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# DISCIPLINING JEFFERSON: THE MAN WITHIN THE BREAST AND THE RHETORICAL NORMS OF PRODUCING ORDER

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*This essay analyzes Thomas Jefferson's letter to Maria Cosway of October 12, 1786, remembered today as the dialogue between Jefferson's head and heart. By offering a close reading of the rhetorical styles of the players in Jefferson's letter, and by reading the dialogue alongside Adam Smith's The Theory of Moral Sentiments, this essay argues that Jefferson's goal was to discipline his irrational, misbehaving heart. Jefferson's letter is interesting as a rhetorical artifact in itself, and deserves a close reading; yet this essay also argues that Jefferson's letter warrants consideration because it offers a detailed discussion of his political psychology and also, I argue, a window into his fantasies about how public affairs would be managed in the United States.*

**O**n a warm Parisian afternoon in September 1786, Thomas Jefferson burned to impress one of Europe's most accomplished and attractive women. Eyeing a nearby fountain, he attempted to vault the ornament only to fall and shatter his right wrist. Because it fails to conform to what Henry Steele Commager calls Jefferson's "tenacious and unqualified" rationality, this story jars with most historical portraits of Jefferson. Garry Wills writes, for example, that Jefferson "would govern his life by the transit of radishes." Henry F. May claims, similarly, that Jefferson "is the very pattern of an Enlightened gentleman,

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cultivating his garden, planting his fruit-trees by the hundred, reading the classics, playing the violin, and meditating about the universe.” Gordon S. Wood notes that “Jefferson came to personify the American Enlightenment,” and Howard Zinn labels Jefferson “an enlightened, thoughtful individual.” Jefferson’s “whole tendency,” for Merrill D. Peterson, “was to combat the chaos of experience and submit it to the dictates of reason.” While the man lying wounded on the Parisian ground was a number-counting, orbit-calculating, Latin-reading, Locke-reciting, Hume-hating, disquisition-writing student of political economy, Jefferson was also a fool in love, and to better understand that fool we must understand the political rationality and irrational romanticism that were in tension within his social milieu.<sup>1</sup>

Jefferson described his leap as “one of those follies from which good cannot come, but ill may.” After two French physicians botched surgeries on his wrist, Jefferson was left with an injury to his writing hand that would bother him for the rest of his life. He therefore was forced to compose multiple drafts of a letter to Maria Cosway, the woman he yearned to impress, in the childish scrawl of his untrained left hand. The final October 12, 1786, letter is structured as a dialogue between his head and his heart, with the head arguing that Jefferson’s courtship of Cosway was a mistake, and the heart arguing that their friendship was worth the pain. This letter is therefore rhetorically distinct. Jefferson met Cosway in early August 1786 through a mutual friend, John Trumbull, while in Paris to conduct commercial treaties on behalf of his young nation. She was there with her husband, Richard Cosway, who had been commissioned to paint the duchesses of Polignac and d’Orleans. Jefferson was smitten; his biographer Joseph Ellis writes that “[w]ithin days Jefferson was head over heels in love.” Jefferson spent most of August and then all of September until his accident on the 18th wooing Cosway. One contemporary described her as “a golden-haired, languishing Anglo-Italian, graceful to affectation and highly accomplished, especially in music.” Sixteen years his junior, Cosway possessed, in Jefferson’s estimation, “qualities and accomplishments belonging to her sex, which might form a chapter apart for her: such as music, modesty, beauty and that softness of disposition which is the ornament of her sex and the charm of ours.” Cosway was a truly beautiful and accomplished Renaissance woman who made Jefferson’s heart gush; she also made him feel like a boy who could vault fountains.<sup>2</sup>

Maria Cosway was married, however, and their six weeks spent prancing through French chateaux and dining at Paris’s finest cafés had to end. As the flowers wilted and the leaves fell from the trees, Jefferson’s broken wrist kept him close to his apartment. Perhaps sensing that his wife was becoming too close to her American suitor, Richard Cosway announced in late September that he and Maria were returning to England. Jefferson saw her for the last

time on an early October afternoon. That night he sat by his “fire side, solitary and sad”; though his wrist ached, his broken bones symbolized the piercing emotional pain he felt when, in spite of anything he might say, do, or write, Maria Cosway traveled out of his life forever.

Letter writing was an important daily activity in which Jefferson was well versed; historian Douglas Wilson characterizes him as “[a] careful and deliberate craftsman who often revised and rewrote his letters before sending them, his letter writing was artful in every sense of the word.” This is an accurate description of the effort he put into his October 12, 1786, letter to Cosway, which, because of its dialogic structure, has long fascinated historians. For Garry Wills, “Jefferson gives the victory to the Heart,” because his letter channeled “Voltaire’s religion of the heart,” which “was always the worldview of Jefferson.” For Richard Matthews, because the dialogue considered friendship and love, “[t]he Head is unable to respond; the Heart is victorious in the debate.” For Morton White, Jefferson’s head gets the better of the heart because he was unable to escape his Enlightenment belief “in the superior power of reason or science.” For Julian Boyd, the editor of Jefferson’s complete writings, Cosway’s confused response to Jefferson’s letter evinced “little understanding of the essential nature of the man to whom reason was not only enthroned as the chief disciplinarian of his life but also, as . . . a sovereign to whom the Heart yielded a ready and full allegiance, proud of its monarch and happy in its rule.” Jefferson was a moralist drawing on the Scottish Enlightenment’s faith in the benevolence of all humans for Wills and Matthews; for White and Boyd, Jefferson was a rationalist drawing on the Enlightenment and John Locke.<sup>3</sup>

