulfilling both, reminiscing he “instantly knew” Sewall to be Massachusettensis. An experienced barrister like Adams was unlikely to “enter the lists” without being certain of his opponent, though announcing Massachusettensis’s identity also exposed his own since his friendship with Sewall and authorship of *Novanglus* were known to patriots.¹⁷ Disclosure was a gambit, obliging Massachusettensis to ponder how much familiarity would inflame or restrain his critic.

Massachusettensis’s true identity would have been known only to leading loyalists close to British army headquarters. Delaying preemptive military action against the patriots, Governor General Thomas Gage insisted loyalists “ought to be encouraged” to defy the Provincial

¹⁵ Sewall is unlikely to have authored the first *Philalethes* series, which was highly critical of the provincial government, because publication coincided with his preferment. *Bos. Gaz.*, March 9 and 23, April 6, and May 11, 1767. A second series defending Thomas Hutchinson was probably Sewall’s. *Massachusetts Gazette: and the Boston Weekly News-Letter*, June 24, July 1–22, and August 5 and 12, 1773 (hereafter *Bos. Weekly Newsletter*).

¹⁶ Pseudonyms were not usually reappropriated, but reuse of Philanthrop or Philalethes would have blunted appeal. “Massachusettensis” was previously employed by the author (Robert Auchmuty?) of *The Importance of Cape Breton consider’d: in a letter to a member of Parliament, from an inhabitant of New-England* (London, 1746) and one other essayist (a Whig and patriot) writing in the *Massachusetts Spy*, December 2, 1771, January 30, June 25, and August 13, 1772, and March 2, 1775. Adams ridiculed its adoption by a patriot “ignorant” of the “Science of Government” in the *New England Chronicle*, May 2, 1776. Adams to James Warren, May 12, 1776, *Adams Papers*, 4:182–83. See also below n. 31.

¹⁷ *Novanglus, and Massachusettensis*, iii–vii.

Congress and Continental Congress.¹⁸ Without divulging involvement in propaganda, he left the loyalists in charge. *Massachusettensis* was the most substantive and substantial (at c.44,000 words) of fifty-three pseudonymous loyalist essays in the *Boston Post-Boy and Advertiser* alone, from December 12, 1774 to April 3, 1775. Shorter series maintained impetus, including *Grotius* (in five issues from January 2) and *Phileirene* probably by Sewall (in four from January 26), targeting the Continental Congress.¹⁹ A satirical play by Sewall in performance would have raised loyalists' spirits by ridiculing patriots, Adams included, for mindlessly "complaining."²⁰

¹⁸ Gage to the earl of Dartmouth, September 20, 1774, in *Documents of the American Revolution, 1770–1783*, 21 vols., ed. K. G. Davies (Shannon: Irish University Press, 1972–1981), 8:212. Gage received memorials from several refugee councilors, including Leonard who attended the Governor's Council on August 31, 1774 (its only official meeting until July 1775). Attorney-General Sewall was not a member and his attendance not recorded. Albert Matthews, "Documents Relating to the Last Meetings of the Massachusetts Royal Council, 1774–1776," *Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 32 (1933), 450–504. *Massachusettensis*'s appearance coincided with the establishment of the first loyal militia (the Boston Association) and preceded by six weeks Gage's deployment of regulars to protect the loyalists of Marshfield.

¹⁹ *Massachusettensis* No. 16 (March 27) implied consanguinity when declaring himself "in some measure anticipated by Grotius [*and*] Philereine [*sic*]." "Grotius," January 9–30, and February 6, 1775. "Phileirene" [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Post-Boy*, January 26, March 9, and April 4 and 13, 1775; Sewall's authorship was assumed rather than proven by Peter Force, ed., *American Archives Fourth Series*, 6 vols. (Washington: M. St. Clair and Peter Force, 1837–46), 1:1184–88; 2:100–3, 286–89; 324–29.

²⁰ "Sir Roger De Coverly" [Jonathan Sewall], *A Cure For The Spleen, Or Amusement For A Winter's Evening* ([Boston?], [February?] 1775), 7. "Sir Roger de Coverley" [*sic*], was a fictional beloved friend (closer in age to Sewall than Leonard) to the authorial narrator of *The Spectator* (London, 1711–1712), exuding a gruff supra-partisanship useful as a political foil.

Sewall, a proven writer, probably directed the entire venture. He was working in Boston when the Powder Alarm of September 1 (triggered by British military maneuvers) sent crowds to his Cambridge mansion demanding his resignation. From then until August 21, 1775, when he left for England, Sewall was “private Secretary to Gen^l Gage.” “He assisted Gen^l Gage in everything,” but with civil government and court work much reduced, his other duties encompassed “writing in favor” of government.²¹ Sewall, on request, briefed Frederick Haldimand, Gage’s second-in-command and envoy to American Secretary Dartmouth, on the limited possibilities for reconciliation following hostilities, urging military action to crush the rebellion as many loyalists then did, merely reiterating *Massachusettensis*’s explanation of its causes.²²

Leonard’s nineteenth-century champions were unaware Sewall was Gage’s senior American adviser or of the documentation wherein Leonard first unveiled authorship. After fleeing to Boston on August 22, 1774, Leonard was “solicited by several of the principal gentlemen there . . . to endeavour to trace the discontents of the people to their source, to point out the criminality and ruinous tendency of the opposition to the authority of parliament, and to convince the people of the justice of the measures of Administration.” It took “several months,”

²¹ Hugh E. Egerton, *The Royal Commission on the Losses and Services of American Loyalists, 1783 to 1785*, . . . (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1915), 233.

²² Sewall’s lamenting the “Seed” germinating “open defiance” summarizes *Massachusettensis* Nos. 1 to 3 (while references to “chymical Grievances” echoed the phraseology of No. 9). His call for 15,000 regulars reflected Gage’s confident bellicosity before the bloody encounter at Bunker Hill. Haldimand personally delivered the letter to Dartmouth c. August 28. Jonathan Sewall to Frederick Haldimand, May 30, 1775, Additional Manuscripts 21695, ff. 120–24, The British Library, London.

incurred “a very considerable expense,” and left him in “peril of his life.”²³ It would have been surprising if the Boston loyalists had not supervised Leonard’s writing. Leonard was a good choice not an obvious one: an articulate critic of Hutchinson, he might expect to carry recalcitrant patriots²⁴ while relying on Sewall to dispel doubts about his loyalty, but he was unpublished as a political writer (as far as we know). At the very least, Leonard could not have written *Massachusettensis* without Sewall’s knowledge; more likely, Sewall exercised editorial control.

Sewall “recommended” Ward Chipman, his twenty-year-old clerk, as “assistant” to Leonard whereupon “he was employed by Leonard in copying *Massachusettensis* and sending them to the printer.” Chipman had previously carried drafts of Sewall’s *Philanthrop* to Hutchinson for revision prior to publication,²⁵ though he did not indicate bringing Leonard’s drafts to Sewall. Regardless, the first three *Massachusettensis* letters were already published by the time Chipman started working for Leonard in late January or early February following

²³ Daniel Leonard to Sir Grey Cooper, June 28, 1779, AO 13/74, f. 517, American Loyalists Claims, Series 1, National Archives of the UK, London.

