CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgments xv

CHAPTER ONE REVOLUTION AND TRADITION IN AMERICAN CULTURE 3 "There is no past for us" 3 "On the mount of Remembrance" 15 "Who has made any thing out of America?" 21

CHAPTER TWO

REVISIONS OF THE REVOLUTION IN AN UN-REVOLUTIONARY CULTURE 33

"Nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed" 37 "We are among the sepulchres of our fathers" 41 "Losing sight of our revolutionary landmarks in the fogs of partyism" 49 "Uncle Sam's a Hundred" 59 "Patriots off their pedestals" 65 "Nothing missing except the Revolution itself" 70

CHAPTER THREE

REVOLUTIONARY ICONOGRAPHY IN NATIONAL TRADITION 76

"Historical understanding is like an evocation of images" 78 "It is impossible to point out an important change in the political organization of a people . . . without discovering a correspondent effect on their prosperity" 91 "Our ideas of his character, and of our own character" 100

CHAPTER FOUR

RESHAPING THE PAST TO PERSUADE THE PRESENT 110

"Among a democratic people poetry will not feed on legends" 110 "The American Revolution might afford subjects to employ the poet" 113 "The Revolution is singularly lacking in dramatic properties" 129 Appendix: The American Revolution on Film 143

CHAPTER FIVE

A RESPONSIVE REVOLUTION IN HISTORICAL ROMANCE 145

"Fiction may some day lend its charms to amplify and consecrate facts" 145

"It shall go hard with us if we do not soon bring to light every remnant of tradition that the war has left!" 153 "A sober desire for history—the unwritten, the unconsidered, but veracious history" 161

"Bringing the British lion and Yankee eagle together" 168 "The more pregnant echoes of the past" 175

CHAPTER SIX

THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION AS NATIONAL RITE DE PASSAGE 186

"A people, like an individual, must needs pass through a season of youth in its progressive development" 186

"Complex processes of symbolic transformation mediate the distance" between cultural or social upheavals on the one hand and theoretical developments on the other" 198

"When this New World awoke to man's estate" 203

"Men living in democratic societies . . . are forever varying, altering, and restoring secondary matters, but they are very careful not to touch fundamentals. They love change, but they dread revolutions" 211

Contents

CHAPTER SEVEN IMAGINATION, TRADITION, AND NATIONAL CHARACTER 221

"What a sieve is history; only it lets out the grain, and retains the chaff" 222

"The comfort of remembrance: a relic of the past to reassure them" 233 "A lingering desire to tell the true story of the Revolution" 242 "Though obscure and susceptible of contradictory meanings, traditions do not cease to be reverenced.... The poet may interpret them, and illustrate and enlarge their influence upon national character" 246

Coda: The Civil War, the Revolution, and American Culture 256

SUPPLEMENT

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN AMERICAN POLITICAL HUMOR 260

Notes 273

Index 371