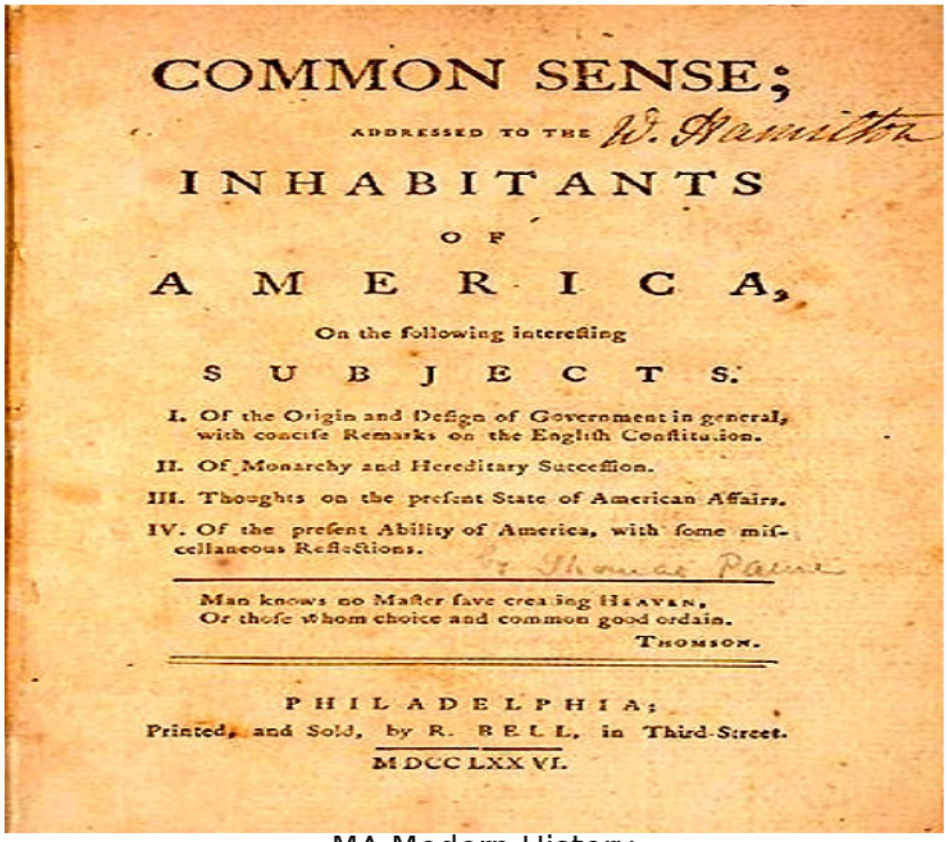
‘The Pen is Mightier than the Sword’

Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution, 1776-92

Jack Campbell Tracey



COMMON SENSE;

ADDRESSED TO THE W. Hamilton

INHABITANTS

OF

AMERICA,

On the following intereſting

SUBJECTS.

I. Of the Origin and Deſign of Government in general, with concife Remarks on the Engliſh Conſtitution.

II. Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succeſſion.

III. Thoughts on the preſent State of American Affairs.

IV. Of the preſent Ability of America, with ſome miſcellaneous Reflections.

Thomas Paine

Man knows no Maſter ſave creating HEAVEN,
Or thoſe whom choice and common good ordain.
THOMSON.

PHILADELPHIA:
Printed, and Sold, by R. BELL, in Third-Street.
M DCC LXX VI.

MA Modern History

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‘The Pen is Mightier than the Sword’

Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution, 1776-92

Jack Campbell Tracey

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I hope with this piece I can make these people proud.

Appendix

[Fig. 1]

Dale-Chall score provides a numeric gauge of the comprehension difficulty that readers come upon when reading a text. It uses a list of words that groups of fourth-grade American students could reliably understand, considering any word not on that list to be difficult. Its mathematical formula is shown below:

$$0.1579\left(\frac{\text{difficult words}}{\text{words}} \times 100\right) + 0.0496\left(\frac{\text{words}}{\text{sentences}}\right)$$

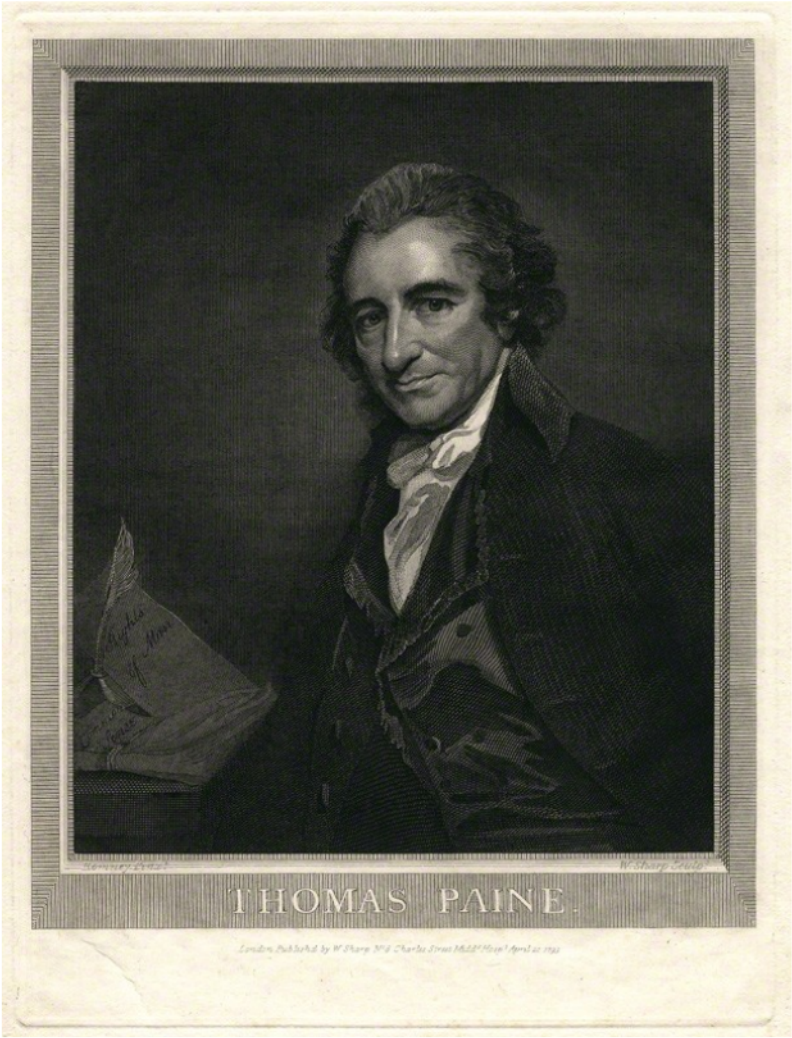
[Fig. 2]

The mapping of Dale-Chall score to readability level is shown below:

Score	**Readability level**
4.9 or lower	easily understood by an average 4th-grade student or lower
5.0–5.9	easily understood by an average 5th or 6th-grade student
6.0–6.9	easily understood by an average 7th or 8th-grade student
7.0–7.9	easily understood by an average 9th or 10th-grade student
8.0–8.9	easily understood by an average 11th or 12th-grade student
9.0–9.9	easily understood by an average 13th to 15th-grade (university) student
10.0 or higher	easily understood by an average university graduate

[Fig. 3]

Sharp, W., Portrait of Thomas Paine, after engraving by George Romney (1793), National Portrait Gallery (London), collection reference: NPG D1364



Introduction

On November 30th 1774, Thomas Paine arrived in Philadelphia; the air thick with political change. Already the port of Boston had been closed as punishment for the Boston Tea Party of December 1773 and the First Continental Congress had assembled in Philadelphia on September 5th 1774. By the second half of 1775, however, the political situation was more confused than outright revolutionary. War between British troops and American fighters had broken out in Massachusetts Bay at the Battles of Lexington and Concord on April 19th, while the Second Continental Congress issued its 'Olive Branch' petition affirming American loyalty to the King a mere three months later. To be sure, the question of independence was, by now, on the lips of Americans across the thirteen colonies. Yet, as Eric Foner and Bernard Bailyn both attest, there remained a residual affection for and fear of the 'mother country' that militated against the forging of an affective common ground between individuals and states firm enough to sustain a broad movement for separation from Britain.[1] Commissioned by Benjamin Franklin and Benjamin Rush, however, Paine's pamphlet *Common Sense* transformed the terms of the political debate. Published in January 1776, Paine challenged the advocates of reconciliation with Britain to show a single advantage of doing so and made the ideal of republican government a living political issue that was both attainable and necessary.

In 1993, Howard Zinn described *Common Sense* as "perhaps the most important publication in the history of the United States."[2] These sentiments echoed that of Henry Cabot Lodge over a century earlier, who in *The Story of the Revolution* (1898) stated that "the pamphlet went far and wide with magical rapidity … almost every American able to read, had read *Common Sense*."[3] These examples bring to bear the near century's long consensus that placed Paine and his work at the centre of the

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[1] Bernard Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution: Personalities & Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, Random House: New York (1992), p.162; *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Harvard University Press: Massachusetts (1967), p.310; Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, Oxford University Press: New York (1976), p.74.

[2] Howard Zinn, "Pamphleteering in America", in *Artists in Times of War*, ed. by Howard Zinn, Seven Stories Press: New York (2003), pp.93-4.

[3] Henry Cabot-Lodge, *The Story of the Revolution*, Scribner's: New York (1898), p.154.

independence cause as the corporeal and literary embodiments of the Patriot movement.

Recently, however, scholars such as Gordon Wood, Trish Loughran, and Michael Warner have tended to emphasise the popularity of Paine's work over the value of its intellectual content or effectiveness.[4] Here, as Ed Larkin suggests, by aligning Paine's work with 'the popular', these historians have tended to trivialise his contribution to American history, setting it in a subsidiary role to the supposedly more important work of the Revolution undertaken by Adams, Jefferson, Hamilton, and Madison.[5] The marginalisation of Paine's writings has, in recent times, been linked with the dislocated nature of late eighteenth century print culture in America. Here, both Loughran and Meredith McGill point out that *Common Sense* was reprinted in just seven out of the thirteen colonies, and not at all in the peripheries of Vermont, Maine, or Florida that lacked the same forms of provincial status that the North American colonies possessed, but nonetheless engaged in the imperial debates of the age.[6] These 'Paineite-revisionists' have argued for the need for a more nuanced analysis of the impact of Paine's writing; one that side-lines both pamphlet and polemicist and questions the conclusion that the Revolution was a literary inspired phenomenon.

Such scholars as Loughran, Warner, and McGill have nonetheless failed to fully appreciate the emotional impact of Paine's work and the literary stratagems he used that underpinned the efficacy of his argumentation. In prioritising the question of circulation – while an important pretext to any discussion of Paine's writings – contemporary historians have betrayed their over-eagerness to treat Paine's writings as simply material artefacts without first considering them as works of literature in their own right. It is, therefore, the central aim of this thesis to take up this remaining challenge, building on the traditions recently

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[4] Gordon Wood, The Creation of the American Republic 1776-87, University of North Carolina Press: Virginia (1998); Trish Loughran, "Disseminating Common Sense: Thomas Paine and the Problem of the early American Bestseller", American Literature, vol.78:1 (2006); Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth Century America*, Harvard University Press: Massachusetts (1990).

[5] Ed Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge (2005), p.6.

[6] Loughran, "Disseminating Common Sense", p.6; Meredith McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Printing 1834-53*, Pennsylvania University Press: Philadelphia (2003), pp.93-4.

established by Larkin, who has more than other modern historian endeavoured to understand Paine first and foremost as an author. It is my intention, then, to deconstruct what lay behind the 'magic' of Paine's work and the means by which he sought to control the content and tenor of the revolutionary debate, placing his manipulation of language front and centre.

This thesis will, therefore, consider the rhetorical tactics employed in *Common Sense* that established 'reciprocality' between the author and his audience and precluded the need for further debate regarding Paine's conclusions (with, of course, the exception of those who, in Paine's eyes, had surrendered the use of their critical faculties in favour of blind allegiance). The focus here will centre on Paine's use of vernacular prose as well as his claims to the proprietorship of common sense that conditioned his audience to view his conclusions as unassailable. I will then explore how various Loyalist writers chose to respond to Paine, demonstrating the ways in which they struggled to negotiate the troubling consequences of their multifarious group identity and counter the Paineite assertions that condemned their traditions as belonging to a wrong-headed minority of ever decreasing support and sagacity. Following this, I propose to trace the development of those rhetorical strategies demonstrated in *Common Sense* through Paine's *American Crisis* essays (1776-83). Here, I will endeavour to show how for Paine the means had changed – moving from the positive argument for American nationhood he articulated in *Common Sense* to a negative one that sought primarily to attack those who opposed his vision – but the ends had remained the same: namely, undermining oppositional stances to the extent where the ground of respected political judgement became one totally of his own design. And finally, my focus will turn to the international applications of Paine's work, exploring his career in Europe through the publication of *Rights of Man*. My intention will be to question whether Paine's efforts as a European writer were at all consistent with his earlier work concerning the literary tactics he used in order to fix the terms of debate in his favour and the problems he encountered in attempting to do so. Here, I will show how Paine struggled to recreate the same rhetorical hegemony over America's public discourse that he had commanded during the late 1770s and early

1780s, as well as assess the ways in which his ‘common sense’ philosophy had left America behind during his years as an agent of international revolution.

A Whole New World:
The *Common Sense* Revolution

By the turn of 1776, that a war of some sort was being fought was obvious. What was less clear for Americans was what the objectives of the fighting were – what would victory look like were it to be achieved? In this chapter, I will outline how with the publication of *Common Sense*, Paine was able to articulate a vision for America’s future that all could claim their part in constructing.

I will begin, therefore, by outlining the history of the circulation of *Common Sense*. Here, it is important I first get to grips with Paine’s pamphlet as a primary source, delineating its geographical spread and the reasons for its incredible popularity before entering into an exploration of the rhetorical stratagems Paine employed throughout the text. I will then move to demonstrate the ways in which Paine constructed a ‘reciprocality’ between himself and his readers than enabled him to pursue his agenda without fear of contestation. Here, I will show Paine as working to manipulate his audience into imagining that their convictions matched his as a means of establishing himself as the spokesmen for an incipient American political nation. It is my purpose to show how in discovering their ‘sense of things’ reflected in Paine’s pamphlet and then finding that work seemingly in the hands of everyone else at once, readers were encouraged to think of themselves as belonging to a larger community of right-headed citizens, with their shared conclusions mutually acknowledged as being just and reasonable.