²⁴ As Taunton’s representative (1769–72, 1773–74), Leonard served on numerous committees remonstrating with the governor. John A. Schutz, *Legislators of the Massachusetts General Court* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1997), 27. See n. 53. One rival described Leonard as a “Gentleman of natural good sense & Eloquence, polite & of engaging address.” Robert Treat Paine, “Narrative of Proceedings of General Court, 1774,” *The Papers of Robert Treat Paine*, ed. Stephen T. Riley and Edward W. Hanson, 3 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1992), 1:544–46. Adams thought Leonard “a scholar, a lawyer, and an orator.” John Adams to Jedidiah Morse, Quincy, December 22, 1815, *Works of John Adams*, 10:195.

²⁵ Francis C. Gray reporting comments of Chipman in 1820, as quoted in Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts* (1867; repr., Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1869), 380.

Leonard's appointment as solicitor general to the American Board of Customs.²⁶ Financially dependent on Sewall, Chipman complained when Leonard objected to his determination to practice law in the Vice Admiralty Court, briefly creating tension between Sewall and the "mean & ungenerous" Leonard in late 1775.²⁷ While never confirming Sewall's authorship and later attesting to Leonard's,²⁸ Chipman nonetheless implied *Massachusettensis* was a team effort: Chipman as clerk, Leonard as chief writer, and Sewall as editor.

Sewall never clarified his own involvement, for though there was opportunity, there was no compelling reason. In 1783, obliged to appear before the royal commission on loyalists' losses, his case rested on verifiable facts: impressive officeholding and loyal "principles & conduct . . . convincing to everyone *there*," including Gage, his witness.²⁹ Offering himself as Gage's adviser was calculated to impress; claiming co-authorship of *Massachusettensis* would only have confused the ministers, none of whom were his patrons. Leonard had already asserted sole authorship, in 1779, advising the Treasury "A part of his publications; under the signature of *Massachusettensis*" were circulating in Britain, meaning the pamphlet editions, and inferred

²⁶ Leonard's predecessor David Lisle died in office on January 20, 1775. *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 23 (1869), 59.

²⁷ Jonathan Sewall to Ward Chipman, London, November 29, 1775, Lawrence Collection: Chipman Papers, 81 vols., 1:971, Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa. Sewall's letter was opened in transit and conveyed to Leonard. Chipman to [Daniel Leonard?], July 1776, Chipman Papers, 1:32–33.

²⁸ Chipman was silent on *Massachusettensis* in his memorial of March 24, 1784 (AO 12/11, ff. 86–88) but reputedly issued an affidavit c.1822. *Adams Papers*, 2:225.

²⁹ Memorial of Jonathan Sewall, November 3, 1783, AO 13/48, ff. 493–94.

responsibility for the original articles published “in America.”³⁰ While Leonard’s authorship should be assumed, subsequent assertion of having devised *Massachusettensis* was economical with the truth.³¹ He had “employ’d himself in writing . . . under the signature of Massachutensis [sic],” the commission clerk noted in 1784 (eliding that responsibility had been devolved); he “published about this time a Pamphlet called Massachutensis which had a considerable Effect in keeping the Province quiet,” though it did not, and “in consequence” was appointed solicitor general. “Nobody was more hearty in the Cause of Gov^t. or did more than M^r Leonard,” asserted the clerk.³² Difficult circumstances demanded tactical self-promotion, and, for their efforts,

³⁰ Leonard to Cooper, June 28, 1779. Substantive textual differences between the articles and the first pamphlet edition are typical of editorial intervention like letters being allocated numbers for example. A file can be supplied on request via colin.nicolson@stir.ac.uk. *Massachusettensis* (Boston: Printed by Mills and Hicks, April or May, 1775), 117 pp. Entry 180b in Adams, *Growth of an Idea*, 135. Modern editions follow the 1776 London imprint by J. Mathews and/or the 1819 joint edition. Bernard Mason, ed., *The American Colonial Crisis: the Daniel Leonard-John Adams Letters to the Press, 1774–1775* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972); Gordon S. Wood, ed., *John Adams: Revolutionary Writings, 1775–1783* (New York: Library of America, 2011), 327–614.

³¹ Modern editors accepted the assertion without exploring motivation. *Adams Papers*, 2:217. American Secretary Lord Germain may have advised Leonard to assert ownership of *Massachusettensis* in its entirety noting Leonard had “made himself very useful to Government . . . by his literary publications.” Memorandum of G[eorge] G[ermain], July 7, 1780, AO 13/74, ff. 526–27. Arriving in London in June 1776, Leonard may have written for the North administration under pseudonym; searches of British newspapers using his name and “Massachusettensis” found nothing. The British Library catalogue unconvincingly attributes to Leonard authorship of a Federalist pamphlet, “Massachusettensis,” *Strictures and Observations upon the Three Executive Departments of the Government of the United States* (USA, 1792).

³² Egerton, *Royal Commission*, 186–87. Another clerk noted more accurately Leonard “had great merit as a Writer.” AO 12/105, f. 39. Leonard’s other claim papers do not mention *Massachusettensis*: State of Mr. Leonard’s

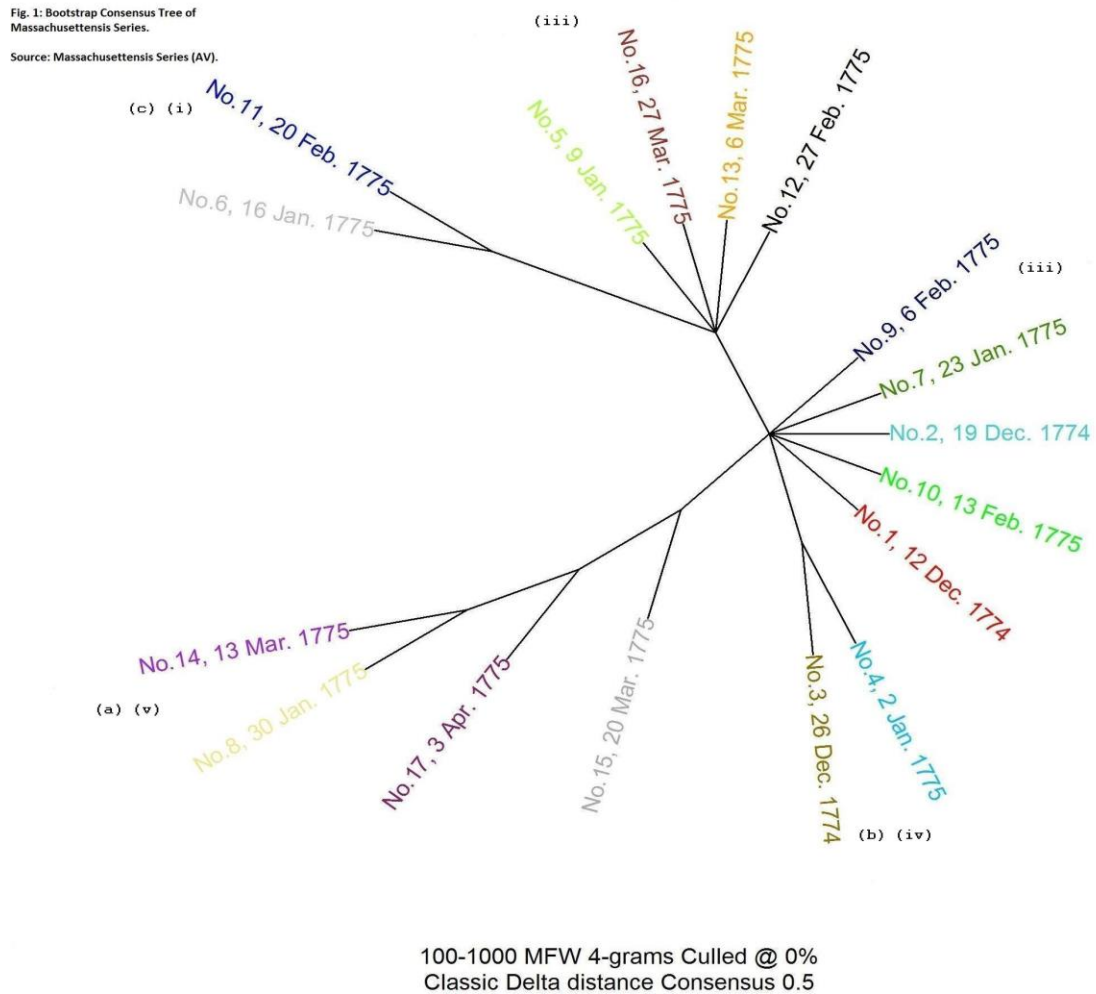
Leonard received £1,400 for £4,681 claimed in compensation for his losses, and Sewall, £1,120 for £5,793.³³

