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“The Taste of This Country”: Jefferson’s Legacy of Cultural Production and The
Formation of American Identity

A Thesis by

Erika S. Gibson

Chapman University

Orange, CA

Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in War & Society

December 2022

Committee in charge:

Alexander Bay, Ph.D., Chair

Jennifer Keene, Ph.D.

Stephanie Takaragawa, Ph.D.

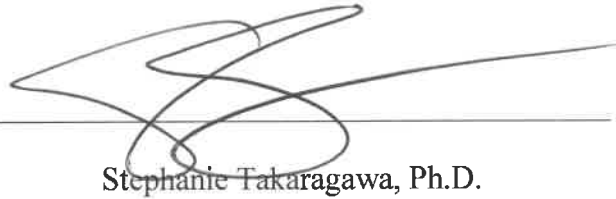
The thesis of Erika S. Gibson is approved.



Alexander Bay, Ph.D., Chair



Jennifer Keene, Ph.D.



Stephanie Takaragawa, Ph.D.

May 2019

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American Identity
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by Erika S. Gibson

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VITA

EDUCATION

M.A. in War and Society, May 2019- Chapman University

B.A. in History, May 2017- Chapman University

PUBLICATIONS

Gibson, Erika. 2018. "'Frenchified': French Food and Salon Culture in Jefferson's White House." *Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8 (2): 1-13.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2019. Gibson, Erika. "'Without the Intervention of Servants': Agnotology in Action at Jefferson's Presidential Table." Society for Historians of the Early American Republic. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

2017. Gibson, Erika. "'Frenchified': French Food and Salon Culture in Jefferson's White House." 7th Annual International Food Studies Conference. Rome, Italy

2017. Gibson, Erika. "'Frenchified': French Food and Salon Culture in Jefferson's White House." Phi Alpha Theta History Honors Society Southern California Regional Conference. Northridge, California.

2017. Gibson, Erika. "*A La Francaise*: French Influences in Cold War Era White House Entertaining." Chapman University Student Scholar Symposium. Orange, California.

FELLOWSHIPS

International Center for Jefferson Studies Short Term Research Fellowship, 2017

Chapman University Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship, 2017

HONORS/AWARDS

Emerging Scholars Award, 7th Annual International Food Studies Conference, 2017

Research Grant, Office of Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity, 2016, 2017

Research Grant, Wilkinson College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, 2016, 2017, 2018

Travel Grant, History Department, Chapman University, 2017

ABSTRACT

“The Taste of This Country”: Jefferson’s Legacy of Cultural Production and the Formation of American Identity

by Erika S. Gibson

This paper uses three fundamental elements of cultural anthropology, food, customs, and language, to examine Jefferson’s diplomatic strategy as president and understanding how he forged a new culture rooted in republicanism. The legacy of tyrannical British rule spurred Jefferson to establish White House protocol which dispensed with the hierarchies of European social practices and instead mirrored republican values of liberty and equality. Analyzing Jefferson’s presidency within a framework of cultural production, reveals that Jefferson strategically deployed cultural elements in the construction of a distinctly American identity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Cultural Production as a Legacy of War	1
American Republicanism	4
Cultural Anthropology Framework	9
Historiography	10
Cultural Production as a Diplomatic Tool	12
Chapter 1	15
Republicanism at the Table	15
French Influences	18
Entertaining at the White House	19
Jefferson's Political Agenda	24
Dining with the President	28
Wine	33
Conclusion	39
Chapter 2	41
New Presidential Protocol	41
Federalist Entertaining	43
Country Roots, Parisian Polish	44
Rules of Etiquette	48
The Tunisian Delegation	54
Republican Attire	57
Conclusion	64
Chapter 3	66
Discourses of Diplomacy, Tropes of Authority	66
Linguistic Analysis	67
Public Writings	69
Private Correspondence	82
Conclusion	91
Republican Dining	92
Presidential Protocol	93
Language and Discursive Spaces	95
Imagined Communities	98
References	101

Introduction

"[T]he taste of this country [was] artificially created by our long restraint under the English government to the strong wines of Portugal and Spain."¹ Jefferson maligned America's poor education on wine, but his complaint about the nation's level of taste extended to American culture at large. As president, Jefferson considered himself the nation's host, a social function he declared was vital to the success of the presidency. His efforts to establish the social responsibilities of the president were inherently diplomatic. He forged the nation's diplomatic strategy in the new capital in the wake of revolution, triggered by the development of an American cultural identity distinct from Great Britain. This paper uses three fundamental elements of cultural anthropology, food, customs, and language, to examine how Jefferson's diplomatic strategy as president provides a new framework for understanding how he forged a new culture rooted in republicanism. Analyzing Jefferson's presidency within a framework of cultural production, reveals that Jefferson strategically deployed cultural elements in the construction of a distinctly American identity, which oftentimes appropriated cultural norms from France while opposing British traditions. As such, these tactics were conscious ploys to break with British practices and develop a distinctively American society. The memory of British rule and war spurred Jefferson to construct a new identity which would strengthen the nation in the eyes of European allies.

Cultural Production as a Legacy of War

By adopting a War and Society studies focus, I compare Jefferson's two legacies, that of a Democratic Republican and diplomatic scholar, to reveal a holistic picture of his political persona. Examining diplomacy through cultural production also revises our understanding of

¹ Thomas Jefferson to William Alston, October 6, 1818, Thomas Jefferson Papers, Library of Congress. Polygraph copy available online.

Jefferson because it highlights how he used presidential capital as a weapon of war or tool for peace. His food, ritual, and language practices were a necessary part of what has become known as Jeffersonian Democracy. This approach contributes to a broader understanding of political decision making in a socially and politically unstable era. Ultimately, my study promises to show that Jefferson's politics were inherently social to establish a unique cultural identity necessary to maintain an independent nation strong enough to withstand the pressures of international politics. This social strategy met with domestic success as well; much of his legislation was a result of efforts outside the capital. Jefferson relied on personal interactions and building rapport with his colleagues rather than the brute force of an executive order.

There are three topics in which I address throughout this thesis. The first is the influence of societal and cultural beliefs on warfare and national military policies. The United States grappled to establish a functional government in the wake of the Revolution. The advent of the Constitution in 1787 and Washington's election in 1788 created a stable and sustainable state. However, Jefferson inherited a government which struggled with foreign relations due largely to its inexperience and lack of international credibility. Through sound domestic policies which improved opportunities for the citizenry, specifically tax reform and westward expansion, he hoped to improve America's reputation among European powers. He believed that strengthening the buying power of the common man was essential to strengthen the nation. Jefferson's goal was to avoid war when possible and instead focused on diplomatic avenues in the European sphere. He chose to act within the cultural framework of entertaining. The introduction of French cuisine was a new cultural practice, but it was vital, in Jefferson's eyes, to elevate the status of American hospitality to rival that of the French and English courts. Food was a defining factor of status, so to engage with Europeans in this arena would improve America's credibility and

facilitate diplomacy. The protocol in Jefferson's White House was also adapted to suit a republican format, however, exceptions to strict etiquette were made with the Tunisian Delegation. Having previously been at war with the Barbary Nations, Jefferson sought to improve relations, and thus prevent additional military engagements through breaking bread. In Jefferson's correspondence with Robert Livingston we also see that New Orleans' strategic location, and Jefferson's hope for Western expansion, encouraged Jefferson to consider military action in dealing with the politically unstable Napoleonic government.

I also address the impact of war on social and cultural institutions, as well as values and practices. The legacy of the American Revolution weighed heavily on the first three presidents who forged new "American" customs. The Revolution marked a turning point for American culture, no longer were the practices of England favorable, one of the most evident being that tea fell out of favor and coffee became more common. This was true in the way society entertained as well; those practices associated with Europe and the Old World were eschewed as markers of tyrannical monarchies.

Both Washington and Adams remained largely outside of the social sphere as president, hosting only obligatory events such as large impersonal levees and holiday open houses. Jefferson embraced the social responsibilities of his office. In his own dining practices at the White House he purposefully altered French food and English dining habits to become more republican: social hierarchies were eliminated to provide an egalitarian dining experience. It was imperative that Jefferson establish American society as distinct from European culture. This was a direct legacy of America's revolt and represented the need to establish the United States as a politically and culturally independent nation.

Finally, I discuss the relationships between war, identity, and historical memory in the Early Republic. In chapter three I argue that America's identity as a revolutionary nation is imbedded within the text and subtext of the Declaration of Independence. The notion of "Americans" existed only because of a successful war against a tyrannical monarch; the willingness to wage war was stated in the Declaration of Independence as necessary to preserve democracy. However, the language of revolution was ill-suited to governance and the principals of liberty and equality had to be adapted to facilitate the running of an administration. The republican nature of government also stems from collective memory regarding the injustices imposed on the colonists by the crown. As the government of the Early Republic struggled to prevent such injustices from occurring within the United States, Jefferson established an American identity which relied on republican principles in the social sphere, eliminating hierarchies and elevating the everyday citizen. The notion that America as a nation of "we the people" was fostered through his social practices.

Jefferson's presidency ushered in the era of Manifest Destiny, which established the legacy he desired. The frontier made the American character: expansion, republicanism, and the need to fulfill a national destiny, more often than not with a rifle in hand, became what it meant to be American. His use of culture as a form of diplomacy proclaimed American power before it existed. Jefferson looked to America's future and understood that it must establish itself as a member of the global community. He rooted his political agenda in cultural diplomacy because he expected the nation to grow and wished to provide a springboard for nation-making and empire-building.

American Republicanism

To understand Jefferson's effect on the practice of power in the Early Republic, it is necessary to explore his enlightened ideals which grew out of the Revolution. Much of

Jefferson's political ideology can be traced back to his agrarian roots. The plight of the farmer and the fate of the nation became mutually constitutive in his mind. However, he was also noticeably influenced by the great thinkers of the past and used the past as a roadmap for future success. Enlightenment traits were shared by many of the Founders. *Common Sense* espoused the values of liberty, equality, and self-governance and was a widely read. There was a distinct difference between Jeffersonian republicanism and Thomas Paine's understanding of republicanism which was widely understood and accepted by colonists. Jefferson's agricultural beliefs posited that success for the nation depended largely on success of the farmer and the common man. He worried that history had seen its greatest days and was concerned about the future of the country he helped build.² Paine, on the other hand, focused largely on industry and economic expansion as the means for creating stability in the United States which emphasized profit over people. Specifically, Paine believed in the need for investment in new technologies such as the spinning Ginny and a small but constant national debt to create unity between the citizenry and the government.³ During the election of 1800 Paine's vocal dislike of modern religion began to conflict with the party line for the Republicans. Though Jefferson himself was not in favor of blind faith or even the current religious norm, he maintained a political silence on the matter of religion during the campaign. Paine's continued agitations led Jefferson's Republican supporters in the south to distance Jefferson, ideologically, from Paine. It was during this election that Jefferson began to see his own political beliefs as contradictory to Paine's views. The development of republican philosophy was a public process which created the ideologies behind the Federalist and Democratic Republican parties. Federalists beliefs aligned with Paine's idea of industrialization and the assumption of national debt, mirroring the British.

² Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 104.

³ Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, 105.

Democratic Republicans favored small government which emphasized land cultivation and conservative spending.

Thomas Jefferson's particular brand of republicanism was just one of the many interpretations held by the Framers. Some historians claim that republican ideals were "inherent" in all English-speaking peoples, even the British Government, long before the Americans took up arms to form their own nation. The Founding Fathers interpreted and advocated for their particular brand of republicanism, which Jefferson then enacted when he became president. Coming to a consensus proved to be not only extremely challenging but vital for national cohesion. The new nation could not rely on shared culture and history to unify the populace as they did in the Old World.⁴ Leadership in the Continental Congress faced the task of creating a government representative of the republican values which were shared by the people of North America. Jefferson's political views matured with age, but from the beginning of his political career he redefined republicanism in a way which no longer blurred the line between monarchy and representative government.

For Thomas Jefferson, republicanism was entrenched in his own nostalgia and idealism. He is widely acknowledged as one of the most ideological Founders. His idealism strikes at the heart of the Revolution in that its principals were self-evident and universal.⁵ Throughout his many years of service to the new Republic, this idealism would be put to the test as he almost always faced opposition, even from members of his own party. This came to a head during the Adams administration as the new American Government struggled to create a foreign policy regarding the French Revolution. Jefferson was an adamant supporter of the French, not only because of his fondness for his years in France, but because it was representative of the

⁴ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1992), 168.

⁵ Joseph J. Ellis, *The Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002), 202.

Enlightenment ideals which the United States espoused during its own Revolution. As Vice President Jefferson pushed for full support of the French Revolution and the new government of the First Republic as it was “America’s Revolution on European soil.”⁶ Decisions as president were heavily influenced by his romanticized imaginings of America as an ever-expanding nation, best represented by the Louisiana Purchase. While it was clear Jefferson understood the expansion implications of such a purchase, he was also fascinated with the concept of new frontiers with undiscovered vistas. It took the president only a few weeks to ask his secretary, Meriwether Lewis, to head the expedition exploring the new lands, and institutionalized discourse that later would become Manifest Destiny. This decision was highly contested by Jefferson’s colleagues as they challenged the expansion of both nation and presidential powers. He employed revolutionary principles to justify his executive power as well as the need for the Louisiana territories which I discuss in detail in Chapter 3. The physical expansion of the country was a vital aspect of shaping the United States psyche. It also played a direct role in Jefferson’s entertaining and diplomatic soft power by incorporating “new” cultures and artifacts from the expedition to his dining. For Jefferson, there was no separation between the social and political when it came to embody republican ideals: these shaped Jefferson’s ideal of “American culture.”

Jefferson was the first Democratic Republican to become president after the most contentious election in the nation’s young history. Referred to as the Revolution of 1800, the election pitted incumbent Federalist John Adams against Jefferson, the Vice President. During this time each party nominated two candidates and the Electoral College cast two ballots. The campaign itself was messy with both parties using the press to slander their opponents. In May 1800, Congress adjourned, and all four candidates retired to their homes for the duration of the election. This distance from the capital made the power of the newspapers nearly absolute as

⁶ Ellis, *The Founding Brothers*, 202.

there was no physical politicking. John Ferling declares “Presidential candidates did not kiss babies, ride in parades or shake hands.”⁷ Instead, candidates allowed surrogates from their party to run the campaign. Reputation and political allies were all a man could rely on during the election. The newspapers assisted in this endeavor by providing their own commentary on each candidate. Whether the newspaper accounts were truth had little bearing on their ability to sway public opinion. Rather than respond directly to allegations put forth in the papers, candidates would encourage friendly press to run negative content regarding their opponents. By the time Jefferson took the oath of office on March 4, 1800 his new government was more deeply divided than ever.

The early years of his presidency were particularly important for Jefferson to establish himself as an authority figure since he had to gain control of many disgruntled statesmen. This period was also significant because it established his republican sensibilities and his deep love for French culture. As a leader, Jefferson mobilized these idealistic principles when making decisions which he felt were vital for the long-term interests of the United States as an independent sovereign nation. Specifically, he grafted European practices onto American values. Through this cultural fusion he staged social engagements to enact policy, a practice I call cultural diplomacy. Jefferson used similar tactics to prevent discord within the government and foreign relations. Rather than use political pressure or presidential powers to press his agenda, he used civilized means such as dining and intellectual exchange to ensure he achieved his goals. In this way, Jefferson established his own distinct power in Washington. Analyzing Jefferson’s political decisions using an anthropological lens emphasizes the importance of cultural capital as the framework for Jefferson’s governance.

⁷ John Ferling, “Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr and the Election of 1800,” Smithsonian.com, November 2004.

Cultural Anthropology Framework

Drawing on anthropological texts regarding the colonial world by Michael A. Lacombe and Trudy Eden, I examine Jefferson's personal accounts as well as diaries and letters of White House guests to reveal a political and cultural space where food, rituals, and language had value. In *Political Gastronomy: Food and Authority in the English Atlantic World*, Michael Lacombe discusses the interactions between the earliest English settlers and the Native Americans. He examines not only food, but the rituals of hospitality and dining to determine the role it played in the success of the American colonies. Because the English and the Native Americans both believed that the offering and eating of food held symbolic meaning, food and dining became a defining factor in the establishment of authority, leadership, and social order in the early Atlantic World. Jefferson used these same methods to ensure political and cultural independence for the United States. Trudy Eden, in the *Early American Table: Food and Society in the New World*, argues that Americans had a long history of adapting food culture. The colonists in the 17th and 18th centuries were less class conscious than the English. Thus, the American diet became more democratic allowing for the breakdown of class distinctions and greater personal virtue by achieving the "social mean." Foods cooked in a traditional English style which incorporated indigenous plants such as turkey and gourds were staples in the diet of the most colonists. Simple but well-prepared meals became the standard to emulate by wealthy colonists, rather than the elaborate meals consumed by the nobility living in England. These adaptations were necessitated by distance and access to material goods which previously defined British identity. The changing social mean facilitated Jefferson's alterations to the social norm as president.

Drawing conclusion about the nature of Jefferson's efforts to break with the Old World and establish an American identity would be remiss without a discussion of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Anderson defines the nation as "an imagined political community-and

imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁸ Nationalism requires bonds outside of immediate location and familiarity to forge a community, and instead relies on shared principles. Anderson’s explanations for the sovereignty and community aspects of nation are akin to the values Jefferson espoused in the Early Republic. Nations are *sovereign* because “Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchal dynastic realm.”⁹ Jefferson’s protocols in the White House specifically rejected European practices in dining, etiquette, and language which entrenched hierarchal values and undermined republican principals. *Community* requires that a nation is “conceived as a deep horizontal comradeship” which people are “willing to die for such limited imaginings.”¹⁰ “Horizontal comradeship” was an idea which Jefferson was attempting to supplant in the country through a distinctly American culture. As I detail throughout this paper, Jefferson maintained that conflict was sometimes necessary to preserve their democracy. His rhetoric in the Declaration of Independence had been mythologized and imbedded pro-war rhetoric in the American psyche.

Historiography

In *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*, published in 1990, Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson argue that Jefferson was, and remains, the quintessential American whose vision for the new nation resonated with the desires of the populace.¹¹ This made Jefferson unique among the Founders because his political philosophies were not rooted in the traditions of European governance. It was this connection with the citizenry that made Jefferson a successful arbitrator of the developing republican government. The notion that

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 6. In 1998 Peter Onuf published an article “‘To Declare them a Free and Independent People’: Nation Race and Identity” in which he hints at the connections between Jefferson’s nation-building and Anderson’s synthesis of the modern nation but never explicitly makes the connection.

⁹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

¹¹ Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 5.

Jefferson's policies and statesmanship were unique among the Founders is a common theme in Jefferson historiography, yet scholars insist on looking almost exclusively at Jefferson's political writings and actions for their conclusions.

Joanne B. Freeman's *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic*, published in 2002, is also germane to this thesis. Freeman explores the relationship between the founders and their ideals of honor. She argues that politics were a necessity bound by the rules of honor, just as social interactions were. However, honor during the New Republic was expressed in many different ways, from clothing, to demeanor, to upholding standards of etiquette. In Chapter two "Slander, Poison, Whispers, and Fame: The Art of Political Gossip," Freeman establishes Jefferson as America's most notorious gossipmonger. By creating a web of friends and allies, and some not so friendly allies, Jefferson was able to keep a pulse on the goings-on, politically and otherwise, of his opponents. Though Jefferson was undoubtedly sharing stories, Freeman claims they fell within the bounds of honor as the stories were often credited back to the subject. By following strict guidelines of behavior Jefferson was able to both impugn the honor of others while maintaining his own.

Recent studies examine Jefferson's unofficial role as the nation's host to provide a new perspective on Jefferson's success as a diplomat. Two of these articles focus on Jefferson's entertaining. "Fatigues of His Table" (2006) by Ellen Scofield highlights the political nature of Jefferson's dinners by focusing on the rules he employed to ensure that guests remained congenial, and firmly in the president's control. Charles Cullen's article "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests" (2008) introduces readers to the more light-hearted social aspects of entertaining with a focus on food and wine. Both authors draw upon Jefferson's own accounts as well as that of his butler, Etienne Lemaire, to recreate the experience at the president's table;

however, neither delves into the larger political ramifications of these events. Scofield comes close in her discussion of the internal politics which ruled the dining room but does not place the meals within a larger political strategy. Recent scholarship has examined his clothing choice in identifying Jefferson's unorthodox political personage. Published in 2018, *Jefferson on Display: Attire, Etiquette, and the Art of Presentation* by Gaye S. Wilson analyzes Jefferson's attire throughout his political career arguing that presentation was an essential part of his political strategy.

