This volume contains eleven substantive essays by scholars whose work on Federalism has begun to appear in the past dozen years, together with an introduction by the editors and a conclusion by James M. Banner Jr. The introduction, entitled “The Paradoxical Legacy of the Federalists,” explains why the editors feel reconsideration is in order. They argue that the scholarly preoccupation during the past thirty years with the transition from republicanism to liberal capitalism has focused disproportionate attention on the Jeffersonian Republicans as agents of change. The Federalists, who unsuccessfully opposed the Republicans in national politics, accordingly have been dismissed as marginal. In his concluding essay Banner makes the same point more forcefully, likening the current historiographical neglect of the Federalists to the former historiographical fate of “women, African Americans, ethnic and sexual minorities, and working people . . . [L]ike the ’inarticulate,’ the voiceless, the unrecognized, and the forgotten . . . in the last twenty years the Federalists have been lost to view.” They have been “[b]anished . . . from the great reconsideration of American politics and society of our age . . . precisely because they lacked all the exoticism and did not seem to need rediscovering” (pp. 248). These essays, then, are an attempt to put the Federalists back on the historiographical map.

The essays are grouped under three general headings. The first, entitled “Age of Federalism,” deals with the era during which the Federalists exercised national leadership. It begins with Rogers M. Smith’s tightly argued essay, “Constructing National Identity: Strategies of the Federalists.” His premise is that national identity, particularly in an era of nation building, rather than being assumed had to be constructed. Smith explores the various strategies pursued by the Federalists in defining citizenship, arguing that they formed “a major dimension of the Federalist-Jeffersonian conflict that intensified through the 1790s.” Smith examines not only the pertinent legislation of that decade but also the judicial decisions of Federalist judges in cases where issues of citizenship arose. He is particularly interested in the role “ascriptive notions of American identity,” that is ones that depend on “unalterable characteristics that are claimed to determine who a person is” (p. 20), played in the developing debate between Federalists and Republicans. He argues that the Federalists emerged as “the champions of almost unalterable hereditary allegiances and nativism” while the Jeffersonian Republicans embraced a citizenship based on “mutual consent and civic racism” (p. 21).

The Federalists initially entertained more liberal attitudes towards Indians and slaves than their Republican counterparts, but surrendered them in favor of three other legal objectives as the decade progressed: 1) asserting the “legal primacy of national over state citizenship” as well as 2) the “near-perpetual allegiance to the nation” and 3) the “denial of full political privileges to immigrant Jeffersonians” (p. 26). The first of these provided the basis for Wilson’s and Jay’s attempt in Chisholm v. Georgia to deny to the states the common law right of a sovereign not to be sued without its consent. The second surfaced in Congressional debates over whether to seat elected representatives whose citizenship was in question (William L. Smith and Albert Gallatin) as well as in court cases involving Americans serving on French warships. And the last lay behind the Naturalization and infamous Alien Friends Acts of 1798. Smith sees the Federalists resorting to nativism to compensate for being “on the losing side of the systems of inequality that most white American
men favored." However, he does acknowledge their contribution to establishing the prevailing vision of "national identity centered on the traits of Anglophone, native-born, white men" (p. 40).

Doron Ben-Atar, in "Alexander Hamilton's Alternative: Technology Piracy and the Report on Manufactures," seeks to correct the notion that Hamilton was an unqualified partisan of Great Britain. Instead Ben-Atar argues that industrial espionage in explicit defiance of British law and designed to transfer the advantages of Britain's early industrial leadership to the United States informed Hamilton's approach to securing the nation's economic independence and was imbedded in his "Report on Manufactures." Hamilton also advocated strong patent law protections for industrial pirates in the United States while supporting harsh penalties for anyone guilty of transmitting American technology abroad.

Herbert Sloan's "Hamilton's Second Thoughts: Federalist Finance Revisited" takes Hamilton's last Report as Secretary of the Treasury to Congress, where he acknowledged that public credit had yet to be placed "on grounds which cannot be disturbed" (p. 61) as his starting point. Sloan distinguishes between "putting the public debt on a paying basis" (p. 63) and establishing public credit. He argues Hamilton failed to establish public credit because of his almost total reliance on the impost to finance the funding of the revolutionary debt, and the inability of the government to develop internal sources of revenue. Sloan invokes the two rebellions engendered by Federalist attempts at internal taxation as well as the role the direct tax of 1798 played in Adams' defeat in 1800 to underscore his claim that Hamilton's attempt to establish public credit was a "failure" (p. 69). Sloan concludes by alluding to the way this failure continued to haunt subsequent administrations for twenty years after the first secretary's resignation.