Did Sewall write any of *Massachusettensis*? There are no surviving manuscript drafts to provide definitive answers, but the investigation was aided by stylometric analysis, commonplace in corpus linguistics when attributing authorship. First, there are significant similarities among those *Massachusettensis* letters grouped in three pairs and five clusters and differences across the series. (Reading Fig. 1 clockwise, Nos. 6 and 11 are least like Nos. 8 and 14, for example).

Case, [August 1781], AO 13/74, ff. 540–41; memorials of Daniel Leonard, 1784–89, AO 13/47, ff. 215–97; the proceedings respecting Leonard's claim are in AO 13/74, ff. 528–41.

³³ AO 12/109, ff. 83, 122. While the reformist Pitt administration was committed to compensating the loyalists, it ended the arrangement agreed upon with Germain permitting Leonard's retention of his councilor's allowance and solicitor's remuneration (£560 p.a.) in lieu of a salary upon his appointment as chief justice of Bermuda in 1781. Sewall was required to relocate to Nova Scotia to retain his salary as judge of the Vice Admiralty Court.

Figure 1

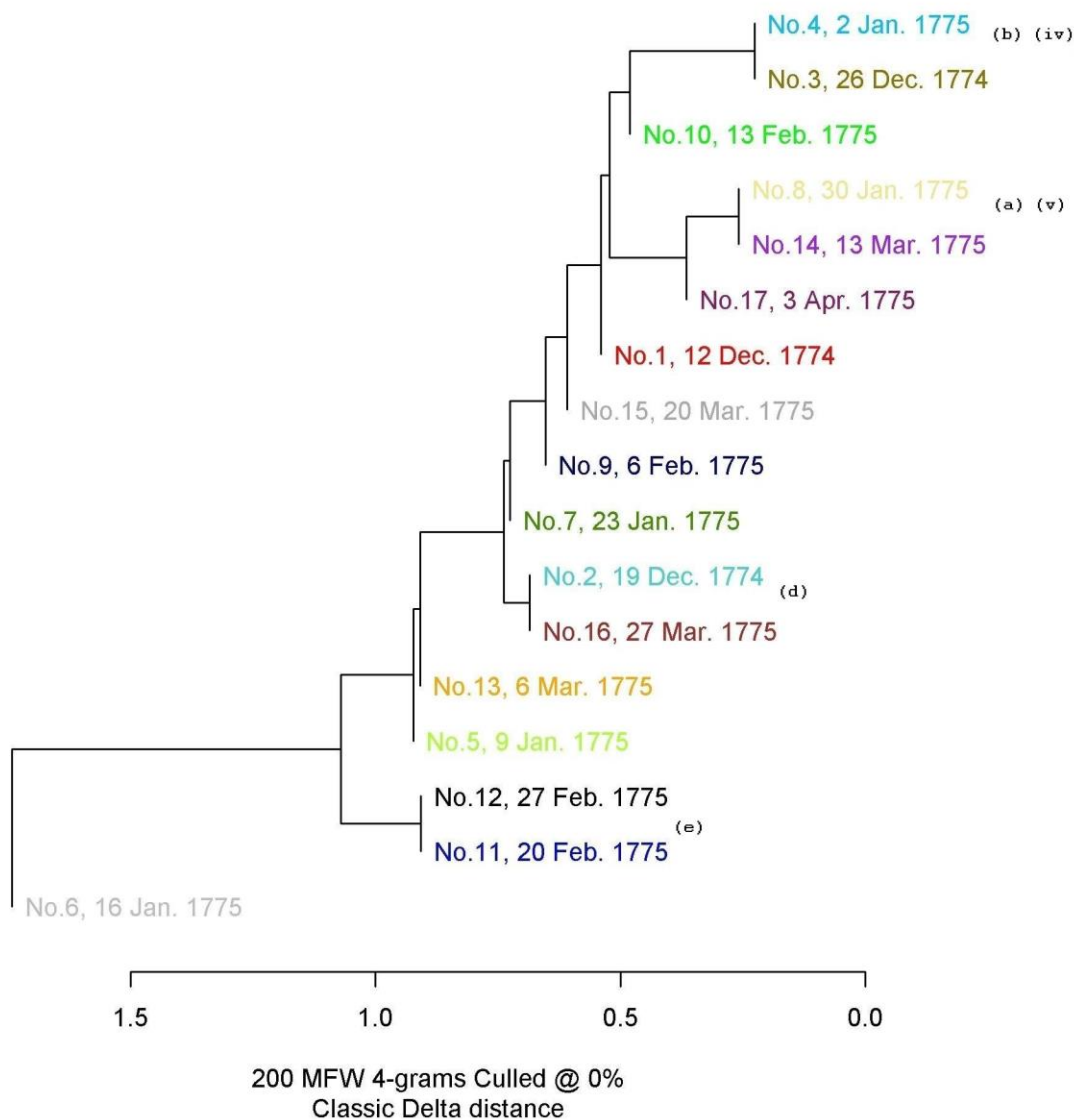


For the purposes of ascertaining Sewall's contribution, pair (b) and cluster (iv) are the most relevant for they contain *Massachusettsensis* No. 3 which Adams identified as Sewall's; pair (b) and cluster (iv) were also reported in other tests (Fig. 2).

Figure 2

Fig. 2: Cluster Dendrogram of *Massachusettensis* Series.