In *Founding Foodies: How Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin Revolutionized American Cuisine* (2010) by Dave Dewitt, Jefferson's contributions to food in the colonies is addressed largely based on his experience as a Virginia planter. Jefferson used his gardens at Monticello to practice his many botany experiments; it was believed that he grew more than 300 varieties of fruits and vegetables, though most of the produce served at his table was purchased from local growers. This also reflects his love of vegetables. Meals at Monticello would have two to three vegetable dishes served with each meat. This was particularly important to understanding the way in which Jefferson approached dining and entertaining. He was very much a locavore who preferred to always have green vegetables when in season and purchased items in large quantities. While this characteristic was forged in his early years at Monticello, it followed him to Paris and The White House where Jefferson imported hams from Virginia and wines from around the world. My project draws upon works both of a political nature and a social nature to identify how Jefferson used the social responsibilities of the president in conjunction with the political aspects to shape his diplomacy.

Cultural Production as a Diplomatic Tool

In the first chapter, I discuss Jefferson's direct involvement in planning social functions at the White House. He carefully chose the French food and wine he served at each gathering

using cuisine as an instrument of political manipulation during his two terms as president.

Though France played a prominent role in his political and social development, the influence of French food on Jefferson's presidency has not been thoroughly analyzed by scholars. Jefferson's account books, political activity, and personal accounts reveal the influence of French cuisine on political culture. Jefferson's unique approach to entertaining can be examined in a new way using a lens of ritual power to highlight how Jefferson established new symbols of power through French food. Entertaining became valuable as a tool through which to exercise power.

Chapter two explores the protocol of Jefferson's White House. Jefferson was well known for adapting European traditions to suit more American ideals. The Salons of Paris catered to the elite of French society and drew intellectuals, artists, and writers from across Europe but were considered classist despite the Enlightenment sentiments discussed there. Jefferson considered intellectual exchange to be inherently republican, and adapted salon culture and English hospitality to American sensibilities. His rather unorthodox entertaining practices required Jefferson to release a presidential memo outlining the White Houses' official policies to avoid offending visiting diplomats. His goal was to establish the White House as the cultural center of America, just as Paris was a cultural center in France. Jefferson believed that a "civilized" society would create legitimacy in the eyes of European governments. By adapting established status symbols from European courts, Jefferson was able to exert power through rituals and practices which held significance to foreign visitors.

Chapter three asserts that Jefferson employed language to shape political culture in the Early Republic. Jefferson used the syntax of language to capitalize on the authority of the presidency in both public and private political texts, including his inaugural addresses and personal correspondence. The Declaration of Independence provides a foundation from which to

examine how Jefferson's political voice developed throughout his career. From a linguistic perspective these texts were notable because they subtly manipulated the audience as a means of pacifying conflict in a world riddled with political tension. When speaking to the American people, Jefferson adopts a tone of humble reverence and encourages national unity, a theme his private correspondence did not always include. Yet, in communication with other sovereign nations Jefferson used language to affirm the United States of America was a political community organization with its own inherent and sovereign powers.

These three arenas are representative of the ways in which Jefferson both broke with European traditions and produced a new American culture. Adapting already established practices and sentiments provided legitimacy to Jefferson's efforts in the eyes of the Old World. The more egalitarian conventions he instituted were rooted in revolutionary principals and thus were easily accepted and emulated by his dinner guests, or at least his American dinner guests. Had Jefferson rejected European traditions entirely, he would not have had the same success in establishing new White House protocol because he would have had to overcome the resistance of an entire population raised within a British cultural framework. His vision of an American identity was devised to install a lasting culture capable of unifying the citizenry.

Chapter 1

Republicanism at the Table

Drawing upon the ritual power discussed by Michael Lacombe, I argue that Jefferson's dining room was a setting for ritual interaction. As president, he already held authority; in society, he flexed that power through the food he served and the atmosphere he staged at each dinner. Food was a defining factor in the establishment of authority, leadership, and social order in the early Atlantic World, "Hospitality," Lacombe notes, "presented unusually rich opportunities to display status and gender distinctions, to stake a claim to superiority, or to challenge such claims."¹² In order to maintain political authority in the new capital and establish it as a cultural center equal to any in Europe, Jefferson introduced French foods which were acknowledged symbols of status. Though Jefferson wished to break with British traditions, he did so using social norms which were already accepted practices in the United States. His marriage of "republican simplicity" with "Epicurean delicacy"¹³ challenged the claim that English social standards were worth emulating.

Beginning with the first Jamestown settlers, English leaders in the New World felt there were specific expectations regarding the connection between hospitality, authority, and power.¹⁴ The early years of settlement in the New World lead to a "rhetorical struggle over what sort of leader was best suited for the early settlements."¹⁵ Through entertaining, elites in the colonies could establish their own authority but were bound their English understanding of hospitality to reciprocate invitations to other powerful men. This threatened their own standing but conformed to social norms. A man's ability to entertain and host large meals was one of the status symbols

¹² Michael A. Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy: Food and Authority in the English Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 108.

¹³ Margaret Bayard Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 391-392.

¹⁴ Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy*, 109.

¹⁵ Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy*, 109.

which signified he was a capable leader. Power was exerted through one's image as much as through one's actions.¹⁶ The new government also struggled to determine what kind of leader would be most successful.

Before the Revolution it was imperative in the colonies that the wealthy establish themselves as yeoman farmers while simultaneously setting themselves apart from the middle class. They distinguished themselves from those in the lower and middle classes not by changing their diets or their inherently English habits, but rather by providing the finest quality of English goods and foods. This included English decor such as mahogany tables, sterling silver service pieces, and porcelain plates.¹⁷ Popular foods were English favorites cooked by an English cook rather than the lady of the house. Traditionally American foods, such as corn-based dishes, would have been avoided at social functions, if not altogether. This adherence to English customs combined with American morality, working and farming rather than being idle, created a new culture for the wealthy which differed from the British. Many of these early breaks with British customs grew out of necessity but laid the groundwork for the American political culture which later fomented Revolution.

Though Jefferson himself claimed to be a yeoman farmer, in reality, he broke all expectations of what it meant to be a yeoman farmer in colonial society. He revered the farmer as the ideal republican and believed that they were the backbone of the nation's economy and the standard for middle class living. As such, he emulated aspects of farming life including more distinctly American foods and objects. Unlike many in the North, Jefferson did not eschew eating native plants such as corn and squash and his meals were cooked by slaves rather than an

¹⁶ Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy*, 109.

¹⁷ Trudy Eden, *The Early American Table: Food and Society in the New World* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 10.

English chef.¹⁸ Jefferson saw himself as a man of the people who lived simply, yet he fashioned a new style of entertaining which deliberately deviated from the social mean and established the president's table as culinary experience unlike any other in America. Employing hospitality in the dining room, President Jefferson exercised power through ritualized symbolic interactions between guest and host.

This deviated from the less sophisticated entertainments of Adams and Washington and broke the social mean. In England, "A plentiful and varied diet of high-quality fine foods created refined, virtuous, and talented people."¹⁹ The American diet was more democratic allowing for the breakdown of class distinctions and greater personal virtue. Jefferson saw himself as a man of the people and very democratic yet introduced French food which was inherently "classist." Thus, Jefferson created his own definition of the "social mean" which established a new independent American culture. The memory of Britain's oppressive policies reaffirmed in Jefferson's mind the need for a break with British culture and the establishment of practices which Americans could call their own.

The president's social responsibilities were not clearly defined and the role he assumed under Washington and Adams was overtly political, with social engagements intended only to strengthen the bonds with their congressional constituents. Jefferson firmly believed that the social responsibilities of the president were vital to maintaining power and easing diplomatic relations. However, he purposefully stepped away from English expectations of entertaining and attempted to elevate American social mean which emulated the middle class rather than the

¹⁸ Though slaves prepared all his meals at Monticello, over his lifetime Jefferson had half a dozen slaves trained in the art of French cooking. During his presidency, three women were trained by the White House Chef Honoré Julien. Fanny Hern, who lived and trained at the White House for six years became the head cook at Monticello in Jefferson's retirement. Before leaving Jefferson's employ, Julien traveled to Monticello to help Fanny set up the kitchens.

¹⁹ Eden, *The Early American Table*, 21.

wealthy. In Jefferson's ideal republic the average citizen was revered and was thus the standard by which to base quality of living and entertaining. What was the "average" for the colony became the societal norm. To exceed that norm as a wealthy individual made you an outsider, rather than an elite as it did in England. These earlier differences made forging a republican culture distinct from Great Britain easier and more palatable for the new nation.

French Influences

The introduction of French cuisine into American entertaining in the White House created a new power dynamic through the introduction of new foods in the political sphere. As the former Ambassador to France, Jefferson experienced the culture of the French court, particularly the quality of dining and entertaining, which he attempted to replicate. As one of the few individuals in America, who had experienced the lavish entertainments of King Louis's court, Jefferson controlled the dissemination of information around formal dining. For many guests, Jefferson's interpretation of European sophistication was the only exposure they had to French dining.

Jefferson's understanding of French cuisine, aided by his *chef de cuisine* and *maitre d'hotel*, dictated the development of a new style of entertaining in America. Jefferson believed the office of the president had an inherently social component and he sought to develop this role as distinct from Europeans. The United States was still a new nation, and thus vulnerable so Jefferson built political and social institutions that capitalized on America's revolutionary identity. The ways of the Old World were to be avoided as they were a slippery slope towards a return of English rule, a legacy Jefferson was not quick to forget. To appear "legitimate" and "civilized" in the eyes of European states he ensured that the food was exceptional while adapting dining protocol to fit his own interpretations of Republican living.

Before Jefferson took office, he began to recruit staff for the kitchens at the White House and turned to Philippe Letombe, the French envoy in Philadelphia, to fill the position because he felt that his household staff needed to be French: “You know the importance of a good *maître d’hôtel*, in a large house and the impossibility of finding one among the natives of our country. I have imagined that such a person might be found perhaps among the French in Philadelphia.”²⁰ Jefferson settled on Etienne Lemaire who remained Jefferson’s *maître d’hôtel* for the length of his presidency. Lemaire’s duties included those of sommelier, accountant, part time cook, and household manager. After hiring Lemaire, Jefferson secured the services of Honoré Julien who became the *chef de cuisine* at the White House. Julien had briefly been the chef for President Washington in the last four months of his administration. As such, Julien was well acquainted with the scope and proclivities of presidential entertaining, though Washington and Jefferson chose to utilize Julien’s talents very differently. In the White House, Julien served food in the French style to guests. Washington, however, had Julien cook almost exclusively for private family meals. Because Jefferson considered the French to be the epitome of the civilized world, French staff were necessary to adopt and adapt traditional dining to suit Jefferson’s cultural aspirations as president.

Entertaining at the White House

Jefferson controlled every aspect of presidential entertainments including suggesting and approving menus while Lemaire flawlessly executed his wishes. Julien was absent from the dining room, but his presence did not go unnoticed and Jefferson’s guests frequently commented on the chef’s skill. According to Samuel L. Mitchill, a Democratic Republican from New York who served as a Congressman during Jefferson’s first term and as a Senator during his second term, commented that “[Jefferson’s cook] understands the art of preparing and serving up food to

²⁰ Philippe Letombe to TJ, 26 Mar. 1801, DLC.

a nicety.”²¹ Jefferson’s dinner parties were “pleasant, personable affairs with good food and imported wines.”²² Records from his dinners were meticulous and included an accurate record of nearly every dinner and every attendee for both of his terms. When Congress was in session, the President held three to four dinner parties per week. Most were small with fewer than ten guests, of the same political party. His aim was to create amiable social environments conducive to political concessions. This differed from the entertainments of Europe which were designed to glorify the monarch. While Jefferson held a position of authority as president, he purposefully avoided practices which would spotlight the office of the president, which could be seen as too monarchical. These methods proved incredibly successful, and Jefferson’s most effective politicking took place over private conversation with the “congeniality of an intimate dinner.”²³ In the dining room, Jefferson’s authority derived from the extension of hospitality, a social custom recognized by guests. In the giving of food and drink a person conveyed status and strength.²⁴ Introducing French foods and a variety of European wines was one way for Jefferson to adapt American dining culture to a more elegant and civilized event without losing the republican simplicity which defined food in the United States.

Exerting power through subtle and social means was a format to which Jefferson was well suited, and which was also representative of the political expectations of the day. In *Affairs of Honor* Joanne B. Freeman, outlines importance of reputation during the Early Republic. It was through conforming to social norms and niceties that a man can strengthen his reputation. This resonates with Lacombe’s discussion of the power embedded in hospitality. Only with a strong

²¹ As quoted in Lucia Stanton, “‘A Well-ordered Household’: Domestic Servants in Jefferson’s White House,” *White House Historical Association*, White House History: Collection 3, (Washington D.C., 2008), 290.

²² Mary Ellen Scofield, “Fatigues of his Table: The Politics of Presidential Dining During the Jefferson Administration,” *Journal of Early American Republic* Vol. 26, No. 3, (2006): 449.

²³ Scofield, “Fatigues of his Table,” 449.

²⁴ Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy*, 141.

reputation could a man then exercise political capital. The politicians who graced Jefferson's table were, therefore, bound by etiquette to acknowledge Jefferson's authority as the host. While he sought to break with British practices, the etiquette of hospitality embedded in dining worked in his favor. Using established notions of etiquette lent credence to Jefferson's deviations in the international sphere because he worked within a context familiar to Europeans. In fact, this was why Jefferson had to formalize White House protocol, which I discuss in detail in chapter two.

The President's dinners encompassed his own political style which relied on forming personal relationships and allowed him to practice politics on behalf of the Republican Party. Jefferson took great care in creating his guests lists, holding politically advantageous gatherings of like-minded men, even if it meant placing himself in a room full of Federalists.²⁵ Federalists accounted for only 51 of the 153 members of the House and Senate so such gatherings were rare, but helped facilitate more convivial atmospheres than simply selecting guests in alphabetical order.

Jefferson's dinners were first and foremost a personal opportunity to become better acquainted with members of Congress. As the first Democratic-Republican to hold the office, Jefferson realized he needed to strengthen his relationships with the vocal Federalist minority. It was Jefferson's belief that social acquaintance fostered a functional political relationship. In this way, Jefferson could better understand where his views differed with both his opponents and proponents. It also provided a less confrontational arena in which to air grievances and find common ground. That said, Jefferson was not opposed to using wine and fine food to facilitate the discussion. As he explained to a Republican guest from South Carolina,

I cultivate personal intercourse with the members of the legislature that we may know one another and have opportunities of little explanations of circumstances, which, not

²⁵ Charles Cullen, "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests," White House Historical Association, White House History: Collection 3, (Washington D.C. 2008), 309.

understood might produce jealousies and suspicions injurious to the public interest, which is best promoted by harmony and mutual confidence among its functionaries. I depend much on the members for the local information necessary on local matters, as well as for the means of getting public sentiment.²⁶

By making himself available to members of government he hoped to prevent misunderstandings and create an arena in which his colleagues gained confidence in his leadership. William Plumer of New Hampshire begrudgingly agreed with Mr. Jefferson claiming that “under the necessity of being civil to each other” when dining at the president’s table meant that political opponents would “treat each other with more decency and respect” when working together in Congress.²⁷

At the beginning of his presidency, Jefferson had no formal order to his invitations and merely invited guests from the same political party. Early in his presidency Jefferson sent short notes inviting guests to dinner, but he quickly had invitation cards printed in which the guests name and date could simply be filled in to expedite the process. The cards read “Th: Jefferson presents his compliments to [name of guest] and requests the favour of his company to dinner on [day of the week] next at half after three o’clock. The favour of an answer is requested.”²⁸ Jefferson’s invitations were considered rather informal and certainly not befitting the office of the president. Washington and Adams both sent invitations which included the title “President of the United States” indicating that the event was officially hosted by the president. Jefferson used his name, rather than his title as he intended the event to be a personal invitation rather than an official state event.²⁹ This was part of Jefferson’s drive to create more republican, and egalitarian events.

²⁶ Cullen, “The President’s White House Dinner Guests,” 313.

²⁷ William Plumer, *Memorandum of Proceedings in United States Senate 1803-1807* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1923), 363.

²⁸ Invitation, Coolidge Collection of Jefferson Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

²⁹ Plumer, *Memorandum*, 211.

By the end of his first term, he had created a more efficient approach to his dinner invitations. His list, though simple, helped him stay organized and ensured that all members of government attended a dinner at least once a month. To facilitate that possibility, he held three to four congressional dinners a week. This took considerable planning, and he began to systematically log each evening's attendees on an 11 by 17-inch sheet, which was then folded to make a four-page booklet. Separate columns were made for Federalists and Democratic-Republicans, which he dated and then tracked every guest usually by last name, though for foreign visitors and wives he often wrote out the guest's full name.³⁰ In the early years of his documentation, he also included notes next to the guests' name which denoted their position in the government and from which state they hailed. As the years passed these notes became unimportant as Jefferson became acquainted with the members of government. As if this were not enough, Jefferson created additional lists for strategic purposes. Some guests he wished to entertain more often than others, and he needed to ensure that he compiled a list of dinner guests who could maintain the level of conversation and conviviality which Jefferson desired to create his salon atmosphere.³¹

On the surface, the sole goal was to create a group which could provide good conversation and help all present get to know one another better. While this was certainly an important aspect to the dinners, the political undertones were always present. Perhaps Jefferson's greatest strength was the ability to make his functions non-political, which in and of itself, was a political ploy. Jefferson effectively utilized these meals to better understand his opponents, which, in turn, improved his ability to work with Congress and pass legislation. More importantly, the construction of his guest list was completely different from the British

³⁰ Thomas Jefferson "Supposed List of Dinner Guests" Coolidge Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

³¹ Cullen, "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests," 319.

adherence to hierarchy, making these events more republican in nature. Jefferson believed that diverging from the Old World socially was necessary to alleviate pressure from Federalists whose politics were rooted in traditional British legal practices.

To create an ideal environment conducive to discussion and manipulation, Jefferson rarely hosted opposing parties at the same meal. When he did host congressmen who disagreed with him, he used wine as a social lubricant to help persuade his opponents to support his policies. Conversation was to stay amiable, no slanderous or riotous language allowed. William Plumer notes that the president “always renders his company easy and agreeable,” setting the tone for the evening.³² The few women who attended dinners at the White House were expected to converse politely. Jefferson appreciated intelligence and good conversation in women which required they be active in the evening’s discussions. This was unusual at the time, but the lack of women meant there were no pleasantries to discuss in lieu of politics. To ensure that each and everyone’s thoughts and opinions could be heard, and his guests could speak intelligently on another’s comments, no two people spoke at once during a meal, though small groups often broke off following the dinner.³³

Jefferson’s Political Agenda

Largely Federalist entertainments had advantages for Jefferson outside of political harmony. While living in New York as Secretary of State, Jefferson became a master in the art of political gossip. His skills during this time were honed as he collected information against Alexander Hamilton, who was also spreading rumors about Jefferson.³⁴ While gossip ran rampant during this time, so long as it fell within the bounds of etiquette, it was an acceptable form of information. Political gossip was, in and of itself, an art that had to be perfected as it

³²William Plumer, Jr., ed., *The Life of William Plumer* (Boston: A. P. Peabody, 1857), 82.

³³ Cullen, “Jefferson’s White House Dinner Guests,” 323.

³⁴ Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 66.

acted as a representation of partisan politics in which political opponents took measure of their adversaries. Jefferson employed the same tactics as president, though the need for cloak and dagger secrecy was no longer an issue. It was assumed that anything discussed at the President's table was going to be repeated and political rivals made no qualms about sharing their true feelings with Jefferson. In such instances, Jefferson used wine to loosen his opponent's tongue, while cultivating a less hostile atmosphere.

Jefferson's political agenda is most apparent when focusing on specific legislation he passed as President. In 1802 and, again in 1807, Jefferson passed legislation through both houses that faced widespread opposition, thanks largely to his expertise as a political actor. In 1802, Jefferson unilaterally pushed for a heavy Tariff on all imported French and English goods. Though the United States and France were on rocky ground after the XYZ Affair in 1800 in which French diplomats attempted to extort the American envoy, trade with France continued.³⁵ In Jefferson's eyes, the XYZ Affair was proof that European powers saw the US as weak and easily exploited. Tariffs on imported goods were an important part of Jefferson's larger goal to eliminate taxes on the citizenry. Passing new tax reforms was vital to strengthening the buying power of the common man, proving that a republican government was effective. This was seen again in 1807, when Jefferson banned the importation of slaves to the United States. Though Jefferson was faced with a divided house, he passed a bill which largely resembled his original proposal to Congress. The meals surrounding the Louisiana Purchase also bear some importance because delegations from the North threatened to secede.³⁶

Between 1803 and 1804, Jefferson regularly hosted dinners across party lines with both Federalists and Democratic-Republicans in attendance. Jefferson's most critical guests were

³⁵ Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, "Private Letters and Public Diplomacy: The Adams Network and the Qasi War, 1797-1798," *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 2011), 289.