Andrew R. L. Cayton's "Radicals in the 'Western World': The Federalist Conquest of the Trans-Appalachian North America," celebrates the role of the Federalists in opening the west and insuring that it remained attached to the national government. Cayton emphasizes that this was a "radical" achievement. The Federalists succeeded in decisively shaping the Old Northwest through the Ordinances of 1785 and 1787 and establishing the national government's "legitimacy" (p. 89) there. But they were much less successful in shaping the Southwest, which evolved under Virginia's hegemony as an area dominated by a slaveholding, plantation elite that valued localism over national control. Moreover, both areas turned against them politically in 1800 despite their military success in subduing the northern Indians in 1794 and their diplomatic success in opening the Mississippi in 1795. Accordingly, most Federalists saw the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 as sealing their political doom nationally. Nonetheless, Cayton insists we recognize the Federalists to be far more radical in their vision for the West than their conservative though politically more successful Republican rivals as well as the persistence of some of the Federalists' achievements despite their political defeat.

The second section, entitled "Federalism and the Origins of American Culture," contains essays that go beyond the "Age of Federalism." However, the first contribution in this section, David Waldstreicher's "Federalism, the Styles of Politics, and the Politics of Style," focuses on the 1790s. Waldstreicher argues that the Federalism of this era "was every bit as much a politics of style as the Jacobinical brand of republicanism that the Federalists denounced as an imported fashion" (p. 100). He cautions against discounting the importance of style in favor of reasoned claims to represent reality. To do so is "to unwittingly take the side . . . of the party in power whose position has made it in their interest to proclaim certain sorts of . . . speech and action to be illegitimate." "Realism," he maintains, "too is a style . . . [which] in its modern liberal version, often has served as a way of naturalizing certain class and gender norms under the post-Enlightenment guise of reason and common sense" (p. 101). Federalism's particular style, which Waldstreicher describes as "a stylized antistyle," is a case in point. Beginning with the struggle over the ratification of the Constitution, the Federalists "invented a national people" that was supposed to be "orderly . . . unified . . . and ultimately . . . ÔrespectableÔ" (p. 101), even though many conspicuously were not. Waldstreicher sees the Federalists' style doing them more harm than good in the long run by denying to them "the new forms of political activity, and the new political actors that the Revolution had brought into being" (p. 100).

This sets the stage for Waldstreicher's retelling of the story of national politics during the Federalist decade as a struggle over styles as much as over substance. His account stresses civic and religious ceremonies more than issues, though he rejects the idea that the Federalists distinguished between the two: "In Federalist practice style was substance" (p. 117). Waldstreicher also insists we see the Federalists as stylistic innovators: "[B]y mobilizing a version of the people's and by denigrating the opposition's activities as mere rhetoric—Federalism..."
looked forward to modern politics” (p.101), though he laments the “profoundly conservative, even repressive ends” (p.117) which their style of popular mobilization has often served.

Rosemarie Zagarrï’s “Gender and the First Party System” contrasts the differing attitudes of Federalists and Republicans towards women’s proper role in politics. While neither party was prepared fully to empower women, Zagarrï finds the Federalists a good deal more accommodating towards them than the Republicans were. This leads Zagarrï to conclude that “the broadening of political privileges for white males [by the Republicans] rested on—in a sense depended on—the subordination of women, as well as blacks and Indians. . . . Paradoxically, the social conservatives of the early republic proved to be more progressive concerning women than their putatively more liberal rivals” (p. 119). Zagarrï supports this conclusion with an analysis of the quasi-political ceremonies women were admitted to in the early years of the republic such as Fourth of July celebrations. She also contrasts the political preferences of two women writers of the period, Mercy O. Warren and Judith S. Murray, to underscore her point. Warren, who sympathized with the Republicans, was a traditionalist in her ideas about women’s role in society while the proto-feminist Murray identified with the Federalists.