The Cult of *Common Sense*

Published on January 10th 1776, the success of *Common Sense* was nothing short of astonishing. Although numbers have varied, best estimates suggest that anywhere between 100,000 and 150,000 copies were sold within a year of its release.[7] By way of comparison, in order to reach the same proportion of the total population of America in 2014, it would be necessary for a piece to receive a circulation of around 22,400,000 in its first year alone.[8] The extraordinary dissemination of *Common Sense* has become a crucial and persistent part of the Paineite legend – the text that swept across a continent, scattering the kindling of revolution in the minds of colonial Americans. As Trish Loughran has cautioned, however, such numbers have been largely predicated on Paine's own free speculation regarding the circulation of his work. In 1779, for example, when writing a semi-private autobiographical account of his life for General Charles Lee, Paine claimed that "the number of copies printed and sold in America [of *Common Sense*] was no short of 150,000" making it "the greatest sale that any performance ever had since the use of letters".[9] Paine's talent for self-publicity is obvious here, and that no conclusive scholarly research has yet been undertaken in order to definitively prove or dispel his precise claims regarding the sales of *Common Sense* is deeply frustrating. Yet, given the breadth of subsequent work on Paine by historians such as Jack P. Greene, Foner, and Bailyn, all of whom have been happy to largely accept such figures at face value, one can confidently assert that Paine's pamphlet did recieve what was an unprecedented reception in the Anglophone world.[10]

At the heart of the pamphlet's popular appeal was Paine's insistence on the use a plain and uncomplicated mode of expression. Here, Paine was a conscious pioneer of a new style of polemical writing aimed at

[7] Loughran, "Disseminating Common Sense", p.6.
[8] These figures are based on those calculated by Lynn Montross in *The Reluctant Rebels: The Story of the Continental Congress 1774-89*, Harper & Brothers: New York (1950), and revised up for population growth according to figures provided by the *U.S. Census Bureau*.
[9] Thomas Paine, "An Autobiographical Sketch (prepared for Charles Lee)", in *The Writings of Thomas Paine vol.4*, ed. by Moncure Daniel Conway, G.P. Putman's Sons: New York (1894), p.431.
[10] Jack P. Greene, "America and the Modernisation of Political Consciousness", *Political Science Quarterly*, vol.93:1 (1978), p.75; Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary* America, p.79; Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution*, p.67.

extending political discussion beyond the narrow confines of the eighteenth century's elite political nation.[11] As Richard D. Brown has argued, Paine's innovation as an author was to "presume an audience of politically interested common men, not an elevated citizenry of gentlemen readers".[12] In this regard, Paine claimed that it was his intention to "make those that could scarcely read understand", promising that he would make his language "as plain as the alphabet".[13] Indeed, fifty-nine per cent of the words that make up *Common Sense* can be characterised as 'simple'.[14] To use a contemporary standard, Paine's pamphlet registers a score of just 7.5 on the *Dale-Chall* readability scale, meaning that it can be easily understood by anyone aged fourteen and over. Compare this with John Adams' *Thoughts on Government* (1776) and Charles Inglis' *In the True Interest of America Impartially Stated*, both of which register a *Dale-Chall* score of 9.5 and 9.2 respectively, and Paine's rhetorical accessibility appears stark by contrast. It is also important to note here that Paine's unpretentious style contributed to the reading out loud of *Common Sense* in taverns and coffeehouses across the colonies. While this consideration does complicate the issue of the pamphlet's circulation somewhat – on the grounds that it is impossible to measure who heard what and when – it also testifies to the public and social nature of print culture in this period. Such was fundamental to the reception of Paine's arguments. The public reading of his work supplemented his use of uncomplicated prose, as anyone (not just the 70 per cent who according to Farley Grubb were literate) could now engage with and feel a part of Paine's vision. This was not only empowering for an audience previously ill-exposed to serious political discussion, it also encouraged them to see themselves as belonging to a wider intellectual family of like-minded Patriots. Paine was thus able to foster a 'crowd mentality' or sorts whereby his audience, upon seeing his work reprinted in text and then repeated in taverns, were

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[11] Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, p.83.
[12] Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870*, The University of North Carolina Press: North Carolina (1997), p.64.
[13] Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, p.83.
[14] Here, 'simple' words are categorised as any word five letters or less in length included in the three-thousand most commonly used words as defined by Jeanne Chall and Edgar Dale in *Readability Revisited: The New Dale-Chall Readability Formula*, Brookline Books: Michigan (1995). For an outline of how the *Dale-Chall* score is calculated, maximum and minimum scores, and what each score relates to regarding readability level see *Appendix* [fig.1-2].

inspired to reciprocate the conclusions of their compatriots in supporting a movement they saw as growing in volume and significance.

Here, one should not think a discussion regarding the reach and popular appeal of Paine's works is merely incidental to the thrust of my argument. Rather, such issues are salutary not least because they remind us that print media was not a passive medium in late eighteenth-century America, nor was it an alternative to embodied political activism. Instead, it was the raw material upon which such activism fed and political identities formed. As the author responsible for having validated the 'huddled masses' as central to the process of political contestation through his familiar, even common style of expression, Paine identifies himself as the *paterfamilias* of the lower orders' collective and burgeoning sense of political identity, assisting in the creation of an audience that would both reflect and act on the sentiments he espoused.

The apparent simplicity of Paine's style, however, belies a subtle complexity. In appropriating the term 'common sense' for his title, Paine claims as his own, and lends credence to, the quotidian wisdom of ordinary people. This, as Sofia Rosenfeld suggests, had two implicit outcomes. In evoking 'common sense', Paine indicates that which he asserts is self-evidently true.[15] No further reflection or analysis was needed and conclusions were understood to be readily apparent (at least to all 'sensible' people who found themselves in agreement with Paine). On the flip-side, those who disavowed Paine's common sense conclusions were branded as absurd, childish, useless, and worthy of ridicule. These people stood apart from the *bon sens* of the majority and were deemed as being destitute of that basic human faculty to make reasoned conclusions.[16] Whatever they offered by way of response to Paine was, therefore, not to be trusted or even taken seriously, and easily dismissed as a result. Paine thus made the terrain of political discussion his own, embedding his conclusions quite literally in the realm of common sense where they were hard to dislodge or even challenge without appearing to accept the premise that one lacked the capacity to recognise that which

[15] For an excellent and insightful discussion regarding the epistemological origins and consequences of Paine's emphasis on common sense see Sofia Rosenfeld, "Thomas Paine's Common Sense and Ours", *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol.64:4 (2008), pp.633-68.
[16] Ibid, p.233

was self-evidently true. Here we see Paine's textual sleight of hand; his own sense of things becoming so ubiquitous a reference point that deference to it was now, frankly, commonsensical.

As well as signalling his continued commitment to a naked mode of expression consciously employed with ordinary folk in mind, Paine's emphasis on common sense introduces a modern kind of self-affirming, pseudo-populism into the debate regarding the future of the American continent that purposefully placed the author on the side of the every-man. This is confirmed by Paine's prodigious use of the pronoun 'we' which appears no fewer than ninety-nine times throughout the course of *Common Sense*. The word "our", too, permeates the text, appearing one-hundred times in total. Here, Paine positions himself as simultaneous speaking from and to his burgeoning common sense community, systematically linking himself to his audience and his audience to him. Paine spoke like his readers. By the virtue of sales and public readings, he was welcomed into their social space. Being the son of a Thetford staymaker, he was born into circumstances that many of his new readers could identify with. Paine, in essence, shared his audience's social and epistemological background. Why, then, should their hopes and convictions not match Paine's? If they did not, then they surely should, for to claim distinction from Paine's sense of things was to, in effect, intellectually and socially isolate oneself. Here, then, Paine and his readers acknowledged each other as ordinary, clear-sighted individuals who, by the virtue of their shared experiences, were able to discern certain truths as unquestionably right. Theirs was an intellectually reinforcing pact, with *Common* Sense acting as a kind of populist authority cable whereby both the author and his audience, in finding their conclusions mirrored in each other, were reassured that their positions were just and reasonable.

Thus, with a multivalent claim to common sense as being on his side, Paine was able to transform himself from a peripheral writer to a prominent spokesperson for an amorphous American public. As a material and political object, Paine's pamphlet had the unusual quality of being both particular and non-particular at once, something that was capable of being held in one reader's hands whilst being everywhere else

simultaneously.[17] Here Paine allowed for the creation of an imagined community citizens with a shared set of political interests, helping to organise what appeared as distant and proximate events according to a calendrical simultaneity that enabled his audience to co-ordinate their social time and space, and thus think in relation to others across the colonies.[18] As Rosenfeld attests, Paine was thus able to persuade large numbers of his new compatriots they actually desired something – a change of government or a new political identity – even if it was contrary to what they originally thought they wanted.[19] *Common Sense*'s success can thus be said to lay in its capacity as a 'farmer of thoughts', herding its audience into a pen of the author's own design, bringing their hitherto unacknowledged hopes and fears into the debate and moulding them to match Paine's own personal vision.

Cutting Through the Fog of Habit

Paine thus moved to demonstrate what stood as contrary to his established 'collective good sense' of things – namely, the constitutional *status quo*. For Paine, however, this was much more than blind iconoclasm (although, in his more frenzied moments, this is certainly the case to an extent). Rather, it was the means by which he was able to condition his audience to think in terms of what could be regarding the ideal future of colonial government.

Paine's first task was, then, to demystify the dominant conventions of eighteenth-century political thought. Armed with a spray of rhetorical bullets, Paine proceeded to fire shot after devastating shot at the heart of Britain's famed constitution. In language that at times made the bible appear diffident by comparison, our author set about countering the notion that mixed government was a prerequisite for the maintenance of liberty. Here, Paine highlights the farcical nature of the Britain's system of 'check and balances', stating that:

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[17] Loughran, "Disseminating Common Sense", pp.19-20

[18] In an incredibly influential formulation first theorised in 1983, Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso: London, pointed to the eighteenth century development of print capitalism as providing the means and propensity to imagine the ideal of a civic community.

[19] Rosenfeld, "Thomas Paine's Common Sense and Ours", p.238.

> *the same constitution which gives the commons a power to check the king by withholding supplies, gives afterwards the king a power to check the commons, by empowering him to reject their other bills … A mere absurdity!*[20]

For Paine, in order to remedy such follies in their own government, Americans would need to institute a simpler constitutional arrangement, for the more simple anything was, he argued, "the less liable it is to be disordered, and easier repaired when disordered."[21] While this may be true for mechanical structures and or mathematical equations, it has never been so regarding the nature of government. In his *Thoughts on Government* (1776), John Adams expressly warned against the dangers of unicameral legislatures, claiming that they would be liable to "flights of enthusiasm" and would not hesitate to make laws in its own interest.[22] Yet, in this beautifully plain example of his near Euclidian rationalism, our author presents as right and proper that which was in reality highly contentious. This was quintessential Paine – narrowing the terms of discussion to suit his own conclusions to the extent where it is difficult to separate fact from fancy.

Following in the tradition of Richard Price and John Cartwright therefore, Paine rejected 'end of history' view regarding the settlement of 1688, refusing to accept that the slipshod program of political pragmatism that followed in any way represented a final solution to the problems of the time. Instead, Paine declared there to be nothing remarkable about the British constitution as it appeared in the late eighteenth-century, finding it suitable only "for the dark and slavish times in which it was erected … when the world was so overrun with tyranny, that the least remove therefrom was a glorious rescue."[23] The tone here is one of intense dissatisfaction with the 'hand me down' system of governance

[20] Thomas Paine, "Common Sense", Philadelphia (1776), in *Thomas Paine: Rights of Man, Common Sense and Other Political Writings*, ed. by Mark Philp, Oxford University Press: Oxford (1998), p.9
[21] Ibid, p.7.
[22] Adams, J., "Thoughts on Government: Applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies", Dunlap: Pennsylvania (1776), in *The Adams Papers: Diary and Autobiography of John Adams*, vol. 2, ed. Butterfield, L.H., Harvard University Press: Massachusetts (1961), pp.365-6.
[23] Paine, "Common Sense", p.7.

that was the colonists' political inheritance. Britain and America's constitutional arrangement had remained strangely static, and a new settlement was, in Paine's eye, long overdue. As a professed 'man of science', the contradiction with the search for advancement in the various fields of science and natural philosophy must have been startling for Paine.[24] Since 1688, humankind's understanding of the laws that governed the universe had evolved beyond measure, with Franklin's discovery that lighting was electrical (1751) and John Priestley's isolation of oxygen (1772) being but two examples of such progress. The question thus remained: if innovation in other areas of human experience were understood as progressive and good, why not in government too? Paine thus presents a revolution in the principles of government as the logical and natural way forward, undercutting the intellectual basis for the whole constitutional paradigm by showing it to be 'behinds the times' and unsuited to the needs of the contemporary world (it was indeed "slavish" and "dark"). Our author, therefore, furthers the rhetorical dichotomies he established by his insistence on the authority of the common sense of the people, with here one being either open to the promise of progress or blindly closed to it.

From the broad, then, to the more particular, and Paine's iconoclastic eye thus turned toward the origin and character of the English monarchy and the principle of hereditary succession. To Paine, the idea of a hereditary ruler was as ludicrous as the idea of a hereditary mathematician. The principle of *primogeniture* was, according to *Common Sense*, little more than an imposition on and insult to posterity. In order to demonstrate its absurdity, Paine once again spoke in tones that were accessible to and understood by all; namely, biblical tones. To be sure, religious arguments would become problematic for Paine later in life. But during his career as an American revolutionary writer, they were fundamental to his mode of expression. Here, Paine sought to expose the idea of kindship as contrary to the mandates of scripture. In a thinly-veiled allusion to what he saw as the inherent conflict between the notion of kingship and the second commandment ("thou shalt have no other gods

[24] Little is known about the first thirty-seven years of Paine's life, but for an insight into his time spent amongst London's growing scientific community see Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (chapter 1) and Larkin, *The Literature of Revolution* (chapter 4).

but me"), Paine compares the institution of monarchy to a form of idolatry, asserting it to be "the most prosperous invention the Devil ever set on foot".[25] Paine goes on to reiterate the point, asserting that:

> *When a man seriously reflects on the idolatrous homage that is paid to the persons of Kings, he need not wonder, that the Almighty, every jealous of his honour, should disapprove of a form of government which so impiously invades the prerogative of heaven.*[26]

In citing scriptural authority against the institution of monarchy, Paine makes the implicit suggestion that the cause of independence and republicanism had the approval of heaven. This celestial warrant was further evinced by global geography, "for the distance which the Almighty hath place England and America" was, according to Paine, "a strong and natural proof that the authority of one over the other was never the design of Heaven."[27] Once again, one sees a certain credence afforded to an idea through it having been reciprocated by another. In this case, that 'other' was God himself. Thus, as Paine's readers were to find in *Common Sense* a reflection of their own values, Paine indicates that his pamphlet was an articulation of the wishes of the Almighty (not unlike the bible). Indeed, the idea that God himself was on colonists' side was a great confidence-giver, confirming that theirs was a righteous cause. Such tactics, of course, could and often were used by way of retort by those who railed against separation from Britain. But in claiming divine authority as pertaining solely to him – and those who shared his views – Paine once again afforded an air of incontrovertibility to his arguments. To oppose the cause of independence, according to Paine's linear rationality that connected reader to author and author to God, was to reject the mandates of heaven, which was by definition profane. Having thus had the religious as well as the common sense ground swept from under their feet, Paine's opponents were left to contemplate their position as moral and intellectual

[25] Paine, "Common Sense", p.11.
[26] Ibid, p.12
[27] Ibid, p.24

outcasts; a status unbefitting to any who sought the authority to advocate in the true interests of their country.