³⁶ Tucker & Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, 10.

often Federalists opposed to his expansion of presidential powers. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 was perhaps Jefferson's greatest exertion of presidential power. However, it was also one of his most contentious acts as president. This was for several reasons, the first was the ambiguous nature of presidential powers. Neither Washington nor Adams had faced such a challenge and there were no enumerated statements about the president's power in the acquisition of land. This deepened the mistrust from Federalists, particularly those in the North. Another disturbing turn of events in the eyes of Federalists, was the apparent cronyism of the deal. At the time of the Louisiana Purchase, Robert Livingston, a longtime friend and advisor to Jefferson, was the Minister of France and James Monroe was assigned as special envoy to France to broker a deal which was devised by Jefferson and Madison. This overwhelming display of power by Virginian politicians was a threat to Federalist politics and power in Washington. The unprecedented use of power created backlash from the Jefferson's staunchest enemies, including James Hillhouse and William Plumer.

James Hillhouse was a senator from Connecticut who, as a Federalist, encouraged the expansion of the Federal government and the assumption of a national debt, as suggested by Alexander Hamilton, to stabilize America's fragile economy.³⁷ While he believed the federal government needed to expand, he was firmly against the expansion of presidential powers and believed that the president must act only within the enumerated powers established in the Constitution. To Hillhouse, the Louisiana Purchase constituted a grave breach of the Constitution and threatened to make the Executive branch too powerful to be sufficiently checked by the Legislative branch. The memory of King George's tyrannical policies towards the colonists and the war that followed, caused the Federalists to be overly censorious of any policy which might

³⁷ Leonard Bacon, *Dictionary of American Biography: Sketch of the Life and Public Services of Hon. James Hillhouse of New Haven: With a Notice of His Son, Augustus Lucas Hillhouse*. New Haven: n.p., 1860.

give any one man too much power. Following the Louisiana Purchase, Jefferson entertained Hillhouse on several occasions as an attempt to pacify Hillhouse and prevent his cries of secession from taking hold.³⁸

Jefferson's list of dinner guests indicates that on December 3, 1804, Jefferson hosted a small dinner with only eleven in attendance.³⁹ Guests listed by last name include Griffin, Livingston, Lewis, Hillhouse, Plumer, Tenney, Davenport, Tibbids, Clagget, Dwight, and Talmage.⁴⁰ While some names are illegible, those that can be read indicate that this was a dinner held for Federalists, many of whom openly opposed Jefferson's policies. This particular evening highlighted Jefferson's maverick entertaining style. He invited groups of like-minded individuals, often putting himself in what would appear to be a politically vulnerable position. This was particularly important in maintaining the open relationships with Federalists. Henry Livingston, a Congressman from New York, had a close relationship with fellow Northerners Hillhouse and Plumer. At the time of this meal, Jefferson's secretary Meriwether Lewis was off on his Corps of Discovery, so the Lewis present was likely Congressman Thomas Lewis Jr, one of the few Federalists from Virginia. James Hillhouse had recently proposed that New England leave the Union after the Louisiana Purchase. William Plumer, also a Federalist, seemed to have an amiable relationship with Jefferson despite their political differences. In a letter dated December 27, 1806, Plumer reflects on his conversations with the President, "But as I am generally placed next to him--and at that time the company is generally engaged in little parties

³⁸ Tucker & Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty*, 103. James Hillhouse was the most vocal of the Northerners crying for secession. In 1808, the last year of Jefferson's presidency, he proposed a reform in Congress which would limit presidential powers. Though it was read on the Senate floor, it was never voted on. Massachusetts Historic Society, The Adams Papers, "Review of James Hillhouse Propositions, 12 April, 1808."

³⁹ Jefferson maintained a running list of dinner guests throughout his presidency. The records from 1804-1809 still exist and are referred to by scholars as his "calendar," "dinner accounts," and "guest list."

⁴⁰ Thomas Jefferson "Supposed List of Dinner Guests" Coolidge Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society. Jefferson is infamous for his spelling errors. While spelling was not as standard as it is today, he often misspelled his colleague's names; Talmadge, Clagget, and Tibbits all have slight errors in his records.

eagerly talking--and thereby gives him and me more freedom in conversation..."⁴¹ The general flow of conversation was exactly the outcome Jefferson intended with these dinners. The exchange of both pleasantries and disagreements with the president set these entertainments apart from those with the elite in Great Britain or France. Dining with a monarch was confined by strict etiquette in which the King held all the power. Dining with the president, however, was republican in nature and the president held equal social status to his guests.

Dining with the President

As was the style in Europe, meals were extended events which began around 3:30 in the afternoon and lasted for three to four hours; including a lengthy discussion after the meal over more wine or coffee. William Plumer, a Federalist Senator from New Hampshire, was a frequent diner at the White House and regularly wrote of his experiences. His first visit to the White House was indeed memorable, "We sat down to the table at four, rose at six, and walked immediately into another room, and drank coffee...His wine was the best I ever drank, particularly his champaign [sic] --it was delicious indeed."⁴² Charles Wilson Peale addressed the tedious nature of the formality of Jefferson's extended dinners; "but hospitality has rendered the custom of setting at Table rather a tedious ceremony but to those who love toping it may be pleasing, this is very tiresome to me a water drinker..."⁴³ Peale, as a man who did not drink alcohol, clearly was not fond of the extended time spent drinking around the dinner table after the meal was complete. What Jefferson saw as a leisurely and relaxed atmosphere spent enjoying good company or a lively debate, was less convivial for those who did not imbibe. However, Peale clearly understood the social significance of Jefferson's hospitality.

⁴¹Plumer, *The Life of William Plumer*, 82.

⁴²Plumer, *The Life of William Plumer*, 245-6.

⁴³ Charles Wilson Peale, diary, June 4, 1804.

There were several guests who appear at the president's table regularly, including Margaret Bayard Smith, whose many detailed descriptions provide information about the décor as well as the particulars of the dinner service. Smith noted that Jefferson preferred a round or oval table in the private dining room, where most of his dinners were held. Smith provided a lengthy description in her letters:

One circumstance, though minute in itself, had certainly a great influence on the conversational powers of Mr. Jefferson's guests. Instead of being arrayed in strait parallel lines, where they could not see the countenances of those who sat on the same side, they encircled a round or oval table where all could see each other's faces, and feel the animating influence of looks as well as words...⁴⁴

Facilitating conversation, as mentioned by Mrs. Smith, fulfilled another purpose; the president intended his dinners to represent true republicanism and the free exchange of ideas was more conducive at a round table. A rectangular table limited conversation to only those guests sitting on either side of each other, and perhaps those across the table, if the table was not too wide or the centerpieces too tall.⁴⁵ Most importantly a round table with no head ensured that all guests were equal. The head of the table was usually reserved for the senior ranking member of society. This was another way for Jefferson to remove himself from the hierarchal norms of European entertaining.

Though an oddity, Jefferson chose to serve his guests personally, an act that represented his roots and embodied southern hospitality and his sentiments that "We are all republicans-we are all federalists." Benjamin Latrobe, an artist and architect, was one of the notable guests who was not a member of Congress. In a letter to his wife in 1802 he noted "Mr. Jefferson said little

⁴⁴ Smith, *The First Forty Years of Washington Society*, 399.

⁴⁵See also, Jennifer Lindner McGlimm, "What is Service a La Francaise?" *Dining at Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance*, ed. Damon Lee Fowler, (Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., 2005). French dinner service, in particular, was a spectacle which included edible center pieces often several feet tall. While undoubtedly an impressive spectacle, the food acted as a wall essentially preventing communication with anyone sitting on the other side of the table.

at dinner besides attending to the filling of plates, which he did with great ease and grace for a philosopher.”⁴⁶ Another reason that necessitated Jefferson’s service was that servants left the dining room after the start of the meal. Though Lemaire generally stayed to assist with the wine, Jefferson relied on dumbwaiters to serve guests at small events.

When he had any persons dining with him, with whom he wished to enjoy a free and unrestricted flow of conversation, the number of persons at the table never exceeded four, and by each individual was placed a dumbwaiter, containing everything necessary for the progress of the dinner from beginning to end, so as to make the attendance of servants entirely unnecessary, believing as he did, that much of the domestic and even public discord was produced by the mutilated and misconstrued repetition of free conversation at dinner tables, by these mute but not inattentive listeners.⁴⁷

Dumbwaiters, quite literally silent waiters, were four tiered tables which sat beside each guest’s and contained each course of the meal. A revolving door was also used to ensure privacy in the dining room. One guest described the door as “so contrived that but a few minutes and all appeared or disappeared at once. This machine, fixed in the wall, held all *one course*, and was turned into the room in a minute.”⁴⁸ In the larger public dining room more traditional service was performed at a large rectangular table, though this room was only used for hosting large meals such as when he hosted a delegation from a visiting nation. These additional devices in the dining room were essential for establishing a secure space for the exchange of ideas. This was another way Jefferson politicized social events.

April 3, 1807 was a typical day in the President’s House during his second term. The menu for the day began with breakfast breads and hot chocolate, a favorite of Jefferson. There was no formal gathering held for members of Congress on this day, but James Madison, Albert

⁴⁶ Benjamin H. Latrobe to Mary Elizabeth Latrobe, 24 Nov. 1802, *The Correspondence and Miscellaneous Papers of Benjamin H. Latrobe*, ed. John C. Van Horne et al. (New Haven, 1984) 232. (Here after Latrobe Papers.)

⁴⁷ Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, 387-388. At Monticello Jefferson had a device which was more in line with our modern understanding of “dumbwaiter.” Beside the fireplace in the dining room a pulley system was installed which allowed a servant in the basement wine cellar to place a bottle in the cupboard and convey it up to Jefferson in the dining room.

⁴⁸ Hetty Ann Barton, diary, May 1803.

Gallatin, Henry Dearborn, and Robert Smith spent much of the day in meetings with the President. They were invited to stay for an “informal” evening meal. The first course of the formal meal of the day, served at four o’clock even when guests weren’t in attendance, included the chef’s selection for the day, partridge with sausages and cabbage cooked in a French way, ham of bacon, a quarter of bear, beef *bouilli*, soup, potatoes, rice, spinach, beans, lamb’s-lettuce salad, and pickles.⁴⁹ The second course, dessert, was perhaps the most anticipated of the day. It included, an egg custard with “floating creams,” apples in a thin French toast, and four dishes of assorted cakes and jellies.⁵⁰ The meal concluded with a selection of wines from Europe; Portuguese Madeira, Spanish Parjete, French Hermitage, and Italian Nebbiolo which were served with a selection of “olives [,] apples, oranges & 12 other plates of nuts &c.”⁵¹ The gentleman then adjourned to the sitting room where coffee and tea were provided.

This relatively simple dinner for Jefferson’s colleagues was part of the lifestyle which Jefferson was attempting to develop for the president. He firmly believed that part of the obligation of office was providing a well-furnished table. This legitimized the presidency because it was upholding the standards of Europe but maintained a distinct Americanness which was viewed favorably by members of Congress. In an ironic twist of fate this also became Jefferson’s downfall. His years in Paris at the Court of Louis XVI gave him a taste for the best, which he was able to indulge in as President. However, it was this attempt to live above his means in retirement that lead to his poor financial choices.⁵²

⁴⁹ There are no menus left from either the White House or Monticello. However, historians have been able to piece together menus based on letters, journals, and entries in Jefferson’s many memorandum books.

⁵⁰ Stanton, “‘A Well-ordered Household’: Domestic Servants in Jefferson’s White House,” 298. The custard was most likely “floating islands” a dessert consisting of *crème anglaise* with meringues suspended on top. The apple dish was likely a tart as “toast” was used to describe puff pastry and breading. The custard was particularly popular and was mentioned on several different occasions by guests and was frequently served at Jefferson’s table.

⁵¹ Stanton, “‘A Well-ordered Household’: Domestic Servants in Jefferson’s White House,” 298.

⁵² Jefferson was not merely a hedonist who drank to excess. In fact, much of the wine he purchased as president remained in the White House cellars after he left office. However, he continued to buy wine in his retirement to

The two holiday events at President's House were held on January 1st and July 4th. They were large events open to the public and intended as a reception rather than a formal meal. The event would fill much of the main floor and spill out onto the lawn where a festival was set up on the North Lawn. Tents housed food vendors, artisans, and merchants while horse races and gambling took place in the streets where today tourists stop to take photos. In the main entrance of the House the Marine Band played lively tunes which could be heard out onto the lawn.⁵³ Members of government and foreign dignitaries and invited guests spent the day in the White House with revelers invited late in the day to enjoy the president's hospitality. The first year that Independence Day was celebrated at the newly constructed White House was 1801 and Jefferson celebrated the continued preservation of independence with his usual entertaining flare:

After a conversation of a few minutes, he invited his company into the usual dining room, whose four large sideboards were covered with refreshments, such as cakes of various kinds, wine, punch, &c. Every citizen was invited to partake, as his taste dictated, of them, and the invitation was most cheerfully accepted, and the consequent duties discharged with alacrity. The company soon increased to near a hundred, including all the public officers and most of the respectable citizens, and strangers of distinction... All appeared to be cheerful, all happy...Mr. Jefferson mingled promiscuously with the citizens.⁵⁴

Though Jefferson preferred his small convivial dinner parties he was very conscious of the duties of office and believed that to make himself available to the people, particularly on such a sacred day for the Nation, was an absolute necessity. Jefferson's willingness to interact and converse

build up the cellars at Monticello. The high price of purchasing, shipping, bottling, and storing wine was one of the extravagances which put him in debt towards the end of his life. He also enjoyed buying books, another luxury item, and poured money into the construction of the University of Virginia. Creditors demanded payment after his death and within a year, all his remaining assets, primarily slaves, as well as the house, was sold to cover the debts.

⁵³ Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, 291.

⁵⁴ Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, 290. An important addition to the Independence Day celebrations was a delegation of Cherokee Indian Chiefs. Though several accounts of the day mention the group little substance is provided. Smith wrote "We found about 20 persons present in a room where sat Mr. J. surrounded by the five Cherokee chiefs." While the feelings of the Indian Chiefs are unknown, Jefferson clearly viewed them as honored guests. However, as I discuss in Chapter 3, Jefferson had a very paternalistic attitude towards Native Americans.

with all in attendance was part of establishing the president as a man of the people, not a man above the people. It also furthered Jefferson's desire to institute social responsibilities as an essential duty of the president. In keeping with his image as a truly republican president, Independence Day and New Year's Day were his opportunities to mingle with citizens. During this time access to the president was considered a right. Smith wrote of other July 4th celebrations, again noting the food: "Tables in each corner of the largest-room were covered with confectionary, wines, punch, lemonade, etc. where without the intervention of servants the company could partake of their refreshments."⁵⁵ On January 1, 1801, William Plumer attended the president's New Year's open house commenting, "The side boards were numerous and amply furnished with a rich variety of wines, punch, cakes—ice cream &c."⁵⁶ The similarity between the two accounts suggests that much like his dinners, Jefferson's open houses followed the same general structure.

Wine

American exposure to wine was extremely limited. Until the early 1800s the United States drank very little wine because it was produced exclusively in Europe and was difficult to transport across the Atlantic without spoiling. Wine was one of the products which set the Old World apart from the New World. Wine, therefore, was a symbol of the civilized world. Part of forging a new culture distinct from Great Britain was to introduce new items into the culture. Jefferson was intent on seeing wine become a staple in America and worked diligently towards that effort. Perhaps America's leading expert on wine, Jefferson's position as president made him uniquely situated to expose Congress to a wide array of varietals. Wine consumption at the White House was one of the legacies which remained after Jefferson's tenure. Entertaining on a grand scale became the norm, and until the 1960s French champagne was a staple at the White

⁵⁵ Smith, *First Forty Years of Washington Society*, 399.

⁵⁶ Plumer, *Proceedings in the United States Senate*, 364.

House.⁵⁷ Jefferson's love of wine helped to establish the scale of presidential entertaining which he believed was an inherent responsibility of the office.

Interestingly, the Thomas Jefferson Encyclopedia, a publication of the Jefferson Foundation at Monticello, published an article on wine with an observation which suggests Jefferson's wine preferences were an agent of cultural production.

The revolution in his own taste in wine followed swiftly on the breaking of the bonds of British colonial government. Thereafter Jefferson rejected the alcoholic wines favored by Englishmen as well as the toasts that customarily accompanied them. He chose to drink and serve the fine lighter wines of France and Italy, and hoped that his countrymen would follow his example.⁵⁸

When introducing the topic of Jefferson's wine habits, James Bear casually addressed Jefferson's break with English wine tastes. Bear equates the breaking of British government control with a break in cultural practices. Not only did Jefferson stop consuming wines favored by the British, but he *rejected* those wines and the hierarchal practice of toasts of which the aristocracy was so fond. I argue in Chapter 2 that Jefferson's policy regarding "healths" was vital to Jefferson's efforts towards cultural production in the White House. Though Bear does not claim that Jefferson was establishing new cultural norms in the United States, his comments on the nature of Jefferson's wine selections imply that a new norm was Jefferson's intended outcome.

Thomas Jefferson on Wine by John Hailman explores Jefferson's passion for wine which began in his youth. Understanding how Jefferson's own tastes in wine developed contextualizes his efforts to establish the White House cellars during his presidency. As a young man he was first introduced to wine in Williamsburg by his mentor George Wythe. At the time most

⁵⁷ During Lyndon Johnson's first administration, he banned the serving of foreign wines in favor of American brands. This was part of a larger drive to introduce the world to American food and culture, even suggesting that embassies serve hot dogs to visiting dignitaries. It was under LBJ's administration that California wines became popular. American wines are still favored in the White House today.

⁵⁸James A. Bear, Jr., 1984. Originally published as "Reforming the Taste of the Country," in *Fall Dinner at Monticello, November 2, 1984, in Honor of James A. Bear, Jr.* (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation), 1-9.

Virginians drank Madeira and claret, which Jefferson's notes reflect as well. While he soon began his own wine cellar at Monticello it was small and stocked primarily with these popular wines. Though he was adventurous with food and wine, it wasn't until he was Minister of France that his tastes expanded to more exotic vintages. Hailman discusses his extensive tours of the French countryside as the turning point between wine enthusiast and wine connoisseur. On these trips Jefferson spent time exploring the vineyards, analyzing everything from the vines to the vintner techniques. The connections he made on this trip allowed Jefferson to create the largest wine cellar in the United States as president.

The connections Jefferson made with vineyards and wine sellers while in Europe aided the establishment of the White House cellars when he took residence. Even before he began to host dinners, he had purchased dozens of cases of wine. Dinners at the President's table often mentioned wine as one of the highlights of their dining experience, "Wine in great variety, from sherry to champagne, and a few decanters of rare Spanish wine, presents from Chevalier D'Yrujo."⁵⁹ Consumption of "exotic" European wines created sophistication and legitimacy in the American Government, which Jefferson was trying to establish as a political power equal to any in Europe.

While Jefferson's tastes in wine were no doubt extravagant, they were also a precursor to the modern American wine consumer.⁶⁰ He enjoyed wines from across the spectrum, both red and white, sweet and dry, and was never averse to trying new varietals. Whereas today a wine enthusiast can often find their wine of choice in grocery stores or high-end liquor stores, Jefferson relied on William Lee his envoy in Marseilles and contacts at vineyards to make

⁵⁹ Benjamin H. Latrobe to Mary Elizabeth Latrobe, 24 Nov. 1802, *Latrobe papers*, 232. Chevalier D'Yrujo was the Spanish ambassador to the United States who married an American woman settled in Philadelphia. D'Yrujo often dined with the President when the capital was moved to Washington and spoke highly of Jefferson's table. In 1802, after Anthony Merry was appointed the British Ambassador, D'Yrujo dined with the President less frequently.

⁶⁰ Hailman, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine*, 4.

purchases. Occasionally, he requested suggestions or left specific purchases up to the discretion of Lee but more often when trying new wines, he would do research prior to his order to know exactly what varietal and vintage he desired. His letters to Lee detailed not only which wines and how many bottles he desired but also specific shipping instructions. Letters often included which ship the bottles should be transported on, who the captain was, the ports of exit and entry, the packaging in the ship, and how he would get payment overseas. These details were provided to safeguard the wine and ensure that it was safely transported to Virginia. Jefferson's meticulous planning was an attempt to mitigate the unreliable nature of shipping, particularly bad weather and pirates-to whom he lost several shipments of wine. Weather was the most difficult factor to weigh when shipping wine, which had to be done almost exclusively in the Spring and Fall. Summers were too hot, and wine spoiled, turning to vinegar in the barrels and shattering bottles. Winters presented the opposite problem; cold temperatures froze the wine. Even Spring and Fall could have poor conditions which ruined the wine. Jefferson lamented the loss of his shipments particularly those lost to "the rascally boatmen" of the Potomac.⁶¹ The boatman would tap barrels of wine and drink their fill, then replace the what they consumed with water, ruining the wine. By specifying a port of entry in the United States Jefferson could assure that a servant or trusted merchant could receive the shipment and avoid the hazards of the river transport.