Source: *Massachusettensis* Series (AV).



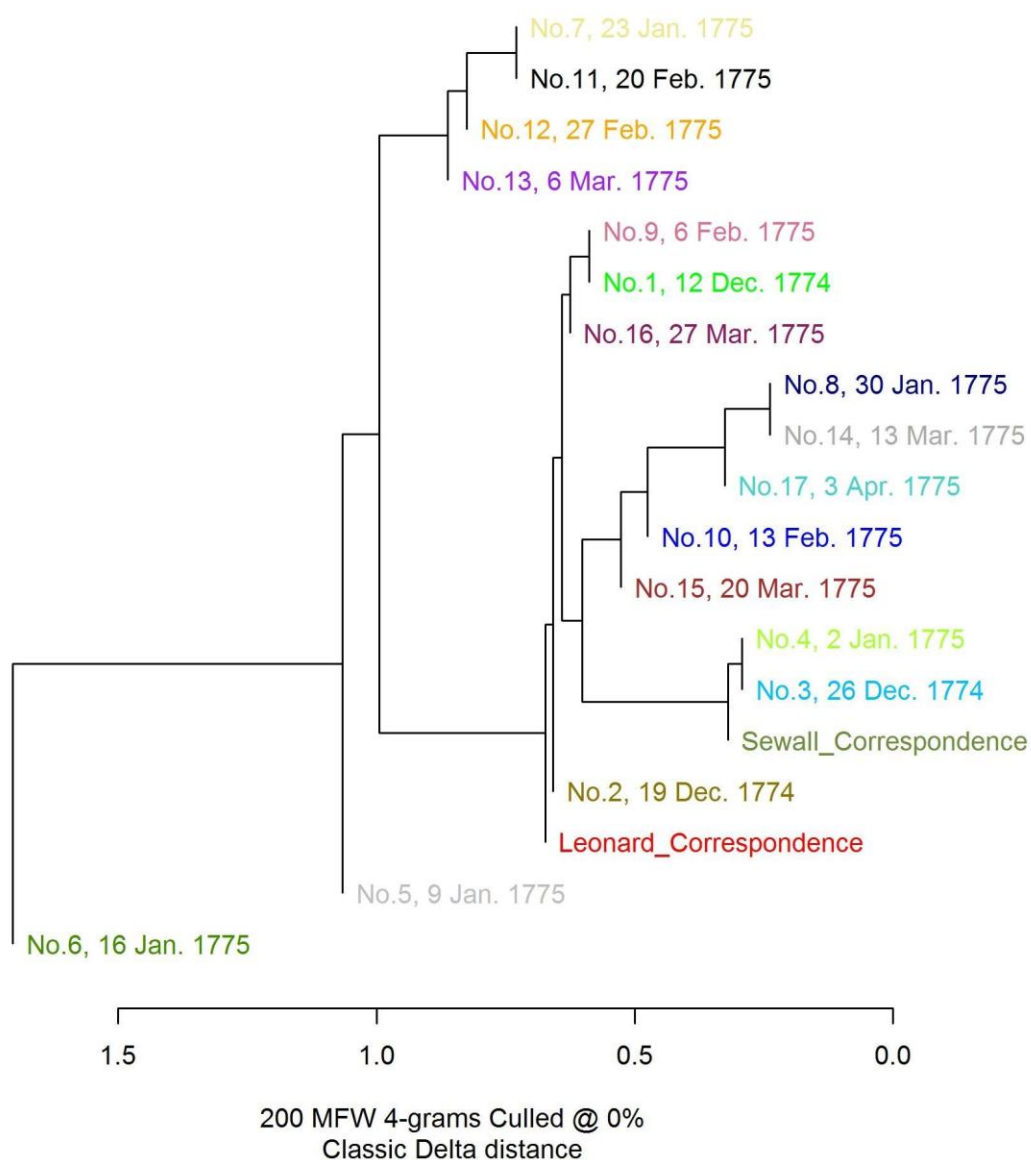
Therefore, if Adams's assertion of Sewall's authorship of *Massachusettensis* No. 3 is correct, then Sewall was most likely to have written pair (b) Nos. 3 and 4, and least likely to have written pair (c) Nos. 6 and 11. Second, re-running tests with samples of Sewall's and Leonard's

correspondences included (Fig. 3) showed proximity between Sewall and pair (b) and Leonard and pair (d).

Figure 3

Fig. 3 Cluster Dendrogram of Massachusettensis Series and Sewall Correspondence and Leonard Correspondence.

Source: Massachusettensis Series (AV), Sewall Correspondence (AV) and Leonard Correspondence (AV).



Third, other tests indicated stylistic features of Sewall's known publications in

Massachusettensis (test 3), similarities between pair (b) and Sewall's correspondence (tests 4, 5,

and 19) and the *Grotius*, *Phileirene*, and *Philaletes* series (tests 20–22). Comparison of *Massachusettsensis* with texts of known authorship identified only Sewall and Leonard as possible authors (tests 7 and 8). In conclusion, similarities between Sewall’s writings and pair (b)/cluster (iv) are consistent with Adams’s assertion of Sewall’s authorship of *Massachusettsensis* No. 3. Adams’s claims must be taken seriously.³⁴

II

Adams’s judgement remains the strongest evidence in Sewall’s case. On *Massachusettsensis*’s publication, Adams was at home in Braintree having been away at the congresses for several months and, without court work, had time for reading and writing during a stay that stretched into the spring. It was logical and inspiring to recognize Sewall’s handiwork, having long engaged him in political debate. Their friendship exemplifies the politics of friendship, exhibiting rationalist and idealist features and turning on intellect and emotion than dependency.³⁵ In their early correspondence, Adams evinced serious interest in jurisprudence,

³⁴ Tests are summarized in the Appendix and findings reported in Figures 1–3 and Table 1.

³⁵ Allan Silver, “Friendship and Trust as Moral Ideals: An Historical Approach,” *European Journal of Sociology* 30 (1989), 274–97, and “Friendship in Commercial Society: Eighteenth-Century Social Theory and Modern Sociology,” *American Journal of Sociology* 95 (1990), 1474–1504; Alexander Nehamas, *On Friendship* (New York: Basic Books, 2016). Recent scholarship explores friendship’s cultural vitality and independent agency in eighteenth-century America beyond socially dependent relationships. See Ivy Schweitzer, *Perfecting Friendship: Politics and Affiliation in Early American Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Richard Godbeer, *The Overflowing of Friendship: Love between Men and the Creation of the American Republic* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Cassandra A. Good, *Founding Friendships: Friendships between Men and Women in the Early American Republic* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015). Founder

and from emulation of the celebrated Roman advocate and statesman Marcus Tullius Cicero, Sewall found in Adams a “fellow-traveller” worthy of admiration.³⁶ What began as a personal quest to know the law became a Ciceronian campaign to clean up politics. Their first political writings commenced in tandem: Sewall on the government side, Adams replying in defense of James Otis, the popular party leader.³⁷ Private ruminations speckled the friendly public exchanges, with Sewall professing reliance on information from a “friend” close to the Boston caucus.³⁸ Adams was on the fringes of Otis’s cabal, yet Sewall mocked his devotion to Otis: “and therefore, be it known to ***** my friend, and . . . other readers,” he would continue to execrate Otis. The five asterisks was a conundrum for Sewall’s “readers,” for Adams, a cruel ruse: the

biographies have made important contributions to the field, including Andrew Burstein, *The Inner Jefferson: Portrait of a Grieving Optimist* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1995); Joseph J. Ellis, *Founding Brothers: the Revolutionary Generation* (2000; repr., New York: Vintage Books, 2002); Edith B. Gelles, *Abigail Adams: A Writing Life* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Gordon S. Wood, *Friends Divided: John Adams and Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017).