Though Jefferson’s love letter has been the focus of myriad historical studies, it has received no attention from rhetorical scholars. This is in spite of the fact that Jefferson’s rhetorical productions have received extended study by rhetorical critics such as Stephen E. Lucas and Stephen Howard Browne. Carefully describing the rhetorical features of the Declaration of Independence and Jefferson’s First Inaugural Address, both scholars have brought a concern for detail that has become the standard for interpreting Jefferson’s rhetoric. Indeed, Lucas calls for and provides “close analysis of the Declaration’s content, structure, and style and of the strategic interaction among them,” and Browne claims (and demonstrates) that “the business of [this] book” is “the painstaking process of interpreting” Jefferson’s First Inaugural “line by line—sometimes word by word.” Both scholars have illuminated the rhetorical strategies of Jefferson’s public discourse, yet they and other rhetorical critics have paid little attention to Jefferson’s private writings. On the one hand, this makes sense, for if rhetorical scholars are concerned with public affairs, then private letters would seem to be out of bounds. On the other hand, if private letters are read in the context of public affairs they can illuminate how individuals desired to

influence those affairs. Jefferson's letter is of tremendous value to rhetorical scholars, because it provides insight into his *sentiments*, to use an eighteenth-century word meaning *patterns of thought*. In this essay, I argue that this letter demonstrates how Jefferson believed reason would operate to influence the thought and behavior of individuals; in short it provides a key for decoding Jefferson's psychology.<sup>4</sup>

To heed Lucas's and Browne's calls for attention to rhetorical detail, this essay analyzes the style of Jefferson's October 12, 1786, letter to Maria Cosway, concluding that the goal of Jefferson's letter was to discipline his irrational heart. Modern scholars, including Beth Innocenti Manolescu in a recent article, have followed Cicero in arguing that style is not mere decoration. In Cicero's words, "neither can embellishments of language be found without arrangement and expression of thoughts, nor can thoughts be made to shine without the light of language." Lucas demonstrates the importance of this insight in his analysis of Thomas Paine's *Common Sense*, noting, "we are led to see the stylistic power of *Common Sense* not just as the 'dress' of Paine's thought, but as an essential element of the total argumentation." For these rhetoricians, a text's style is an argument to be analyzed in conjunction with the other arguments a text advances. Jefferson's letter confirms this thesis, for it distinguishes the head from the heart in content as well as in style. When the dialogue between Jefferson's head and heart begins, the two interlocutors have distinct styles. Initially, the head's words are constructed in accordance with Scottish rhetorician Hugh Blair's "*style periodique*," in which "sentences are composed of several members linked together, and hanging upon one another." The heart's words are constructed in accordance with Blair's "*style coupé*," in which "the sense is formed into short independent propositions, each complete within itself." However, as the dialogue unfolds, the heart adopts the head's rational style—Jefferson disciplines himself.<sup>5</sup>

I thus read Jefferson's letter as a performance of the self-regulation called for in Enlightenment works such as Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Like Jefferson, Smith was concerned about providing social glue for societies in the absence of revealed religion. In section 1, I show how Smith offers a suggestion for achieving social cohesion by having citizens internalize society's norms of approved behavior, creating a "man within the breast" that instructs them how to behave. However, Smith does not provide a detailed discussion of the psychology behind the man within the breast; in section 2 I demonstrate that Jefferson's letter fills this void. Not surprisingly, his letter contradicted most of the accepted eighteenth-century rules for authoring love, confusing Cosway and ultimately failing as a declaration of love. In section 3, I place Jefferson's letter in the context of other letters he was writing at the time to argue that his letter is best interpreted not just as a failed declaration of love

but also as an explanation of Jefferson's fantasy for orderly public affairs in the United States.

Before beginning, however, a word is warranted about motive. The point of this essay is not to celebrate Jefferson but instead to increase our understanding of the rhetorical norms of nation-building in the founding years of the United States. With a burgeoning market of historical biographies celebrating the achievements of the white, male "Founding Fathers," some might argue (validly, in my view) that enough is enough. Though Jefferson has been the subject of countless works, nevertheless his subject position was one of political privilege from which he wielded tremendous rhetorical power to shape both the social realities of his day and the historical impressions of ours. As Pierre Bourdieu writes, "[t]here is no social agent who does not aspire, as far as his circumstances permit, to have the power to name and to create the world through naming." We should not forget that Jefferson had more power to define reality than most Americans, and therefore I read this letter as an indication of an influential politician's desires for social control: by disciplining the masses in the manner he had disciplined his own heart.<sup>6</sup>

### **"HARSH MEDICINE": JEFFERSON'S HEAD AND ADAM SMITH'S MAN WITHIN THE BREAST**

Following Maria Cosway's departure from Paris, Jefferson described himself as "more dead than alive." To work through his grief, he wrote. The Scottish rhetorician Hugh Blair claimed that "Language is become a vehicle by which the most delicate and refined emotions of one's mind can be transmitted, or, if we may so speak, transfused into another." Bearing his soul to Cosway was a way of coping with her absence and bridging the distance between their hearts. Indeed, Jefferson ended his letter with a simple wish: "receive me into your own recollection with a partiality and a warmth," one proportional to the warmth burning inside him.<sup>7</sup>