Jefferson became adept at ordering and shipping wine and his work with proprietors created a wine empire. The relationships he built with sellers became particularly important and Jefferson used all his presidential authority to aid in procuring particularly rare or hard to come by bottles. However, he was not above a little flattery when necessary. Jefferson was quick to

⁶¹ Hailman, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine* 5. Wine could be shipped in a variety of ways. Some, such as sparkling wines, came pre-bottled from the vineyard and thus required bottles be individually protected. To ship bottles, straw and cloth padding would be placed in in a barrel and 4-6 bottles would be nestled inside. For wines sold by the barrel, such as table wines like chianti, barrels could be placed directly into the hold of a ship.

praise a wine to the vineyards who created it even if it was a wine he might not have personally been fond of. In a letter dated May 4, 1803 he wrote:

I am about to ask from you the execution of a troublesome commission, without being able to encourage its undertaking by an assurance that it may not be repeated hereafter. The meanness of quality, as well extravagance of price of the French wines which can be purchased in this country have determined me to seek them in the spot where they grow.⁶²

This tactic was one he employed in political and social settings. He overused superlatives which was “a blurring of the dim line between courtesy and deception.”⁶³ While questionable, it served him well, during his years as president, Jefferson was the largest American procurer of wine and became so adept at understanding the wine industry that customs officers often asked Jefferson what they should charge in customs taxes as they did not know how to evaluate the wine. The irregularity on the tariffs for wine, and the misclassification as to what type of commodity it was, spurred Jefferson to propose a new wine tax: “Were the duty on cheap wines put on the same ratio with the dear, it would wonderfully enlarge the field of those who use wine, to the expulsion of whiskey.”⁶⁴ Jefferson believed that wine should be more widely available and more widely consumed. By setting a standard tariff on all wine, regardless of its value, Jefferson was attempting to make wine an American drink.⁶⁵ Serving a large variety at his White House dinners helped to expose his guests to many different varieties of wine and added to the allure of dining with the president.

⁶² Letter to Fulwar Skipwith May 4, 1807 University of Virginia Archives.

⁶³ Dumas Malone, “Jefferson the President, Second Term, 1805-1809,” In *Jefferson and His Time*, (Boston : Little, Brown, 1948) 369.

⁶⁴ T.J. Randolph, ed., *Memoirs of Thomas Jefferson* (London 1829), vol. 4, 79; Bergh, vol. 1, 217.

⁶⁵ For additional reading see Dave Dewitt, *The Founding Foodies: How Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin Revolutionized American Cuisine* (Illinois: Sourcebooks Inc., 2010). Americans generally favored ale or cider. Particularly in the south, cider was considered a uniquely American drink. In the founding years of the Jamestown Colony, the Virginia company resorted to paying settlers with homemade cider as paper and coin money was not available in between shipments from England. Washington also famously distilled whiskey which was not considered an everyday drink the way ale, cider, and water was.

Over Jefferson's life his personal tastes expanded and adapted as did that of the wine drinkers around the world. Another issue in determining his personal tastes were the variations in production which affect the flavor of the wine. For instance, Barsac and Saunternes, French wines which were considered dry during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were now known to be quite sweet. There are also varietals which can vary based on the preference of the vintner or the season in which the grapes are picked. As president Jefferson was already planning for his future at Monticello. One shipment of Portuguese Termo, a dry port, was sent to down to Virginia to age and Jefferson pronounced, "to provision for my future comfort."⁶⁶

Jefferson's two terms as president were dubbed his "golden age of wine."⁶⁷ Each year of his first term he spent nearly \$3,200 of his \$25,00 salary on wine.⁶⁸ This budget facilitated the growth of the White House cellars and contributed to the golden age moniker. He quickly established the executive mansion as having the most extensive cellars in the United States which included wines from across Europe. Over the course of his presidency, he spent $\frac{3}{4}$ of his total salary on his lavish dinners and entertainments. At the time there was no Social Secretary and not budget for entertaining, but Jefferson's desire to institute new cultural practices justified the cost of entertaining as well as using his own money.

Jefferson's time abroad provided a thorough wine education and he particularly enjoyed purchasing popular and rare varieties. On September 12, 1804 William Lee, who was stationed in France at the American Consulate, sent a shipment of food and wine to the President. The shipment included five cases of wine totaling 738F. The most notable of the wines purchased in this shipment was a case of 1798 Chateau Margaux at 7F per bottle.⁶⁹ At the time this was a

⁶⁶ Jefferson to William Jarvis, April 16, 1806, Privately owned. Transcription available at Founders Online.

⁶⁷ Hailman, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine*, x.

⁶⁸ Hailman, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine*, 256.

⁶⁹ 1804 Wine Shipment, Coolidge Collection of Jefferson Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

fairly extravagant price but would have added considerable prestige to the President's table. Chateau Margaux, still a famous name in wine, would have been one of the highest quality wines in the president's cellars. The shipment also included cases of preserved fruits including raisins, apricots, prunes, and peaches. Another French delicacy, geleé a fowled a type of duck aspic, was included in the shipment and would have been served as an appetizer course or set out on a buffet.⁷⁰ These items would be shipped from Marseilles in wooden barrels and crates packed with straw to protect the glass bottles and jars. Though Jefferson was not the first to order and serve such foods in America, he was certainly the most visible. Jefferson's wine expenditures were a vital part of his political strategy, both for its ability to impress and inebriate, but also as part of his larger attempt to establish the United States as a civilized and culturally independent nation. Foreign dignitaries who dined at the White House saw the quality and variety of wine served by the president and reported back to their governments, elevating the status of the American government in the process. Strengthening America's image abroad established the nation as solvent.

Conclusion

Merry Ellen Scofield points out that "records reveal a man who firmly believed his dinners to be the proper republican platform for exerting influence and promoting political harmony during a period in American history when such presidential power was less than assured."⁷¹ Food in Colonial America was subjected to radical changes thanks to Jefferson's influence. This influence can be seen in every stage of the meal from the meticulous care Jefferson gave to new plant species at Monticello, to new dishes served at the President's House. These new advents combined with Jefferson's celebrity status, diffused French cuisine into the American diet.

⁷⁰ Jefferson, *Thomas Jefferson's Memorandum Book*, 434.

⁷¹ Scofield, "Fatigues of His Table," 15.

Addressing the link between Jefferson's French influences and how he entertained at the White House can help us better understand the social tactics Jefferson employed to create an arena for political engagement at his regular congressional dinners. The impact of French culture on Jefferson's Presidency, particularly the way Jefferson chose to assert his political power through the creation of atmospheres conducive to political machinations, is vital to understanding the role of entertaining at the White House. Jefferson's congressional dinners demonstrated that food was a political tool used to exert presidential power over his adversaries. Jefferson felt that one of his duties as president was not only to entertain, but to entertain at the same caliber of the European Courts in a republican fashion. While his distinct salon style of entertaining developed from his love of French culture, it was the political aspect of the Jeffersonian dinner party which makes his style truly revolutionary. Before Jefferson, there was no set precedent for entertaining, which gave him great license to hone his events to suit his own personal style and political purpose. Ultimately, this drive to "Frenchify"⁷² White House entertainments helped to establish the American government as a civilized nation and a legitimate political player on the global stage.

⁷² Erika S. Gibson, "'Frenchified': French Food and Salon Culture in Jefferson's White House," *Food Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 8, no. 2 (August 2018): 1.

Chapter 2

New Presidential Protocol

Jefferson believed that the presidency had a social component which Washington and Adams had neglected. He saw the president as the nation's host and thus entertaining was a necessity. However, the legacy of British rule lingered in the new nation and Jefferson feared the Federalists would steer the country away from its republican origins. This made entertaining an arena in which Jefferson could forge American culture distinct from the monarchical practices of Europe. Jefferson's republican adaptations of French entertaining placed him in a position of power, but Jefferson further exercised power through the strict disciplining of his events. Society already had an accepted standard of social norms which governed individual behavior in public. Jefferson took this one step further to forbidding common practices which reinforced aristocratic hierarchies. In November of 1802 Benjamin Latrobe referred to guests "acting against the health law" prompting Jefferson to remind dinner guests that toasting was not permitted at his table.⁷³ These rules further constrained Jefferson's dinner guests which ensured Jefferson maintained the authority in the room. It was in this way that he was able to create environments conducive to social and political manipulation.

Clothing was also a large part of the Jefferson's deviation from his Federalist counterparts. In private settings Jefferson portrayed himself as a plain man of the people who looked much like everyone else. His appearance, according to Federalists, often bordered on slovenly and rude as Jefferson saw no qualms in dismounting from his horse and immediately meeting guests in what every attire he had on. For a country schooled in the English expectations of presentation, such acts were unspeakable and even insulting. Jefferson saw this as welcoming, and certainly more polite than keeping his guests waiting while he changed his clothes. Not only

⁷³Benjamin H. Latrobe, *Latrobe Papers*, 232.

did this change encourage a new style of dress, it portrayed the president as merely a man, and therefore not above the people.

Though I have broadly addressed the historiographical works that inform this project, it is important to introduce an additional work for this chapter. One of the most comprehensive examinations of Jefferson's White House entertaining was written in 1981 by Robert Davis. "Pell-Mell: Jeffersonian Etiquette and Protocol," discusses the many ways Jefferson deviated from the practices of Washington and Adams as president. While Davis addresses such details as Jefferson's inauguration and his tendency to go riding without an escort, the bulk of this work focuses on Jefferson's Rules of Etiquette, which I discuss later in this chapter. Jefferson's insistence on entertaining "pell-mell," in which all in company are considered equal and no guest has seniority, offended Washington City's foreign ministers who conformed to the hierarchal practices of Europe, yet Jefferson insisted on the practice. Davis concluded that Jefferson's motivations for maintaining his dictum in the dining room were unclear. Ultimately, "Jeffersonian diplomatic etiquette and protocol was largely a façade," Davis claims, because "the president was a Virginia aristocrat accustomed to the niceties and fineries common to the upper stratum of American society."⁷⁴ While Davis's portrayal of Jefferson's character is apt, he neglects to look at the values behind pell-mell or the revolutionary identity with which Americans associated. The republican nature of Jefferson's entertaining practice, as well as my critique of Davis, are addressed in this chapter.

⁷⁴ Robert R. Davis Jr., "Pell-Mell: Jeffersonian Etiquette and Protocol," *The Historian*, vol. 43, no. 4 (August 1981) 229.

Federalist Entertaining

Both Washington and Adams held regular formal gatherings at their place of residence, and these entertainments took on characteristics of their host.⁷⁵ Washington, ever cognizant of his position as “Father of His Country,” made an effort to visit briefly with every member of government in attendance.⁷⁶ At his biweekly leaves, formal receptions with refreshments and conversation, men lined the walls of his parlor as Washington walked the room spending a few minutes with each man. Washington viewed these events as purely social and designed to put members of congress in the same room under friendly terms. Notably, Washington rarely held political dinners, but at the end of his presidency he employed Honoré Julien as his chef, a man who later served as Jefferson's *chef de cuisine* for 7 years.⁷⁷ Washington served food which was in excellent taste but tended to favor foods commonly served in America. At his residences in both New York and Philadelphia his slave, Hercules Washington, was installed as the head chef. Washington's grandson described Hercules in detail: “He was at the period of the first presidency, as highly accomplished and proficient in culinary art as could be found in the United States...The chief cook gloried in the cleanliness and nicety of his kitchen.”⁷⁸ Hercules took great pride in his job and was always meticulously dressed. By selling kitchen scraps and leftovers he was able to make money and maintain a wardrobe of well-made clothes. He had eight assistants in the kitchen including butlers, assistant cooks, and waiters. While Martha Washington oversaw the mansion, the kitchen was strictly Hercules's domain. Though there are no formal menus left from Washington's presidency meals most likely included ham, duck,

⁷⁵ During most of Washington's tenure as President the capital was located in New York City and Philadelphia. Adam's spent most of his time in Washington City, but the President's house was still under construction. Though he lived in the President's House during the last months of his presidency he did little entertaining there as it was still largely unfinished.

⁷⁶ Charles Cullen, “Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests,” White House Historical Association, White House History: Collection 3, (Washington D.C. 2008), 310.

⁷⁷ Cullen, “Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests,” 310.

⁷⁸ Dave Dewitt, *Founding Foodies: How Washington, Jefferson, and Franklin Revolutionized American Cuisine* (Naperville: Sourcebooks, 2010), 138.

turkey, and geese. It is also said that Washington was fond of barbecue so roasted meats would have been a main feature. When Washington resigned the presidency and prepared to return permanently to Mount Vernon, Hercules mysteriously went missing and was never found.

When Adams took office, he continued with Washington's tradition, relying heavily on his wife Abigail to organize the gatherings and maintain the proper social protocol. Her influence kept the tone light and casual, far from the world of politics in which the men spent their days. John and Abigail also presided over holiday balls that included full meals and dancing.⁷⁹ Entertaining was clearly an expected component of the office of the president, but Martha Washington and Abigail Adams played a key role in keeping political functions social. As the first widower to hold the office, Jefferson had no hostess on which to rely, and as I argue, he kept his social functions political.

Country Roots, Parisian Polish

What we have come to understand as Jefferson's characteristic style of entertaining took its inspiration from the French Salons of Paris. Parisian salons were one of the only acceptable venues for those of common birth to interact with members of the nobility; an idea which appealed to Jefferson's republican nature.⁸⁰ A strict set of social rules ensured that commoners did not overstep their bounds and inadvertently offend a nobleman. Historian Steven Kale argues salons were important to reinforce the "'values, attitudes...and feelings of an earlier age'...as a means of stabilizing identities and establishing social rules at a time when social and cultural coordinates were unsettled, a phenomenon that gave enormous symbolic capital to older elites."

⁸¹ For elites to maintain control of the production and dissemination of class appropriate content,

⁷⁹ Dewitt, *Founding Foodies*, 312.

⁸⁰ Catherine Allgor, *Parlor politics: in which the ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2002), 14.

⁸¹ Steve Kale, *French Salons: High Society and Political Sociability from the Old Regime to the Revolution of 1848* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 9.

salons balanced open access with exclusive guests.⁸² Salons were also organized by prominent women in society who determined the topics of conversation and established the atmosphere of each event. This was significant because only in this way could women establish themselves as intellectuals.⁸³ The formality of French salon culture is important to note because Jefferson made distinct changes in his entertaining in the White House. Assuming the role of host entered what Europeans would consider the women's sphere. Social and political salons were generally hosted by political wives and wealthy women of independent means. This was an extension of women's roles as social hostesses in the upper classes. Salons were their opportunity to exert agency within the domestic sphere in France and helped improve the status of women. By the Restoration in 1815, a woman's ability to converse intelligently at the salons was a lauded trait.

Jefferson appropriated French salon culture and grafted it to common social practices in the United States through republican adaptations. French culture was considered the height of elegance and civilization amongst European allies and the reproduction of this European standard elevated society in Washington City. Jefferson rejected the classist structure of social salons and his guests, many of whom had never experienced a Parisian salon, readily adjusted to the structure of Jefferson's salons. With many of his guests uninitiated, he adapted entertainments to suit republican tastes while projecting an aura of authority. As a widower, he viewed himself as both the host and hostess in the White House, a role with which he was comfortable from his years of entertaining in both France and the United States. Washington society was familiar with the expectations between host and guest would have deferred to his

⁸² Kale, *French Salons*, 9.

⁸³ Kale, *French Salons*, 13. Jefferson's drive to adapt salon culture to a more republican standard was ahead of his time. By the time of French Restoration in 1815 liberal salons "recognized personal merit and the equality of rights practiced an openness in their sociability aimed at diffusing progressive ideas and respect for parliamentary government among an ever-wider *corps politique*." Kale, 121.

expertise, and indeed, American guests quickly adapted to Jefferson's eccentricities when he began hosting events as president in March of 1801.

Intellectualism flourished in salons and Jefferson could see the affect that the free exchange of ideas had on the French populace, "Even in Europe a change has sensibly taken place in the mind of man. Science has liberated the ideas of those who read and reflect, and the American example has kindled feelings of right in the people."⁸⁴ While Jefferson enjoyed the academic rigor of the French salons, he knew that the format had to be altered to fit American entertainments, which revolved around community fellowship. To better accommodate the republican sensibilities of American politicians, Jefferson did away with many of the formalities of the French salons, particularly the hierarchy and strict social roles. This was often commented upon by guests, "Mr. J banished from his table all approaches to ceremony and reserve."⁸⁵ Jefferson focused on the academic atmosphere which gave salons their gravitas while implementing a less formal social structure more in line with the social mean. "Without the least ceremony he seated himself at the head of the table and immediately began to help himself and those around him—dinner was soon ended and the ladies left the table and were soon followed by the gentlemen."⁸⁶

French staff was a vital aspect of Jefferson's presidential entertaining. As mentioned in the last chapter, he believed in "the importance of a good maître d'hôtel, in a large house" who could see to the daily chores required to keep the house running smoothly as well as a classically trained French chef.⁸⁷ While visiting the President's House with her husband John Quincy Adams, Louisa Catherine Adams added credence to Jefferson's European quality of dining, "The

⁸⁴ Jefferson to Bellini, September 30, 1785, in *PTJ*, 8:568-69. Transcription available at Founders Online

⁸⁵ *Diary of Hetty Ann Barton*, 1804.

⁸⁶ Frances Few diary in *Journal of Sothern History*, XXIX (1963), 367.

⁸⁷ Philippe Letombe to TJ, 26 Mar. 1801, DLC.

entertainment was handsome. French servants in livery, a French butler, a French cuisine, and a buffet full of choice wine. If not for the lack of fire in the fireplace I might feel as if I were in Europe.”⁸⁸ As a woman born in England and well-traveled across the continent she was versed in the finery of French entertaining. Many guests commented on the formality of the liveried servants who wore “blue cloth coats with gilt buttons and scarlet facings, scarlet waistcoats, and corduroy pantaloons.”⁸⁹ Lemaire attended the meals in formal, if plain, attire. This was well chosen as the president was known to wear well made, but plain clothing quite contradictory to the finery of his table. This adaptation helped to bridge the gap between aristocratic, and thus distasteful, aspects of salons with the more republican practices of food and fellowship. This was likely his attempt to find a happy medium between the flamboyance of his French attire and the sturdiness of his clothing as a gentleman farmer in Virginia.

As a politician, Jefferson used his love of food to create social salons out of common political dinners at the White House. By adhering to this more European style he was able to politic and make meaning change in the young nation. His idealized, agrarian based, republican values became the foundation for all his political dealings, particularly in regard to securing the future of the country. While Jefferson was concerned with the plight of the nation, he nevertheless believed that the underlying Enlightenment ideals of the American Revolution were vital to securing the country’s future.

⁸⁸ Margaret A. Hogan and C. James Taylor (eds) *A Traveled First Lady Writings of Louisa Catherine Adams* (Boston: The Belknap Press of Harvard University), 2014. Though it would seem Mrs. Adams was flattering the President on his European elegance, it is clear from reading her diary that she held no fondness for Mr. Jefferson or his attempts at French finery. The year she and John Quincy Adams lived in the new Capital her diary is riddled with criticisms and disdain.

⁸⁹ Lucia Stanton, “Nourishing the Congress: Hospitality at the President’s House,” *Dining at Monticello: In Good Taste and Abundance*, ed. Damon Lee Fowler, (Charlottesville: Thomas Jefferson Foundation, Inc., 2005) 15.

Rules of Etiquette

Though Jefferson entertained guests at the White House in his new salon style from the beginning of his presidency, it was not until 1803 he formalized his “Rules for Etiquette in Washington.” The necessity to establish a written set of rules arose from two years of subtly offending British delegates. Anthony Merry, the British minister plenipotentiary to the United States, claimed that Jefferson’s actions as president “...was prepared and intended as an insult, not to me personally, but to the sovereign I represented.”⁹⁰ Jefferson’s preference to allow dinner guests to enter the dining room in no particular order deeply offended the sensibilities of the staid British officials, and their wives. British social order relied on a hierarchy and Jefferson’s abolition of formal practices undermined the way in which the foreign ministers interacted with guests and understood their “place” in the room. The first rule established the order in which visitors called upon each other. The second stated, “When brought together in society, all are perfectly equal, whether foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office.”⁹¹

“Rules for Etiquette in Washington;”

- i. In order to bring the members of society together in the first instance, the custom of the country has established that residents shall pay the first visit to strangers, and among stranger, first comers to later comers, foreign and domestic; the character of stranger ceasing after the first visits. To this rule there is a single exception. Foreign ministers, from the necessity of making themselves known, pay the first visit to the ministers of the nation, which is returned.
- ii. When brought together in society, all are perfectly equal, whether foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office.