Paine, however, went further still in his critique of monarchy, employing the language of nature in order illustrate the self-evident fatuity ingrained within the fabric of kingship. With characteristic impudence, Paine insisted that natured disapproved of the hereditary rights of kings, or why would she "so frequently turn it into ridicule by giving mankind an ass for a lion."[28] Indeed, Paine's belief that England was more often than not granted *asses* over *lions* was, moreover, made clear in his discussion regarding the origins of the English monarchy, in which he posits the idea that the first kings were "nothing better than the principal ruffians of some restless gang … earning [them] the title of chief among plunderers".[29] Our author, therefore, showed the principle of hereditary rule to be both irrational and evil, for it left the doors of power open "to the foolish, the wicked, and the improper".[30] That he should make allusion to the natural world in order to evince his argument was quite ordinary for Paine. As Christopher Hitchens in his short but wonderful biography of Paine makes clear, natural metaphors and allegory were a regular part of the Paineite canon, as they have always been for those who have witnessed the melting of political glaciers and the unfreezing of the tundra of despotism.[31] But in evoking what he perceived to be the universal and indisputable laws of nature and applying them to the socio-political order in order to highlight its absurdities, Paine, once again, cleverly obviates the need for further debate. As with those who would reject the common sense of Paine and his readers, therefore, all propositions that ran contrary to the 'natural way of things' were explicitly labelled, if not ridiculous, unnatural, and were therefore not worthy of any seriously critical evaluation. Paine make this conviction clear in his

[28] Ibid, p.15. Writing as "The Forrester, Paine would later go on to echo such sentiments during a series of letters exchanged with the anti-*Common* Sense editorialist "Cato" in which he claimed that "Nature seems sometimes to laugh at men by giving them so many fools for kings; and other times she punishes their folly by giving them tyrants; but England must have offended highly to be curst with both in one".
[29] Paine, "Common Sense", p.15.
[30] Ibid, p.17.
[31] Christopher Hitchens, *Thomas Paine's Right of Man*, Atlantic Books: London (2007), pp.7-8.

appendix to the third edition of *Common* Sense, stating his belief that "He who takes nature for his guide, is not easily beaten out of his argument".[32]

While other writers sought only to probe the deficiencies of the British constitution, and ponder what they thought to be appropriate measures for redress, Paine's aim was to tear the world apart. Thoughts contrary to Paine's characterisation of the British government, its origins and character, were dismissed as torpid and unthinking, cowardly and unmanly. In evoking nature, God, and the ordinary man's good sense of what was what as witnesses for his case, Paine deliberately couches his conclusions in terms that were apparently incontrovertible. We are not simply dealing with random populist tropes here however. Paine's rhetorical marksmanship was deadly accurate, unshackling American's from their reverence of the past and jettisoning the shibboleths of the British constitution from their place of honour to the intellectual nadir of derision and ridicule. In this regard, Paine circumnavigated any requirement for further discussion regarding the inherent truthfulness of his claims, for to argue against Paine was now to contest the authority of those three seemingly unquestionable entities – God, nature, and common sense. Paine, therefore, successfully constructed a rhetorical dichotomy that placed himself and his adherents on the right side of the debate, while those who stood in opposition were easily maligned as mentally or morally deficient. Armed with a sense of moral and intellectual certainty, Paine and his readers were therefore able to strip the institutions of the old of their veil of sanctity, clearing the way for the development of new ideas and visions regarding the future of America; ideas that were long since held in reserve for fear of disturbing the received paradigms of colonial government that were, until the release of *Common Sense*, held by many to be sacrosanct.

Standing Tall

In place of the old world then, Paine was compelled to offer a vision of the new. In a fundamental way, the entire efficacy of *Common Sense* rested on Paine's capacity to do so, for without any means to imagine the

[32] Paine, "Common Sense", p.57.

new, how could his readers be expected to join him in overthrowing the old (immaterial of how persuasive he had been in exposing its follies). It is an obvious, even banal, point, but not one that was lost on Paine. It was crucial, therefore, that he contest the notion that America's connection with Britain was the natural and only guarantor of her peace and prosperity. In this regard, Paine would, once more, demonstrate his considerable flair for shaking complacent assumptions and dismantling the inherited prejudices that governed America's public sphere. Here, Paine held that the colonies in fact never needed British protection in order to maintain and further her station, and, far from benefitting, had largely suffered as a result of Britain's 'maternal oversight'.[33]

Believing Europe to be "too thickly planted with kingdoms to be long at peace", Paine asserted that America, by her submission to the prerogatives of Great Britain, had become directly involved in foreign quarrels when her true interest lay in doing precisely otherwise.[34] She had, in essence, been reduced to the status of a "make-weight in the scale of British politics", leaving her trade with Europe in state of perpetual flux.[35] Paine, therefore, proposed that "America would have flourished as much, and probably much more, had no European power had anything to do with her."[36] His reason was typically simple: "America's commerce by which she hath enriched herself [were] the necessities of life" and would always fetch a price in any market so long at eating was "the custom of Europe."[37] Paine thus constructed a vision of America's economic future free from the burdensome clutches of Britain's motherly guardianship. Here, our author not only reassured his audience of America's commercial viability as an independent nation, but, once more, undercut the notion that the past was in any way a suitable foundation upon which to build the future happiness of the colonies. Such a position was made abundantly clear with the well-placed use of a folksy analogy that obliterated the idea of continuity for its own good, questioning the logic that suggested

[33] Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution,* p.78.
[34] Paine, "Common Sense", p.24.
[35] Ibid, p.24. In a frankly astonishing act of hubris, Paine would later anonymously cite *Common Sense* as the defining authority on and nature and sources of America's commercial success and the economic ruin her connection the Britain had so often wrought.
[36] Ibid, p.21.
[37] Ibid, p.21.

"because a child has thrived upon milk … it is never to have meat; or that the first twenty years of our lives [are] to become a precedent for the next twenty."[38]

Clearly, for Paine, it was the present and future that were most important, not the past. This emphasis perhaps explains the notable absence of any reference to the works of ancient or enlightenment thinkers in Paine's work. As Bailyn rightly points out, English enlightenment writers were habitually referenced by American pamphleteers, both to ornament a page of speech and lend authority to their argument.[39] John Adams, for example, insisted that the principles of good government could only be found in the works "Sidney, Harrington, Milton, Nedham, Neville, Burnet, and Hoadly."[40] Yet, as previously stated, such authorities were conspicuous by their absence in the pages of *Common Sense*. The effect of this quite conscious oversight on the part of Paine was two-fold. Firstly, in avoiding the use of what he called 'specialised knowledge', Paine re-emphasised his commitment to a simple mode of expression, rejecting the use of 'elite' figures to support his arguments for fear of alienating his primarily plebeian audience. Such figures, Paine knew, were remote from the ordinary citizen; their intellectual authority not carrying far beyond the higher echelons of America's revolutionary intelligentsia. Instead, as previously stated, for Paine the final authority for judging the value of political arguments rested with his readers. Here, Paine further aided the process of identification with between himself and his audience that served to strengthen the bonds of positive intellectual reinforcement that he had endeavoured to create in order preclude in the impact of contradictory viewpoints. More importantly, however, in eschewing the wisdom of past thinkers, Paine redefined the cause of political revolution as a phenomenon that looked to the future. Whereas other founding fathers, such as Thomas Jefferson, were nostalgic for an agrarian past, Paine's cast of mind was, as Foner describes, one that "gloried in newness and invention".[41] Regarding the character of this 'future', however, Paine was atypically vague. Concerning

[38] Ibid, p.21.
[39] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, p.24.
[40] Adams, "Thoughts on Government: Applicable to the Present State of the American Colonies", p.354.
[41] Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary* American, p.105.

the establishment of a Continental Charter, for instance, Paine stated that he only presumed to offer "hints, not plans".[42] Compare this, say, this definiteness Paine displays regarding the past (his aforementioned chastisement of the history and origins of the British monarchy for example). This ambiguity was, nonetheless, an important rhetorical ploy for Paine, allowing for divergence regarding individual imaginings of future, but also coherence and unity regarding the basis for those experiences; viz. their founding in the pages of *Common Sense*. This was a subtler Paine at play – rhetorically more delicate, yet just as effective.

Here, in possibly his greatest contribution to American public life, Paine taught Americans what he termed "the manly doctrine of reverencing themselves."[43] According to Paine, America's promise lay not in the past, but in the present and the future. Her strength – moral, intellectual, and martial – was in no way predicated on her erstwhile relationship with Britain, or any other foreign power. This becomes strikingly apparent during Paine's discussion on "the present Ability of America". Here, Paine delineates the many advantages he sees America to be blessed with – being "so happily proportioned" in men and land as well as in articles of commerce and war – all of which pointed to the need for an immediate and permanent separation from Britain.[44] It is, however, Paine's language during the third section of *Common Sense* that is most worthy of comment in this regard. No other writer, indeed no other pamphlet, of the revolutionary era was able to match its intensity or vividness:

> *The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth … tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now … The least fracture now will be like a name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.*[45]

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[42] Paine, "Common Sense", p.44.
[43] Thomas Paine "To Mr. Secretary Dundas", Paris (1792), in *The Writings of Thomas Paine vol.4*, ed. by Conway, (1894) p.452.
[44] Paine, "Common Sense", pp.36-41.
[45] Ibid., p.20.

With its emotional appeal and sense of urgency, Paine was able to convey to his audience that not only was America practically capable of attaining independence, but that it was absolutely necessary she do so – nature, God, and common sense all implored her. Espousing what he saw as the universal consequences of the American Revolution, Paine ends the section with his finest peroration, declaring that:

> *O ye that love mankind! Ye that dare to oppose not only the tyranny but the tyrant, stand fourth! Every spot of the old world is overrun with oppression. Freedom has been hunted round the globe … Europe regards her like a stranger, and England hath given her warning to depart. O! receive the fugitive, and prepare in time and asylum for mankind.*[46]

Paine's insistence, then, that the American Revolution was "the cause for all mankind" gave a context to what many still saw as everyday events that was no less than cosmic in its dimensions. In so doing, Paine was able to grant American's a sense of worth in their own capacities, helping them to stand at something like their full height, and inspiring confidence in the idea that they enjoyed a special place in the course of world history and in, as Greene puts it, in the "architecture of God's intent".[47]

With its mixture daring impudence and ferocious pugnacity, beautiful simplicity and irrefutable logic, *Common Sense* provided the independence movement with its intellectual core, fusing together a unique political and moral vision, and crystallising otherwise inchoate civil discontent into something attainable. Nonetheless, despite its success in winning converts to the cause, it would be wrong to satisfy oneself with the assumption that following the release of *Common Sense*, American society underwent something like a complete homogenisation of sentiment. As John Adams noted, Paine was able to offend as many as he persuaded, and there remained those for whom his positions represented a very direct threat that required an immediate and unequivocal rebuttal.

[46] Ibid., p.35
[47] Greene, "America and the Modernisation of Political Consciousness", pp.79-80

We Didn't Start the Fire:
The Loyalists Respond to Paine

The Loyalists Problem of Identity

Naturally, Paine's audience were by no means all embryonic Patriots, whose latent aspirations for independence were suddenly catalysed into revolutionary action following the publication of *Common Sense*. As the military historian Paul H. Smith has shown, Loyalists – those who wished for America to remain under British rule – constituted something like twenty per cent of the total population of the American colonies at the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord in April 1775.[48] Smith arrived at this approximation by extrapolating from the 19,000 Loyalists he documented in the provincial corps of the British army. Based on the estimate that fifteen per cent of all Loyalists served in British military units – a ratio derived from the work of Lorenzo Sabine – Smith used the family multiplier of four to arrive at a total number of 500,000 Loyalists.[49] While Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan are right point out that Smith's approach underestimates the full range of Loyalist sentiment, since active-military service represented but one facet of Loyalism, there can be little doubt that Loyalists were numerous and their experiences

[48] Paul H.Smith, "The American Loyalists: Notes on their Organisational and Numerical Strength", *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol.25:3 (1968), pp.263-4.
[49] Ibid., p.264.

merit more careful attention than scholarship has generally satisfied itself with to date.[50]

For this not insignificant group then, *Common Sense* represented anything but the promise of national fulfilment. For many, Paine's menace was of greater consequence than the geographically-limited turmoil wrought by military confrontations to date. To be sure, the spectre of the martial arena – the early campaigns in New England and the recruitment of Hessian mercenaries by both Continental and British forces during 1775, as well as the British advances through New York and New Jersey in late 1776 and early 1777 – posed a direct threat to the fabric of personal relationships and local institutions. Simply put, the flight of 19,000 men to fight under the British banner, as Judith Van Buskirk has shown, resulted in the splitting of families and caused disruption to local economies.[51] The Paineite threat, however, was much more catholic in its scope. For Loyalists, Paine's works gave voice to the perils of national and imperial dislocation as he proposed his vision for a new world that divided its populace into 'right-headed' Patriots and unthinking Loyalists. Such fears were given literary personification in the twelfth chapter of J. Hector Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* (1792). Here, Crevecoeur's narrator, "Farmer James", described a deep sense of hesitancy and sorrow felt by many Loyalists at the outbreak of revolution:

> *shall I renounce that name, that nation which I held once so respectable? … The sentiments they inspired grew with my earliest knowledge and were grafted upon the first rudiments of my education. On the other hand, shall I arm myself against that country where I drew first breath … The idea makes me shudder!*[52]

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[50] Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, "Loyalism and the British Atlantic 166-1840", in *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*, ed. by Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan University of Toronto Press: Toronto (2013), p.17.

[51] In *Generous Enemies: Patriots and Loyalists in Revolutionary New York*, University of Pennsylvania Press: Philadelphia (2003), Judith Van Buskirk provides an exploration of the relationships between Loyalists and Patriots in Revolutionary New York and of the effects of living in a city surrounded by opposing armies.

[52] J. Hector Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer XII: Distresses of a Frontier-Man*, ed. by Susan Manning, Oxford University Press: Oxford (1998), p.192. Here, Ed Larkin provides an interesting discussion on the role of the novel in the creation of Loyalist identity in "The cosmopolitan revolution: loyalism and the fiction of an American nation", *Novel: A Forum on Fiction*, vol.40:1 (2007), pp.25-76.