Jefferson called on Cosway to read his letter as a dialogue "between my Head and my Heart" (444). Jefferson's "head" and "heart" represented two sides of his self, the rationalism of calculating orbits and architecture, and the romanticism of wooing married women and reading Laurence Sterne. In the dialogue, the head and heart are at war. The heart is naïve, "But they told me they would come back" (446); childlike, "May heaven abandon me if I do!" (446); honest, "With what sincere sympathy I would open every cell of my composition to receive the effusion of their woes!" (447); empathetic, "Deeply practised in the school of affliction, the human heart knows" (447); and social, "Alone, the scene would have been dull and insipid" (450). On the other hand, the head scolds, "These are the eternal consequences of your warmth and precipitation" (444);

demands self-punishment, “no reformation can be hoped, where there is no repentance” (444); administers treatment, “Harsh therefore as the medicine may be, it is my office to administer it” (444); expounds practical teachings, “intending to deduce from thence some useful lessons for you” (446); adjudicates, “Let us put this possibility to trial” (447); calculates probabilities, “Everything in this world is matter of calculation” (448); and berates sentiment, “we ride, serene and sublime, above the concerns of this mortal world. . . . Leave the bustle and tumult of society to those who have not talents to occupy themselves without them” (449). The heart is the romantic dreamer; the head is the rational disciplinarian whose antisocial sentiments are in direct opposition to the heart’s sociality.

Arguing that “friendship is precious not only in the shade but in the sunshine of life,” the heart desires Cosway’s love (449–50). However, the head scolds the heart’s inability to control its irrational desires for a doomed relationship. The heart’s first speech is a lamentation: “I am indeed the most wretched of all earthly beings. Overwhelmed with grief, every fibre of my frame distended beyond it’s natural powers to bear, I would willingly meet whatever catastrophe should leave me no more to feel or to fear” (444). The head is not sympathetic to this emotional ejaculation, though, and censors the heart with “harsh medicine”: “While suffering under your follies you may perhaps be made sensible of them, but, the paroxysm over, you fancy it can never return. Harsh therefore as the medicine may be, it is my office to administer it” (444). The head concludes, “you should abandon the idea of ever seeing them again” (446). Jefferson’s head thus claims the “office” of disciplinarian as its own—which is an odd arrangement in a love letter that, to be successful, must demonstrate the depth of Jefferson’s romantic heart. Breaking with the obvious conventions for love letters, the head instead is allowed to attack friendship—not only by blaming the heart for Jefferson’s pain, but also by verbally abusing it. The head thus assumes the position of what Adam Smith called “the man within the breast.”

In 1771, Jefferson wrote a letter to his nephew Robert Skipworth recommending books for Skipworth’s library. Jefferson was an avid bibliophile, and therefore was in a good position to recommend the best in philosophy, criticism, and fiction to his relative. Scottish philosophers and rhetoricians, including David Hume, Thomas Reid, Lord Kames, and Adam Smith, were prominent upon this list, which was logical because Jefferson’s teacher at the College of William and Mary, William Small, was a Scot familiar with the teachings of the Scottish Enlightenment. Jefferson specifically endorsed Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which was published in 1759 and received as a seminal treatise on ethics.<sup>8</sup>

Smith’s *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* proposes a microphysics of power based upon the internalization of cultural norms. Smith’s desire to enforce

social order is made clear in the final chapter, where he provides a cursory overview of the history of moral philosophy, and then argues that though each philosophy was flawed in some way, it would be “well for society” if individuals would follow them. Smith’s own moral philosophy is based on *sympathy* (the harmony of sentiments between individuals) and *approbation* (the desire to please others). For Smith, virtuous actions arise because individuals are capable of feeling the emotions of others, and thus they relish the approbation, and fear the disdain, of their fellow citizens—which leads them to behave properly: “Nature, when she formed man for society, endowed him with an original desire to please, and an original aversion to offend his brethren. She taught him to feel pleasure in their favourable, and pain in their unfavourable regard.” Yet approbation alone does not make an action virtuous, because actions are often committed with impure intentions. Smith hence argues that a virtuous person *deserves* the approbation of another: “Nature, accordingly, has endowed him, not only with a desire of being approved of, but with a desire of being what ought to be approved of; or of being what he himself approves of in other men.” A virtuous individual desires not only to be praised, but to be praise-worthy.<sup>9</sup>

Upon this foundation Smith elaborates a moral theory of internal self-discipline. For Smith, by internalizing society’s mores, individuals become self-regulating; by encouraging citizens to monitor one another, society becomes self-regulating. Rejecting the immediate influence of a supreme deity over everyday affairs, Smith argues that God “has made man, if I may say so, the immediate judge of mankind; and has, in this respect, as in many others, created him after his own image, and appointed him his vicegerent upon earth, to superintend the behaviour of his brethren.” In the absence of God, humans are forced to regulate themselves. They must do this, Smith claims, by internalizing social norms and then judging their own actions in relation to those norms. For Smith, individuals judge their conduct by dividing themselves into two persons: “When I endeavour to examine my own conduct, when I endeavour to pass sentence upon it, and either to approve or condemn it, it is evident that, in all such cases, I divide myself, as it were, into two persons; and that I, the examiner and judge, represent a different character from that other I, the person whose conduct is examined into and judged of.” Thus, it is not only the watchful eyes of other citizens (the “external spectators”) that regulate behavior; it is the “internalized spectator”—a fiction that Smith calls the “man within” and also the “judge within”—that, by constantly reminding individuals what they should and should not be doing, disciplines them to behave virtuously. He writes:

It is not the soft power of humanity, it is not that feeble spark of benevolence which Nature has lighted up in the human heart, that is thus capable of

counteracting the strongest impulses of self-love. It is a stronger power, a more forcible motive, which exerts itself upon such occasions. It is reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct.<sup>10</sup>