All other observances are but exemplifications of these two principles. To maintain the principle of equality, or of *péle méle*, and

⁹⁰ Anthony Merry’s account as it was recorded by Josiah Quincy and printed in Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy* (Boston, 1868), 92-93. The term “ambassador” did not become common until after the Congress of Vienna in 1814. Minister Plenipotentiary simply meant a Minister with “full rights and powers of the government” ensuring the Minister had the ability to act on behalf of his government. While “ambassador” is the more commonly used term today, “envoy and minister plenipotentiary” is still part of an Ambassador’s title.

⁹¹ Saul K. Padover, ed., *The Complete Jefferson : Containing his Major Writings, Published and Unpublished, Except his Letters* (Duell, Sloan, 1991) 309.

prevent the growth of precedence out of courtesy, the members of the executive will practice at their own houses, and recommend an adherence to the ancient usage of the country, of gentlemen in mass giving in precedence to the ladies in mass, in passing from one apartment where they are assembled in another.⁹²

Jefferson's first rule establishes protocol for polite society outside the dining room. Building on the accepted customs of the "country" Jefferson decrees that residents will pay visits to new comers as a welcoming overture of friendship. He specifically pulls from country practices as he aligns himself with the yeoman farmer who is the backbone of the nation. As the common man was the most prolific in America, his practices were to be emulated. This, in Jefferson's opinion, distinguished American's from the aristocracy of Europe. It also eliminates hierarchy from the protocol, who calls on whom first is established based on residency rather than social standing as in England.⁹³ Only when the "stranger" is a foreign dignitary is it necessary to first visit the "ministers of the nation." While this was logistically the most expedient arrangement, it was also crucial for the foreign diplomat to receive his credentials. As is the case today, a minister must be acknowledged by the president in order to conduct the business on behalf of his nation. Once a minister had presented himself and received his credentials it was possible for government officials to return the call and proceed with political matters. Minister Merry, though acquainted with the visiting practices of England, had been informed that members of government would call on him and was displeased that the rules implemented under previous administrations would not be continued. "Now, for the first Time,

⁹² Saul K. Padover, ed., *The Complete Jefferson* (Duell, Sloan), 309.

⁹³ Davis Jr., 519. While social calls were common in the English countryside, they conformed to a strict social hierarchy which was so prevalent that it appeared in popular literature of the time. In the first chapter of *Pride and Prejudice* Mrs. Bennet begrudges her husband's hesitance in visiting the new neighbor, "Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not."

Mr. Jefferson has required that I should make the first Visit to the Heads (as they are termed here) of all the other Departments as well as that of State...”⁹⁴

Jefferson’s second rule, “When brought together in society, all are perfectly equal, whether foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office,” is reflective of his enlightened values. In a republican society all men were equal, with the yeoman farmer being the epitome of American ingenuity. Though this seems to be a broad statement, it encompassed all rules which usually dictated European entertainments. Rather than individually listing each hierarchical practice he dispensed with, Jefferson implemented a blanket statement which protected all guests from the confines of status.

He ends his rules by commenting that “pêle mèle,” the practice of dismissing the social hierarchy, would best ensure an equitable gathering. Jefferson’s rules were originally met with much speculation and some outrage by Washington society. However, there was no accepted protocol for entertaining as president which spurred Jefferson to create some standard by which the country, and particularly the government should hold itself. Those who dined with Jefferson regularly were aware of his proclivities in the dining room, but not all who visited. On one occasion, a French diplomat addressed the lack of courtesy with the President. He felt that the lack of formal introductions was a snub to his status as a member of a foreign delegation. Jefferson understood the visitor’s concerns claiming, “I am sorry that your first impressions have been disturbed by matters of etiquette, where surely they should least have been expected to occur.”⁹⁵ In this instance Jefferson’s more laid-back style of entertaining was remiss in meeting the basic standards of politeness. Good manners were a part of common courtesy and should be upheld in all entertainments. The rigid social hierarchy imposed by the European aristocracy was

⁹⁴ Merry to Hawkesbury, 6 December 1803, F.O -5, 41:25.

⁹⁵ As quoted in Hailman, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine*, 259.

not emulated in Jefferson's White House, however, that did not justify dispensing with the social niceties. Jefferson's entertainments acted as a conduit for both domestic and foreign policy and expressed to his guests that American republicanism was thriving.

When entering the dining room, Jefferson chose not to follow the formal rules of etiquette which dictated that those of a higher rank were seated first.⁹⁶ William Plumer, who dined frequently with the president, remarked, "One thing I have always noticed when dinner is announced--he directs the company to walk, and he is the last that enters the dining room."⁹⁷ This was important to understanding Jefferson's adaptation of salon culture. Rather than follow the precedent of the host escorting the highest ranked woman into the dining room, he instead, allowed all guests to enter the dining room in no particular order. Then, he himself, would follow behind and take his seat at the table. With this, Jefferson eschewed the hierarchy so imbedded in the ritual of Parisian salons and English entertainments. He called this style "pell- mell." At public ceremonies, to which the government invites the presence of foreign ministers and their families, a convenient seat or station will be provided for them, with any other strangers invited and the families of the national ministers, each taking place as they arrive, and without any precedence."⁹⁸ This was not a misstep, but rather, an attempt to make dining with the president a truly egalitarian event. Though some considered this a disregard for etiquette, in actuality, this was Jefferson's deliberate attempt to move away from the styles of the British and French courts.

When the wife of the British Prime Minister commented upon this shocking lack of formality Jefferson responded, "When brought together in society all are perfectly equal, whether

⁹⁶ Cullen, "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests," 319.

⁹⁷ William Plumer, *The Life of William Plumer*, 60.

⁹⁸ As quoted in Lucia Stanton, "Observing the Health Law," in *Spring Dinner at Monticello, April 13, 1986, in Memory of Thomas Jefferson* (Charlottesville, VA: Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation), 1-9.

foreign or domestic, titled or untitled, in or out of office.”⁹⁹ This notion was Jefferson’s ideal of Republican principles in action. As an idealist who valued every man as equal, Jefferson used the dining room as an arena in which all in attendance were equal, including himself.

Other changes to traditional etiquette were also made. One guest mentioned that “three laws governed his [the president’s] table- no healths, no politics, no restraints.”¹⁰⁰ Jefferson believed that drinking toasts to one another’s health was a distinctly British undertaking and, consequently, avoided it at his meals. The British would drink toasts throughout the meal by “calling out successively to each individual, to let him know you are drinking his health. The actor in this ridiculous comedy is sometimes ready to die of thirst, while he is obliged to inquire the names, or catch the eyes of twenty-five or thirty persons...”¹⁰¹ The practice, however, was common among the wealthy in America and was a common practice by George Washington; who continued to do so from his days as a General and to the end of his presidency. While it maintained as a common occurrence, some people believed that to end the practice of “healths” was the final stage of the Revolution. It’s clear that Jefferson, too, disdained the practice, but on the grounds that it was anti-Republican, rather than a final stage of the Revolution. One Puritan minister called it “an unjust and Tyrannical Invasion on the Liberty which belongs to everyone.”¹⁰² However, neither Madison nor Monroe brought back the practice of toasts during their time in office.

The two annual open houses Jefferson hosted, which I discussed in chapter 1, were carried over from previous administrations but held very different meaning for Jefferson’s

⁹⁹ Quoted in Esther Singleton, *Story of the White House*, (Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), 31.

¹⁰⁰ Benjamin H. Latrobe, *Latrobe Papers*, 232.

¹⁰¹ As quoted in Lucia Stanton, “Observing the Health Law,” 1-9. This quote came from French diplomat Chastellux who considered the toasts silly and inconvenient. While Chastellux is mentioned in several of Jefferson’s papers, his first name is never mentioned.

¹⁰² Stanton, “Observing the Health Law,” 1-9.

political colleagues. Under previous administrations, holiday events were only one of many opportunities to visit the president's residence.¹⁰³ The weekly levees which both Washington and Adams held allowed the political community open access to the president. Removing them made Jefferson seem less approachable and the constraints of his evening entertainments did not assuage his colleagues' feelings that the president was removing himself from his constituency. Though this event was designed for politicians and their wives, along with the rest of the citizenry, to visit the president as part of the holiday festivities, his political opponents did not always possess holiday cheer. On January 1, 1806, many of the Federalists chose not to attend the open house claiming "as they had not been invited this session to dine with him [Jefferson] they would not this day visit him."¹⁰⁴ Social niceties and hospitality that generally went hand in hand with politics was purposefully dispensed with by disgruntled Federalists who felt they had not received enough of the president's time during the last session of Congress. While Jefferson generally had each member of government to dine at least once when Congress was in session, the relatively small number of Federalists mean that more Democratic Republicans received invitations to dine at the President's House. It seems, though hospitality and manners were important in society, Federalists were willing to abandon common practices if it better suited their political agenda. Interestingly, they maligned Jefferson for doing exactly the same thing in establishing new presidential protocol.

¹⁰³ Under the Washington administration and part of the Adam's administration the Capital was in Philadelphia and there was no official residence for the president. It wasn't until the famous "Dinner Table Bargain" of 1790 that the swampy lands between Virginia and Maryland were designated as the future capital, name Washington after the first president. The President's House (now known as the White House) was constructed during the last year of Adam's presidency and was only habitable in the last few months of his term. When Jefferson moved in the building was still under construction with much of the lower floors unfinished. Merriweather Lewis, Jefferson's secretary, fashioned a bedroom in what is today the East Room.

¹⁰⁴ Plumer, *Plumer's Memorandum*, 363.

The Tunisian Delegation

1800 was a tumultuous year for American foreign relations. Not only was the nation on the brink of war with France, but conflict with the Barbary Nations also escalated. Though the United States had treaties with all four nations, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco, demands for additional tribute angered American diplomats who preferred to renegotiate their treaties. Jefferson had been a part of the diplomatic retinue responsible for negotiating treaties in 1784, and wrote to James Madison, “Would it not be better to offer them an equal treaty. If they refuse, why not go to war with them?”¹⁰⁵ Only Morocco accepted an equal treaty, which assured safe passage for American trade through the Strait of Gibraltar. Jefferson, however, was distrustful that the Barbary nations would maintain peace and abide by the terms of the treaty. In a letter to Adams he opined “I should prefer the obtaining of it [peace] by war.”¹⁰⁶ Relations with the other Barbary nations remained tenuous though treaties, which included annual tribute, were negotiated between 1784-1796.

Jefferson’s willingness to go to war in 1784 had not dwindled by the time he assumed the office of the president. In February 1802 Jefferson submitted orders to the Secretary of the Navy which stated U.S. ships were “authorized and directed to subdue, seize, and make prize, of all vessels, goods, and effects, belonging to the Bey of Tripoli, or to his subjects, and to bring or send the same into port, to be proceeded against and distributed according to law.”¹⁰⁷ America blockaded Tripoli and the conflict came to a head when the USS Constitution seized Tunisian vessels attempting to skirt the barricade.¹⁰⁸ The Bey of Tunisia responded by sending an envoy

¹⁰⁵ Jefferson to James Monroe, November 11, 1784, in *PTJ*, 7:511. Transcription available in Founders Online.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas Jefferson to John Adams, July 11, 1786. Transcription available in Founders Online.

¹⁰⁷ Circular to Naval Commanders, February 18, 1802, in *PTJ*, 36:605. Transcription available at Founders Online.

¹⁰⁸ Brian Kilmeade, *Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War Which Changed American History* (New York: Penguin, 2018) 18.

consisting of Mellimelli and eleven attendants. Mellimelli was tasked with retrieving restitution for all capture vessels as well as to exact tribute from the American government.

Jefferson strictly enforced his rules amongst his guests, however, he suspended many of his usual practices when hosting the Tunisian delegation on December 9, 1805. This meal was Jefferson's largest and most extravagant entertainment for a foreign dignitary. As such, it represents the epitome of Jefferson's diplomatic skill. This is evident not only in the richness and variety of the dishes he served, but also in his concession to his guests. The Tunisian envoy arrived during Ramadan, and thus fasted during daylight hours. Jefferson pushed the arrival time back to exactly at sunset rather than arrive at 3:30pm as was customary. This was a deliberate attempt on Jefferson's part to curry favor with his guests and establish the United States government as hospitable and civilized. The Tunisian envoy's experience was vital to establishing America's international reputation and create a favorable global image. Jefferson's goal was to prevent further military interactions and prevent the harassment of American trading vessels. Military might was a necessity for protecting American interests but was to be used sparingly and avoided when possible.

Having declared war on the Barbary Nations in his first months in office, Jefferson saw this visit as an avenue for long term peace. This meal was the embodiment of Jefferson keeping his social functions political. The delegation included Sidi Sulliman Mellimelli, the official representative and an entourage of about six men.¹⁰⁹ This meal was unique in that it did not conform to Jefferson's usual schedule. The dinner was modified in deference to the delegation who were Muslim and in observance of Ramadan. Lemaire's accounts for the week show that a wide array and large quantity of foods was purchased for the ambassador's meal. Groceries for

¹⁰⁹ Cullen, "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests," 326. Jefferson's entourage consisted of ten men in total four of whom were attendants who served, played music, and prepared Mellimelli's elaborate costumes. Plumer, *Plumer's Memorandum*, 210.

the week included 120 pounds of beef, 35 pounds of veal, 90 pounds of mutton, 30 pounds of rice, 27 pounds of pork, 25 pounds of butter, 17 dozen eggs, 3 turkeys, 30 small birds, and an assortment of green vegetables.¹¹⁰

A party of fourteen was assembled to receive the foreign dignitaries including Congressman and Mrs. Thomas Mann Randolph (Jefferson's daughter and son-in-law), Dr. George Davis, Isaac Coles (Jefferson's secretary), Congressmen John Randolph, Joseph Nicholson, John Dawson and John Eppes (Jefferson's son-in-law), as well as a number of Senators including John Quincy Adams, Samuel Smith, Samuel Mitchill, and George Logan.¹¹¹ The guests were assembled and prepared to begin the meal promptly at sunset, but the delegation was more than thirty minutes late and Mellimelli attempted to delay the meal further. He wanted to take a few minutes to smoke his pipe but was convinced by Jefferson to smoke in the dining room.¹¹² While all conversation had to go through a translator, the meal seemed to be pleasant enough after it finally began. Mellimelli "freely partook of the dishes on the table" and his attendants also seemed to enjoy themselves.¹¹³ When Mellimelli left the room after the dessert to smoke his pipe his attendants partook of the wine and Jefferson's grandson remembered that "Altho Mohamatens [Muslims], they emptied them [their wine glasses] repeatedly and seemed to enjoy and feel their wine."¹¹⁴

Accounts from Dolley Madison and William Plumer both discussed Mellimelli's reactions to the foreignness of American society from his own. Plumer specifically addressed Mellimelli's response to Native Americans. At the New Year's reception held January 1, 1806 at

¹¹⁰ Lemaire Accounts, 1806-1809, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

¹¹¹ Thomas Jefferson "Supposed List of Dinner Guests" Coolidge Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹¹² Cullen, "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests," 326. William Plumer mentions this pipe in his memorandum books. Plumer called upon Mellimelli at his hotel one evening and Mellimelli offered him snuff and took out a four-foot-long pipe which he proceeded to smoke as he conversed with Plumer. Plumer, *Plumer's Memorandum*, 210.

¹¹³ As quoted in Cullen, "Jefferson's White House Dinner Guests," 326.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Jefferson Randolph, "Memoirs," Edgehill-Randolph Papers, Accession #1397, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library.

the White House. Mellimelli asked the visiting Native Americans from the Western territories which “prophet” they followed, Moses, Jesus Christ, or Mohammed, he was shocked by their answer; none of the above. Instead, they told Mellimelli, they followed the “Great Spirit.”¹¹⁵ This answer led Mellimelli to the conclusion that American Natives were “vile heretics.”¹¹⁶ He was also surprised by the freedom granted women in American society, both in their dress and their independent movements. During one dinner hosted by Secretary of State and Dolley Madison Mellimelli attempted to bless Dolley with male children by wrapping her in a “magic” cloak and reciting a prayer.¹¹⁷

This dinner with the Tunisian delegation is a case study to examine how Jefferson portrayed American culture to a foreign envoy that was not rooted in European etiquette. Though Mellimelli had interacted with both Americans and Europeans, he had never, until this visit, been immersed in a Western culture. As someone who did not hold preconceived notions regarding “proper” European etiquette, Mellimelli was the ideal audience for staging entertainments which displayed uniquely American culture. Moreover, Jefferson’s authorization of force towards Tunisia in 1802 runs contrary to arguments that Jefferson was not willing to go to war. Rather, he was more than willing to engage with foreign nations attempting to exploit the United States because it was viewed as young and weak.

Republican Attire

Entertaining was not the only way Jefferson sought to break with British customs. He also adapted the European styles of dress to meet the more functional needs of the United States. Jefferson’s years in France gave him firsthand experience with the proclivities of court dress,

¹¹⁵ William Plumer, *Plumer’s Memorandum, United States Senate 1803-1807*, 364. Plumer does not mention which tribes were represented at the open house merely that “all the Indian Chiefs” were present.

¹¹⁶ Plumer, *Plumer’s Memorandum*, 364.

¹¹⁷ Samuel Mitchill to Catherine Mitchill, December 11, 1805, quoted in Alan David Aberbach, *In Search of an American Identity: Samuel Latham Mitchill, Jeffersonian Nationalist* (New York: P. Lang, 1988), 40.

which did not suit a nation which was more accustomed to work than leisure. Jefferson's distinct Americanness became a disadvantage upon his arrival in France at the end of July in 1784 as the Minister Plenipotentiary. Yet, he was enamored of all that France had to offer; "Behold me at length on the vaunted scene of Europe! ... you are perhaps curious to know how this new scene has struck a savage of the mountains of America....Were I to proceed to tell you how much I enjoy their architecture, sculpture, painting, music, I should want words. It is in these arts they shine."¹¹⁸ His first purchases in Paris included clothes for himself and his daughters, hiring a *valet de chambre*, and a year's subscription to the *Journal de Paris*.¹¹⁹ Jefferson adopted French fashion to improve his standing amongst aristocrats and to be taken seriously as a diplomat. Ironically, as president he eschewed these same trappings as unnecessary for the authority of a leader. As an ambassador he had to balance the more staid expectations of American politics with the over-the-top dress of the French court.¹²⁰

Though America was considered provincial and backwards by European standards, there were clear status symbols and social expectations amongst the wealthy. Customs were the way in which class and status were represented. As I have mentioned previously, Trudy Eden in *The Early American Table* redefines class and status in America through dining. In *Jefferson on Display: Attire, Etiquette, and the Art of Presentation* Gaye Wilson examines Jefferson's attire as an outward display of status, a concept which will be addressed in further detail in this chapter. As the first man to live in the White House for the entirety of his presidency, he also

¹¹⁸ Jefferson to Bellini, September 30, 1785, in *PTJ*, 8:568-69. Transcription available at Founders Online

¹¹⁹ Thomas Jefferson's Memorandum Books, 557.

¹²⁰ Benjamin Franklin famously flaunted the image of the backwoods provincial. He was often in company wearing a coonskin cap, which delighted the French aristocracy. Rather than adapt the extravagance of the French court, Franklin chose to embrace American stereotypes, a clear sign that he, too, understood the importance of image as a part of your political success.

sought to establish the social expectations for the office. As such, he implemented new customs and practices to fulfill his role as host-in-chief of the American nation.

In Europe, attire has always signaled class and station, during the Early Republic clothing in America was no different.¹²¹ In the United States clothing tended to be less formal than in Europe but the quality of one's clothing was still important. George Washington is famously quoted as saying "a plain genteel dress is more admired and obtains more credit than lace and embroidery in the Eyes of the judicious and sensible."¹²² While Washington understood that a more formal attire was very much a necessity of his station, lace and expensive embellishments were symbols used by the English aristocracy and were thus to be avoided. In this, Washington too had a sense of the "republican" tastes of the new nation. In his inaugural portrait he is portrayed wearing all black with some lace at his cuff and collar, but none of the ostentatious gold or jeweled garments worn by the nobility. However, Washington did choose to keep some of the more formal aspects of European dress including clubbing his hair back in a black silk bag and wearing a dress sword. As a former general the wearing of a dress sword would be somewhat unremarkable and in line with his military accomplishments. John Adams also chose to wear a dress sword at his inauguration. Having no military experience, a dress sword was worn entirely as a status symbol of the office established by Washington. Jefferson chose to forego this symbol as he had never served in the military and felt the sword was too reminiscent of English fripperies.¹²³

¹²¹ G.S. Wilson, *Jefferson on Display: Attire, Etiquette, and the Art of Presentation*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018), 142.

¹²² 3 George Washington to Bushrod Washington, Jan. 15, 1783, in George Washington, *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745-1799*, ed. John C. Fitzpatrick (39 vols.; Washington, D. C., 1940-44), XXVI 40.

¹²³ Wilson, *Jefferson on Display*, 134.

