A Republic of Men
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Preface

I started this book in 1986. After doing some initial research, I began to write an introductory chapter meant to create a context for examining the American founders’ construction of gender and politics. My idea was to explore the gendered basis of seventeenth-century English political theory and the gendered evolution of nineteenth-century American culture. Building on the past and anticipating the future, I would then focus the main analysis on how the founders inherited, adapted, altered, and bequeathed patriarchal politics during the late eighteenth century. Alas, the best laid plans . . . By the time I had drafted the first chapter and divided it in two, and then again several times, my introductory chapter had become a book. On the Man Question: Gender and Civic Virtue in America was published in 1991.

At that point, I focused directly on the writings and speeches of the American founders. I was intrigued by their language. Many of them were obsessed with democratic disorder in the ranks of men. They developed and deployed a “grammar of manhood” that provided informal rules for stigmatizing disorderly men, justifying citizenship for deserving men, and elevating exceptional men to positions of leadership and political authority. Importantly, the terms they used to stigmatize disorderly men (e.g., effeminacy), characterize citizenship (e.g., manly freedom), and legitimize political leadership (e.g., civic fatherhood) precluded women from participating in what became a republic of men. I decided to focus this book on how the founders’ gendered language and concepts shaped their patriarchal politics.

I presented aspects of my research in a series of conference papers that explored the founders’ gendered language and politics. Early comments from Shane Phelan, Christine Di Stefano, and especially Pauline Schloesser encouraged me to broaden my focus and refine my analysis. Later remarks by Kirstie McClure and Kathy Ferguson were important to the revision process. Booth Fowler, Judith Grant, and Robin Romans read rough drafts of several chapters, persuading me to temper some claims and investigate others. Michael Kimmel’s reading of the full first draft provided a useful sense of what
was still missing, while Harry Brod’s superb critique of the entire manuscript guided me through the next round of research and revisions. Kevin White’s thorough and informed reading of the penultimate draft was the basis for a final set of revisions. I thank all of these scholars for their time, energy, interest, and insights.

Two aspects of this research have been previously published. “Manhood, Immortality, and Politics during the American Founding,” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 5, 2 (November 1996), weaves together a number of loose threads to show how the founders relied on the idea of immortality to temper individualism and promote public order. “The Bachelor and Other Disorderly Men,” *Journal of Men’s Studies* 6, 1 (August 1997), explores the founders’ portrait of male marginality and examines its relationship to family, citizenship, and political leadership. I am immensely grateful to *Journal of Men’s Studies* editor James Doyle for his wisdom, collegiality, and flexibility.

I am tempted to spell out in detail how important my wife and son have been to the thinking that went into this book, the process of writing and rewriting it, and the fact that it is now completed. Instead, let me simply say, Kathy and Simon, I love you.