For Smith, it is “the man within the breast,” which he describes as “the abstract and ideal spectator of our sentiments and conduct,” that regulates behavior. Thus, it is the internalization of norms of proper behavior—what society dictates as praiseworthy and deserving of approbation—that fits citizens for modern society.<sup>11</sup>

Virtuous individuals for Smith divide themselves into two persons, “the agent” and “the spectator.” Significantly, Jefferson divides himself into two persons in his letter to Cosway: the heart, the agent that leads Jefferson into love, and the head, the internal spectator that passes judgment upon the heart. Jefferson’s head thus performs the role of the rational spectator preparing him for society; indeed, if his heart and his bones were perpetually broken from quixotic adventures with younger women, then he could not be a good citizen or an effective politician. The head claims that Jefferson’s ill-advised relationship with Cosway was “one of the scrapes into which you are ever leading us” (444). Because his heart’s desires for friendship and love lead Jefferson into “scrapes,” the head is obligated to control the heart’s irrationality. Maria Cosway was married, and would only be in Paris for a short time. As the head reports, “I often told you during it’s course that you were imprudently engaging your affections under circumstances that must cost you a great deal of pain” (446). According to the head, whether or not an action should be undertaken is determined by a calculation of utility: “Everything in this world is matter of calculation. Advance then with caution, the balance in your hand. Put into one scale the pleasures which any object may offer; but put fairly into the other the pains which are to follow, and see which preponderates” (448). Based on its calculations, the head concludes that wooing Cosway was an error; but even more strongly, it attacks friendship in general, claiming, “The art of life is the art of avoiding pain. . . . The most effectual means of being secure against pain is to retire within ourselves, and to suffice for our own happiness” (448–49). Premised on philosophical positions familiar to Jefferson such as Epicurus’s doctrine of *ataraxia* (mental tranquility through isolation), the head advocates an individualism divorced from the social world. By cutting Jefferson off from the uncertainties of social relations it plans to avoid pain and heartache.<sup>12</sup>

As the man within the breast, Jefferson’s head scolds the heart’s irrational longings for love, noting, “I reminded you of the follies of the first day, intending to deduce from thence some useful lessons for you” (446). The heart does not comply with the head’s “useful lessons,” instead criticizing the head for

“getting us to sleep with your diagrams and crotchets” (445), and for championing “in such elevated terms” its “frigid speculations” at the expense of the “generous spasm of the heart” (450). Deploying what Emma Rothschild calls the eighteenth-century’s “conflict of political thermometers,” the heart employs the tropes of warmth and coolness to attack the head for its frigid rationality and its lust for solitary order:

When the poor wearied souldier, whom we overtook at Chickahominy with his pack on his back, begged us to let him get up behind our chariot, you began to calculate that the road was full of souldiers, and that if all should be taken up our horses would fail in their journey. We drove on therefore. But soon becoming sensible you had made me do wrong, that tho we cannot relieve all the distressed we should relieve as many as we can, I turned about to take up the souldier; but he had entered a bye path, and was no more to be found: and from that moment to this I could never find him out to ask his forgiveness (450–51).<sup>13</sup>

According to the heart, the head’s calculations lead to asocial, egoistic behavior that prevents Jefferson from helping fellow humans in need. For the head, the self is the ultimate marker of moral worth; the heart feels otherwise, leading Jefferson to heartbreak.

Jefferson’s head assumes the position of the “internal spectator,” rendering judgment on his behavior and recommending isolation as a remedy for the heart’s romantic longings. Advocating isolation is logical for someone with a broken heart, yet the prominent role and stultifying criticism of Jefferson’s head suggests a break with the Scottish Enlightenment. In fact, Jefferson’s letter upends the Scottish Enlightenment’s elevation of the passions to preeminent status as it was famously described by David Hume’s statement that “Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey only.” Further, the Scottish Enlightenment assumed that “the heart was often another word for moral sense,” as Wills writes. The moral sense was the rightful guardian of the individual for Scottish philosophers. Jefferson’s letter, however, suggests that for him the moral sense was subordinate to his head’s rational calculations. The head’s attacks on the heart’s romantic behavior, which put the heart on the defensive, support White and Boyd’s conclusions that the head wins the letter’s heated debate—making this a strange love letter indeed.<sup>14</sup>

### **“A DIVIDED EMPIRE”: STYLE AS ARGUMENT IN JEFFERSON’S LETTER**

We can now begin to see why interpreters of Jefferson’s love letter have been so puzzled. After all, is Jefferson’s head or heart victorious? Though the head

speaks first, scolding the heart with gusto, the heart speaks last, dominating the concluding pages of the dialogue by speaking all lines. In these final pages, Jefferson attributes the victory of the American Revolution to the heart: "If our country, when pressed with wrongs at the point of the bayonet, had been governed by it's heads instead of it's hearts, where should we have been now? hanging on a gallows" (451). On some level, Jefferson surely intended the heart to be victorious, because in his love letter the heart champions friendship and the head assaults it. It would have been a contradiction to write a love letter attacking love; yet, in a manner, this is what Jefferson did.