Instead, Jefferson's presidential portraits portray him as staidly dressed and surrounded by symbols of his republican interests.¹²⁴ In her analysis of President Jefferson's public image Wilson compares two wood engravings commissioned by newspapers to be printed in the papers following his inauguration. Both engravings used a portrait by Rembrandt Peale as their inspiration for Jefferson's features, but each artist chose to highlight slightly different academic facets in their final product. Cornelius Tiebout was employed by August Day who wanted to represent Jefferson as a "philosopher and statesman."¹²⁵ George Hem bold employed David Edwin who represented Jefferson as a "Man of the People."¹²⁶ Both artists depicted "Old-World traditions" based on European portraiture in designing the background of the image. Columns and heavy draperies appear behind Jefferson in both works.¹²⁷ The Philadelphia statehouse held portraits of both Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, sent to the United States by the royal couple during the American Revolution. The engravers eagerness to adapt traditional European styles of art was not unlike Jefferson's own drive to create an America which grew out of European traditions. However, the portraits also acted as a stark reminder of the excesses of monarchy and the consequences of any one man having too much power.

Tiebout's Jefferson is both a statesman as well as an academic which Tiebout represents as a harmonious combination of Jefferson's abilities. To Jefferson's right, a cloth draped table is furnished with books and a bust of Benjamin Franklin while Jefferson holds up a copy of the Declaration of Independence.¹²⁸ The items chosen by Tiebout represent what he considered to be the best of American philosophical thought. He purposely eschewed European Enlightenment thinkers. On Jefferson's left a small side table holds a scientific instrument and a globe rests on

¹²⁴ Wilson, *Jefferson on Display*, 135.

¹²⁵ *Aurora* (Philadelphia), February 26 and 27, 1801, and February 23, in Wilson *Jefferson on Display*.

¹²⁶ *Aurora* (Philadelphia), February 26 and 27, 1801, and February 23, in Wilson *Jefferson on Display*.

¹²⁷ "Jefferson the Philosopher," Cornelius Tiebout, Philadelphia, 1801. "Man of the People," David Edwin, 1801.

¹²⁸ "Jefferson the Philosopher," Cornelius Tiebout, Philadelphia 1801.

the floor. These more scientific devices conveyed Jefferson's intellectual prowess and differentiated him from his predecessors. It also represented the more egalitarian nature of American politics which relied on knowledge and skill, not birth, to ascend to the highest office of the land.

Edwin employed some of the same symbols, both a globe and books appear alongside Jefferson, but his intention was to portray Jefferson as a head of state rather than to focus on more intellectual pursuits.¹²⁹ To Jefferson's right sits an intricate but comfortable chair and Jefferson holds a globe under his left hand.¹³⁰ Books and papers are scattered on the table beneath the globe alongside quills and ink. Over Jefferson's left shoulder bookshelves line the wall, a fitting backdrop for a man who claimed, "I cannot live without books."¹³¹ Quill and ink were also symbolic of the tools a statesman employed in his work. Jefferson's reputation as a scholar was already well established. Upon his return from France he became president of the Antiquarian Society, a position which connected him with the wider intellectual community. Many of the members of the society corresponded with Jefferson throughout his presidency, keeping him well informed of all the latest scholarly pursuits as well as providing a direct line to the whims and wishes of the American people.

What is perhaps most remarkable about both images is their likeness in attire. Both engravings show a man simply dressed in a dark coat and waistcoat, dark breeches, and black hose. The only adornment on either is a starched white cravat and a hint of lace at the wrists.¹³² This was reflective of Jefferson's reputation as a "plain citizen, without any distinctive badge of

¹²⁹ Wilson, *Jefferson on Display*, 136.

¹³⁰ "Man of the People," David Edwin, 1801.

¹³¹ TJ to John Adams, June 1815.

¹³² Jefferson the Philosopher," Cornelius Tiebout, Philadelphia, 1801. "Man of the People," David Edwin, 1801.

office.”¹³³ Moreover, Wilson notes, it is Jefferson’s shoes which are most remarkable. In both image Jefferson is depicted wearing laced booties rather than heeled slippers with metal buckles. In Washington’s portrait by Gilbert Stuart, gold buckles are one of the status symbols which signify Washington’s social and political status. Jefferson’s preference for serviceable footwear was well documented both in his purchases as well as by White House visitors. In November 1803 Anthony Merry, the new British minister, arrived at the White House in full diplomatic regalia but was greeted by a comfortably dressed Jefferson “not merely in undress, but actually standing in slippers down at the heels.”¹³⁴ While Minister Merry found Jefferson’s attire beyond contempt, it was within Jefferson’s republican framework. He received the minister while at work and rather than stand on ceremony he greeted Merry at once.

The adornments Merry wore as an official envoy of the British Government were all a part of the formalities Jefferson attempted to deconstruct as president. In Jefferson’s view, it was not the clothes that made the man, so while his choice to greet Merry informally dressed was deliberate it was not intended as an insult to the minister. This fits into a larger social framework as the English relied on hierarchy and reciprocity to reaffirm order and status.¹³⁵ Merry would have expected reciprocal dress and treatment as was befitting two men of equal social standing. To be denied the symbols which defined Merry as a member of the British elite and an official envoy to The United States, placed him in unfamiliar territory in which he did not know the rules. James Madison, then Secretary of State, had to assure Merry that Jefferson’s attire was not a deliberate insult, but was common practice, even when meeting foreign dignitaries. “The President did not observe those distinctions of dress, more than other in this country, and that he

¹³³ *National Intelligencer* (Washington, DC), March 6, 1801, America’s Historical Newspapers.

¹³⁴ Anthony Merry’s account as it was recorded by Josiah Quincy and printed in Edmund Quincy, *Life of Josiah Quincy* (Boston, 1868), 92-93.

¹³⁵ Michael A. Lacombe, *Political Gastronomy: Food and Authority in the English Atlantic World*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 110.

had received Danish minister [Penderson]... in the same plain manner.”¹³⁶ Jefferson, however, was placed in a position of power as it was he who was breaking the rules, and through his social interactions, redefining them.

Jefferson used dress and social interactions as one of his arenas for change because they were already understood and accepted by Europeans. Universally dress was a status symbol, so Jefferson worked within this framework to redefine what garments and attire were considered to be powerful in the New Republic. The ornate trappings of European finery no longer represented wealth and privilege but was a garish reminder of the abuse of the British monarch. Despite the more laid-back attire of the President’s constituency, his overly lax attention to dress sometimes shocked his political colleagues. Senator William Plumer of New Hampshire commented upon first meeting Jefferson, “...a tall high boned man came into the room; he was drest, or rather undrest, with an old brown coat, read waistcoat, old corduroy small clothes, much soiled- woolen hose- & slippers without heels.”¹³⁷ The staid and serviceable attire represented in Jefferson’s engravings came to represent dignity and quiet refinement, however, his everyday clothes did not have the same affect. Plumer originally mistook President Jefferson as a servant and only when his companion, General Varnum, addressed Jefferson by his title did Plumer realize his audience had begun.¹³⁸ By 1804, three years since first meeting the president, Plumer was no doubt used to Jefferson’s proclivities. Yet, in discussing a dinner on December 3, Plumer again mentions Jefferson’s fashion, “He was well dressed-a new suit of black- silk hose-shoes-clean linen, & his hair was highly powdered.”¹³⁹ The fact the Plumer felt the need to comment on Jefferson’s appearance is significant because it reflects the expectations of the time. As with today, outward

¹³⁶ Madison to Monroe, 19 January 1804, in James Monroe, *James Monroe Papers* (Library of Congress, Presidential Papers).

¹³⁷ William Plumer, *The Life of William Plumer*, 94-95.

¹³⁸ William Plumer, *The Life of William Plumer*, 94-95.

¹³⁹ William Plumer, *Plumer’s Memorandum, United States Senate 1803-1807*, 212.

appearance was a symbol of authority and the president was expected to live up to certain standard. Jefferson's first meeting with Plumer clearly did not meet the standard, even though Washington and Adams both dressed more informally than European leaders. Through his own dress, Jefferson declared extravagant attire to be obscene and Americans quickly followed suit.

Conclusion

Jefferson's efforts to reimagine traditional practices of hospitality in a more republican light was part of a larger strategy to forge an American identity distinct from Europe. The actions of the foreign ministers living in Washington City inadvertently gave credence to Jefferson's White House protocol. After Minister Merry experienced the insult of dining at the president's table, his wife, along with the wife of the Spanish Minister, began to host weekly events "with dancing and cards for the frivolous, and the honor of her [Mrs. Merry] conversation for those who could appreciate it."¹⁴⁰ This deliberate attempt to undermine Jefferson's Rules of Etiquette was dubbed a "social war"¹⁴¹ by historian Robert Davis, an apt term for the series of social snubs that followed. However, openly showing their contempt for Jefferson's lack of precedence merely made Jefferson more resolute in his republican notions of entertaining. In a letter to William Short, Jefferson wrote, "The principle of society with us, as well as of our political constitution, is the equal rights of all; and if there be an occasion where this equality ought to prevail preeminently, it is in social circles collected for conviviality: nobody shall be above you, nor you above anybody, pele-mele is our law."¹⁴² Though the foreign ministers disapproved of Jefferson's dismissal of precedence, their resistance gave his practices more exposure. Their "social war" highlighted their contempt for all of Washington society. Refusing to attend the president's entertainments in favor of their own did nothing to discourage Jefferson and instead

¹⁴⁰ Helen Nicolay, *Our Capital on The Potomac*, (New York: Century & Co., 1924) 80.

¹⁴¹ Davis Jr., "Pell-Mell," 223.

¹⁴² TJ to Short, 23 January 1804, in *American Historical Review* 33, no 4 (July 1928), 32.

he became more vocal. Both Jefferson and Madison wrote to Monroe in England to warn him there may be backlash from Jefferson's political snubs and slovenly attire.

This particular anecdote is indicative of the reasons Jefferson felt that America needed a distinct culture. The hierarchal expectations held by British diplomats were contrary to the principles which founded the nation. To establish a country independent from Great Britain, simply to imitate its culture, made The United States more susceptible to the pressures of European power because there was no unifying American identity. It is the attitudes and values which drove Jefferson to so drastically change presidential protocol which negates Davis' claim that "Whatever the motivation, it is clear that Jeffersonian diplomatic etiquette and protocol was largely a façade." The ideology behind Jefferson's White House protocol, which Davis fails to address, was more than mere motivation; it was the belief that American identity was not irrevocably tied to Great Britain. Jefferson viewed a distinct American culture rooted in republican values to be vital to establishing an imagined community which connected people through more than simply a shared rebellion. Once the generation of Founders had passed, the American people still needed a common bond.

Chapter 3

Discourses of Diplomacy, Tropes of Authority

George Washington and John Adams are an integral part of American mythology and, rightly, hold a place of distinction as Founders. However, their voices are largely absent from their legacies. Though prominent in their own time their writings do not hold the quotable qualities of that Jefferson's writing possess. Washington was a war time general and his writing was limited to correspondence and strategy. Adams, a prolific writer, was a trained attorney which was reflected in his prose.¹⁴³ Jefferson's voice was unique not only for his turn-of-phrase but also because his rhetoric was radical in its originality. The ideas espoused in his work were profoundly different from the language of British law and politics. Incorporating these concepts into his writing endowed the nation with a revolutionary voice distinct from Europe. Language is one of the arenas where we see Jefferson break with British culture to constitute an independent American identity. The revolutionary language of the War of Independence was adapted to support the governance of the new nation during his tenure as president.

Peter Onuf, a preeminent Jefferson scholar, published *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* in 2000 which examines Jefferson's political rhetoric. Onuf argues that Jefferson's motivation was rooted in his republican values which were shared by the people of the United States. "American nationhood," claims Onuf, "was not simply a boon to colonists seeking to evade onerous tax burdens but a great benefit to mankind."¹⁴⁴ I argue throughout this paper that Jefferson saw a distinct American culture as vital to the survival of the state. Onuf

¹⁴³ Though Adams was a member of the Declaration Committee responsible for producing the Declaration of Independence, he declined to write the document because he felt Jefferson's public works made him a better author for the document. In the musical *1776* Adams famously, and fictitiously, refers to Jefferson's "happy talent of composition and remarkable felicity of expression." Though Adams never actually said this, it is perhaps one of the most apt descriptions of Jefferson's voice.

¹⁴⁴ Peter Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 191.

makes a similar argument regarding the necessity of nationhood, “nationhood was the solution to the local tyrannies of the old regime, the threshold to full, equal, and consensual participation in the modern world”¹⁴⁵ He concludes that often Jefferson’s devotion to republicanism led him to belief that those who did not share republican values were a dangerous and an enemy of the state, themes I address in this chapter.

Linguistic Analysis

In *Language and Power*, Norman Fairclough enumerates a linguistic framework rooted in Marxist and Foucauldian theory which breaks down the power structures contained within the syntax of language. He calls his theory Critical Language Study (CLS) and argues that language shapes culture and culture shapes language. Only by analyzing this relationship can scholars, and Fairclough hopes, non-academics identify the power mechanisms, and link them to the dominant capitalist class. CLS requires looking at all aspects of written and spoken language including vocabulary, syntax, grammatical structures, tone and deference, as well as the roles people assume within society. It consists of three major stages; description, interpretation, and explanation.¹⁴⁶ Discourse, which Fairclough defines as the social practice of language, encompasses all three stages and is a socially conditioned process which is intrinsically embedded in society. Even before we learn to speak, we learn to interpret body language and tone which then translates into written text. Because he saved his prolific writings, and their many drafts we can see that, Jefferson understood the power of language and chose his words cautiously and deliberately. Applying Fairclough’s Critical Language Study framework to both Jefferson’s personal and public writings reveals the establishment of a new nation that was legitimate, powerful, and equal to any country in Europe.

¹⁴⁵ Onuf, *Jefferson’s Empire*, 190.

¹⁴⁶ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 39.

For the purposes of clarity and to provide analysis of Jefferson's writing over time, this paper will focus largely on three areas identified by Fairclough; intertextual context and presuppositions, relational values such as modality and pronouns, and experiential values expressed through vocabulary. Intertextual context refers to the information the author, and often the audience, already knows. In Jefferson's case this was often the political environment of the Early Republic or some bit of gossip to which he had been privy. From this general context the writer can draw conclusions, or presuppositions, interpreting this general context.¹⁴⁷ Because the intended audience would already understand this context, the presuppositions would also be accepted and would establish the writer's intent and tone. Presuppositions exert authority by drawing upon a common history. Relational values are grammatical features the author uses to express himself in comparison to others or to identify degrees of probability. Modality can be either relational, comparing the author to others, or expressive, expressing degrees of probability. These modalities can either unite or divide an audience. "We" is another grammatical feature which expresses a relational connection and establishes the author as part of the collective.¹⁴⁸ It assumes the authority to speak on behalf of the collective and often creates an "us/them" dichotomy to maintain cohesion. Finally, experiential value addresses how "ideological differences between texts in their representations of the world are coded in their vocabulary."¹⁴⁹ Essentially, word choice and rhetoric establish the author's position and feelings regarding the subject of the work. In Jefferson's case this is evident from his meticulous editing process as well as the final product. This diligence to reiterating the language of both the revolution and the Enlightenment was part of a larger understanding of Jefferson's role in history and his task of shepherding the United States away from British practices and towards an independent

¹⁴⁷ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 164-165.

¹⁴⁸ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 142-143.

¹⁴⁹ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 131.

government. Language was an important part of Jefferson's political strategy and essential to his diplomatic success.

Public Writings

Jefferson was known in his own time for his prodigious writing and published books and treatises as a politician as well as scholar. It is these public documents which gave Jefferson his political reputation and made him a household name, particularly in Virginia. Compared to his many written works, few of Jefferson's writings were speeches but whether written or oral his distinct style was clear. Jefferson public writings are also unique in that they reveal the formation of a national identity following the divide from England. Both the Declaration of Independence and his first inaugural address are written with the intent to unite men behind common Enlightenment beliefs. Jefferson's long and extensive political career gave him the opportunity to reiterate Enlightenment themes to the public for forty years. In both instances he used unifying language and deliberate grammatical structures to imbue his words not only with meaning but with emotion.

The Declaration of Independence, 1776

While this project focuses on Jefferson's presidency, it would be remiss of me to not to discuss The Declaration of Independence as it is his most famous work and established him as a political force among colonial leaders. More importantly, this document initially defined America as separate from Great Britain and later imbedded within the American psyche the notion that revolution was necessary and acceptable to maintain a democracy. The United States was forged through war, but it was Jefferson's words which established an American identity inherently predisposed to war.

The Declaration of Independence can be examined in many ways, but I will focus on the intertextual context and presuppositions as well as language and grammar. But first, the structure

of the document needs to be outlined to understand the intertextual context Jefferson created by his choice of framework. In writing this document Jefferson, and the Declaration Committee at large, deliberately framed this letter as more than merely a list of grievances. They understood that this declaration would be read by colonists as well as Parliament and made a calculated decision to organize the document into three main parts; the first is an introduction which set forth the purpose of the document, specifically the rights held by colonists as citizens of Great Britain and as individuals. From this section comes the famous “We hold these truths to be self-evident” which in itself is a presupposition asserted by Jefferson.¹⁵⁰ The first part is important to the overall structure of the document because it conveyed the topic in a way that is easy to understand and relatable to many colonists who believed they were being taken advantage of by the British Crown.¹⁵¹ The second part of the document is a specific list of grievances. This list was significant to the framework of the document because it specifically detailed ways in which the British Government had abused colonists. It even discussed the colonists attempts at redress that were ultimately unsuccessful. This was the first time the grievances were listed together, but, it was only a reiteration of what the colonists already knew. The final part of the document is the ultimate split from Britain. This section relied on the first two parts to help colonists understand their specific relationship with Great Britain and the actions which justified leaving the Empire.

The entire structure of the document is significant in creating the United States of America as a legitimate political entity among the colonists because of the intertextual context and presupposition. Fairclough claims presuppositions are common ground for readers and “are not properties of texts, they are an aspect of the text producers’ interpretations of intertextual

¹⁵⁰ Declaration of Independence, (1776).

¹⁵¹ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 168-170.

context.”¹⁵² Each section of the document builds on the previous text, and Jefferson interweaves the presuppositions into each section, beginning in the first paragraph; “...a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”¹⁵³ This presupposition assumes that it is logical and crucial for the colonists to establish the necessity of the separation from Great Britain. Jefferson then reasserts the need for separation in great detail by listing each transgression the King has committed against the colonists. These, too, are presuppositions and Jefferson used them very specifically as “*ideological functions*,” because “what they assume has the character of ‘common sense in the service of power.’”¹⁵⁴ Fairclough claims this can be either sincere or manipulative, and in the case of the Declaration of Independence I would argue this fulfills both descriptions. Sincere, because Jefferson is reiterating a shared history of abuse but manipulative because he knew that this document would be seen as a declaration of war, both figuratively and literally, for the beleaguered colonists.

Perhaps the best use of CLS is in dissecting the language Jefferson used to describe the Colonies’ relationship with Great Britain. Word choice and rhetoric are particularly important to the success of this document and its resonance with the average colonist. The most obvious is Jefferson’s use of the word “he” in reference to King George. Jefferson uses it at the beginning of nearly every accusation regarding the King and it holds a specific purpose outside of repetition. The use of “he” is actually a function of agency and normalization. Fairclough specifically addresses instances in which agency, or “who done it,” is in question when vague headings or phrases are used in written language.¹⁵⁵ One example Fairclough uses is “the defense

¹⁵² Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 164.

¹⁵³ Declaration of Independence, (1776).

¹⁵⁴ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 165.

¹⁵⁵ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 139-140.

issue *came to the front*” a sentence which passively implies there was no actor or catalyst for the issue.¹⁵⁶ However, Jefferson uses “he” to *ensconce* the King’s agency, and the King specifically. While the government is mentioned more broadly, Jefferson is attempting to make the responsibility for the Colonies’ separation unique to the King because, despite the Colonies’ attempts to reach a compromise, it was the King who continually ordered oppressive policies be implemented as a means of punishment and control. This was a technique which was successful because of the colonists’ ideology which, in the 150 years since the founding of Jamestown, differed drastically from that of Britons still living in England.

Jefferson also utilized relational modality, which Fairclough describes as “the authority of one participant in relation to others.”¹⁵⁷ Jefferson employed the inclusive “we” to create a sense of unity and apply to the basic human principles expounded by John Locke. Jefferson began “We hold these truths to be self-evident...that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of property.”¹⁵⁸ Here he was speaking not only for the colonists but took on the burden of speaking for humanity. This collective “we” is designed not merely to codify the Congress’ authority to speak for the colonists, but to affirm that man has a right to represent himself and enact his rights. Fairclough points out that “we” can be replaced by many different words. These words encompass the people, Americans, republicans, man, and what Jefferson considered to be all enlightened thinkers. What is perhaps most important about Jefferson’s use of “we” is the implied existence of “us.” Each transgression listed has the implied affect that the action was committed against “us” collectively. This, along with his many presuppositions, entrenches within the minds of the readers that Americans collectively have been violated, unifying individuals from all colonies against the aggression of the English King.