In “The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Federalism,” Paul Finkelman argues that “the Federalists were the people most committed to liberty and racial fairness, if not necessarily equality and fraternity” (p. 156) in the early Republic. Finkelman finds that many Federalists—be entertained an antipathy for slavery and slaveholders that dated back to the Federal Constitution’s framing and adoption. He goes on to attribute some of the Republican antagonism to the British Treaty to Jay’s willingness to waive claims against Britain for slaves they had carried off contrary to the peace treaty in return for commercial concessions. After the Republican triumph of 1800, the Federalists as a party became more outspoken against slavery as they assumed the character of a northern-based minority. And blacks responded in kind. For instance, in 1812 the Federalists managed to use black voters to take over the hitherto Republican town meeting of Salem, Massachusetts. The Federalists were also consistently more sympathetic to the Haitian slave insurrection than were the Republicans. Finkelman argues that “Jeffersonian democracy led to racism, elevating all whites to equality on the backs of slaves and free blacks” in both North and South. In contrast, “Federalists did not need the wages of whiteness to feel secure in their social place” (p.154), thanks largely to their elitist social standing.

Steven Watts concludes the section on political culture with an essay entitled “Ministers, Misanthropes, and Mandarins: The Federalists and the Culture of Capitalism, 1790-1820.” In it he portrays the Federalists less as resisters of change than as its agents who nonetheless felt unhappy about the consequences of their handiwork’s assault on paternalism, civic humanity, and gentry authority. Watts examines the lives of three leading Federalists—Timothy Dwight, John Adams, and Josiah Quincy—to show how they attempted to balance the competing objectives of self-assertion and self-control. Dwight sought this through revivals, Adams through checks against the willfulness of natural aristocrats, and Quincy by emulating what he thought were the unprincipled tricks of his Republican opponents. Watts concludes by suggesting that Federalist mediations between assertiveness and repression migrated into Victorian culture and eventually “became central to the whole structure of modern capitalism” (p.175).

The final section, “Varieties of Federalism,” begins with an essay by Keith Arbour entitled “Benjamin Franklin as Weird Sister: William Cobbett and Federalist Philadelphiä’s Fears of Democracy.” Arbour argues that Franklin had antagonized Philadelphiä’s Federalist leadership throughout his career, but particularly at the end of it. Instead of endowing institutions the Federalists identified with and Franklin had helped to found, he left the Library Company and Hospital insulting bequests while the bulk of his estate went to establishing endowments for assisting young tradesmen in Boston and Philadelphia. Federalist resentment of Franklin was sufficiently strong to allow William Cobbett, an immigrant upstart journalist, to make his name by scurrilously attacking Franklin as the embodiment of all that had gone wrong in the French Revolution. Cobbettä’s Federalist audience feared not just economic and political inversions, but “lurking darkly beneath both . . . gender inversion” (p. 193). Though Cobbettä’s wild allegations stressing the sexual irregularities in Franklinä’s life commanded an attentive audience, they worked at cross-purposes with the Federalist objective of policing the press and, in the opinion John Adams, were counter-productive.

In “Steady Habitsä Under Siege: The Defense of Federalism in Jeffersonian Connecticut,” Andrew Siegel accuses “[l]eaders of” applying “a double standard to the Federalists. While traitorous or cantanker-
ous Republicans are seen as anomalous, the entire Federalist party is held accountable for the ‘Insular secessionist schemes of Timothy Pickering and the sulphurous jottings of Fisher Ames’ (pp.199-200). Siegel analyses Connecticut Federalism to vindicate it against the charge of being anti-republican. He mobilizes Federalist voices, which celebrated the state as the longest lived republic in human history, to demonstrate that their conservatism rested on “the twin pillars” of “caution and reverence for the status quo” (p. 210). Siegel acknowledges that “[t]he twin crises of the Embargo and the war [of 1812] exposed the contradiction” (p. 211) in their conservatism and led at times to an incautious defense of tradition. But he argues that caution eventually prevailed, as exemplified in the Hartford Convention, and that this paved the way for a convergence between the two parties both nationally and locally and the disappearance of the antagonisms that had dominated politics since the early 1790s. Siegel is more critical of Federalist paternalism as it shaped male leader’s attitudes towards blacks and women, but argues that Federalists treated women in private, particularly their wives, more as political equals.