Borrowing from the language of sentimentalism, Farmer James reduces the Revolution to a choice between killing his father and killing his brothers. Far from being the unthinking coward described by Paine, Crevecoeur's farmer presents the reader with a profound ethical conundrum that many Loyalists were themselves forced to confront. Rather than viewing the conflict as being one between two distinct peoples as Paine did, Loyalists were inclined to interpret the Revolution in terms of an act of fratricide. This was confirmed in the many examples of Loyalist pamphlet literature. To give but one, Charles Inglis, in his response to *Common Sense*, stated his belief that "the present calamitous war" had "pushed on Britons to shed the blood of Britons", emphasising the enduring ties of "religion, kindred and country" shared by the colonists and their imperial brethren.[53]

What the testimonies of Inglis and Farmer James both speak to is the Loyalist refusal to reduce the hostilities with Britain to the simple 'us' versus 'them' binary that Paine undertook to establish in *Common Sense*. Maya Jasanoff recently made this point explicit, asserting that Loyalists felt a deep sense of duel-allegiance, being in every way 'Anglo-Americans'.[54] Thus, amidst a dispute where, as a consequence of the dichotomies established by Paine, one was expected to unambiguously choose one's 'side', the Loyalists were faced with a very peculiar crisis of affiliation. This crisis was less about being either British or American as oppose to being neither. The Loyalists' identity thus appeared out of step with that of their compatriots, confirming their ostracism from the mainstream common sense of other Americans. They represented a 'third-way', if you will, somewhere between absolute independence and absolute submission, that many understood to define the condition of the colonies prior to appearance of Paine's pamphlet. Indeed, such a belief was exemplified by Inglis, who in response to Paine stated his view that prior to the outbreak of war, Americans had enjoyed all the benefits of independence without incurring any of the burdens.[55] With the publication of *Common Sense*, however, and the subsequent groundswell of support

[53] Charles Inglis, *The True Interest of America Impartially Stated*, James Humphreys, Jr: Philadelphia (1776), p.1
[54] Maya Jasanoff, "The Other Side of the Revolution: Loyalists in the British Empire", *William & Mary Quarterly*, vol.65 (2008), p.225.
[55] Inglis, *The True Interest of America*, p.4.

for political revolution that followed, this third-way had been overturned, with the Loyalists left behind on a shifting ground of frustration and doubt as the Paineites forged ahead in creation of a new, distinctly American identity that notably excluded any who wavered about the prospect of national independence.[56]

The evident sense of ambivalence felt by Loyalists in the face of calls for separation was, however, underscored by a deeper, pre-existing question: who, or what, were the Loyalists? The Patriots had their cause, the *mise en scene* of which was encapsulated by Paine's polemical *tour de force*; a shared vision that all who agreed with Paine could claim a part in constructing. But what, if anything, did the Loyalists have to gather around and find comfort and unity in? There were a number of sources available for the construction of Loyalist identity. David Shields, for one, has detailed the rise of social institutions in late eighteenth-century America – the literary and political clubs, the coffeehouses, and the taverns – where Loyalists could meet and reaffirm their sense of collective identity through cultural manifestations such as toasts and poetry recitations.[57] Such displays varied in tone, with some acting as a positive expression of Loyalist values, and others as an abnegation of the Patriot cause. One such toast typical in its veneration of "the parent state that [had] amply provided for, and nobly fought in defence of her children … Health and long-life to all friends of the British monarchy."[58] Another was equally so in its scornful denunciation of rebellious colonists, wishing for a "speedy downfall to the allies of treason."[59] Other displays were simply paeans to Loyalist martial spirit, with one song beseeching:

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[56] It is important to note that the new Paineite-American identity even included men such as John Adams who, despite disagreeing with Paine on questions regarding the nature 'good government', found common ground on the need to oppose British authority and the Loyalists who defended it. Here were may discern the binary division fostered by Paine that sought to place the multifarious Loyalists in a state of ataxia and frustration.
[57] David Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America*, University of North Carolina Press: North Carolina (1997), p.175.
[58] "A Briton in New York", *Loyal and Humorous Songs, on Recent Occasions: Birth and Coronation Odes, Poems, Serious and Sarcastical, Martial Airs and Choruses, Constitutional Toasts and Sentiments, Calculated to Promote Loyalty and Unanimity*, Huge Gaine: New York (1779), pp.53-4.
[59] Ibid., p.55.

> *Rise Britannia's sons arise and see, Rebellions strife intrude on thee … scourge the traitors that rebel, And the horrid monster quell; And all your liberties maintain, Under great George's milder reign.*[60]

These demonstrations had an invigorating effect on those present, generating a renewed sense unity and resolve, and an awareness of a shared past and a common set of goals in the present.[61]

In spite of this, as both Philip Gould and Keith Mason have recently testified, what is most striking about the Loyalists as a group is that they do not appear to have shared any obvious external characteristics. Their motivations and lived experiences differed according to the salience each individual placed upon unfolding events. It was their heterogeneity that defined them, not any great degree of commonality (aside from the fact they were supporters of the British crown).[62] A plethora of distinct circumstances existed that worked to shape individual decisions to remain loyal to Britain. In many ways, this apparent lack of internal group cohesiveness made Loyalists such an easy target for *ad hominem* attacks from Patriots – which Paine himself indulged in on more than one occasion – that served to further isolate the Loyalists as the enemies of progress and heighten their fears of social and filial dislocation.

Loyalist writers were thus compelled to embark on what was, in essence, a defensive war of words that sought to justify their place in the Atlantic world as well as remedy the possibly troubling consequences of their multifarious group identity. Here, Loyalists writers strained at consensus, attempting to place themselves and their audience within a wider community of "reasonable Americans".[63] In his first letter to the people of Pennsylvania, "Cato", for example, laboured to show how it was the Loyalists, and not Paine, who truly spoke to for the sentiments of Americans, claiming that "nine out of ten people abhor the doctrine of independence".[64] Written in 1774, Thomas Bradbury Chandler's *A Friendly*

[60] Ibid., pp.68-9.
[61] Keith Mason, "The American Loyalist Problem of Identity in the Revolutionary Atlantic World", in *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*, ed. by Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (2013), p.50.
[62] Ibid., p.42; Philip Gould, *Writing the Rebellion: Loyalists and the Literature of Politics in British America*, Oxford University Press: New York (2013), p.8.
[63] Gould, *Writing the* Rebellion, p.13.
[64] William Smith writing as "Cato", "To the People of Pennsylvania I: In Defence of the Assembly and Against Electing a Convention", *Pennsylvania Gazette* (1776), Northern

Address to All Reasonable Americans anticipated such arguments. Here, Chandler warned against motives of those who "exclaimed loudly against the 'arbitrary' proceedings of the British Parliament."[65] As Gould points out, however, it is the title of Chandler's piece that is most revealing, implying the existence of a majority of "reasonable" Americans who still embraced their position as loyal subjects under the British Crown.[66] By identifying themselves as part of the mainstream, Loyalist writers strove to counter the impression that theirs was a community of disparate individuals lacking a recognisable core. In this regard, Loyalists writers sought to reaffirm their shared interests and common heritage, thereby recuperating a sense of kindred feeling and belonging. We may, therefore, discern in Loyalist writings the use of rhetorical tactics that Paine himself employed in order to bolster their own sense of self. By defining their conclusions as belonging to the greater mass of sober and sensible Americans, Loyalist writers confirmed their intent not to cede the ground of commonality with their audience to Paine. Men such Inglis, Chalmers, and "Cato" knew that to do otherwise would be to run the risk of presenting themselves as speaking only from self-interest and partisanship in defence of tradition-bound gibberish. Here, rather perversely, Paine can be said to have acted as a mobiliser for Loyalist identity; a centrifugal force, as it were, by which Loyalists could define themselves in opposition to. In so doing, however, Loyalists writers conceded the terms of debate to Paine and surrendered authority to the binaries he established that first questioned the Loyalist position as something other than the right and rational basis for the continent's future happiness.

Literary Quality and the Scribbling Imp

Loyalist writers thus sought the means to stem their declension into ambivalence as literary and political objects, their focus squarely on destabilising the popular icons of the Patriot cause: namely, Thomas Paine and *Common Sense*.

Illinois University Digital Collections (Document ID: S4-V5-P01-sp06-D0091).

[65] Thomas B. Chandler, *A Friendly Address to All Reasonable Americans: On the Subject of our Political Confusions*, Mills & Hick: Boston (1774), p.7.

[66] Gould, *Writing the* Rebellion, p.13.

At the heart of Loyalist strategies to counter the impact of Paine's work were efforts to undermine him in his capacity as an author. Here, to write well was to demonstrate one's political credibility. More to the point, however, to show up one's opponents as unable to master the canons of good literary taste was to invalidate any claims they held to political credibility.[67] In this regard, historians are able to identify examples predating the publication of *Common Sense*. In 1774, for example, Samuel Seabury – Alexander Hamilton's one-time pamphleteering sparring partner – voiced his opposition to Congress' publication of the Articles of Association. The seventh article, for example, undertook to protect the domestic woollen trade against British imports, stating "We will use our upmost endeavours to improve the breed of sheep and increase their number to the greatest extent, and to that end, we will kill them sparingly". By way of response, Seabury sneeringly questioned how one was expected to kill anything "sparingly" (for to kill something seemed a perverse way of sparing it), calling it "a queer phrase indeed".[68] Here, Seabury's argument centres as much on the use of language as it does the practical consequences of the article's adoption. In highlighting this seemingly innocuous rhetorical lapse, Seabury tacitly raises the question: how could Congress be trusted to make laws if they were unable to master the elegance of the language in which they were written?

Regarding Thomas Paine, the Loyalists continued in this tact, often labelling the author of *Common Sense* as 'incapable' or highlighting what they saw as his abuse of language. James Chalmers, for example, made this point expressly clear, claiming Paine was "utterly unqualified for the arduous task he has presumptuously assumed."[69] Inglis continues the theme in the preface to *In the True Interest of America* (1776), indicting Paine as guilty of "Catachresis – that is, in plain English, an abuse of words".[70] Such thoughts were restated thirty-three years later by James Cheetham in his mudslinging biography *The Life of Thomas Paine* (1809).

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[67] Philip Gould, "Loyalists Respond to *Common Sense*", in *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era*, ed. by Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, University of Toronto Press: Toronto (2013), p.115.
[68] Samuel Seabury, "Free Thoughts on the Proceedings of the Continental Congress", *New York Gazetter* (1774), University of Alberta Libraries: The CIHM Monograph Collection, p.20.
[69] James Chalmers writing as "Candidus", *Plain Truth*, Robert Bell: Maryland (1776), p.4.
[70] Inglis, *The True Interest of* America, p.vi

As with Chalmers, Cheetham questions Paine's qualification to write about political affairs, damning him as "Defective in arrangement, inelegant in diction … and cannot be appealed to as an authority on the subject of government."[71] The larger contours of the debate are glaringly apparent here, with often tendentious arguments regarding the law and the nature of government seguing seamlessly into parallel discussions concerning literary style as the touchstone of political credibility. Indeed, Paine himself was not adverse to the linkage of literary excellence and political trustworthiness. To be sure, he often made use of the tactic himself. Writing as "The Forrester", Pained proceeded to mock Cato's first letter as "insipid in stile, language and substance" claiming his manner of writing had "as much order in it as the motion of a squirrel."[72] The prominence afforded to the correct use of language was, in other words, not merely a superficial adjunct to more profound political debate, but was integral to the Loyalists' rhetorical strategies involved in discrediting their opposition. To claim they wrote in an elevated style – and, by extension, that their adversaries did not – aided the Loyalists in establishing an authorial personae of their own, leveraging their political stances into a position of credibility and prominence whilst concurrently marginalising that of their opponents.[73] By engaging in this kind of linguistic pedantry, however, some class ground was conceded to the common reader. As previously stated, an effective ruse of Paine's was to foster reciprocality with his audience by making use of language and idioms that all could identify with. Yet, by basing their avowals on lofty considerations of literary elegance, Loyalist writers confirmed their misunderstanding of the emotional pull of Paine's 'common sense' philosophy and their remoteness from the readers he had forged a degree of epistemological commonality with.

Attempts to marginalise Paine and the impact of his work, however, went further than simply questioning his ability as a writer. Loyalist attacks and rebuttals also comprised acts of personal castigation, aimed at linking the author's deficiencies in literary talent with innate moral

[71] James Cheetham, *The Life of Thomas Paine*, Southwick & Pelrue: New York (1809), pp.47-8
[72] Thomas Paine, writing as "The Forrester", "The Forrester to Cato III", in *The Writings of Thomas Paine vol.1*, ed. by Conway, p.848
[73] Gould, *Writing the* Rebellion, p.60

vices designed to besmirch Paine's character. Writing under the pseudonym "Fidelia", the poet Hannah Griffits cast Paine in the role of the literary prostitute selling his talents to the highest bidder; the "Grubb Street hireling" who composed "not from Principle, but Lucre."[74] Such sentiments were echoed by Jonathan Odell in his poem *The Words of Congress* (1779), describing Paine as a "scribbling imp" and a "True son of Grubbstreet".[75] The characterisation of Paine as self-interested was reiterated by "Cato" in his letters to the people of Pennsylvania. Here "Cato" claims that *Common Sense* had been written for the personal gain, with the author "prostituting the cry of publick necessity to cloak an ambition … to aim at the total destruction of our charter Constitution, and seizing into their own hands our whole domestick police, with Legislative as well as Executive authority."[76]

Cato's reference to the violent usurpation of the British constitution betrays yet another strand of personal slight made against Paine, one that made use of historical allusion in order to illustrate the full horrors of his demagoguery in the mind of British-Americans. Here, the author of *Common Sense* was recast as the living spawn of the last Cromwellians; the heir to the puritan enthusiasts of the mid-seventeenth century responsible for promoting civil war and jeopardising Britain's cherished balanced constitution. Chalmers makes the comparison as plain as could be, calling Paine "our [the colonists'] CROMWELL", with his calls for democracy sure to be followed by the "horror, misery and desolation" wrought by the Roundheads in name of establishing a republic in England.[77] The New York writer "Camillus" repeats the warning, arguing that "the [republican] experiment had already been made during the Usurpation of OLIVER CROMWELL" and that prompt military action was needed in order to relieve colonists from the "most degrading Species of

[74] Hannah Griffits writing as "Fidelia", as quoted in Myra Jehlen and Michael Warner, *The English Literatures of America 1500-1800*, Routledge: London (1997), p.1084. The figure of the Grubb Street hireling was a familiar on in early modern English culture, a writer whose mercenary work was demonised by critics such as Alexander Pope and Samuel Johnson who feared the commercialisation of print. For a discussion on the historical construction of the 'Grubb Street hireling', see Gould, *Writing the Rebellion* (chapter 4).
[75] Jonathon Odell, "The Words of Congress", anthologised in *Loyalist Poetry of the Revolution*, Collins: Philadelphia (1857), ed. by Winthrop Sargent, p.52.
[76] Smith writing as "Cato", "To the People of Pennsylvania I", Northern Illinois University Digital Collections (Document ID: S4-V5-P01-sp06-D0091).
[77] Chalmers writing as "Candidus", *Plain Truth*, pp.9-10.