In *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Smith argues that virtuous individuals internalize society's norms, hence becoming spectators of their own actions: "The man of real constancy and firmness . . . does not merely affect the sentiments of the impartial spectator. He really adopts them. He almost identifies himself with, he almost becomes himself that impartial spectator, and scarce even feels but as that great arbiter of his conduct directs him to feel." For Smith, the "wise and just man" of "constancy and firmness" internalizes the judgments of others and of society more generally, thereby regulating his behavior. This was a valuable insight for Smith because self-policing citizens made an orderly state possible. Jefferson was interested, like Smith, in politics without revelation; in *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), he attacked "religious slavery," arguing that "Reason and free enquiry are the only effectual agents against error." In place of religion and God, he spoke in the Declaration of Independence of "Nature's God" and often turned to nature and natural history for instructions about governing. Smith and Jefferson had similar philosophical interests, and I take it to be no coincidence that Smith's description of the modern subject's split psychology prefigures the performances of head and heart in Jefferson's letter. Indeed, I read Jefferson's letter as a dramatization of Smith's psychological theories in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.<sup>15</sup>

Jefferson's dialogue between head and heart, in turn, fills an important gap in Smith's moral psychology. According to philosopher James R. Otteson, "Smith does not delve further into the theory of mind" underlying his psychology, nor does he "explain how it is possible to have two streams of consciousness between which one must choose—or, indeed, who or what it is that chooses between them. . . . In fact, he offers no metaphysical conception of the soul at all." Jefferson's letter not only suggests how two streams of consciousness can exist within the mind, but also demonstrates the proper role of each and how disputes would be resolved. Though Jefferson begins the letter as a fractured self, the head becomes the man within the breast and gains control over Jefferson's heart as the argument unfolds. How this is done, and why it matters, will be demonstrated by considering the letter's style. In Browne's words, "we have in Jefferson a thinker, writer, and speaker who remained

invested his entire adult life in the art of rhetoric.” Jefferson was indeed a master rhetorician who wielded his pen with a delicate concern for the style of his compositions. By analyzing the rhetorical registers of the heart, it is evident that the heart stylistically evolves, and it is this rhetorical evolution that demonstrates that Jefferson was effective within the text at disciplining his heart.<sup>16</sup>

The head’s continued scolding of the heart, aimed at impressing the importance of calculation and slandering the emotional randomness of romantic sentiment, is reinforced by its style, which suggests, as the head told the heart, that “This is not a world to live at random” (448). The passages in which the head speaks are marked by three orderly features. First, by inductive and deductive logical reasoning. Second, by a lack of rhetorical markers of emotion—there is only one exclamatory sentence, and every sentence is connected to the previous sentence in the manner that Blair called “*style periodique*.” And third, by what Blair called “antitheses,” or binary pairs brought together for comparison: warmth and coolness; balance and anarchy; sense and imprudence; randomness and calculation; above and below; withdrawal and engagement. The last paragraph of the head’s dialogue is particularly illustrative:

The most effectual means of being secure against pain is to retire within ourselves, and to suffice for our own happiness. Those, which depend on ourselves, are the only pleasures a wise man will count on: for nothing is ours which another may deprive us of. Hence the inestimable value of intellectual pleasures. Ever in our power, always leading us to something new, never cloying, we ride, serene and sublime, above the concerns of this mortal world, contemplating truth and nature, matter and motion, the laws which bind up their existence, and that eternal being who made and bound them up by these laws. Let this be our employ. Leave the bustle and tumult of society to those who have not talents to occupy themselves without them. Friendship is but another name for an alliance with the follies and the misfortunes of others. Our own share of miseries is sufficient: why enter then as volunteers into those of another? . . . A friend dies or leaves us: we feel as if a limb was cut off. He is sick: we must watch over him, and participate of his pains. His fortune is shipwrecked: ours must be laid under contribution. He loses a child, a parent or a partner: we must mourn the loss as if it was our own. (449)<sup>17</sup>

The head’s words, including this passage, are logical in content and are constructed in *style periodique*. The head claims that, because no one can take them away and thus they are safe, and because the best pleasures are the safest pleasures, that therefore pleasures depending solely upon the self are best—hence solidifying a stance of isolation. In this passage, the head speaks of intel-

lectual pleasures alongside serenity, withdrawal, and truth, and opposes these “safe” pleasures to friendship, society, engagement, bustle, tumult, folly, and misfortune. This strategic use of *dialysis* allows the head to draw a logical border; if the heart stands for friendship, it necessarily stands for heartache and disorder as well.

Significantly, the heart adopts the head’s style at the letter’s close, espousing its romantic values in the language of the head. This is how Jefferson performs the process of disciplining his heart. When the heart speaks in the first 15 paragraphs of the argument, 18 of the first 44 sentences are marked by exclamation points to reveal emotion. The sentences are also rhythmically choppy and lack logical connectives. For example:

And our own dear Monticello, where has nature spread so rich a mantle under the eye? mountains, forests, rocks, rivers. With what majesty do we there ride above the storms! How sublime to look down into the workhouse of nature, to see her clouds, hail, snow, rain, thunder, all fabricated at our feet! And the glorious Sun, when rising as if out of a distant water, just gliding the tops of the mountains, and giving life to all nature!—I hope in god no circumstance may ever make either seek an asylum from grief! With what sincere sympathy I would open every cell of my composition to receive the effusion of their woes! . . . Deeply practised in the school of affliction, the human heart knows no joy which I have not lost, no sorrow of which I have not drank! Fortune can present no grief of unknown form to me! Who then can so softly bind up the wound of another as he who has felt the same wound himself? But Heaven forbid they should ever know a sorrow!—Let us turn over another leaf, for this has distracted me. (447)

This passage, in which the sentences are inflected and the clauses are simple and brief, exemplifies Blair’s *style coupé*. This simple style of end-stop phrases is distinct from the head’s *style periodique*, and thus at this point the differing characters of the head and heart are expressed in differing styles.