Alan Taylor’s essay, “From Fathers to Friends of the People: Political Personae in the Early Republic,” concludes this section. Readers familiar with his recent books, Liberty men and Great Proprietors and William Cooper’s Town will not be surprised by his use of Henry Knox and William Cooper to exemplify a particular type of Federalist who managed by dubious means to enrich himself in the midst of the financial turmoil of the immediate postwar period. Wealth only partially fulfilled their ambitions for gentility, though. They also sought to establish their social, cultural, and political power in the 1790s at a time when the economic expansion of that decade was empowering challengers. Taylor shows how Jedediah Peck in Otsego County, New York and Ezekiel G. Dodge on the Maine frontier first economically co-operated with and eventually challenged their former patron’s political power. Taylor argues that the process was repeated in “one county after another” (p. 244) throughout the newly settled areas in the North. It did so because men like Cooper and Knox tried “to bring the Revolution to a premature end” by pursuing the illusion “that gentlemen could restore the colonial era’s unity of economic, social, and cultural authority.” But, Taylor asserts, “[t]hey failed to recognize the enduring potential of the American Revolution’s legacy to legitimate upstarts unwilling or unable to achieve or endure genteel authority” (p. 245).

The foregoing summary of the substantive essays contained in this volume should make it clear that scholars will have to look beyond them for synthetic coherence. The surprising thing about these essays is how little agreement exists among the authors about the nature or the significance of the subject under investigation. Some view Federalism as the expression of an ineffectual conservatism, others insist it was essentially radical and revolutionary, while a few see them as being both simultaneously. Some emphasize Federalists’ tendency towards elitism and exclusivity, others its superior regard for women and minorities. Some view it as little more than a different style, others as the embodiment of a radically different vision of the republic. While so little agreement about the nature of the beast persists, “reconsiderations” about it are likely to continue indefinitely without noticeable clarification.

James Banner in his conclusion entitled, “The Federalists—Still in Need of Reconsideration,” attempts to chart a course that he hopes will clarify matters in the future. Beyond the prevailing “cultural biases” in the profession against elites, he identifies three “historiographical circumstances” which need to be negotiated before “a coherent presentation of the entire thickly textured worldview of Federalists” will be possible. The first has to do with “the application of the concepts ‘court’ and ‘country’ to the politics of the early nation.” Banner notes that what began as “metaphorical constructs . . . have now come to be taken for established reality” (p. 249) and questions their applicability to a “nation state [where] the continuous sovereign authority that embodies public power and has legitimately gained the right to protect, govern, and administer through law a unified territory for an inclusive common good . . . had not yet come into being to stand in for a European court” (p. 250). Banner also notes that the rapid transformation of the Federalists from “court” to “country” after Jefferson’s victory in 1800 raises additional questions about the suitability of this model. Banner’s second “circumstance,” is the similarity he notes between Antifederalism in the 1780s and Federalism after 1800. This suggests to him a “bloodline . . . between the earliest criticism of the Constitution and attacks upon the Jeffersonian majority” which underscores the importance of Federalism “as a major component of the American political tradition.” Finally, Banner argues it is time to rethink the Federalists’ relationship “both ideological and in fact, to the emerging market economy of the new century.” If we do so, he suspects, we will discover “distinctly liberal, or at least protoliberal, ideas” and behaviors, particularly among the lesser Federalists” (p. 251).
Banner’s hope for this volume is that it will lead to a “deep and nuanced” examination of Federalism “as a many-dimensional ideology, as a political party, and as the public expression of a vital segment of American society” during the early republic. Above all, he hopes Federalism will come to be “seen as one of many complex emanations of the eighteenth century... that created a political tradition too weak to withstand the forces of democratic capitalism but strong enough to imprint itself on virtually every important issue that followed its day” (p. 253). If Banner gets his wish, though, it is not clear how he sees the obvious “bloodline” between Federalist strategies of resistance to the Embargo and the War of 1812 and Southern secession during the era of the Civil War being reconciled with the creative liberalism he anticipates future scholarship will unearth. My own hunch is that his research program will lead pretty much to the same “tension-ridden, and paradoxical” (pp. 15-16) interpretation of Federalism that the editors of this volume rightly acknowledge is the hallmark of these essays.

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