Tyranny, Republican Tyranny."[78] As the historian Brendan McConville has stated, the English civil wars served as a powerful point of historical reference for American colonists up to 1776.[79] Loyalists such as Chalmers and "Camillus" did not have to work hard to encourage colonial Americans to imagine for themselves the potential horrors regicide and revolution, nor did they have to draw on any great powers of imagination in order to exemplify the similarities in character between Cromwell – the wild-eyed fanatic who had eerily calculated his way to autocratic power – and Paine – the duplicitous, scheming foreign agitator.[80]

Such attacks, both literary and personal, constituted an attempt to displace the author of *Common Sense* from his recently acquired position of prestige as the self-nominated spokesmen of the independence movement. In so doing, Loyalist writers endeavoured to do for Paine what Paine had done for the British constitution, stripping *Common Sense* – and the entire independence movement *per extensionem* – of its moral and intellectual foundation. This was, as previously suggested, primarily an attempt to recapture that which Loyalists' feared had been diluted to the point of being lost; namely a sense of purpose and self, undercutting their opponents' political footing whilst simultaneously securing their own. As Gould states, however, Loyalist rebuttals of Paine testify to a creeping anxiety lurking beneath contempt for their opposition.[81] In personalising the nature of their attacks, the Loyalists unwittingly signalled their misapprehension of *Common Sense*'s emotional appeal that stretched beyond the influence of any single writer or group of writers. As this became increasingly evident – as their position went from bad to worse – Loyalist writers became hopelessly self-reflexive, as though they now addressed only themselves.

Retreating into their Shell

[78] "Camillus", "To the Public: Considerations on the Present Revolted State of America", New York (1776), as quoted in Bannister and Riordan, p.49.
[79] Brendan McConville, *The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America 1688-1776*, University of North Carolina Press: North Carolina (2007), p.93.
[80] Gould, *Writing the* Rebellion, p.151.
[81] Ibid, pp.41-2.

Despite their best efforts to form a consensus around their opposition to the Paineites, Loyalist writers were never truly able to successfully combat the dichotomies conceived by Paine that placed 'British-Americans' – morally and intellectually – in an inferior position to the Patriots. Indeed, Loyalist writers often served to entrench the very sense of separation and 'uncommonality' they had initially set out to combat. Nowhere is this more painfully apparent than in Cato's fourth letter in which the author parodies Hamlet's famous soliloquy. Because of what it says about the Loyalist mind-set, and for the response it elicits from Paine himself, the passage is worth quoting in its entirety:

To write of not to write; that is the question –
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to bear
Th' unlicens'd wrongs of furious party zeal,
Or dip the pen into a nest of hornets.
And still, by teasing, wake them? To write, to answer –
No more? And by a single answer end
The thousand scorns and heart-aches which an author
Is born to suffer – 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished! To write, to answer,
Reply, perchance rejoin – aye, there's the rub!
For in replies, and answers, and rejoinders,
Who knows what deadly broils and feuds may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal zest
Of mutual forbearance. There's the curse
That makes calamity of wordy war.
For who would bear the scoffing of the times,
The Tory's hated name, the Tool of Power,
The contumely of the pension'd Slave,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a dry quill? Would endure the Pain
This fould discharge of wrath from Adam's sons
Marshall's in dead array, both old and young,
Their pop-guns here, and there their heavy Cannon,
Out Labour'd pages not deemed worth a Rush

But that the dread of something worse to come,
Some undiscover'd mischief puzzles thought,
And makes one rather court of ancient path
Than fly to others that we know not of!
And thusthe native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of fear,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard, their currents turn awry.[82]

Here, Smith touches on a progressively commonplace motif in Loyalist writing: that of the beleaguered and isolated author. In Smith's use of this passage, however, it is his utter lack of irony that is most striking. Smith quite intentionally borrows from Shakespeare's most renowned malcontent in order to sentimentalise his position as a martyred author – anxious, hopelessly ambivalent, and totally impotent to stem the rising tide of rebellion that was gripping the nation. Gould is right, then, when he says that rather than a means to persuade potential converts, Smith's authorship here is a way through which he embodies the role of the alienated outcast who alone could comprehend the consequences of the unfolding political tragedy.[83] Paine, of course, was quick to ridicule, seeing "Cato's" slide into imitation as yet further proof of his incapacity as an author. Once more posing as "The Forrester", Paine wrote "His ("Cato's") fourth letter is introduced with a punning soliloquy – the title to soliloquies is indisputable; because no man cares for him company."[84] If this kind of taunt was 'vintage Paine' in his approach to Loyalist critique, it also recast Smith from a noteworthy writer to a hopeless and antiquated "assembler of sources" without a willing audience with whom to share his thoughts.[85]

From their isolation, Loyalist writers turned inward; their tone one of bitterness and regret. Odell, for instance, penned an especially embittered poem entitled "Inscription on a Curious Chamber-Stove" in which he writes:

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[82] William Smith writing as "Cato", "To the People of Pennsylvania IV: On the Improbability of Receiving Assistance from Foreign Powers and Against Independence", *Pennsylvania Gazette* (1776), Northern Illinois University Digital Collections (Document ID: S4-V5-P01-sp08-D0236).
[83] Gould, *Writing the* Rebellion, pp.129-30.
[84] Paine writing as "The Forrester", "The Forrester to Cato III", ed. by Conway, p.853.
[85] Ibid., p.853.

But to covet political Fame
Was in him a degrading Ambition,
A Spark from Lucifer Came,
And kindled the Blaze of Sedition.[86]

The poem resembles something like an expanded epigram, or mock biography, the intended target of which was none other than Benjamin Franklin who is identified as one of the chief culprits of the revolutionary movement. On should note the very different place of religious iconography here *vis-à-vis* that of Paine's work. For Paine, the 'deployment of God' not only signalled his belief in the righteousness of the Republican cause but also reinforced his commitment to forging common ground with his audience (biblical airs being so universally accessible). Paine's use of God, simply put, was outward-facing and positive. Odell's evocation of religious imagery, however, strikes ones as all together more introspective and downbeat. Through his poetry, Odell adorns the image of the solitary mourner, angrily beseeching his God for answers regarding the unfavourable turn of events he and others were struggling to negotiate. Here Odell, in essence, surrenders to the Paineite caricature of the Loyalist without affinity to any broader movement or congregation of peoples; his was a church of one. What is salient here, however, is the apparent lack of political purpose to Odell's work. Odell does not appear to set a wider objective for himself besides taking a witty a jab at a leading Patriot, nor does he seem to imagine a larger audience of possible converts. Instead, all the poet seems content to do is share his ire with like-minded Loyalists.[87] Much of the same bitterness that is evident in Odell's poem is also apparent in "Cato's" final letter. Here, the author damns the reading public that "may be said to feel better than they can see; and therefore seldom take the trouble to employ their thoughts on publick affairs".[88] Again, the lack of an imagined readership is plain. These are not the words

[86] Jonathon Odell, "Inscription on a Curious Chamber-Stove … Invented by Doctor Franklin" (1776), in *American Literature, 1764–1789: The Revolutionary Years*, ed. by Everett Emerson, University of Wisconsin Press: Milwaukee (1977), p.66.
[87] Gould, *Writing the Rebellion*, p.4.
[88] Smith, writing as "Cato", "To the People of Pennsylvania VIII", *Pennsylvania Gazette* (1776), Northern Illinois University Digital Collections (Document ID: S4-V5-P01-sp15-D0233).

are not those of a man wishing to 'make friends and influence people'. Rather, it is the rancorous lamentation of one who feels a deep sense of loss, disappointment, and helplessness at the turn of events. In their parochial view of their immediate audience then, neither Odell nor "Cato" aim to facilitate any degree of unity (Loyalists or otherwise). Contrast this with Paine's continuous efforts to engage his audience as equal partner in his 'common sense' revolution. In this regard, the use of words such as "us", "we", and "our" – which, together, appear 167 times throughout *Common Sense* – all speak to Paine's desire to reach out to his reader on a rhetorical level; a tactic that intended to both empower his readers as well as nurture the previously delineated bonds of positive intellectual reinforcement. Loyalist writers, though, appear to make no such attempt to engage with a disinterested public sphere, preferring instead to simply vent at it. Their tenor and pitch is one of anguish and loss for an idealised imperial tradition that had been wrestled from their grasp.

When Loyalist writers did occasion to reconstruct an image of imperial grandeur for public view, they invariably fell back the threat of British military power. Chalmers, for instance, briefly heralds the "pre-eminently envied state of Great Britain" who power, glory, and fame had "re-echoed from pole to pole."[89] In the succeeding paragraph, however, "Candidus" (as Chalmers disguised himself) warned that it would be unreasonable to believe that Britain would not "exert herself powerfully to preserve us from our frantic schemes of independency [and] to save themselves and us from ruin."[90] Such warnings were repeated by Inglis, who cautioned Americans that if independence was declared, Britain would "for her own preservation, risk every thing, and exert her whole strength, to prevent such an event from taking place."[91] Combined with an increasingly well-articulated sense of isolation that emerged through the years 1779-83, such dire warnings reveal an intensified trend of desperation in Loyalist discourse. Their appeal had lost all semblance of any precision, measure, or proportion in thought, with their literary efforts appearing to slip ever more into bombast; intoning a sense of regret and despair.[92] Here, Loyalist writers might be said to have perversely served

[89] Chalmers writing as "Candidus", *Pain Truth*, p.5.
[90] Ibid, p.5.
[91] Inglis, *The True Interest of* America, p.2.
[92] Gould, *Writing the* Rebellion, p.38.

as their own obituarists – chronicling demise of their cause and digging their own political grave – studying the process of decay of a world that had long since ceased to exist but for which they would continue to pine.

Loyalist writers were acutely aware of the success of Paine's pamphlet and of their own tenuously held together identity. In many way, the Loyalists were on the back foot from the outset of the conflict. Paine had set the terms of the debate and it was for the Loyalists to respond. Without an identifiable and unifying foundation upon which to build a political identity that could match the emotional appeal of Paine's vision, Loyalists writers were forced to resort of acts of pedantry over the use of language and personal abuse aimed at discrediting both the author and his work as a means of constructing a choate narrative for pro-British Americans to rally behind. In so doing, however, Loyalist writers bizarrely made Paine the centre of their world – a beacon for the Loyalists as well as the Patriots. By defining themselves primarily in relation to their principal adversary, the Loyalists relinquished all claims they could have had to the possession of any independent intellectual or moral force of their own. The Loyalists' initial efforts to show themselves as belonging to a rational majority followed by their slide into despondency testifies to Paine's successful shaping of the typography of political discussion that his opponents were unable or unprepared to respond to. This is, of course, not to say that Paine's work was done or that the Patriot cause did not suffer its own particular slings and arrows. Here, the man with the incendiary pen would once again be called into the service of the American nation in the hope of rekindling what some feared to be the dying embers of the revolutionary spirit.

Crisis Point:
The Battle for Hearts and Minds

Backs to the Wall

The winter following the Declaration of Independence had seen a series of defeats. George Washington's amateur army had lost New York and been forced into an ignominious retreat across New Jersey (Paine had shouldered a musket himself, becoming an aide to General Nathanael Greene and had witnessed the route first hand).[93] These early setbacks had threatened to choke off the Patriot cause barely before it even had time to draw breath. Paine thus set out to rally flagging volunteers and recapture in text the hope and sense of urgency that defined his earlier work in a series of essays entitled *The American Crisis* (1776-83). Here, in the introduction to the first essay, Paine penned what was perhaps the greatest campfire, eve-of-battle oration since Agincourt, ordered by Washington to be read aloud to the Continental Army on the eve of the Battle of Trenton, December 23rd 1776:

> *These are the times that try men's souls: The summertime soldier and sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country, but he that stands it NOW, deserves the love and thanks of man and woman. Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered; yet we have this consolation with us, that the harder the conflict the more glorious the triumph. What we obtain too cheap, we esteem too lightly – 'Tis dearness only that gives everything its value.*[94]

[93] Hitchens, *Thomas Paine's Rights of* Man, p.38.
[94] Thomas Paine writing as "Common Sense", *The American Crisis*, December 23rd 1776, p.1.

Striking in its clarity and defiant in its optimism; this opening passage of the *Crisis* reveals Paine at his rhetorical best. Here, however, it is Paine's canny ability to make a virtue out of hardship that is most noteworthy. Indeed, such a strategy lay at the heart of Paine's efforts, becoming an essential motif of the *Crisis* essays. To show resolve in the face of potential disaster was, for Paine at least, a sure sign of the virtue of Patriots' crusade and of its eventual triumph. To be sure, Paine did not have to press his audience particularly hard for them to imagine themselves as a 'chosen people' in this regard. Through study of the bible, or listening to sermons, or leafing through dog-eared pages of almanacs and homily books, Americans learnt that particular kinds of trials, at the hands of particular kinds of enemies, were the necessary fate and eventual salvation of 'God's elect'. Time and time again, Paine makes continuous reference to the perseverance shown by Patriots, astutely turning what at first seem like calamitous defeats into glorious examples of American fortitude. He claimed, for example, that Washington's retreat across the Delaware River in early December 1776 following the loss of New York, was not that of a panicked or cowardly band of men, but was rather "bore with a manly and martial spirit".[95] In his fourth essay, Paine would admit that it had been "distressing to see an enemy advancing", yet he insisted that "the nearer any disease approaches to a crisis, the nearer it is to a cure" claiming that "Danger and deliverance made their advances together".[96] Continuing along the same thread, Paine would later present British victories as decidedly hollow, asserting that they had in the end contributed to her own defeat. In his fifth essay, for instance, Paine claimed that the British capture of Fort Ticonderoga in July 1777 had "served only to hasten his [John Burgoyne] overthrow, by enabling him to proceed to Saratoga, the place of his destruction."[97] In these passages, Paine strove to convey an impression of stoicism and resoluteness he saw

[95] Ibid, pp.2-4.
[96] Ibid, September 12th 1777, p.1.
[97] Ibid, March 23rd 1778, p.5. Following the Battle of Bemis Heights on October 7th 1777, British troops under the command of General John Burgoyne were left severely depleted. On the morning of October 8, he was back in the fortified positions he had held on September 16. By October 13 he was surrounded at Saratoga, and on October 17 he surrendered his army. The remnants of his expedition retreated from Ticonderoga back to Quebec.

as necessary for the triumph of republicanism in America. Here, Paine may be said to have engaged in what might loosely be termed a form on 'rhetorical imprinting' – identifying his audience of Patriots with certain values in the hope they would then become inspired to emulate them. In this regard, like all sustaining mythologies, the idea that the Patriots were a select band endowed with special qualities did not depend upon it being true in order for it to be effective. It is, rather, best viewed in terms of a source of group identification, with Paine drawing on what he felt were the most germane tenets of the national ideal with the intent that their association with the independence movement would, in time, become customary.

In emphasising such virtues, our author realised two inferred outcomes. Firstly, Paine managed to inculcate a feeling of inevitability regarding the eventual triumph of the independence movement, breeding confidence and sustaining morale in the face of national catastrophe. In his third essay, Paine gave voice to such sentiments, stating that "nothing was wanting on our part but patience and perseverance, and that, with these virtues, our success … seemed as certain as fate."[98] This was further facilitated by Paine's repeated insistence that theirs was a movement favoured by providence – a claim he had also made in *Common Sense* and persisted, to this point, as a mainstay of Paine's American writings. He professed his "secret opinion … that God Almighty [would] not give up a people to military destruction, or leave them unsupported to perish, who have so earnestly and so repeatedly sought to avoid the calamities of war".[99] Paine would later go on to repeat his case for divine protection, declaring that:

> *The vast extension of America makers her of too much value in the scale of providence, to be cast like a pearl before swine … Providence has some nobler end to accomplish than the gratification of the petty elector of Hanover, or the ignorant and insignificant king of Britain.*[100]

[98] Ibid, April 19th 1777, p.8.
[99] Ibid, December 23rd 1776, p.1.
[100] Ibid, March 21st 1778, p.9.