³⁶ Jonathan Sewall to John Adams, September 29, 1759, *Adams Papers*, 1:28–29.

³⁷ “J” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, February 14, 1763; “Humphrey Ploughjogger” [John Adams], *Bos. Eve. Post*, March 14, 1763; “Jehoshaphat Smoothingplain” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, March 28, 1763; “J. Philanthrop,” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, April 4, 1763.

³⁸ “J” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, March 14, 1763. “J’s” allusion to a meeting of the Boston caucus at “*Adjutant Trowel’s long Garret*”—where “guardians of the public liberty, hold their *nocturnal* assemblies, and with senatorial wisdom, consult, debate, project, scold, write, drink and smoke, *pro bono publico*”—bears striking resemblance to a famous passage in Adams’s diary (February n.d. 1763) concerning bricklayer Thomas Dawes’s smoky garret. Lyman H. Butterfield, et al., eds., *Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 1:238–40.

imaginary friend was probably five-lettered Adams himself.³⁹ Sewall likely aimed to enlist Adams in a scheme to undermine Otis's trenchant criticism of Hutchinson, then chief justice and lieutenant governor. Addressing "Friend John"—in a letter hitherto missed by scholars—Sewall recalled having nurtured his friend's "ambitious Genius" and proffered "Directions for your political conduct in the Road to Honour." "Friend John" was to pretend support for his "mad Heroe" Otis by besmirching Hutchinson, thence court Hutchinson's favor for entry to the government party.⁴⁰

Probably referring to Sewall's gamesmanship, Adams wrote "Had I but known this, three Years agoe, I would have seen thee, gizzarded eer I would have honourd thee with my Friendship."⁴¹ Philanthrop's appearance in 1766 again brought Adams to public debate (as "Clarendon") and private anger at perceived slights, cathartically exploring Sewall's betrayal of trust (as "Misanthrop"). "Misanthrop" discovered "Principles, Motives and Views," behind Sewall's search for preferment, promising to reveal Philanthrop's studied deceit. A second draft profiled his misguided friend: "After he gets home, he retires to his office and seats himself at his

³⁹ "J" [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, April 25, 1763.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Sewall to Friend John, n.d. 1763, Sewall Papers, 20 vols., 2:4–7, Library and Archives of Canada. The holograph letter alludes to "Friend John's" first appearance in print, which, if referring to Adams, suggests an earliest possible date of composition of March 14. A later date of June 20 is suggested by Sewall's Swiftian allusion to a "modest proposal" regarding hemp cultivation made by Ploughjogger in the *Boston Evening-Post* of that day. There is no receiver's copy or indication whether the letter was sent. It climaxed with a Latin extract from Cicero's first oration against Catiline's conspiracy to seize power in 63 BCE (*In Catilinam*, 1.10.26), offering partnership with Sewall in a consensus Adams's Roman hero preached.

⁴¹ John Adams to Jonathan Sewall, [spring 1763?], not sent, *Adams Papers*, 1:62–63.

Desk to ruminate and scribble,” Adams wrote. “I am not my own Man! I am a Slave! . . . because I have the Sentiments of Liberty . . . but am past a possibility of enjoying the heavenly Goddess!” His “Brother” he had “treated with the most wicked Cruelty,” whence the misanthropic Sewall rediscovered “the Sentiments of Liberty, her Feelings, the most exquisite Relish of her Charms,” repressed in the search for office.⁴²

As these incidents illustrate, primary friendship—the dyads by which friends judge other friendships—is “preserved by silence,” divulgence of secrets jeopardizing trust.⁴³ By keeping personal anger out of public view and Philanthrop’s identity secret (until discovery in 1767), Adams found a *modus vivendi* for retaining Sewall as a friend and avoiding exposure of his part in Sewall’s scheming. Adams did not challenge Philanthrop, nor Sewall, Adams. They shadowed each other’s political progress and in the law courts never fully tested themselves against each

⁴² “Clarendon” [John Adams], *Bos. Gaz.*, January 13–27, 1766; “Misanthrop,” [John Adams], No. 1 [January 1767], No. 2 [January 1767], *Adams Papers*, 1:183–86, 189–90.

⁴³ Derrida, *Politics of Friendship*, 53.

other.⁴⁴ Addressing “Paskalos” (Adams’s friend and physician Joseph Warren), Philanthrop declared he would “not enter the lists . . . with his opponent . . . to convince him of his error.”⁴⁵

When Adams saw these words again in *Massachusettsensis* No. 3, he assumed a personal exordium by Sewall—a public exhortation with a message for him alone inviting reply. Its salutation—“MY FRIENDS”—was used but once in the series,⁴⁶ and Adams likely found meaning in Cicero’s celebrated injunction to put country before friends (*De Amicitia*, 37). “To undertake to convince a person of his error, is the indispensable duty, the certain, though dangerous test of friendship” (December 26, 1774). The friendship trope, mingling Ciceronian sentiment and Biblical piety, enticed readers into agreement. “He that could see his friend persevering in a fatal error without reminding him of it, and striving to reclaim him, through fear that he might thereby

⁴⁴ Sewall, as advocate general of the Vice Admiralty Court, was chief prosecutor in the controversial trial of John Hancock (November 7, 1768–March 25, 1769) for violating trade laws, but lacking compelling evidence, he abandoned the prosecution. Adams was defense counsel. See L. Kinvin Wroth and Hiller B. Zobel, eds., *Legal Papers of John Adams*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 2:181–91. In the Boston Massacre trials when Adams successfully defended Captain Preston and the British soldiers arraigned on murder charges, Sewall, as province attorney general, ought to have been the chief crown prosecutor. Sewall had previously refused to prosecute British soldiers accused of misdemeanors, and Acting Governor Hutchinson probably required Sewall to step aside to avoid reproach that the crown would be soft on the defendants. Sewall’s post-trial reprisal of Philanthrop reviewed the trial evidence without discussing the defense. *Adams Legal Papers*, 3:7–8; Hiller B. Zobel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), 219. “Philanthrop” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, December 24, 1770; January 14 and 28, and February 18, 1771.

⁴⁵ “Philanthrop” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, December 1, 1766.