¹⁵⁶ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 139.

¹⁵⁷ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 142.

¹⁵⁸ Declaration of Independence, (1776).

The Declaration of Independence is a revolutionary document because it represents an expansion of natural rights and establishes a precedence for colonial lands to break from their mother country. However, it is also a formidably powerful document because of the way it uses language to assert the United States of America is a political organization with its own inherent and expressed powers. Jefferson did this by appealing to the people's republican values which he emphasizes in his use of intertextual context and his diction, which places colonists on the side of progress, while placing the British Government in the wrong. While Norman Fairclough believes it is vital for the common man to understand and *break down* power constructs asserted through language, Jefferson uses language in the Declaration of Independence to do the exact opposite. He *builds up* the power of the colonial people and government as a way proclaim equal sovereignty with the British Government. Jefferson's rhetoric was a vital part of empowering the colonists to claim their rights as autonomous individuals capable of making autonomous political decisions. It was Jefferson's ability to capture the attention of his fellow colonists that made this document so persuasive and his writings as president have the same effect.

Jefferson's First Inaugural Address, 1801

Jefferson's first inaugural address has become infamous for its most quoted line "We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists."¹⁵⁹ The call for cooperation between parties still resonates in times of political upheaval, but this line is only one of many designed to appeal to the spirit of cooperation after a particularly virulent election. In Chapter 7 of *Language and Power*, Fairclough discusses how the subject, or producer, uses language as a creative social process when orders of discourse are "de-structured."¹⁶⁰ In times of political or social upheaval, such as elections, the established practices often see dramatic changes and creatively

¹⁵⁹ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁶⁰ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 180.

reorganizing language can “create a commonality of ideology” which ingratiates the subject to the audience.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the First Inaugural address sets the tone for Jefferson’s first term in office. Jefferson inherited a potentially disastrous relationship with the French and American ships faced harassment on the high seas. Here he lays out his diplomatic strategy and establishes what he considers to be the moral imperative of a republican government.

As the first president from the Democratic-Republican party, Jefferson embodied the de-structuring of American political practices honed under Washington and Adams. His tenuous political position following his electoral tie with Burr, required that his first inaugural address establish his authority and unite his political constituents. From his very first words “Friends and fellow-citizens” Jefferson united those in the audience by grouping “the people” together under the collective banner of “fellow-citizens.”¹⁶² Fellow-citizens appears six times throughout the speech as well as in the opening address. Jefferson uses this phrase in two different ways, the first when making an appeal the second when referring to the “the people.” When addressing the audience Jefferson is often calls upon their belief in the principles of enlightenment, “Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things.”¹⁶³ Liberty, a founding principle enumerated by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, is a belief shared by all Americans. Thus, the citizenship granted to those in the audience was a reminder of the war Americans waged in throwing off the bonds of British tyranny. While Jefferson is encouraged unity, the subtext of his words appealed to this shared history. Though war was required to break free from Great Britain, an enlightened republic had recourse outside of conflict. Jefferson’s choice to use “fellow-citizen” in referring to the people

¹⁶¹ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 180.

¹⁶² Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁶³ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

is also a deliberate choice which shows a kind of reverence for the capacity of man.

“...entertaining a due sense of our equal right to the use of our own faculties, to the acquisitions of our own industry, to honor and confidence from our fellow-citizens, resulting not from birth, but from our actions and their sense of them...”¹⁶⁴ Here Jefferson acknowledges the individual rights held by the people while establishing a respect amongst the people for one another.

Enlightenment ideals are combined with the industriousness and grit of the American people which Jefferson idealized in his dream of a republican nation.

The office of the president was imbued with the power of the people, which Jefferson reasserts by speaking to and for *all* citizens using the collective “we” sparingly, only ten times in the entire speech, but to great effect.¹⁶⁵ As I have previously mentioned, the collective we is an important rhetorical tool used to establish authority because it speaks on behalf of a larger audience.¹⁶⁶ However, as Jefferson is speaking to a divided audience, he does not rely on “we” the way he did in The Declaration of Independence. In fact, “fellow-citizen” is used to couch the term and placate his political opponents. Most often he uses “we” when referring to concrete shared experiences, “During the contest of opinion through which we have passed...” In this instance rather than speak on behalf of the people Jefferson is attempting to include himself in the collective experience. This resonates with his republican values and his idealized image of himself as a merely a man of the people. It also helped to bridge the divide between himself and a government divided by the turmoil of the presidential election. This less authoritarian “we” also reminded politicians that regardless of their opinion on the outcome of the election, the task of running the government was still vital, “...I look with encouragement for that guidance and support which may enable us to steer with safety the vessel in which we are all embarked amidst

¹⁶⁴ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁶⁶ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 142.

the conflicting elements of a troubled world.”¹⁶⁷ The use of both “us” and “we” in this sentence, far from assuming authority, actually relinquishes some authority in Jefferson’s request for guidance. By including this request, he reassures members of government that their voices and their opinions will be valued during his administration. Despite a more inclusive tone, Jefferson does use an authoritarian “we” in several lines. Most famously, “We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists.”¹⁶⁸ It is important to note that only after Jefferson acknowledged his fellow-citizens, and his position as one of them, did he assume the authority to speak on behalf of the assembled politicians.

Jefferson also created unity through his use of presuppositions. Jefferson’s interpretation of intertextual context appeared in the form of presuppositions, essentially, he tells the audience what *he* believed to be important.

A rising nation, spread over a wide and fruitful land, traversing all the seas with the rich productions of their industry, engaged in commerce with nations who feel power and forget right, advancing rapidly to destinies beyond the reach of mortal eye -- when I contemplate these transcendent objects, and see the honor, the happiness, and the hopes of this beloved country committed to the issue and the auspices of this day, I shrink from the contemplation, and humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.¹⁶⁹

Everyone in the audience knew that the United States was prospering, but Jefferson chose to restate this fact because it is a vital component of the government’s functioning. He reaffirmed this by claiming to “humble myself before the magnitude of the undertaking.” As president, Jefferson must shepherd the nation to an era of continued prosperity. Jefferson believed that while the revolution of 1776 shaped the “form” of the government, the election of 1800 would decide its “principles.”¹⁷⁰ The imagery of America as a land of burgeoning potential is carefully

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁶⁸ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁷⁰ John Ferling, “Thomas Jefferson, Aaron Burr and the Election of 1800,” Smithsonian.com, November 2004.

chosen. Fairclough points out that presuppositions can be sincere or manipulative but also “ideological functions, when what they assume has the character of ‘common sense in the service of power.’”¹⁷¹ In this moment Jefferson called upon the potential of the nation to construct the belief in American ingenuity. This appeal to “background knowledge,” or commonly held beliefs, used accepted national rhetoric to reaffirm authority by calling on an idea which already held value to individuals in the audience.

Jefferson’s Second Inaugural Address, 1805

Though his second inaugural address is not as widely quoted as the first, it is an example of Jefferson’s political voice. As with his previous writings, Jefferson relied on rhetorical devices to capture the attention of his audience and reinforce his authority. The first four years of his administration were filled with new challenges for the nation and the office of the president. The Louisiana Purchase in 1803 and new tax laws were two of the largest policy shifts and featured prominently in Jefferson’s inaugural address. Jefferson’s extension of presidential powers through the purchase of the Louisiana Territory was particularly upsetting for Northern Federalists who believed the scope of presidential powers should be narrowly defined in deference to the Federal Government. Senator James Hillhouse from Connecticut, in fact, encouraged the state to secede from the United States in protest of Jefferson’s flagrant abuse of power.¹⁷² The Second Inaugural Address, therefore, extolled domestic prosperity as means to prevent division and a potential internal war.

Jefferson drew upon themes from his tax reforms to establish common ground with the audience, “The suppression of unnecessary offices, of useless establishments and expenses,

¹⁷¹ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 165.

¹⁷² Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson, *Empire of Liberty: The Statecraft of Thomas Jefferson*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) 148.

enabled us to discontinue our internal taxes.”¹⁷³ These presuppositions highlighted the need for new tax policies which rejected “useless establishments” and reaffirmed his stance on the wasteful spending on bureaucratic institutions. As a Democratic Republican Jefferson favored small government which facilitated the will of the States through limited regulation. A large bureaucracy was contradictory to the success of democratic nation. However, Jefferson understood that taxation was a necessary evil when running the government. “The remaining revenue on the consumption of foreign articles, is paid cheerfully by those who can afford to add foreign luxuries to domestic comforts...”¹⁷⁴ As a proponent of the yeoman farmer, a flat tax on all citizens would be a hindrance the working class. Instead, he implemented a sales tax on luxury items. The wealthy, who were the main consumers of such goods, could easily afford this additional expense. This ensured the government had a steady stream of revenue while protecting the lowest earners. While his audience was largely made up of wealthy men, his strategy affirmed these presuppositions because they spotlighted the government’s successes and its ability to work as a unit. Following the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, Jefferson faced backlash from Federalists and was criticized for overreaching presidential powers. Jefferson instead refocuses attention on successes forged through bipartisan cooperation.

Much like in his first inaugural address, Jefferson uses relational values to create a sense of unity and political cohesion. “In the transaction of your foreign affairs, we have endeavored to cultivate the friendship of all nations, and especially of those with which we have the most important relations.”¹⁷⁵ The Adams administration had struggled with foreign diplomacy, and only in September of 1800 did Adams negotiate a peace with France. As such, much of Jefferson’s first term was dedicated to improving America’s international standing both through

¹⁷³ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁷⁴ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁷⁵ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

diplomacy and military might. Only a month after his inauguration in 1801, Jefferson and Congress declared war on the Barbary nations, but in the later years of his first administration Jefferson sought to improve relations with this region as well as European nations.¹⁷⁶ Jefferson's efforts to resolve conflict internationally required domestic cooperation and was one of the many victories which reinforced his dedication to strengthening a united government. This address redirected the nation's gaze away from the international conflicts of the first term and towards domestic growth in the expanding nation.

Jefferson also used we to discuss the American successes as they will be viewed by posterity. "We are firmly convinced, and we act on that conviction, that with nations, as with individuals, our interests soundly calculated, will ever be found inseparable from our moral duties; and history bears witness to the fact, that a just nation is taken on its word, when recourse is had to armaments and wars to bridle others." Jefferson was acutely aware that his actions would be scrutinized by future generations, and as president he was particularly focused on establishing lasting practices for the expanding republic.¹⁷⁷ It is therefore no surprise that Jefferson would invoke the authoritative use of "we" and remind audiences of the historical significance of his actions in the same sentence. As an idealist, appealing to the "moral duties" of a "just nation" were meant to speak to the audience's deep sense of honor and reputation.¹⁷⁸ Both of Jefferson's elections were contentious and morally ambiguous. Using unifying language and reminding men of their moral duties also assuaged the lingering tensions from the election. The

¹⁷⁶ Brian Kilmeade, *Thomas Jefferson and the Tripoli Pirates: The Forgotten War That Changed American History*, (New York: Penguin, 2018), 15.

¹⁷⁷ All of the Founders expressed concerns regarding their legacies. As the "democratic experiment" had never before been attempted, they understood that their decisions, and the subsequent successes or failures, would determine whether the United States could survive as a nation. Yet despite this concern, the Founders wrote prodigiously and saved everything. Jefferson was known to draft three or more versions of his letters alone. While this is interesting to examine from a linguistic perspective, it also means Jefferson preserved many of his own flaws.

¹⁷⁸ See also Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor*. Leaders of the Early Republic lived and died by the strength of their reputation. Therefore, to act dishonorably was tantamount to political suicide.

election of 1804 was particularly tough on Jefferson. James Calendar, a newspaper editor from Richmond who had previously written favorably of Jefferson's candidacy and even published articles against his opponents, blackmailed Jefferson. Calendar requested that the President make him the post-master general for the state of Virginia, and in exchange he would refrain from sharing Jefferson's relationship with his slave Sally Hemmings. Jefferson refused, and Calendar published several cartoons and articles about Jefferson's "mullato concubine."¹⁷⁹ Despite Calendar's efforts Jefferson was reelected for a second term.

Jefferson also carefully chose his words to represent experiential value and situate himself among the people, "Proceeding, fellow citizens, to that qualification which the constitution requires..."¹⁸⁰ While "we" assumed authority on behalf of the collective, "fellow citizens" places Jefferson among the people. This is a phrase he employed in the first inaugural address and continued to use in both speeches and published addresses. As merely another member of the group Jefferson humbles himself and admits that though he is the president, he is a servant to his office and the people of the United States. "I shall now enter on the duties to which my fellow citizens have again called me and shall proceed in the spirit of those principles which they have approved."¹⁸¹ Jefferson takes his duties as a representative of the people very seriously, and "fellow citizens" becomes his mantra.¹⁸²

Jefferson also employs more questions in the second inaugural address than in many of his previous public writings. This is a rhetorical device used to reinforce his argument. "... it

¹⁷⁹ Annette Gordon Reed, *Sally Hemmings and American Controversy*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1998), 190.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.

¹⁸² Both George Washington and John Adams used the phrase "fellow-citizens" in their inauguration addresses, though much more sparingly than Jefferson. In the 20th Century we see a now common adaptation of this phrase. The published manuscript of FDR's first inaugural address begins "I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels." The use of "my fellow Americans" attempts to create the same sense of comradery and fellowship Jefferson strove to achieve with "fellow citizens."

may be the pleasure and pride of an American to ask, what farmer, what mechanic, what laborer, ever sees a tax-gatherer of the United States?”¹⁸³ Jefferson’s new tax policy was a point of pride because it lifted financial burdens from the common man ensuring that he was free to live unfettered by the tax collector. Jefferson believed that the success of the average worker or farmer was vital in determining the economic success of the United States. Highlighting his success in the form of a question gives the audience an opportunity to consider the question and come to the same conclusion that Jefferson does. Rather than merely telling his audience that the tax laws have a positive outcome he allows his fellow citizens to come to that point on their own.

In addressing the addition of Louisiana during his first term he actually uses a series of questions to capitalize on the promise of an expanding and strengthening of the United States. “But who can limit the extent to which the federative principle may operate effectively? The larger our association, the less will it be shaken by local passions; and in any view, is it not better that the opposite bank of the Mississippi should be settled by our own brethren and children, than by strangers of another family? With which shall we be most likely to live in harmony and friendly intercourse?”¹⁸⁴ These questions both make the statement that the acquisition of Louisiana was to the benefit of the United States and presented the audience with unpopular alternatives. The first question asks who can limit the “federative principle.” Following the untenable restrictions places on the colonists during the Revolution, Americans valued the federal republic above all else. Here Jefferson argues that not to acquire Louisiana would have been a detriment to the government because it would have stymied the nation. Phrasing the alternative as abhorrent and anti-republican ensured that those disgruntled with his extension of

¹⁸³ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address, *The Avalon Project At the Yale Law School: Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy*, (New Haven: Connecticut): 1996.

¹⁸⁴ Thomas Jefferson, Second Inaugural Address.

presidential powers knew that the decision was made not to inflate Jefferson's own worth, but rather to extend the reach of the republic. The second and third questions in this sequence both support the notion that having a French neighbor was not a benefit to the country. He in fact frames the acquisition in a familial context in which the United States must support and nurture its own people. The new territory ensured that border states would not be abandoned to the mercy of strangers.

Private Correspondence

Jefferson's private correspondence shared many of the same qualities as his public writings, but he expressed his opinions more freely with less care given to maintaining a unified political front. Political correspondence with trusted friends and confidants tended to express his zeal for a sustainable republican nation. Jefferson's private political correspondence during his presidency tends to be decidedly one sided, focusing on the political agenda set forth by himself and the democratic republican party. Nonetheless, it is incredibly important in understand how he so successfully used the pen as his weapon of choice. It also reaffirms the revolutionary ideologies of his youth and his efforts to create a stable and sustainable political system into which the nation could continue to grow. Though these letters were less restrained they still utilized many of the same rhetorical and grammatical devices Jefferson relied on in his public writings. In particular, his effort to create unity using "we" and to reaffirm his political values.

Letter to R. Livingston April 18, 1802

While Jefferson was a known Francophile, he did not allow his affinity for France to cloud his decision making regarding the United States' alliance with Napoleon's government. In a letter to Robert Livingston in April of 1802 Jefferson laid out his concerns regarding French ownership of New Orleans and the potential for an alliance with Britain. A long- time political ally, Livingston was made Ambassador to France in 1801 when Jefferson took office and was

responsible for negotiating the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. Though this was done quickly without writing to the president or congress for permission, Livingston was clearly familiar with Jefferson's position. In letters such as this one, Jefferson shared his hopes and concerns regarding France's changing position on the international stage. Jefferson went so far as to claim "the impetuosity of her [France] temper, the energy & restlessness of her character, placed in a point of eternal friction with us...render it impossible that France and the US. can continue long friends when they meet in so irritable a position."¹⁸⁵ Jefferson's letter, though written to an ally and confidant, utilizes the same rhetoric and grammatical structures as his public writings. It is the authority imbued in his correspondence which in turn gives Livingston the power to negotiate with France.

In expressing his fears on France's hold on New Orleans, Jefferson relies on presuppositions regarding the nature of the United States relationship with France. "of all nations of any consideration France is the one which hitherto has offered the fewest points on which we could have any conflict of right, and the most points of a communion of interests."¹⁸⁶ Though Livingston was well aware of this history, Jefferson's presupposition reflects his interpretation of U.S.- French relations at the time. This interpretation becomes vital to understanding Jefferson's political shift away from France by the end of the letter. Instead, he focuses on the needs of the American people, particularly farmers. "it is New Orleans, through which the produce of three eighths of our territory must pass to market, and from it's fertility it will ere long yield more than half of our whole produce and contain more than half our inhabitants."¹⁸⁷ Here Jefferson acknowledges the role of the Mississippi River and the Port of New Orleans in America's long-term growth. He predicts, accurately, that as America grows and

¹⁸⁵ TJ to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802.

¹⁸⁶ TJ to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802.

¹⁸⁷ TJ to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802.

continues to move West, New Orleans will play a vital role in the economy. Access to the Gulf of Mexico also ensures American vessels can monitor the Western border along the Mississippi. The strategic value of the Port of New Orleans becomes the justification Jefferson provides for a potential alliance with Great Britain, which he enumerates through expressive modality.

Modality can hold two forms, the first “relational modality” shows the participant’s authority in relation to others and is often expressed using “we.”¹⁸⁸ Jefferson also employed expressive modality, which Fairclough describes as “the speaker’s authority with respect to the truth ...i.e. the modality of the speaker/writer’s evaluation of the truth.”¹⁸⁹ In establishing his stance regarding a new partnership with Great Britain, Jefferson evaluates the power of the British navy and the invaluable strength it will add to securing the shipping rights of the expanding nation. “the day that France takes possession of N. Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low water mark. it seals the union of two nations who in conjunction can maintain exclusive possession of the ocean. from that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet & nation.”¹⁹⁰ The instability of the French government and its tempestuous nature made France a poor governor of New Orleans. Strategically, the United States would have difficulty defending its Western border because France could change its policy regarding the US depending on its immediate needs. Jefferson interpreted the internal conflicts of France to be prohibitively unstable and thus undesirable as an ally. An alliance with Great Britain, however, would assure that the United States could gain control of the port of New Orleans. Despite the history between the US and Great Britain and Britain’s near constant conflict with France, Jefferson believed England to be a calculated risk with significantly more potential than an alliance with France.

¹⁸⁸ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 142.

¹⁸⁹ Fairclough, *Language and Power*, 142.

¹⁹⁰ TJ to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802.

In this letter Jefferson's rhetoric revolved around defining and labeling friendship. Though he seemed resigned with a potential British alliance, the idea that France was a long-time ally and friend became a tether for Jefferson. "Friend" was used to convey a deeper affinity than a mere political ally. The shared values of liberty and freedom made France unique among our allies and Jefferson claimed "from these causes we have ever looked to her as our *natural friend*..."¹⁹¹ Because of this close relationship, ending an alliance would be much like ending a friendship and therefore should involve more consideration than other international decisions. The use of "natural friend" refers to the bond of forged by the parallel course of revolution. As two of the largest countries in the world experiencing revolution they shared a bond formed through rebellion and the struggle to create lasting democracies.

Jefferson saw France's governance of the Louisiana Territory, specifically of New Orleans, to be in direct conflict with the interests of American business and national security. His solution is to encourage France to cede New Orleans to the United States as "this would certainly in a great degree remove the causes of jarring & irritation between us, and perhaps for such a length of time as might produce other means of making the measure permanently conciliatory to our interests & friendships."¹⁹² Jefferson's solution was to maintain the alliance only as long as it remained in the best interests of the United States. Ironically, this was very similar to the XYZ Affair, in which French delegates attempted to extort "tribute" from the American ambassadors upon their arrival in France in 1800. This calculated manipulation contrasts sharply with Jefferson's reputation as overly idealistic. It suggests that though sympathetic to the French, Jefferson placed the strategic needs of the United States above his personal feelings about France.