Further to this this, by stressing the importance of constancy over capriciousness, of doggedness over capitulation, Paine (perhaps unconsciously) identifies himself as the literary standard-bearer of such virtues. By insisting on their importance and striving to sew them into the tapestry of the American mind, Paine made himself the exemplar of the virtues he had established as emblematic America's nascent national character. Perhaps this is what William Sharp was thinking in his likeness of Paine, composed in 1793 [*appendix* fig. 3].[101] Here we see the indomitable author of America's revolutionary movement; his rough-hewn face conveying an impression of fortitude and steadfastness as he assiduously documented America's ascent from near destruction to the daylight of deliverance. Here, Paine's aforementioned service in the ranks of the continental army leant an air of authenticity to this imagining and aided his identification with this audience as someone who had shared in their toils. Paine, and therefore his work, can thus be said to have acted as a fantasy figures of sorts, in which the fluid and often remote concepts of resoluteness and valour found physical expression, becoming fixed and consolidated.

Once again, however, Paine was acutely aware that mere expressions of defiance would prove insufficient if the ends he desired were to be achieved. Instead, if 'real' victories were to be secured, he would need to articulate a proper basis upon which they could be achieved and independence sustained. Here, Paine argued for the need for a strong union between states. In the tenth essay of the *Crisis*, Paine would make this conviction plain, contending that "The union of America is the foundation-stone of her independence; the rock on which it is built … to accomplish a particular purpose, all parts must act together."[102] Such a union would, according to Paine, prove to be the source of America's national strength "giving us [America] importance abroad and security at home."[103] Ever aware of the power of economic arguments, Paine points to commerce as the basis upon which a strong and lasting union could be

[101] William Sharpe "Thomas Paine", engraved by George Romney, *The National Portrait Gallery* (London), Collection Reference: NPG D1364.
[102] Paine, *The American Crisis*, March 5th 1782, p.9. Indeed, Paine may have coined the term "United States of America" in the fifth essay of the *Crisis* papers (I, for one, am unaware of an example that predates it).
[103] Ibid, April 19th 1783, p.3.

build. In the last piece of the series entitled *A Supernumerary Crisis*, Paine suggested that bi-lateral trade between states would strengthen the union by fostering relations build upon interdependence and mutual interests.[104] Even debt had its uses in this regard. In the final *Crisis* essay, for example, Paine almost glorifies the national debt as a badge of honour. He reiterated this point in *A Letter Addressed to the Abbe Raynal* (1782), in which he described the debt incurred in the pursuit of independence as "the majesty of the multitude".[105]

Paine, thus, continued to use many of the same rhetorical strategies he employed in his earlier work, resisting oppositional voices at source by presenting British advances as only minor setbacks in America's otherwise unimpeachable progress towards her maturity. Our author, once more, sought to inaugurate a rhetorical dichotomy that argued for the need for a stronger union between the colonies – both as a matter of pragmatism and principle – as "the cheapest way of being great – the easiest way of being powerful", whilst simultaneously railing against maintaining the connection Britain as directly antagonistic to those undeniably desirable ends.[106] In this regard, Paine sought to re-secure the conclusions he advanced in *Common Sense*, articulating a broad-based vision for America's future founded on unity in hardship and mutual commercial interests between states and managing to assuage remaining doubts regarding the attainability of that vision by presenting national distress – both military and material – as the natural and necessary state of a young nation.

Toads under a Harrow

Having thus proposed what he saw as the proper basis for America's present and future strength – namely, a union among states – Paine turned his pen against the enemies of that vision. Here, Paine switches tact somewhat, veering from the largely positive stylings of *Common* Sense that focused its attention chiefly on issues concerning America's

[104] Larkin, *Literature of Revolution*, p.123.
[105] Thomas Paine, "A Letter Addressed to the Abbe Raynal on the Affairs of North America", in *The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine vol.2*, ed. Philip Foner, Citadel Press: New York (1969), p.215.
[106] Ibid, p.3.

national potential to deal in acts of personal abuse aimed at his adversaries. In this regard, Paine's primary target was Sir William Howe, the Commander-in-Chief of the British forces during the American War of Independence.[107] Here, Paine set about in an assassination of Howe's character with a maelstrom of textual assaults comprising of a mixture of rage and ridicule. In his fifth *Crisis* essay, for instance, Paine expressed his wish to leave Howe's name to infamy and America's dark desire "to bestow her funeral favours" upon him.[108] Howe's character, Paine claimed, was composed too largely of "indolence and inability … to be anything more than the hero of little villainies and unfinished adventures."[109] These insults were succeeded by taunts aimed at the mocking of Howe's perceived lack of intellect and manliness, claiming that was forever bound "to lick upon the dust that kings have trod upon."[110] Trying to argue with Howe, a man whom had "renounced the use and authority of reason, and whose philosophy consisted of holding humanity in contempt", was, according to Paine, "like trying to administer medicine to the dead, or endeavouring to convert and atheist by scripture."[111] Such attacks framed Paine's efforts to undermine Howe in his capacity as the orchestrator of British offensives. Here, Paine asserted that Howe's actions resembled "the labors of a puppy chasing his tail" and in order for America to know what she must do, she ought only to see what Howe had done and do the opposite.[112] Here, then, we may discern an alteration on a familiar strategy. Where literary quality was taken as a sign of political trustworthiness for Loyalists, TP strives to show British military failures as evidence of their impropriety to govern the colonies effectively. Indeed, Paine could not have made the suggestion clearer, declaring that "if Britain cannot conquer us, she is neither able to govern or protect us …

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[107] Howe was sent to North America in March 1775, arriving in May after the Revolutionary War broke out. After leading British troops to a costly victory in the Battle of Bunker Hill, Howe took command of all British forces in America from Thomas Gage in September of that year. Howe's record in North America was marked by the successful capture of both New York City and Philadelphia. However, poor British campaign planning for 1777 contributed to the failure of John Burgoyne's Saratoga campaign, which played a major role in the entry of France into the war. He resigned his post as Commander in Chief, North America, in 1778, and returned to England.

[108] Paine, *The American Crisis*, March 21st 1778, p.2

[109] Ibid, p.2.

[110] Ibid, January 13th 1777, p.1.

[111] Ibid, March 21st 1778, p.1.

[112] Ibid, May 31st 1782, p.1.

therefore the only road to peace, honour and commerce is independence."[113]

Aside from his bumbling incompetence, however, Howe was, in Paine's eyes, also guilty of cruelty and duplicitousness. Having come to America "under the high sounding titles of commander and commissioner" with the pretence of bringing about a mutually beneficial reconciliation, Howe was indicted by Paine as having become "the patron of low and vulgar frauds … [importing] a cargo of vices blacker than those which you [Howe] pretends to supress."[114] Here, in his second *Crisis* essay, Paine observed that despite many cares having been taken to set Howe's character in an amiable light "we have no just authority for believing it", stressing that his avowed purpose in America was to "kill, conquer, pardon, and enslave".[115] Howe's intentions were resounded by Lord Talbot, who, in a speech given before the House of Lords on March 5th 1776, announced that:

> *I am everyday more and more and more convinced that this people [the Americans] will be brought back to their duty, and the subordinate relation they stand in to this country, till reduced to unconditional, effectual submission; no concession on our part, no lenity, no endurance, will have any other effect but that of increasing their insolence.*[116]

Once again speaking in biblical tones and demonstrating his not inconsiderably flair for turning a concise phrase, Paine summarised his thoughts on Howe's conduct as resembling that of "a Herod of uncommon malice", implying that even Herod – the bible's most notorious baby-murderer and deity hunter – would have disapproved of his actions.[117]

Howe was, of course, not alone in this regard. Although Paine would later indict British soldiers as being guilty of "a thousand instances of cruelty", there are surprisingly few reliable accounts of atrocities perpetrated by either side of the conflict. One case that stands out,

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[113] Ibid, April 19th 1777, p.15.
[114] Ibid, March 21st 1778, p.2.
[115] Ibid, January 13th 1777, p.4.
[116] Ibid, April 19th 1777, p.12.
[117] Ibid, March 2st 1778, p.6.

however, is that at the Battle of Waxhaws on May 29th 1780. Under the command of General Sir Banastre Tarleton, a force of 149 mounted soldiers, overtook a detachment of 350 Virginia Continentals led by Abraham Buford. Only after sustaining heavy casualties did Buford order the surrender. Tarleton, nonetheless, ignored the white flag and mercilessly massacred Buford's men. In the end, 113 Americans were killed and another 203 captured, 150 of whom were so badly wounded that they had to be left behind.[118] In his own account of the battle, Tarleton all but admits responsibility for the massacre, stating that his horse had been shot from under him during the initial charge and, thinking him dead, engaged in "a vindictive asperity not easily restrained."[119] That Paine should seek to take advantage of instances of British wickedness is unsurprising – they were a propaganda gift for a master polemicist. Indeed, as Ben Rubin contends, such examples of unwarranted acts of barbarity on the part of the British became important rallying cries for the patriot cause, with many who had been more or less neutral on the question of independence becoming ardent supporters of the revolution as a result.[120] Rather than viewing them in terms of disconnected acts committed by rogue commanders, however, Pained tended to view such crimes as indicative of a wider British national temper. Here, Paine alleged that Britons falsely understood the true meaning of national honour as consisting of the belief that “to be a great people, is to be neither a Christian, a philosopher, or a gentleman, but to threaten with the rudeness of a bear, and to devour with the ferocity of a lion.”[121] Once more, there is a dichotomy at play here through which Paine sought to rally support for the Patriot cause. There was no such thing as a ‘benevolent Brit’ – only total and unrelenting opposition to their rule would guarantee Americans safety from their atrocities.

Such attacks were necessary for Paine to, once more, undercut the moral basis of British actions during the war, and were entirely consistent with the oratorical stratagems he employed in his earlier works. What sets

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[118] Mark M. Boatner, *Cassell's Biographical Dictionary of the American War of Independence*, Littlehampton Book Services: Sussex (1973), p.1174.
[119] Banastre Tarleton, *A History of the Campaigns of 1780 and 1781 in the Southern Provinces of North America*, Colles et al: Dublin (1787), p.32.
[120] Ben Rubin, “The Rhetoric of Revenge: Atrocity and Identity in the Revolutionary Carolinas", *Journal of Backcountry Studies*, vol.5:2 (2010), p.19.
[121] Paine, *The American Crisis,* November 21st 1778, p.4.

the *American Crisis* apart, though, was the singularly vengeful and unforgiving tone adopted by Paine against those Americans who wished to remain loyal under British rule. In *Common* Sense, even when indicting the British crown for its historic crimes, often in wild and frantic terms, Paine frequently spared the incumbent monarch (George III) the verbal hammering he dished out to British army commanders during the war. Thus, where in *Common Sense* Paine's position was that one could not support the British because of the greatness of the American cause, in the *American Crisis* Paine's argument rested on the suggestion that one had to support struggle for independence because of the ignobility of the British character. A subtle distinction, but one that marked an important evolution in Paine's mode of argument that now accommodated the use of personal insult and censure in order to discredit the enemies of Republicanism. Here, the rhetorical means Paine used in order to establish a dichotomy designed to undercut the any residual feeling of goodwill towards the British had altered. But, crucially, the imagined ends remained the same. The character of British army-generals, according to Paine, was so self-evidently base that the need to further evince the conclusion that held the Patriots' struggle to oppose the implementation of their will on the continent as an ethical imperative was, frankly, redundant. To remain opposed to independence was to expose oneself as a condoner of the actions the British commanders employed in order to achieve the complete subjugation of the colonies, thus relinquishing all claims one could possibly have of holding the true interests of Americans at heart. This was, in essence, to reduce all those who wavered on the prospect of separation from Britain to the status of accomplices to the crimes committed against their compatriots, a position from which it was near impossible to answer back without indicting oneself as guilty by association. For Paine, anything other than whole hearted support for the Patriot cause made one a tory which, if acted upon, also made one a traitor.[122] In scathing and trenchant terms, Paine denounced should men as cowards "for servile, slavish, self-interested fear is the foundation of Toryism; and a man under such influence, though he may be cruel, can never be brave."[123] Paine would subsequently claim that is was not the

[122] Ibid, p.2.
[123] Ibid, December 23rd 1776, p.2.

numbers of such men that hurt America "so much as the not finding out who they are", believing it to be every Patriot's duty "to find them out" and to punish them with "exile from the continent for ever".[124] As Foner has stated, he accordingly urged the Pennsylvania legislature to enact laws requiring an oath of loyalty to be taken by all voters and office-holders, which was duly adopted, serving to further push the Loyalists to the periphery of American public life.[125]

Paine, thus granted the Patriots a supplementary means by which they could identify themselves. Having previously illustrated what they were fighting for – specifically, the promise of national fulfilment, peace, and prosperity – Paine now categorically defined what is was they were against. Here, Larkin is entirely correct when he says that Paine doesn't so much define Loyalism or the threat it posed as he does the character of Loyalists (or so he perceives it to be).[126] By emphasising the individual Loyalist over any shared vision of Loyalism – or Britons over any collective ideal of the British national character – and using the term as an *ad hominem*, Paine empties Loyalism and Britishness of any ideological or conceptual meaning, thus making his characterisation hard to effectively counter. This proved for Patriots a remarkably important and successful strategy in the formulation of a distinctly American identity, presenting a choate and sanitised vision of the founding that went uncontested by all those except the cruel, cowardly, or intellectually inept.

Beginning to Think Big

Having demonstrated his capacity to solidify and unify sentiment domestically – both in his call to arms and his dismantling of British leaders and their sympathisers – the *Crisis* also hints at Paine preparedness to begin to 'think big' regarding the potential scope of the colonies' fight for independence. For Paine, the American Revolution was a revolution of principles and values, not just of government. That such principles should suddenly wither and dies and the Atlantic's edge was unthinkable for Paine, and his mind, not unexpectedly, bent towards their

[124] Ibid, January 13th 1777, p.2.
[125] Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, p.140.
[126] Ed Larkin, "What is a Loyalist", *Common-Place.org*, vol.8:1 (2007), http://www.common-place.org/vol-08/no-01/larkin/

application internationally. Throughout the *Crisis* essays then, we see the root-seeds of Paine's internationalism beginning to take shape, with the principles of America's revolution heralded as a model for the world to follow. In the third instalment of the *Crisis*, for example, Paine declared that should America gain her independence, she would have it in her power

> *to set an example of peace to all the world … because, by separating ourselves from the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, it afforded an opportunity never given to man before of carrying their favourite principle of peace into general practice, by establishing [a government] that shall hereafter exist without wars.*[127]

The weight afforded to the universality of the principles that guided America's revolution in Paine's mind was, however, most startlingly revealed through his use of language. Throughout the thirteen essays comprising of the *American Crisis*, Paine makes reference to 'mankind' thirty-three times; to 'universal principles' fifty-six times; and to the 'world' or the 'universe' one-hundred times, all of which speak to a profound concern for the wider principles of the revolution not particular to any one nation or people. The use of such words are evenly spread throughout the thirteen essays, appearing consistently at the heart of each piece with the notable exception of the fifth, which, as previously discussed, primarily concerns itself with the somewhat narrower focus of taunting and mocking General Howe. Compare this with the anonymous Loyalist writer "Rationalis" who only manages to reference "mankind" three times and the "world" four times, and also Inglis who evokes the idea of "universal" principles just once, and the universal thrust of Paine's rhetoric becomes plain.[128] As well as broadening the scope of America's revolution, Paine's use of language in this regard carried with it two unspoken upshots. His stress on America having given birth to a new world with new principles – with its concomitant allusion to the idea of renovation, renewal, and advancement – serves to reiterate Paine's

[127] Paine, *The American Crisis*, April 19th 1777, p.7.