⁴⁶ “MY DEAR COUNTRYMEN” was used in Nos. 2, 5, and 10; the 1819 edition added this salutation to every printed letter, thus obscuring the significance of No. 3’s.

incur his displeasure, would little deserve the sacred name himself.” This was the “instant” he remembered in 1819, when *Massachusettensis* threw down Philanthrop’s chivalric challenge “to enter the lists.”⁴⁷

III

With such erudite allusions *Massachusettensis* sought the agreement of the educated elite, while its imagery appealed more to popular audiences. In No. 1 the metaphor of a physician diagnosing a dying polity haunted the reader with a ruptured fragile peace while validating the dire “salutary medicine” of counterrevolution. No. 2 breathed genial common sense, ready to find common ground with waverers then conquer it for loyalism: again, saturnine imagery commended rationality, with Shakespearean analogy to a benighted traveler toiling through a dense wood then led by a dangerous guide to a precipice.⁴⁸ Less knowledgeable readers were offered the sword of Damocles, hanging by a thread over the colonists. *Massachusettensis*, whoever, he was, consciously fed the inquiring mind, in No. 3 promising “arcana”—state secrets—exposing the false patriotism of the rebels. “PERHAPS by this time some of you may enquire who it is that suffers his pen to run so freely?” No. 4 began, “I will tell you.” The clues provided (of residence, social status, learning, and cross-partisanship) profiled rather than identified the author.

Does *Massachusettensis* bear marks of Sewall’s influence? Literary allusions in Nos. 1 to 4 are typical of Sewall’s previous writings, so too the wit, intrigue, and characterization on display. *Philanthrop* had commenced defending the provincial government by first identifying

⁴⁷ *Novanglus, and Massachusettensis*, vi.

⁴⁸ *Henry VI: Part 3*, 3.2.172–79; *Hamlet*, 1.4.68–77.

with the audience and seeking common ground on universal principles. *Philanthrop*: “Man is a social Creature”; *Massachusettsensis*: “WHEN a People, by what means soever, are reduced to such a situation.” In true Ciceronian fashion, the lengthy preambles of both series were followed by rhetorical questions assuming readers favored nonpartisanship: both effortlessly established a middle ground of practical solutions beyond readers’ actual preferences, whilst denigrating the political choices of the vulgar. “Is not civil government dissolved?” *Massachusettsensis* No. 1 answered his own question with a continuation of the neo-Hobbesian theme of *Philanthrop* No. 1: that subordination to government was being undermined by popular resistance.⁴⁹

Massachusettsensis No. 4 used parallel narrative, as had *Philanthrop*, to avoid having to defend the hated Boston Port Act, instead implicating the townspeople in criminality. Sewall had prepared but never executed prosecutions for the Boston Tea Party, and perhaps Adams detected insider knowledge in No. 4. The stylistic similarities between Sewall’s writings and *Massachusettsensis* Nos. 3 and 4 are consistent with Adams’s deduction that the series bore Sewall’s imprint, despite obvious differences in apparatus.⁵⁰

Leonard’s Whig credentials make him an ideal lead author for Nos. 5 to 7. These letters reprised arguments on the colonies’ constitutional status raised by Governor Hutchinson in 1773 and answered by John Adams when he drafted the reply of the House of Representatives. Adams tried to prove the colonies were dominions of the king not the crown and thus not subject to the

⁴⁹ “*Philanthrop*” [Jonathan Sewall], *Bos. Eve. Post*, December 1, 1766; “*Massachusettsensis*,” *Bos. Post-Boy*, December 12, 1774.

⁵⁰ *Massachusettsensis* did not use the scriptural epigrams or classical epigraphs (Horace especially) found in Sewall’s early publications (cited in note 36), and avoided close reading of adversaries’ text, but neither did such devices typify his *Philanthrop* letters of 1776 (cited in note 58).

supreme authority of the realm, the King-in-Parliament.⁵¹ *Massachusettensis* repeated the substance of Hutchinson's assertion about Adams's deductive illogicality—that it created an *imperium in imperio* with regard to sovereignty, a central assumption of loyalists writing in the loyal Whig tradition searching for compromise.⁵² As a legislator, 1770–74, Leonard had witnessed Hutchinson's entrenchment and Adams's skillful maneuvering but was denied opportunity on a larger stage when the Patriots prevented his nomination as a delegate to the first Continental Congress fearing his popularity with moderates and conservatives.⁵³ Was *Massachusettensis* Leonard's revenge? Perhaps, for the thrust of Adams's reminiscences was that

⁵¹ See John P. Reid, *The Briefs of the American Revolution: Constitutional Argument between Thomas Hutchinson and James Bowdoin of the Council and John Adams for the House* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), and *Constitutional History of the American Revolution: Vol. 4: The Authority of Law* (London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), 4:192–200.

⁵² L. F. S. Upton, "The Dilemma of the Loyalist Pamphleteers," *Studies in Burke and His Time* 18 (1977), 71–84; William A. Benton, *Whig-Loyalism: An Aspect of Political Ideology in the American Revolutionary Era* (Rutherford, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1969), 7–38, 125–32.

⁵³ The high-water mark of Leonard's Whig career was his election to the provincial committee of correspondence on May 28, 1773, which declared parliamentary sovereignty "utterly subversive of freedom." *The Journals of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts, 1715–1779*, 55 vols. (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1919–90), 50:11–14, 30. But in February 1774, Leonard voted against the proposed impeachment of Chief Justice Peter Oliver for taking a crown salary from the tea tax. (26–27, 75–76; 146–50; 199–200.) Observing Leonard "had changed his principles," Robert Treat Paine connived to ensure Leonard's absence from the House when the congressional delegation was elected. "Narrative of Proceedings of General Court, 1774 [after April 20, 1795]," *Paine Papers*, 1:544–46.

Sewall also was “a patriot” with “sentiments . . . purely American” before corruption by Hutchinson.⁵⁴

Subsequent letters proffered legalistic argument suited to either. Nos. 6 to 16 focused on constitutional law and treason law with explication and numerous quotations from historical documents (the Massachusetts Charter of 1628 in Nos. 6 and 11), legislative proceedings of the colonial assemblies (in Nos. 11, 13, and 14), political pamphlets (by Whigs James Otis and John Dickinson, marshalled against the patriots in Nos. 7, 8, 13, and 15), acts of Parliament (in Nos. 12 and 15), and the Continental Congress (in No. 16). *Philanthrop* also cited treason statutes and legal reports (Coke, Hale, Hawkins) and their reappearance in *Massachusettensis* No. 9 may exhibit the attorney general’s familiarity with treason law.⁵⁵ Whoever wrote Nos. 9 to 14 required access to a library, and, since their flight, Leonard and Sewall had to rely on Custom House provender.

Adams began *Novanglus* aiming to critique the entire *Massachusettensis* series, of which six had appeared before the first *Novanglus* (January 23), and was obliged to play catch-up and craft rejoinders to intermittent replies. Throughout, Adams noticed echoes of his friendship with Sewall—personal references to common experiences. When *Massachusettensis* first directly addressed *Novanglus* in No. 11 (February 20) he proposed discussion to advance a pragmatic solution, defensively reiterating the inviolability of parliamentary supremacy and the “absurdity”

⁵⁴ *Novanglus*, and *Massachusettensis*, iii.