However, the heart’s rhetorical register shifts as the argument progresses. The final three pages of dialogue, which many historians have utilized as evidence for the heart’s victory, stylistically mimic the head: the prose is logical and connected; reasoning is pronounced; structural binaries are dominant; emotion withers away. The heart justifies its points in the head’s style, as is apparent in the following comparison:

*Head:* I often told you during it’s course that you were imprudently engaging your affections under circumstances that must cost you a great deal of pain: that the persons indeed were of the greatest merit, possessing good sense, good

humour, honest hearts, honest manners, and eminence in a lovely art: that the lady had moreover qualities and accomplishments, belonging to her sex, which might form a chapter apart for her: such as music, modesty, beauty, and that softness of disposition which is the ornament of her sex and charm of ours. But that all these considerations would increase the pang of separation: that their stay here was to be short: that you rack our whole system when you are parted from those you love, complaining that such a separation is worse than death (446).

*Heart:* When nature assigned us the same habitation, she gave us over it a divided empire. To you she allotted the field of science, to me that of morals. When the circle is to be squared, or the orbit of a comet to be traced; when the arch of greatest strength, or the solid of least resistance is to be investigated, take you the problem: it is yours: nature has given me no cognisance of it. In like manner in denying to you the feelings of sympathy, of benevolence, of gratitude, of justice, of love, of friendship, she has excluded you from their controul. To these she has adapted the mechanism of the heart. Morals were too essential to the happiness of man to be risked on the uncertain combinations of the head. She laid their foundation therefore in sentiment, not in science. . . . A few facts however which I can readily recall to your memory, will suffice to prove to you that nature has not organised you for our moral direction. (450)

Here, the heart couches a logical argument in *style periodique* and not the emotional *style coupé*, claiming that because the head is uncertain, morals must be trusted to the heart—hence boomeranging accusations of irresponsibility back upon the head. The heart's solution of "a divided empire" is formulated in the head's binary logic. Binaries ("antitheses") mark the heart's final words: right and wrong, sentiment and science, hope and despair. At the letter's close, the heart's *style coupé* morphs into *style periodique*; thus, there is a stylistic metamorphosis of the heart, and it was through the style of his letter that Jefferson disciplined his heart. Though he does not totally disavow the heart's sociality, he forces his heart to speak the language of reason, perhaps with the hope that if it speaks rationally it would also behave rationally.

Jefferson advocates "a divided empire" in which the heart manages the virtues associated with romanticism (sympathy, benevolence, gratitude, love, and friendship), and the head those valued by the Enlightenment (science, architecture, calculations). Both the head and the heart have their roles in the divided empire of Jefferson's mind; as Smith instructed his readers, "Wise and judicious conduct . . . is the best head joined to the best heart." Jefferson suggests how this divided empire should be managed: through a process of self-regulation whereby individuals are forced by "the man within the breast" to

speak rationally. Having both his head and his heart speak rationally was important for Jefferson because he, like many other politicians at the time, viewed the self as a performance. Even though his mind was divided—and though Jefferson was suffering from the psychological trouble that Tocqueville called “a sort of inner shuttering”—by skillfully manipulating the style of his prose, he was able to create the appearance of rationality. This leads to a larger conclusion about Jefferson’s rhetorical culture. By adopting a rational style, even the most irrational being could be perceived as rational—even someone like Jefferson himself, who designed an impractical home (Monticello) he could not afford, and often judged other public figures by his norms of friendship, leading to irrational vendettas against those who crossed him (for example, Vice President Aaron Burr and Chief Justice John Marshall). Douglas Adair demonstrates that elites in the eighteenth century were preoccupied with how others would view them and their legacies, and as a prominent public figure, Jefferson undoubtedly desired to appear rational. Further, Jay Fliegelman demonstrates that morality in Jefferson’s time was tied to a culture of performance in which politicians were obsessed with representing the virtue of their inward characters to external spectators. In a theatrical milieu and an inchoate “public sphere” in which the public and private affairs of politicians were widely scrutinized, Jefferson’s emphasis on style was appropriate because performance mattered.<sup>18</sup>

Suffering from the heartbreak of a lost love, Jefferson compromised his heart in order to prevent future heartaches. Having the heart adopt the head’s style was a way of rendering it docile; if the heart was forced to speak logically with syllogisms, enthymemes, and antitheses, then external spectators like Maria Cosway would necessarily respond to it as though it was rational. Rational speech hence provokes rational responses in a self-fulfilling prophecy of isolation. At the same time, having the heart speak the letter’s most memorable and final lines was an attempt to trick Maria Cosway into believing that his heart’s love for her was superior to his head’s scorn. Perhaps sending mixed messages was a way to ensure that the head disciplined the heart; for Cosway’s confusion engendered a negative response to Jefferson’s affection, which in turn deepened his heartache and validated the head’s status as the manager of the body politic. Paradoxically, by simultaneously desiring and not desiring Cosway’s love, and manifesting this ambivalence through the letter’s style, Jefferson assured himself that she would not love him back.