[128] "Rationalis", "An Address to the People of Pennsylvania", *Pennsylvania Gazette* (February 1776), Northern Illinois University Digital Collections (Document ID: S4-V4-P01-sp33-D0075); Inglis, *True Interest of America*.

defining of revolution as a process the importance of which lay in the future, repeating his earlier efforts in *Common Sense* discussed in the first chapter. Paine was also, once again, able to give Americans a sense of place and purpose in the course of contemporary events, identifying their cause as the principal catalyst of positive change and the virtues that guided it as the standard which all should aspire to match. Here, Paine conjures for his audience the image of a national metamorphosis of sorts, the colonies having risen from the position of a supplicant to the world's intellectual and moral leaders. This involved more than simply inspiring confidence where before there was doubt. Paine's language here was the instrument through which Paine was able to claim ownership over the future for the cause of independence. This was yet another way through which placed his arguments on the 'right side of the debate', implicitly suggesting that the momentum of history was undeniably swinging in his favour and presenting opposition as futile (as well as morally questionable).

In this regard, Paine's broadening horizons were most brazenly expressed in his addresses to the people of England in editions six and eight of the *Crisis*. America had, according to Paine, "extended [her] ideas beyond the limits and prejudices of an island", and instead had held out "the right hand of friendship to the universe".[129] Paine would subsequently make his comparison between the condition of America and Britain clear, affirming that:

> *The soul of the island, in its native state, seems bounded by the foggy confines of the water's edge … while those who are inhabitants of a continent, by casting their eye over a larger field, take in likewise a larger intellectual circuit … and their liberality fills a larger space*.[130]

Here, Paine astutely subverts the notion that Britain's splendid 'island-isolation' was a source of strength, characterising it instead as a condition that served to handicap a peoples' rational development; keeping them

[129] Ibid, October 20th 1778, p.4.
[130] Ibid, March 1780, p.3.

base in their manners and ignorant in their outlook.[131] This was Paine, once more, forestalling the need for further debate with the defenders of British interests. To proclaim oneself obstinately loyal to the 'mother island' was to reveal oneself to be brutish and feckless; virtues that lay in almost total contradistinction to those evoked by Paine to describe the American idyll. Here Paine further isolated the Loyalists as firmly un-American both in affiliation and in character.

Salvation, however, was at hand, with Paine suggesting that the possibility of imminent revolution in England being entirely more likely than it was in America in 1775. As Bailyn and Foner have argued, where colonists remained largely obstinate in their esteem for Britain until 1775, England, according to Paine, was "rent into parties, with equal shares of resolution" with their mutual animosities "in the highest state of fermentation".[132] In a barefaced appeal to the middling and lower orders of English society – the cousins of those whom Paine had so effectively galvanised into revolutionary fervour with the publication of *Common Sense* – Paine declared that the "caterpillar circle of court had an interest to pursue, distinct from, and opposed to yours … Your present king and ministry will be the ruin of you … America has set you the example, and you may now follow it and be free."[133] Paine would echo his calls for England to follow in America's wake four years on, pressing his opinion that "a total reformation is wanted in England" akin to that which had taken place in America, citing the need for an "expanded mind [and] heart which embraces the universe."[134] Paine thus subtly reverses the parent-child analogy that was for so long taken to describe the position of subordination and deference the colonists had suffered under in her relationship to Britain. It was now by America's example – who through painful experience had flourished into a state of maturity – that the old world would take their lead, enlightening once dark minds as well as

[131] For an exploration of the importance of the idea of islandhood to eighteenth-century conceptions of Britishness, see Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Pimlico: London (2003). Cynthia Behrman in *Victorian Myths of the Sea*, Ohio University Press: Ohio (1977) also provides a singularly interesting discussion in this regard, demonstrating how Britain's island geography was viewed by many as a favourable dispensation of providence that set them in contradistinction with their continental rivals.
[132] Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American* Revolution, p.310; Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, p.52; Paine, *The American Crisis*, March 1780, p.3
[133] Ibid, November 21st 1778, p.9.
[134] Paine, "A Letter Addressed to the Abbe Raynal on the Affairs of North America", ed. by Foner, p.228.

laying the foundation for the establishment of new governing principles others could emulate and put their faith in.

Paine's incitement of revolution in England then not only signalled his confidence in America's development to a state of global pre-eminence, but was also, in many ways, the natural extension of his conviction concerning the moral and intellectual absoluteness of the independence case and in the perfectibility of human society. It was maybe this belief that inspired the succeeding volumes of English nonconformist tracts, such as Richard Price's *Discourse on the Love of our Country*, which attempted to convince Britons that theirs was a country short of perfection and of the need to recognise the merits of nations in other countries.[135] What is more certain, however, is that the *American Crisis* heralded the start of Paine's career as an international revolutionary theorist, espousing throughout the global ramifications of America's revolution in principles. Paine's nation, as Seth Cotlar rightly observes, was no longer made of soil, but of sentiment, to be associated with the cause of revolution rather than the country in which it occurred.[136]

It is tempting to think, as several historians have, that Paine's *Crisis* essays were commentaries on issues of only immediate concern; that they were, in other words, simply *ad hoc* responses to unfolding events or certain people upon which Paine placed particular importance. It is easy to understand why one should reason thus. There are, after all, no bold or declarative titles suggesting a far reaching manifesto as with *Common Sense*. Instead, each piece is headed with only a date and place of composition. Such conclusions, however, ignore the subtleties of Paine's language and cast him in the guise of a somewhat doddery scribbler hurriedly jotting down his thoughts on the American cause. This description fails, nonetheless, to adequately encapsulate the subtleties of Paine's rhetoric that worked to shut down opposition to his conclusions and, by extension, the Patriot struggle. As has been argued throughout the duration of this thesis, this was by no means a short-term tactic deployed by Paine in order to win converts for the cause one person at a

[135] Ian Dyck, "Local Attachments, National Identities and World Citizenship in the Thought of Thomas Paine", *History Workshop*, vol.35 (1993), p.124
[136] Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic*, University of Virginia Press: Charlottesville (2011), p.54

time. Rather it was a long term stratagem designed to convey his confidence in the eventual triumph of republicanism whilst simultaneously ensuring that those who were antagonistic to such ends were condemned to spout their opposition from a sedentary position. The *American Crisis*, then, was not merely a clarion call to Americans to defend their patrimony against the British and their Loyalist sympathisers, but was also a proclamation of the universal values that guided America's ascent to pre-eminence that would inform the corpus of Paine's later work in Europe and beyond.

Epilogue:
Rights of Man and 'Age of Paine'

Révolution sans frontiers

Paine arrived in Europe in April 1787, a time when the continent was pregnant with revolutionary promise. Leaving America behind, our author was keenly aware that the successful conclusion of the war with Britain – confirmed with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3rd 1783 – constituted only part of the work of the American Revolution. The other part was making sure that the central precepts of that revolution were properly understood and accepted by the rest of the world. To illustrate the point, Paine introduced Part Two of *Rights of Man* with an analogy comparing mechanics and the structural sciences with the geographic spread of reason and liberty:

> *What Archimedes said of the mechanical power may be applied to reason and liberty: Had we, said he, a place to stand upon, we might raise the world.*
>
> *The Revolution in America presented in politics what was only theory in mechanics. So deeply rooted were the governments of the*

> *old world … that no beginning could be made in Asia, Africa, or Europe to reform the political condition of man*.[137]

Using Archimedes' theory of leverage, therefore, Paine suggests that the United States amounted to something like a fulcrum that could be used to spread the principles of democracy and freedom across the globe. What that fulcrum now required, as Larkin so astutely observed, was a lever.[138] That lever, for Paine and his fellow democrats at least, was *Rights of Man*.

Written in March 1791, however, Part One of *Rights of Man* nonetheless strikes one as decidedly more conservative in tone than his American works. Indeed, at one point, Paine comes desperately close to defending Louis XVI, stating his belief that the monarch and the Monarchy were distinct, and that "it was against the established despotism of the latter, and not against the person or principles of the former, that the revolt commenced".[139] Here, Paine's argument, for once, seems confused and wracked with uncertainty. As Gary Kates asks, how could there be despotism without a despot? And how could despotism be attacked without also offending the despot himself?[140] Compare this, say, with Paine's position in *Common Sense*, in which he not only denounced the British monarchy as an institution, but also the monarch himself. The overriding purpose of *Rights of Man* Part One, it seems, was not to pull the world up from its roots as with *Common Sense*. Rather, it is designed with the aim of stimulating a moderate revolution, without, it seems, seeking the complete overthrow of the monarchical system – the central pillar of Paine's work as an American writer.

The reason for this moderation in Paine can, I believe, be partly explained by his veneration for the Marquis de Lafayette. For Paine – or for the Paine of 1790 at least – the French Revolution belonged to Lafayette. By comparison with many of Paine's American associates – such as Timothy Matlack, Dr. Thomas Young, and James Canon – the Marquis was a somewhat conservative revolutionary. He believed in a constitutional

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[137] Thomas Paine, "Rights of Man: Part the Second", ed. by Mark Philp Oxford University Press: Oxford (1998), p.210

[138] Larkin, *Literature of Revolution,* p.114

[139] Thomas Paine, "Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution", ed. by Mark Philp Oxford University Press: Oxford (1998), p.137.

[140] Gary Kates, "From Liberalism to Radicalism: Tom Paine's *Rights of Man*", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol.50:4 (1989), p.579.

monarchy, and, during his leadership of the *Assemblée Nationale*, went to great lengths to exclude large swathes of the populace from directly participating in political affairs. In October 1789, for instance, the Fayettists easily manoeuvred the Assembly to pass a law that restricted those eligible to stand for political office to those men who were able to pay an annual tax equivalent to a *marc d'argent*, worth in the region of fifty-four days' labour.[141] Such measures, of course, did not go unchallenged. In January 1790, as the Assembly reiterated its support for the *marc d'argent* law, the radical Nicolas de Condorcet attacked the measure, claiming that its inclusion into the constitution would "establish a legal inequality against those you have declared equal in rights."[142] *Rights of Man* Part One was, therefore, above all a vindication of the Revolution as won by Lafayette; an apology, of sorts, written precisely at a time when the statesman was under attack for the anti-democratic thrust of his policies.

One should not forget the pamphlet's origins in this regard either. *Rights of Man* was not just paean to human liberty, but was first and foremost a repudiation of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (November, 1790). Here, Burke took up the idea of which English radicals were particularly fond – the idea that liberty was inherited – and used it to reinforce the wider hereditary principle. Here Burke declared that "No experience has taught us that in any other course or method than that of an hereditary crown our liberties can be regularly perpetuated and preserved sacred as our hereditary right."[143] Burke thus met his critics on their own ground, challenging democrats to defend the hereditary principle in one way (meaning the inheritance of liberties from one's ancestors) and deny it in another without contradicting themselves. Quite uncharacteristically, therefore, Paine began writing *Rights of Man* on the defensive. In contrast with his career as an American writer, the terrain of the textual contest was not of Paine's design. One must not mistake Paine's moderation with propitiation to Burke's arguments however. Rather, we may discern in Paine here an acute sensitivity for the political

[141] Ibid, pp.572-3.
[142] The manuscript for the Marquis de Condorcet's speech is in the *Archives de la Seine*, VD12: 48-57, as quoted in Kates, "From Liberalism to Radicalism", p.574.
[143] Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, J.Dodsley in Pall Mall (London), p.20.

disposition of his new audience. In this regard, Paine was keenly aware that his European readers – particularly those in England – did not, generally speaking, share the same sensibilities as his American public in 1776. Here, Paine betrayed his eagerness not to alienate any readers before they had chance to digest the intricacies of his arguments. In *Rights of Man* Part One, Paine thus demonstrates his capacity for rhetorical delicacy, not unlike that shown in *Common Sense* when considering the future of colonial government. This subtler mode is, therefore, properly understood as a conscious rhetorical ploy designed to suit the needs of his largely conservative European audience – for what better way for someone inciting revolution to gain credibility with such readers than to embrace a more centrist stance. This was Paine, once more, attempting to identify with his audience, working to form a common ground upon which he could move forward and mould to the debate to suit his own ends.