⁵⁵ Edward Coke, *Institutes* (1628–44), Matthew Hale’s *History of the Common Law* (1713), William Hawkins, *Pleas of the Crown* (1716), in “*Philanthrop*,” August 3 and 10, 1767, and *Massachusettensis* No. 9; also in No. 9: Matthew Bacon, *New Abridgement of the Law* (1736–66), Michael Foster, *Report on the Trial of the Rebels in 1746* (1762), and William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1769).

of dividing sovereignty. But he threw Adams's own words back at him. "These are stubborn facts, they are incapable of being winked out of existence, how much soever we may be disposed to shut our eyes upon them." Adams had used the phrase "stubborn facts" as defense counsel in the Boston Massacre trials. Was the "wink" a direct appeal to Adams himself?⁵⁶

Adams responded in *Novanglus* No. 5 (February 20) arguing Parliament was no longer the "lawful authority." "There lies your fort, Massachusettensis. Make the most of it." The sixth *Novanglus* (February 27) was a rejoinder, and he engaged the constitutional issues in Nos. 7 and 8 (March 6–20). "My Friends," Adams wrote in the seventh, "Our rhetorical magician [Massachusettensis], . . . continues to *wheel*. . . . The question is not . . . whether the authority of parliament extends to the colonies in any case . . . But whether it extends in all cases." The fundamental issue was "whether we are a part of the kingdom of Great-Britain." From this intellectual departure point, Adams developed the argument for colonial legislative autonomy within the empire. Scrutinizing the constitutional histories of Massachusetts, England, Wales, Ireland, and Scotland in subsequent letters, *Novanglus* dismantled the apparatus binding Americans and Britons, and advanced the doctrine of "parallel sovereignty" (Thompson) to

⁵⁶ "Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passions, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence: nor is the law less stable than the fact . . ." John Adams, "Argument for the Defense," December 3–4, 1770, in *Adams Legal Papers*, 3:269. Massachusettensis may have been reminded of the phrase when *Novanglus* No. 4 referred to "stubborn figures." "Facts are stubborn things" may have originated in the 1730s, with Adams borrowing from Jared Eliot, *A Continuation of the Essay upon Field-Husbandry, as . . . Ordered in New England* (New London, CT, 1749), 20. Jennifer Speake, ed., *Oxford Dictionary of Proverbs*, 6th ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 103; Bartlett Jere Whiting, *Early American Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 143.

unravel the paradox of an *imperium in imperio*. It was Adams's most distinctive contribution to Patriot ideology to date, prompted by *Massachusettensis*'s intransigence.⁵⁷

Massachusettensis Nos. 11–17 rehashed arguments but with citations calculated to rouse Adams's ire. First was familiar parliamentary legislation purporting to establish Britain's uninterrupted exercise of the authority to tax. Knowing Adams's veneration for James Otis, with which Sewall had once tried to embarrass Adams into accord, *Massachusettensis* No. 12 (February 27) quoted Otis's earlier elucidation of parliamentary supremacy to undermine *Novanglus*. The thirteenth (March 6) traded personal insults warning calumny "recoils upon the head of the accuser" of "wheedle." "I wish Novanglus's memory had served him better, his tale might have been consistent with itself, however variant from truth." Hitherto, *Massachusettensis* had said nothing of any previous connection with his adversary. But here he (probably Sewall) expected Novanglus's acknowledgement. So too with No. 14 (March 13) wherein he (Sewall?) returned to the Albany Plan of Union of 1754 when the prospect of French conquest was taken seriously by Sewall and Adams then in their twenties. (Leonard was but fourteen years old.) "There is but a step between you and ruin," *Massachusettensis* warned in No. 15 (March 20). These were the sentiments of a friend. "I have sometimes quarreled with my friends," *Massachusettensis* wrote in the final letter, No. 17 (April 3).

It is painful to me to give offence to an individual, but I have not spared
the ruinous policy of my brother or my friend;— they are both far

⁵⁷ Thompson, *John Adams and the Spirit of Liberty*, 66–79, 84–85; Ryerson, *John Adams's Republic*, 134–

advanced. —Truth from its own energy will finally prevail, but to have a speedy effect it must sometimes be accompanied with severity.

Novanglus was a “subverter” and *Massachusettensis* had failed to save him. Who but Sewall might have uttered such a personal plea?⁵⁸

IV

After the Revolutionary War, American opinion followed Adams’s identification of Sewall, unaware of Leonard’s claim of authorship. Leonard returned to Massachusetts in 1799 and 1808, vainly attempting to recover his estate, meeting with Adams on both occasions.⁵⁹ Discussion doubtless rested on the pre-Revolution years, their friendship having commenced in

⁵⁸ In London, Sewall reprised *Philanthrop* for an early response to the Declaration of Independence over six articles, *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, August 16,–September 4, 1776. He developed *Massachusettensis*’s discussion of the Imperial Crisis, premising that independence was always in rebels’ minds. Having hoped to dissuade Adams, was Sewall also telling himself that *Massachusettensis*’s friendly overtures had been pointless? “The curtain is drawn, and the Actors now appear in their genuine characters,” he wrote on August 21, citing statutory evidence of parliamentary supremacy that appears in research notes among his private papers. Carol Berkin thought the notes evidence of input to *Massachusettensis* No. 12 (*Jonathan Sewall*, 110). This was confirmed by authorship attribution test 24. [“Memorandum listing acts supporting claim of Parliament to jurisdiction over the colonies and the right to impose duties”], n.d., Sewall Papers, 14:7008-09; [“Note on the establishment of the General Post Office”], n.d., Sewall Papers, 14:7024.

⁵⁹ Daniel Leonard to John Adams, New York, June 30, 1799, quoted in Davol, *Two Men of Taunton*, 363.

the mid-1760s when Leonard had embarked on his legal career.⁶⁰ Leonard disclosed details of his political “seduction” by Hutchinson and Sewall,⁶¹ perhaps prompting the recollection by Adams in his autobiography (c.1804) that he “suspected, but never that I knew ascertained” *Massachusettensis* was “written by two of my old friends, Jonathan Sewall and Daniel Leonard.” Adams was referring to public opinion, which assumed single authorship, while open to the possibility of coauthorship.⁶²

Sewall’s account of a warm reunion with Adams in London in 1787 is silent on *Massachusettensis* though celebrating their heroic friendship, describing Adams as his “*fidus Achates*” (Aeneas’s faithful henchman in Virgil’s *Aeneid*).⁶³ Sewall’s own exile took him from Massachusetts to England to New Brunswick; before faltering, Sewall knew that for Adams their friendship burned brighter than most others. His family accepted Sewall’s authorship of *Massachusettensis* without question.⁶⁴ Adams similarly cast their friendship in heroic terms on publication of a joint edition of *Novanglus* and *Massachusettensis* in 1819. “He always called me John, and I him Jonathan; and I often said to him, I wish my name were David.” The famous

⁶⁰ Adams later saluted Leonard as an “intimate” friend but only when coupled with Sewall—his “brother barristers” and “my cordial, confidential and bosom friends.” To Jedidiah Morse, Quincy, November 29, 1815, *Works of John Adams*, 10:194–95.