Cosway’s October 30, 1786, response demonstrates that, as a love letter, Jefferson’s dialogue was a failure. She claims that Jefferson’s letter made her think of love, but also of the inner workings of the human psyche, about which she complains: “You seem to be Such a Master on this subject, that whatever I may say will appear trifelling, not well express’d, faintly represented . . . but

felt.” Offering a standard interpretation of Jefferson’s letter in line with the Enlightenment doctrine that women feel and men think, Cosway thus recognizes that the head dominated the letter. Indeed, she laments the fact that she could not write something as calculated as Jefferson, but instead could only write what she “felt,” which would be “trifling” like the heart’s *style coupé*. Her response is also angry, perhaps at receiving such a cold letter from a potential lover. Because of her anger and confusion, she is hesitant to respond to his love letter. Though she admires Jefferson’s writing, she expresses bewilderment, noting, “for with difficulty do I find a line but after having admired it, I recollect some part concerns Me.” Cosway became befuddled; Jefferson’s love letter failed her expectations.

Expecting a gushing symphony of romantic sentiments, Cosway’s confusion is understandable because Jefferson’s love letter violated the eighteenth century’s norms for epistolary rhetoric. Authoring love was a complicated affair, for the writings of Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau created strict generic conventions for romantic love letters. Both Richardson and Rousseau were popular in Jefferson’s America; *Clarissa, Or the History of a Young Lady* (1748) was one of the best-selling novels in America during the late eighteenth century, and *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761) was, along with *Émile*, one of Rousseau’s most influential books in America. Jefferson knew and respected both authors, recommending the April 1761 William Kenrick translation of Rousseau’s *Julie* and also Richardson’s *Clarissa* to his nephew, Robert Skipworth. Both authors detailed the standards for love letters.<sup>19</sup>

Richardson’s major novels, *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, were comprised of collections of letters exchanged between major characters. In addition to his novels, Richardson wrote a popular letter-writing manual, *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions* (1741). This manual codified conventions for many types of letters, including romantic letters. Eleven examples in his manual were romantic letters, and taken together they defined the genre. Letter LXXIV, “From a respectful Lover to his Mistress,” opened with a reference to passion, and continued to make a claim for the man’s sincerity: “I can only assure you, madam, that the heart of man never conceived a stronger or sincerer passion than mine for you.” Letter LXXV, “The Answer,” opened by praising the man’s modesty, and ended “You, sir, best know your own heart; and if you are sincere and generous, will receive as you ought, this frankness from *Your humble Servant*.” In these two letters, sincerity, generosity, modesty, frankness, and passion were praised. When passion was absent or, even worse, challenged, the effectiveness of a romantic letter was compromised, as Richardson demonstrated in letter LXXIX, “A Gentleman to a Lady, professing an Aversion to the tedious Forms of Courtship.” The courtier began passionately, but continued to break the rules of the genre by dismissing courtship: “To try by idle fallacies, and airy compliments, to prevail

on your judgment, is a folly for any man to attempt who knows you." This suitor refused to compliment his love, and her response was telling: "I am very little in love with the fashionable methods of courtship: Sincerity with me is preferable to compliments; yet I see no reason why common decency should be discarded." She continued, "There is something so odd in your stile, that when I know whether you in are jest or earnest, I shall be less at a loss to answer you." For Richardson, true love was not flattery, sophistry, or dishonesty—it was clear, plain, sincere, and seductively passionate.<sup>20</sup>

For both Richardson and Rousseau, the love letter persuaded through *ethos*, not *logos*. As literary critic Thomas McFarland argues, in Rousseau's *Julie*, "[t]he elevation of feeling to the ontological heights was accompanied by an undercurrent of hostility to reason." Like Richardson's novels, Rousseau's *Julie* was framed as letters between the stories' protagonists, Saint-Preux and Julie. In the preface, Rousseau claimed that "a letter that love has truly dictated, a letter from an honestly impassioned lover will be loosely written, verbose, drawn out to great lengths, disorderly, repetitious. The lover's heart, full of overflowing emotion, keeps saying the same thing over and over and never finishes saying it, like a living spring which endlessly gushes forth and is never exhausted." After reading a love letter, "you feel your soul touched; you feel moved without understanding why." For Rousseau, a lover abandons reason and becomes *insane* with passion, as Saint-Preux did in letter XIV: "What have you done, ah! what have you done, my Julie? You wanted to reward me and you have destroyed me. I am drunk, or rather, I am insane. My senses are disordered; all my faculties are disturbed by that fatal kiss." Rousseau's letters in *Julie* were in large part hostile to reason, for it was not reason but passion that navigated the emotional realm of the lover. As they laid out the generic constraints for a love letter, Richardson and Rousseau provided a set of rules that Jefferson violated in his letter. Indeed, as Cosway recognized, though Jefferson's heart was initially drunk with despair, his letter became fundamentally rational, hence transgressing the standards of epistolary rhetoric. Tellingly, Jefferson and Cosway never saw one another again.<sup>21</sup>

### **JEFFERSON'S FANTASY: THE LANGUAGE OF REASON AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ORDERLY PUBLIC AFFAIRS**

Though insanity found a welcome home in love letters and was praised by proto-romanticists like Rousseau, its presence in politics was less desirable. In the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, the 13 loosely united states of America were rocked by crime, domestic violence, and popular uprisings against the government as the progress of modernity seemed to unravel. Events like Shays's Rebellion in Massachusetts, which occurred in the winter of

1786–87 while Jefferson was still in Paris as farmers took up arms against the state government to achieve tax relief, caused widespread consternation and furthered the movement toward a federal constitution with coercive powers for repressing future “rebellions.” In line with the eighteenth-century’s prominent discourse about madness, Shays’s Rebellion and other popular uprisings were described in psychological terms. Writing to Jefferson in Paris, Abigail Adams told him that “[i]gnorant, wrestless desperadoes, without conscience or principals, have led a deluded multitude to follow their standard.” According to Jefferson’s friend Benjamin Rush, one of Philadelphia’s leading abolitionists and social activists, “Shays will now be left a solitary example of political insanity and wickedness.” Similarly, an article appearing in a Massachusetts newspaper called the events a “publick act of madness and extreme folly.” For these authors, though popular violence was sanctioned in America before and during the Revolutionary War, after independence it was madness.<sup>22</sup>