Having briefly left and then returned to France in February 1791, Paine arrived in Paris to find the political climate embittered and even more polarised. Having become acquainted with a number of prominent French radicals – including Condorcet, Jacques Pierre Brissot, and Madame Roland – and witnessed the violent suppression of peaceful democratic protests, such as the massacre at the Champ de Mars on July 17th 1791, Paine became increasingly frustrated with the Fayettists, and was now convinced that only the creation of a fully democratic republic could save the French Revolution from disaster. Thus, in the midst of these political developments, Paine decided to compose *Rights of Man* Part Two. Where in Part One Paine had scarcely mentioned the United States, in Part Two he focused the eyes of his European leaders directly on her example. Here, Paine describes the quixotic experience of Pennsylvania in 1776 as an example of how a people could create a constitution, constructing a utopian vision of America's democratic republic and the benefits she derived thereof, stating that "There the poor are not oppressed, the rich are not privileged … There taxes are few because their government is just; and as there is nothing to render them wretched, there is nothing to engender riots and tumults."[144] Here, one sees in Paine a return to the

[144] Paine, "Rights of Man: Part the Second", p.218.

strategy of establishing binaries that proved so effective in establishing a rhetorical hegemony over the political debates of revolutionary America. To assail the adoption of such a constitution was to unmask oneself as in favour of high taxation and the oppression of the poor; a moral and intellectual nadir none would risk association with. There is, moreover, a reappearance of the arguments first espoused in *Common Sense*, damning all kings as criminals and monarchy as founded on the *faux* principles of conquest and plunder, unable to reform itself.[145] By intrinsically linking the French cause with the goals that inspired a revolution across the Atlantic, Paine axiomatically lends a multi-national flavour to those aims and principles, suggesting that they were global imperatives of universal significance.[146]

Central to Paine's internationalist mode here was his reverence for the merits of scientific enquiry. As the opening of this chapter suggests, scientific metaphors were a litany in Part Two of *Rights of Man*. In an earlier article written as co-editor of the *Pennsylvania Magazine*, Paine considered the material and educational benefits of the pursuit of science, perceiving that "the same materials that delight the fossilist, enrich the manufacturer and the merchant … the one contemplates their natural beauties in the cabinet, the others, their re-created ones in the coffer."[147] Such arguments echoed those expressed in his *Letter Addressed to the Abbe Raynal*, in which Paine heralds the many benefits of scientific study and hints at its possible use in bringing about more cordial relations between states, asserting that "science, the partisan of no country, but the beneficent patroness of all, has liberally opened a temple where all may meet."[148]

Crucially for our purpose here, however, in the *Rights of Man* Part Two, Paine's esteem for scientific enquiry met with a re-energised commitment to the creation of an entirely inclusive and participatory democratic political system. In this regard, Paine's emphasis on the

[145] Kates, "From Liberalism to Radicalism", pp.584-5.
[146] Here, one should note how Paine's internationalism depended also on ideologies that had enticed many Europeans to fight on the side of the Patriots (like Lafayette). Simply put, in some ways Paine is building on the Europeanisation of the American Revolution that occurred during the conflict itself.
[147] Thomas Paine "Useful and Entertaining Hints", *Pennsylvania Magazine* (April 1775), University of Pittsburgh Library online, call number: 31735060400797.
[148] Paine, "A Letter Addressed to the Abbe Raynal on the Affairs of North America", ed. by Foner, p.223.

virtues of science carried with it profound etymological consequences that directly facilitated the communication of his democratic ideals to a European audience. As Larry Stewart has argued, by the 1770s science had evolved from a private endeavour practiced almost exclusively by wealthy gentlemen-aristocrats to a widely enjoyed pursuit, leading to the creation of "a public science to which many might obtain entry."[149] Paine reasoned, therefore, that just as the systems of the 'new sciences' were, in appearance at least, open to all, so too should the right to exercise a political voice. For Paine, the political process, like science, demanded mass participation if the necessary advances toward perfecting that process were to be attained. In borrowing from the language of science, Paine, as with *Common Sense*, thus provided a rhetorical framework through which anyone could claim the right to an active place in the political realm. As Cotlar had noted, Paine thus redefined the political character of his readers from passive subjects under hereditary leaders to active citizens engaged in the process of change.[150] Here, our author in effect grants to his audience the political responsibilities of the old paternalist order, jettisoning the system of deferential social relations that still dominated the power structures of Europe. By de-emphasising the degree of separation between his readers and their leaders, Paine implied that the right to political inclusion was not subject to one's class or level of formal education, but was based on the shared capacity to reason – this was truly the realisation of Paine's 'common sense' revolution in a European context. Importantly here, in appropriating the language of science, Paine couches his conclusions in the veil of an objective and seemingly irrefutable authority. Previously, Paine achieved such ends through appeals to providence, with God himself evoked in order to forestall debate over some of his more contentious assertions. Now – in a nod to Paine's later professed deism – science became the impartial authority to which he made his appeals. In this regard, claims to objectivity acted to allay some of the more troubling upshots of Paine's discourse. Paine strove to present himself as a dispassionate, non-partisan observer of events, describing (apparently without the malign influence of

[149] Larry Stewart, *The Rise of Public Science: Rhetoric, Technology and Natural Philosophy in Newtonian Britain 1660-1750*, Cambridge University Press: New York (1992), p.xvi.
[150] Cotlar, *Tom Paine's America*, p.172.

personal bias) what he saw as the proper and rational course for political reform. This was Paine quite purposefully showing himself to be something other the seditious hireling author portrayed by the Pittites, becalming his readers in the hope they would be more receptive to his urgings he proffered.

Sadly for him, however, Paine would ultimately be disappointed by the turn of events in France. Rather than turning to rational political discussion, the activities ordinary French citizens chose to engage in all too often resembled that of the violent, unwashed mob described by Edmund Burke and other conservative writers. Paine was appalled by stories of 'popular executions' of members of the *ancien regime* – such as that of Louis-Benigne Bertier de Savigny and his father-in-law Joseph-François Foulon – denouncing the perpetrators as men of a deranged mind.[151] His sense of regret was profound, as conveyed in a letter sent to Thomas Jefferson in April 1793 in which he claimed that he had relinquished hope of "extending liberty throughout the greatest part of Europe" based on the principles upon which the American Revolution was fought.[152] Here, in a sense, Paine was forced to acknowledge his lack of success as a revolutionary polemicist as he proved unable to articulate a political ground broad enough for the fulfilment of his societal idyll in Europe. The reasons for Paine's failure to establish a hegemony over the pitch and tenor of the political debate as he had done in American are open. But chief among them, I believe, was Paine's own curiously ambiguous status in the French revolutionary process. That our author was pro-revolution was clear. What is less obvious is which revolution he was in favour of. This ambivalence within Paine was made clear by his change of approach between Part One and Two of *Rights of Man*, switching from a moderate Fayettist to a radical democrat within the space of a year. Paine's allegiance remained visibly wedded to the principles that inspired America's revolutionary moment. Here, rather ironically, Paine may be said to bear more than a slight resemblance to the Loyalists with whom he had quarrelled a decade previous, nostalgic for a tradition that was now out of step with the needs of the specific time and place, with such pangs going unreciprocated by his audience.

[151] Kates, "From Liberalism to Radicalism", p.577
[152] Hitchens, *Thomas Paine's Rights of* Man, p.62

We're all Paineites now

Following his sojourn in France, Paine returned to America in 1802 to find that the political atmosphere had changed dramatically. Now it was Paine – not the British or the Loyalists – who was the subject of public abuse. As Foner cites, one Boston journalist described Paine as "a lying, brutal, drunken infidel" who never missed an opportunity to wallow in the "confusion, devastation, bloodshed, rapine and murder, in which his soul delights."[153] His life, character, and career were also the subject of several defamatory biographies that appeared during the 1790s. One such example was George Chalmer's *The Life of Thomas Pain* which appeared in London in 1791. Chalmers biography deals primarily in a range of petty accusations and insults regarding his sexual delinquency, alcoholism, and instances of wife-beating, most of which was unfounded.[154] Here, however, Chalmers cleverly constructs his work as a kind of mock-heroic tale in which Paine is cast in the role of the misguided philosopher. Paine is characterised, not so much as evil, as simply wrong-headed. Thus, what we have here is a case of conservative British and American writers post-war doing for Paine what Paine had done for them during the conflict. Whether by raising questions regarding his personal character or the reasonableness of his work, Paine's detractors attempted (and often succeeded) in reducing one of the most important figures of the Atlantic world's revolutionary epoch into little more than an ill-mannered, drunken, unoriginal propagandiser. They precluded the need for further debate regarding Paine and what he stood for because he, by the virtue of his personal and professional flaws, was inherently not to be trusted. Paine's 'common sense' was now cast as strangely perverse. The literary dichotomy he had created – whereby one either stood for or against what was good and right and rational – which had once served him so well in dismantling his opponents, was now employed against him. If this made the mere mention of Paine difficult, any chance of evoking him as a spokesman for republican ideals was rendered impossible. The intention

[153] Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary* America, p.258.

[154] George Chalmers writing as "Francis Oldys", *The Life of Thomas Pain: The Author of Rights of Man and The Age of Reason and With a Defence of His Writings*, Stockdale: London (1791).

was to isolate Paine, as Paine had isolated the Loyalists ten years earlier; to make a pariah out of him and thereby strip him of any claims he may had had to be a politically credible force. Here, in many ways, Paine was the victim of his own success, with the oratorical rules of public engagement he had conceived of used to great effect to diminish the efficacy of his public advocacy.[155]

The reasons for such efforts to minimalise the impact of Paine's life and work are several. Certainly is decision to 'come out' as a vehement anti-Christian deist could not have been more poorly timed. Having published what is perhaps the most popular and notorious critique of the bible ever in *The Age of Reason* (1794-95), Paine returned to America precisely at a time when the continent was in the midst of a religious revival marked by an intense pietism.[156] Compare this with the position of prominence religious iconography enjoyed in Paine writings during the 1770s and 1780s. In turning his face against established Christianity, a key trope for the construction of reciprocality with his readers was no longer available to Paine. Paine's aggressive anti-clericalism – which registered favourably with European audiences – was met with indignation by American readers, and thus proved fertile ground for the basis of attacks against him. Rather than a means through which Paine could manipulate the ground of the political debate by presenting his conclusions as enjoying divine approval, religious arguments now became a stick with which his opponents regularly chose to beat him. Allied to this, as his close friend, Paine was often used as a conduit through which Federalists could attack and embarrass Jefferson and raise questions regarding the President's religious observance. Here, Jefferson was guilty by association, with doubt cast over his morality and therefore his suitability to govern – such tactics were politically convenient and rhetorically effective.

Above all, however, the marginalisation of Paine was chiefly linked to the historical needs of a new nation. Here, as Baily attests, post-war

[155] Paine generally refused to respond to *ad hominem* attacks levelled at him by political rivals, claiming they were not worthy of his attention. This struck me as a strange stance that contradicted his earlier stances on the nature of authorial debate. Writing as the "Forrester", for instance, Paine often insisted on the inclusion of the personal in the consideration of public matters.

[156] Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary* America, p.261.

American leadership sought the creation of a distinct civilisation free from the weight of the past and corrupting influence of foreign examples.[157] In this regard, the confused nature of Paine's citizenship did not help his cause. As John Quincy Adams would later state, Paine was seen one without a country and with "no affections that constitute the pillars of patriotism".[158] Here, Quincy Adams not only touches on yet another form of attack that was levelled at Paine as a means to discredit him – namely, the fact that was not deemed to be sufficiently 'American' – but also the powerful sense of exceptionalism that was being fostered in America following the war that sought to distinguish their origins and national character from that of European forms. Here, Paine's ideal of world citizenship was pushed to the periphery in favour of a naturalised discourse emphasising the primacy of filial, local, and national attachments that placed the concept of 'the American people' above notions regarding the universal rights of man as the final authority for political argument. In this regard, the dangerously egalitarian implications of Paine's rhetoric – with the agency it afforded its largely plebeian audience – now also appeared to have left American behind. Once the original enthusiasm for political agitation had tempered itself throughout the ordinary activities of everyday life, the radical dimensions of the revolution were repressed by a governing elite who required a safe public memory of the conflict that would not threaten the legitimacy of their social status or political and economic power. To be sure, some of the old ideas and attitudes of 1776 still remained, but they were now viewed from different angles, reformulated, and applied to new problems. The fear of power, for example, was prevalent, but so too was the inescapable recognition of the need to create a government – with its own independent treasury and right to tax, equipped with all the apparatus necessary for the coercion of its citizens – that was potentially more powerful than any that had gone before it. Standing opposed to such a formulae, the Paineite philosophy was now cast as politically pathological and contrary to the interests of Americans. Paine – by whose words the notion of the United Stated was first conceived – was consequently

[157] Bailyn, *Faces of Revolution*, p.214.
[158] John Quincy Adams as quoted in David Hawke, *Paine*, W.W. Norton & Co.: New York (1974), p.33.

ostracised as strangely un-American, with his 'sense of things' no longer enjoying the reciprocality with his readers that they had done with the publications of *Common Sense* and the *American Crisis* essays. Where he once was held to be the writer by whose pen American had first learned to revere herself, he was now cast as a problem citizen who stood apart from a new nation struggling to define a stable, moderate vision of itself and declare her revolution successfully completed.

I must stress, however, that marginalisation is not the same as irrelevance. Even in their rejection of him, Paine remained absolutely central to how Americans defined their political identity. The sheer extent of denunciations to which he was subject suggests as much, with Paine himself keenly aware of his adversaries near obsession with him, claiming that he was now "so famous among them, they cannot eat or drink without me."[159] The manner, too, in which Americans post-war set about berating our author, as previously suggested, borrowed largely from the Paineite canon. Political types of every variety employed the language and literary stratagems that Paine himself had made popular during the Revolution. Here, Paine was once again a victim of his success as a polemicist, in essence granting his detractors the rhetorical mediums through which they could savage his life and work (as well as his supporters the means to defend them). Thus, while he could be dismissed, Paine remained hard to ignore, terrain upon which American politics was contested post-war remaining essentially of Paine's own creation. So effective were the rhetorical strategies he employed, that even from his now peripheral position on the public stage Paine persisted in influencing the nature and temper of political debate, continuing to act as the yardstick by which people measured their political identity.

Once the white-head of Paineite-revolutionary fervour had cooled in America, Paine proved unable to re-assert the kind of hegemony over public discourse that he had established during the 1770s and early 1780s. This, I believe, was principally due to the transnational trajectory of his career during the 1790s. As he branched out and looked toward the international application of America's revolutionary principles, Paine

[159] Thomas Paine, "Letters from Thomas Paine to a Citizen of the United States III" (November 19th 1802), ed. by Conway, p.393

struggled to maintain those rhetorical connections that had proved so successful in creating reciprocality between author and audience in *Common Sense* and the *Crisis* essays. Perhaps then, the initial élan for Paine's work was partly serendipitous. Indeed, such was the view of many early commentators, often suggesting that our author had succeeded only in conjuring the resentments and longings already felt but not yet realised by colonial Americans. Such an attitude was echoed by one Connecticut man who, when responding to *Common Sense*, stated that "In declaring your own, you have declared the sentiments of Millions".[160] Even if one concedes this point, however, one should always rightly acknowledge the effectiveness and ingenuity with which Paine made his case for political revolution in the eighteenth century Atlantic world. Paine had obviated the need for further debate regarding the propriety of his claims through appeals made to ostensibly objective and irrefutable authorities; namely, providence, science, nature, and (of course) common sense. With the notable exception of Edmund Burke, Paine was consistently able to dictate the terms of discussion to his opponents that always proved favourable to his desired ends. Thus, as has been the central thrust of this thesis, Paine established rhetorical dichotomies that his opponents struggled to combat. To oppose Paine and was to deny the undeniable authority of the witnesses he evoked in his defence, placing oneself irrevocably on the wrong side of history. Through his works, therefore, Paine was able to forge ahead confident that his readers would accept the basis of his conclusions as right and reasonable. Here, Paine was able to convey a political vision that looked beyond the trivia of piecemeal constitutional reform and sought an end to executive tyranny through the virtue and common good of representative democratic government. At times when reason and rights are under attack, Thomas Paine's example will always be a part of the arsenal upon which we shall depend, his works truly deserving of their place alongside the exalted company of the bible and the works of Shakespeare which recur at times of both distress and joy. Thus, Paine still feels intensely important to us in the twenty-first century. His internationalism, his modern cast of mind, his rationalism and belief in the perfectibility of human society all speak to values that still resonate as

[160] "Anonymous", "To the Author of the Pamphlet entitled *Common Sense*", *Connecticut Gazette*, New London (March 22nd, 1776)

relevant now. Jack P. Green was, therefore, entirely right in 1978: “in a fundamental sense, we are today all Paine’s children.”[161]

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[161] Greene, “America and the Modernisation of Political Consciousness”, p.92.

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