⁶¹ *Works of John Adams*, 10:194–95.

⁶² *Adams Diary*, 3:313n.

⁶³ Jonathan Sewall to Joseph Lee, September 21, 1787, box 1, folder 15, Lee Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

⁶⁴ Samuel Sewall to Lucius M. Sargent, Burlington, February 19, 1851, “Authorship of the Letters of *Massachusettensis*,” 5–8.

Biblical story of David and Jonathan retrospectively projected the Adams–Sewall friendship onto the grand narrative of American history.⁶⁵ Adams described his actual last conversation with Sewall when he had been taking his departure for the Continental Congress against Sewall’s most earnest advice while he was on the court circuit at Falmouth. The debate with *Massachusettensis* initiated by *Novanglus* thus seemed a clear continuation of that discussion. The “instant” identification of Sewall was Adams rhapsodizing the moment of realization in December 1774 when he recognized Sewall in *Massachusettensis*, when conviction banished doubt. It was a gift to the self, an attempt to capture echoes of emotional intimacy and intensity, neither fiction nor wishful thinking.

When presented with Chipman’s testimony of Leonard’s authorship, Adams was disarmingly candid.

He said that he knew all the time that Leonard was suspected to be the author; but he never believed it, because he never thought Leonard able to write it. That it exhibited, indeed, more labor than Sewall was accustomed to expend on his compositions, and such interior marks of Sewall’s mind, that, if Leonard did write it, he was quite sure he was indebted to Sewall, either for the general turn of thought, or for subsequent corrections.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Novanglus, and Massachusettensis*, iii–vii. On David and Jonathan, see 1 Samuel, 18:1; 19:1–3; 2 Samuel, 1.26–27.

⁶⁶ Senator Josiah Quincy III, *Life of Josiah Quincy*, 380.

In this version, Sewall inspired and edited Leonard's drafts, perhaps contributing original passages. Adams refused to concede Sewall's noninvolvement, even when acknowledging he was "mistaken in imputing" *Massachusettensis* to Sewall alone. He reassured the veteran Abraham Holmes: "I have had, in the early part of my life, nearly equal esteem for both of these characters [*Sewall and Leonard*], and am willing that justice should be done between them." Accepting Leonard's authorship "makes no alteration in the argument" advanced in *Novanglus*.⁶⁷

Adams's measured advice about co-authorship was buried in the rush to prove him wrong. In 1850, Charles Francis Adams, John Adams's grandson and editor of his *Works* "now understood" Leonard authored *Massachusettensis*, citing the critical evidence of his grandfather's recently opened autobiography and the Holmes correspondence.⁶⁸ He supplied expert testimony in a newspaper debate⁶⁹ in which Lucius M. Sargent declared in Leonard's favor, citing hearsay evidence (a letter from Leonard to Judge Chipman's son confirming authorship, which has not survived) to rectify a "colossal . . . mistake."⁷⁰ The investigation was

⁶⁷ John Adams to Abraham Holmes, October 14, 1821, *The Adams Family Papers, 1639–1889*, (microfilm, 608 reels, UMI Research Collections, 1954), reel 124, Mass. Hist. Soc.; *Adams Papers*, 2:225. Abraham Holmes (1754-1839), an Anti-Federalist at the 1788 Massachusetts convention and representative for Rochester (1787–91, 1797-98) joined Adams at the 1820 convention on the state constitution.

⁶⁸ *Works of John Adams*, 2:405; 4:10.

⁶⁹ See note 3

⁷⁰ Drake's case rested on John Adams's own judgement and the absence of evidence indicating Sewall and Leonard disputed Adams's attribution. Sewall's eldest son intimated his father's authorship was "a fact well-known to him." Sargent believed Adams became convinced of Sewall's authorship following their reunion. "The Author of *Massachusettensis*," 354-356; "Authorship of the Letters of *Massachusettensis*," 5, 11.

flawed, however, for Sargent, unapprised of John Adams's thoughts on co-authorship, dismissed C.F. Adams's suggestion that stylistic variations in *Massachusettensis* might be indicative of such. "Summing up all the Evidence, the conclusion could be that both [*Sewall and Leonard*] had had their hands in it."⁷¹ Sargent uncritically evaluated Chipman's evidence, perhaps because he obtained it from C.F. Adams barely a month before going to press,⁷² and did not know Chipman started working for Leonard on Sewall's recommendation after *Massachusettensis* commenced publication. Content to prove *Massachusettensis* was not who John Adams had said he was, Sargent denied himself the chance to explore co-authorship.

V

Historical evidence, stylometrics, and textual analysis support Sewall's co-authorship of *Massachusettensis* in a propaganda scheme likely directed by Sewall with Leonard a major player. Adams's actual friendship with Sewall complicated the writing of *Novanglus* and *Massachusettensis*—informing and giving form to the debate, especially for Adams, who consciously aimed to crown a long-standing rivalry with an adversary who might become an enemy. Adams imagined then conducted dialogue between two authors—him and Sewall—under cover of pseudonyms. *Novanglus* took Adams on an intellectual journey to eventual choices of independence before empire, country before king and friends. For much of that journey, he was never alone; Sewall was his omnipresent imaginary friend whom *Novanglus* was

⁷¹ Charles F. Adams to Lucius M. Sargent, March 1, 1851, "Authorship of the Letters of *Massachusettensis*," 22–23.

⁷² Lucius M. Sargent to Charles F. Adams, February 27, 1851, *Adams Family Papers*, reel 540; "The Author of *Massachusettensis*," 356.

answering. Largely for him Adams was writing *Novanglus*.⁷³ Sewall and Leonard may not have written *Massachusettensis* for Adams, but Adams most certainly was in their minds when they finished it.

⁷³ For fuller treatment see Colin Nicolson and Owen Dudley Edwards, *Imaginary Friendship in the American Revolution: John Adams and Jonathan Sewall* (Routledge, forthcoming).

Appendix

Authorship Attribution Test Performed for *Massachusettsensis* Series

[See Attached placed Landscape view]

Table One

Attribution of Authorship for *Massachusettsensis* Series

Letter	Following stylometry	Following textual analysis	Words
No. 1	Sewall?	Sewall?	2597
No. 2	Leonard?	Sewall and Leonard?	2864
No. 3	Sewall?	Sewall?	3633
No. 4	Sewall?	Sewall?	4692
No. 5	Leonard?	Leonard?	2558
No. 6	Leonard?	Leonard?	2636
No. 7		Leonard?	2665
No. 8	Sewall?	Leonard?	1677
No. 9		Leonard and/or Sewall?	2267
No. 10		Leonard?	1974
No. 11	Leonard?	Sewall?	2005
No. 12	Leonard?	Sewall and Leonard?	2152
No. 13	Leonard?	Sewall?	2947
No. 14	Sewall?	Sewall?	1682
No. 15	Sewall?	Sewall?	2328
No. 16	Leonard?	Leonard and/or Sewall?	3537
No. 17		Leonard and/or Sewall?	1461
TOTAL			43675
AVERAGE			2569

Lead Author	Words	
	Average	Total
Sewall?	2768	16609
Leonard?	2671	18699