¹⁹¹ TJ to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802.

¹⁹² TJ to Robert Livingston, April 18, 1802.

Letter to Joel Barlow May 3, 1802

One of Jefferson's many confidants was Joel Barlow, a Connecticut born author and politician who served as an envoy to the Barbary nations under President Adams as well as the United States Minister to France and believed strongly in the enlightenment, liberty, and republican values. As such Barlow was a natural friend for Jefferson, both dedicated to preserving American liberty. Because of the nature of his friendship, Jefferson was much more direct when discussing his concerns regarding the Federalists than he is in any of his public works. Here he expressed his true self to a sympathetic and understanding audience. He claimed, "the present one [government] is not respectable; being the bitterest remains of the cup of Federalism, rendered desperate & furious by despair."¹⁹³ This presupposition would have been shared by Barlow but clearly shows that Jefferson's call for unity in his public addresses was an idealistic dream in which he fervently believed, but which he feared would not come to pass. Interestingly, this is also the only time Jefferson capitalizes the "F" on Federalism. Throughout the rest of this letter, "federalist" and "federal government" remain in lower case. While it is clear that Jefferson was specifically referring to the Federalist political party, he differentiated between the concept of a person who believed in a federalist government, and the political party which was slowly devolving.

Though the Federalists comprised the minority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives, their vocal disgruntlement made progress difficult for the Democratic-Republicans. In Jefferson's view, the Federalists antics were counterintuitive, and damaged American progress. He further enumerates this belief when discussing the state of the political affairs in the Northern States,

¹⁹³ TJ to Joel Barlow, May 3, 1802.

Vermont is decidedly with us. it is said & believed that N. Hampsh. has got a majority of republicans now in it's legislature; and wanted a few hundreds only of turning out their federal governor. he goes assuredly the next trial. Connecticut is supposed to have gained for us about 15. or 20. percent since her last election; but the exact issue is not yet known here. nor is it certainly known how we shall stand in the H. of R. of Massach. in the Senate there we have lost ground. the candid federalists acknolege that their party can never more raise it's head.¹⁹⁴

In his typical approach, Jefferson is attempting to logically predict the future of the Democratic Republicans through a state by state approach. As Northern States became more Republican, the Federalists became a dying breed and the party knows it is disintegrating.

While Jefferson is against party politics in principle, he understands that they are unavoidable and believes “we shall now be so strong that we shall certainly split again; for freemen, thinking differently & speaking & acting as they think, will form into classes of sentiment.”¹⁹⁵ It is not the difference in opinion which Jefferson fears, on the contrary, those differences are vital to the success of the Republic. Political parties are to be avoided because they form an allegiance to an organization rather than to the ideals of liberty and republican simplicity. Moreover, “the healthy firm and virtuous feeling confidence in their physical & moral resources, and willing to part with only so much power as is necessary for their good government, and therefore to retain the rest in the hands of the many, the division will substantially be into whig and tory as in England *formerly*.”¹⁹⁶ This return to English standards of government is part of what Jefferson seeks to eradicate in the United States. The American experience of unjust taxation and the memory of an indolent King are forefront in the minds of

¹⁹⁴ TJ to Joel Barlow, May 3, 1802. Spelling and grammar was not standardized in the United States until the beginning of the 19th century, by which time Jefferson was set in his ways. He regularly spells words phonetically and often adds additional punctuation marks, as is the case with the apostrophe in “it’s.”

¹⁹⁵ TJ to Joel Barlow, May 3, 1802.

¹⁹⁶ TJ to Joel Barlow, May 3, 1802.

many in government. Instead, Jefferson seeks to establish lasting political institutions which operate under a republican standard the success of which may be impaired by the party politics.

Jefferson also uses two forms of modality, the first is “we” which he uses throughout to represent the Democratic Republicans but is juxtaposed with “federalists” to represent the other in the dichotomy. This is perhaps one of Jefferson’s strongest and most enduring writing habits. In the Declaration of Independence, he established a clear dichotomy between “we” the colonists and “they” the British government. He utilizes this framework with Barlow to highlight the politically and philosophical superiority of the Democratic Republicans. There is perhaps one quote which could be interpreted as addressing a larger American “we.” Directly before Jefferson begins to take stock of the Northern states, he claims, “every where else we are becoming one”¹⁹⁷ Here it seems more likely that Jefferson is talking about the American people and their move towards a more ideologically united nation. This is significant for Jefferson because in accepting a common American ideology rooted in republicanism he believed it to be more sustainable and capable of producing long term security and prosperity. Without such a commonality, the American people were prey to foreign powers who would exploit the new nation. The XYZ Affair with France in 1800 was proof to American politicians that Europe had no qualms in extorting the new nation.

He also uses “we” repeatedly throughout his evaluation of each state’s political affiliation. The more united tenor of his public addresses is very much not apparent. He seems focused on replacing Federalists with Democratic Republicans even though he acknowledges a political divide is nearly inevitable. As the president and thus leading member of his party, the assumption of the collective voice is understandable but also brings in to question his political motives and seems over-zealous in his efforts. The political mudslinging of the 1800 election

¹⁹⁷ TJ to Joel Barlow, May 3, 1802.

pitted the two parties against each other, and from these political disagreements grew personal hostilities. Jefferson's position as president gave him the leverage to maneuver the Federalist party out of existence. He firmly believed that the actions of the Federalist party derived from dangerous views about the nature of government. The Federalist agenda was propagated by statesmen who conformed to a more Old-World political structure rooted in the English Parliamentary system. It is easy to see how a man like Jefferson who rejected traditional government and whose political views were uniquely American would fear a return of English tyranny in the guise of a federal government.

Conclusion

Though Jefferson's writing matured throughout his career, his focus on representing the morals and ideals of the burgeoning American nation stayed the same. Language was perhaps Jefferson's most powerful, and prolific, diplomatic tool. He utilized the pen to both wage war and ensure peace. But what is perhaps most notable was his ability to forge an American identity steeped in the acceptance of war as a natural extension of democracy, "& what country can preserve it's liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? let them take arms. the tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants. it is it's natural manure."¹⁹⁸ The memory of British rule and the fear of a weakened America prompted Jefferson to reiterate the need for force to occasionally solve political problems. Jefferson's interactions with the Barbary nations reinforce the power of military force as well as the success of diplomatic negotiations.

Jefferson's comments to Barlow suggested a very "us" versus "them" dynamic between Democratic Republicans and Federalists. Jefferson goes so far as to malign the individuals in the party. He reiterated the firm belief that the Federalist Party needed to die to make way for a

¹⁹⁸ Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, Published in *PTJ*, 12:355–57.

stable and free government moving forward. Jefferson's letter to Robert Livingston regarding the US relationship with France, resonates with undertones inclined to decisive action. Though on friendly terms with France, removing New Orleans from French control by force was a strategy he understood could become a reality. This is one of the instances where Onuf's analysis that Jefferson's zealous adherence to republican values created enemies to freedom. France, despite America's history of friendship, could not be allowed to maintain the rights to the Mississippi River because their values were a threat to the success of the United States.

Jefferson was unique among the Founders because the principles he expounded were the original American ideals and were not reliant on older British customs. As president his goal was to enact policies which would serve the new nation forever, not just the foreseeable future. These policies both engaged with the threat of war and grounded the United States in political stability while avoiding war with Great Britain and France. Enlightenment ideology espoused in revolutionary language broke with European political practices and provided a sustainable voice for the new American government.

Conclusion

The election of 1800 is often referred to as a “revolution” because America saw its first peaceful transfer of political power from one party to another. March 4, 1801 the Federalist regime was laid to rest and a Democratic Republican dynasty reigned for the next twenty-five years. However, the changing of the guard extended much farther than political dominance; when Jefferson took office, he was intent on revolutionizing an entire culture. Robert Tucker and David Hendrickson claim that Jefferson was ahead of his time because he did not rely on the tenants of the Old World in imagining a New World. This made him unique even amongst the Founders because he could see a future that did not grow out of England, but which grew out of the republican ideals espoused in the Declaration of Independence. As president he believed the only way to remain a nation independent of European powers was to ensure that the United States developed its own distinct culture rooted in the egalitarian nature of liberty. The need to establish a legacy for the United States, rather than merely for himself, made Jefferson extremely liberal with presidential powers because in his mind the end justified the means. Expansion was one of the surest ways to protect American independence.

After leaving office, Jefferson continued his pursuit of establishing the pillars of the nation. When the British burned Washington D.C. in 1814, Jefferson sold his entire personal library, some 2,000 books, to the Library of Congress. He knew that a nation needed its own history and that his collection provided a survey of dozens of subjects. In 1819 he established the University of Virginia, the first public university in the nation in an effort to make education more accessible. America’s current cultural landscape would look very different if Jefferson had not laid the ground work our current institutions. This was revolutionary at the turn of the 19th century and it was deliberate. Jefferson forged a distinctly American cultural identity necessary for an independent nation that was strong enough to withstand the pressures of international

politics. Using a framework of cultural anthropology, we can see *how* Jefferson established new social practices rooted in revolutionary values of enlightenment and republicanism in three areas: food, protocol, and language.

Republican Dining

By the time of the Revolution, food in the British colonies deviated from practices in the motherland due to the lack of ingredients and access to the material items which were class markers for the British elite. Instead, colonists forged new dining habits which reflected the agrarian nature of the colonies and the salt-of-the-earth nature of its inhabitants. Jefferson adapted French food, considered by Europe to be the epitome of civilized culture, to suit more republican tastes by incorporating flora and fauna native to the Americas. Classical French cooking techniques, and large quantities of butter, elevated the actual food Americans ate and Jefferson endeavored to introduce his dinner guests to a variety of new cuisines. Jefferson felt that one of his duties as president was to forge a new precedent for presidential entertaining distinct from those in Europe. Food was also a political tool used to exercise presidential power at the dining table.

Jefferson changed many presidential practices, but his revisions to the dining experience must be examined separately. Michael Lacombe's analysis of English hospitality provides a framework for arguing that Jefferson's dining room was a setting for ritual interaction. Lacombe places particular influence on the offering and acceptance of food as vital to status within society. Jefferson articulated power through staged dinners which highlighted the intricacies of French cookery. In this way Jefferson defined his own authority, leadership, and within a society which eschewed the hierarchies of Europe. Hospitality was an arena which was already an accepted practice in the United States and Jefferson's adaptations were acknowledged within this framework. The addition of French food legitimized Jefferson's cultural production because they

were familiar symbols of status. Reforming accepted social norms allowed Jefferson to recast them in his own image of republicanism.

In Jefferson's mind, politics and entertaining were mutually constitutive practices vital to the success of a president's agenda in Congress. French food in particular impacted society because it was foreign to the accepted eating practices in America yet added novelty to the experience of dining with the president. This facilitated the exercise of political power by creating times and places where interpersonal relations could strengthen trust and the ability to negotiate or compromise in Congress. The sheer volume of accounts which focus on the food on the table rather than the company or conversation signify that what was eaten was as noteworthy, or even more so, than the host. Jefferson also felt that creating dining experiences which rivaled the European courts was a necessary part to producing a new American culture which could compete with the long-established practices of the Old World.

Presidential Protocol

The nation's youth worked to Jefferson's advantage as the United States' host. Washington City was a new capital built exclusively for housing the government, unlike New York or Philadelphia which were bustling metropolises before the Continental Congress spawned the first American government and the city was still in the planning phases when Jefferson took office. Even the White House was still under construction when Jefferson moved in, an apt metaphor for American culture. Both the physical office of the president and the president's political role were works in progress and Jefferson used his presidency as an opportunity to craft the president's political and social role. Establishing new protocol for the office of the president was vital to creating a nation capable of one day growing out of its infancy and achieving political independence on the international stage.

Jefferson capitalized on the tenants of English hospitality when entertaining in the White House. The hosting of meals and sharing a table was imbued with symbolic relevance and placed Jefferson, as the host, in the seat of authority. It is that authority that allowed him to appropriate French salon culture, adapt daily practices, and establish new protocol for the president's social agenda. Jefferson worked smarter not harder by reforming already accepted social norms from Europe to become more republican in nature. The strict social hierarchies which ruled both Britain and France were incompatible with a democratic government, and thus those practices were eliminated.

Jefferson believed that the presidency had a social component outside entertaining. As the nation's figurehead, reputation and public perception were just as important as the ability to lead. Washington and Adams chose to present themselves and their office in the traditions of the Old World, removing only the most overtly monarchical practices of entertaining and dress. Presentation became an important deviation from both European and Federalist practices. Because Jefferson considered himself merely a man of the people, he over emphasized the plainness of his attire. His daily dress favored clothing such as corduroy and cotton which were functional and commonly worn by "average" Americans. When greeting foreign dignitaries and members of Congress at home, the president made no attempt to dress more formally, believing that his time and that of his guests was more valuable than the potential insult of appearing underdressed. This encouraged a more simplistic style of dress and established the president as a man of the people.

The hierarchal expectations held by British diplomats were contrary to the principles which founded the United States. To simply imitate Great Britain's culture, which lauded class, made the United States susceptible to the British. If the British still viewed America as culturally

the same, reabsorbing the country would be an easy and desired outcome. Scholarship identifying Jefferson's motivation in implementing his eccentric new protocol in the White House is not complete without an examination of Jefferson's republican values and the shared idea of liberty and equality which led the citizenry to break from Great Britain to begin with. American identity was not irrevocably tied to Great Britain and Jefferson's adaptations highlighted this fact for the Americans as well as foreign ministers. Rather, the shared identity of a revolutionary state became the foundation for a shared culture which could develop alongside Americans as the country grew and expanded West.

Language and Discursive Spaces

Jefferson defined the revolutionary voice of America, most notably in the Declaration of Independence which proclaimed the right for oppressed peoples to throw off the yoke of tyranny. His use of specific incendiary rhetoric embedded in the American psyche an acceptance of and need for violence in protecting essential human liberties. His words were incredibly effective, encouraging nearly two million people to take up arms against Great Britain. However, the language of revolution does not translate to the language of governance. As president, Jefferson had to again redefine his political voice in a way which utilized republican principals of liberty and equality while, publicly, encouraging unity. In his unceasing drive to establish a unified and independent nation, cries to overthrow an oppressive government were softened and he encouraged those with differing ideologies to resolve their differences through discourse rather than discord. Collectively, America feared the return of a monarchical tyrant. The Federalists were convinced Jefferson's expansion of presidential powers set America on the road to despotism, while Jefferson believed his unilateral action on the Louisiana Purchase was justified in securing land for western migration.

How Jefferson used revolutionary language is clear when applying a linguistic framework to his writing. *Language and Power*, by Norman Fairclough breaks down the power structures contained within the syntax of language which shows how a writer exerts power. The mutually constitutive nature of language can be examined using Fairclough's Critical Language Study (CLS) which identifies how power mechanisms in language are linked to a dominant class. CLS has three stages; description, interpretation, and explanation which directly correlates to discourse.¹⁹⁹ Fairclough defines discourse as the social practice of language, encompasses all three stages and is a socially conditioned process which is intrinsically embedded in society. This framework reveals Jefferson's attempt to adapt revolutionary language into the language of governance.

I have identified three specific tenants of CLS to address within Jefferson's writing. Focusing on intertextual context, modality, and rhetoric in each of the documents I analyze provides a clear set of standards by which to evaluate the authority of Jefferson's voice and draw conclusions about the development of revolutionary language over the course of his political career. Language played a vital role in Jefferson's political and personal life. Both public addresses and private correspondence show that his private political correspondence carried themes of unity and liberty from his public works. It is in his private writing where the nuances in his political beliefs are fleshed out in conversations with political allies. The larger understanding of Jefferson's role in establishing a republican government is apparent in his writing. His words articulated republican values in a way that was easily understood by the citizenry which provided the foundation for American governance in the Early Republic and beyond.

¹⁹⁹ Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power*, (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015), 39.

Jefferson's voice, particularly as president, developed throughout his life but maintained a focus on the revolutionary values of liberty and republicanism. The iteration of ideals which Jefferson believed were necessary to maintain the American nation was prevalent in both his personal and private writing as president. The intent behind his actions was to propagate legislation which facilitated American expansion. Only through growth did Jefferson believe the nation could fortify itself to withstand European pressures. As such, language was Jefferson's most prolific diplomatic tool. However, Jefferson's decisive views on conflict, both in relation to the Barbary Nations and the French in the Louisiana question, reveals that language was equally as valuable to Jefferson as a tool of war.

But what is perhaps most notable was his ability to forge an American identity steeped in the acceptance of war as a natural extension of democracy. Jefferson's letter to Robert Livingston regarding the US relationship with France, highlights Jefferson's willingness to incite war if it was in the best interest of the nation. Though on friendly terms with France, removing New Orleans from French control by force was a strategy he understood could become a reality. Jefferson's ideas on government were rooted entirely in the New World and did not depend on the political tenants of the Old World and British customs to forge a new nation. Enlightenment virtues of liberty and republicanism were inherently different Europe and thus provided new ideology for America. His commitment to establishing a nation which could survive for generations to come was reiterated in the republican notions of equality which he emphasized in his letters to both friends and political foes.

Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson claims that “nationalism has never produced its own grand thinkers.”²⁰⁰ While I do not dispute that, I do argue that Jefferson knew the value of community and sovereignty in establishing a sustainable government. As I have previously mentioned, his vision for the future of America did not rely on the traditions of England and Europe which made him unique among the Founders. This “quintessential American,” as *Empire of Liberty* phrases it, is part of what makes him, if not “a grand national thinker” than perhaps a precursor to one. It was his drive to produce an accepted American culture, and his understanding that a country cannot survive without one, which shows he laid the foundation for an imagined community of the United States. His political ideology was steeped in Enlightenment principals which placed sovereignty with the people rather than in the hands of a monarch.

Anderson’s argument that national consciousness arose with the help of print media, particularly newspapers, has some truth in the United States where newspapers provided most of the politicking and campaigning in the elections of 1796 and 1800. However, in the US, the vernacular was the language of government and thus printed works not only brought people together through the spreading of shared values, it also aligned with the ideals of the men in power. Newspapers did not create a new vernacular in North America, but rather reiterated the language developed by the Founders. What is perhaps unique about Jefferson’s use of the print, both newspapers as well as published pamphlets, is that his works were rooted in revolutionary language: he had to both articulate this in the Declaration of Independence and then adapt it to the language of governance as president. Jefferson’s cultural production both through material and written culture laid the groundwork for what would later become a shared American identity in which “horizontal comradeship” thrived.

²⁰⁰ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 5.

Jefferson used excepted tropes from English hospitality combined with elevated French cuisine to forge an American identity distinct from Europe. An independent identity was vital to strengthening the US in the eyes of the international community. Part of establishing a shared identity for nation building was establishing a shared history, but Jefferson feared that without a distinct American culture revolutionary values would die with the Founders. After Jefferson left office, Dolley Madison understood how fragile American identity was during her tenure as First Lady from 1809-1817.²⁰¹ But she believed that “Republicanism was more than politics, it was a way of life” and she continued many of the entertaining practices Jefferson began as president including regular political dinners, French cuisine, and a ban on the practice of toasting.²⁰² Though Dolley continued to establish American dining and entertaining practices she no longer had to actively break with European practices. The eight years Jefferson spent entertaining in the White House moved national identity far enough from European practices that the citizenry recognized their cultural independence.

Jefferson’s life was a struggle between his republican values and society’s expectations. Jefferson adapted to his environment and reinvented himself in a way true to his idealized image of a republican gentleman. While reinvention often took a physical form, it also involved manipulating society’s rules and expectations.²⁰³ These manipulations became their own form of diplomacy which created political capital Jefferson could exert through the office of the president. Jefferson operated in a world very familiar with political violence. Cultural diplomacy acted as a means to prevent conflict and maintain not just peace but establish camaraderie with

²⁰¹ Catherine Allgor, *A Perfect Union: Dolley Madison and the Creation of the American Nation* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2013) 5. Allgor argues that Dolley’s desire to save Washington’s portrait, despite it not being valuable, was a deliberate attempt to preserve American identity and history for the people of the nation. Ironically, her flight from Washington became part of the mythology of American identity.

²⁰² Allgor, *A Perfect Union*, 70.

²⁰³ In Chapter 2, I discuss Jefferson’s physical appearance as one of the customs he adapts to create his republican image. For further insight see Gaye Wilson, *Jefferson on Display: Attire, Etiquette, and the Art of Presentation*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018).

Federalist politicians who might otherwise be hostile. This can be seen in both interactions with members of the government as well as formal entertaining with other sovereign nations.

Jefferson was unique amongst leaders because he was concerned not as much with *his* image but the image of the nation and government. He believed that his style of diplomacy would entrench republican ideals into the way America imagined itself as a community.

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