Several authors described why madness must be eradicated from the United States—because insanity implied an absence of mental control, and the comparable political situation was anarchy. *The Anarchiad*, published serially in Connecticut newspapers in 1786 and 1787 by the famed Connecticut poets known as the “Wits”—David Humphreys, Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, and Lemuel Hopkins—prophesized that Shays’s Rebellion would destroy the state:

Behold the reign of anarchy, begun,  
 And half the business of confusion done.  
 From hell’s dark caverns discord sounds alarms,  
 Blows her loud trump, and calls my *Shays* to arms,  
 O’er half the land the desperate riot runs,  
 And maddening mobs assume their rusty guns . . .  
 Now sinks the public mind; a death-like sleep  
 O’er all the torpid limbs begins to creep;  
 By dull degrees decays the vital heat,  
 The blood forgets to flow, the pulse to beat;  
 The powers of life, in mimic death withdrawn,  
 Closed the fixed eyes with one expiring yawn;  
 Exposed in state, to wait the funeral hour.<sup>23</sup>

*The Anarchiad* diagnosed the period following the Revolutionary War as a “reign of anarchy,” and feared that the nation-building project would end in “one expiring yawn.” Rush reached similar conclusions, arguing that “the minds of the citizens of the United States were wholly unprepared for their new situation” following independence from Great Britain. Observing the

general postwar anomie and the events of Shays's Rebellion with horror, Rush claimed that "the excess of the passion for liberty, inflamed by the successful issue of the war, produced, in many people, opinions and conduct which would not be removed by reason nor restrained by government." Hence, he labeled the "insanity" of common citizens "*anarchia*," a disease that would be treated by a new array of institutions, including the clinic, the asylum, and the school.<sup>24</sup>

Jefferson came to a different conclusion. In fact, he praised Shays's Rebellion, telling Abigail Adams, "I like a little rebellion now and then. It is like a storm in the Atmosphere," and William Stephens Smith, "What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots & tyrants." Further, he told James Madison that rebellions are "a medicine necessary for the sound health of government." Jefferson lauded these events because he believed they preserved the revolutionary "spirit" of political participation beyond the Revolutionary War. His response to Shays's Rebellion, however, was more ambiguous than these frequently cited quotations let on. In fact, he told Stephens Smith that Shays's Rebellion was "founded in ignorance," and that it provided British propagandists with ammunition for their attempts to create the appearance of "our being in anarchy." In a revealing series of questions, he asked, "Yet where does this anarchy exist? Where did it ever exist, except in the single instance of Massachusetts?" Like other politicians concerned with nation building, Jefferson reported that Shays's Rebellion resulted in anarchy and was founded in "ignorance."<sup>25</sup>

Though Jefferson defended Shays's Rebellion, he nevertheless had reservations about it—and his greatest fear was that it would provoke a conservative backlash that resulted in despotism. Jefferson's fears were piqued by John Adams, who instructed him, "Dont be allarmed at the late Turbulence in New England. The Massachusetts Assembly had, in its Zeal to get the better of their Debt, laid on a Tax, rather heavier than the People could bear; but all will be well, and this Commotion will terminate in additional Strength to Government." Adams was prophetic, because Shays's Rebellion did end by increasing the strength of government. In fact, those who were eager to consolidate power in a federal constitution used Shays's Rebellion to advance their cause. This caused Jefferson to grouse that the Constitutional Convention "has been too much impressed by the insurrection in Massachusetts: and in the spur of the moment they are setting up a kite to keep the hen-yard in order." Jefferson feared the consequences of despotism, which he characterized as "government of wolves over sheep." As he told Madison, he was frightened that politicians would observe Shays's Rebellion and "conclude too hastily that nature has formed man insusceptible of any other government but that of

force, a conclusion not founded in truth, nor experience.” Jefferson did not fear anarchy per se but its consequences: that anarchy would yield powerful rhetorical justifications for despotism.<sup>26</sup>

For Jefferson, rebellions were problematic precisely because they provided the perfect rhetorical justification for despotic government. As he noted, “Unsuccessful rebellions indeed generally establish the incroachments on the rights of the people which have produced them.” Recalling the British government’s attempts to coerce dissent in the years leading up to the Revolutionary War, Jefferson in the 1780s offered an alternative form of governance to despotism that I label “disciplined democracy.” In 1789, he told Richard Price that “the American war seems first to have awakened the thinking part of this nation in general from the sleep of despotism in which they were sunk,” suggesting that revolutions were praiseworthy because they awakened citizens to the importance of participating in politics. The debates over the Constitution provided further evidence for this point, offering “a new and consolatory proof that wherever the people are well informed they can be trusted with their own government.” Jefferson’s faith in the ability of citizens to govern themselves explains his outrage at despotism, which denied this capacity. In the aftermath of Shays’s Rebellion, he repeatedly expressed his hope to his correspondents that the “rebels” were not punished too harshly, telling Abigail Adams, “I hope they pardoned them,” because “the good sense of the people will soon lead them back, if they have erred in a moment of surprize.” Further, he told Edward Carrington that “I am persuaded myself that the good sense of the people will always be found to be the best army. They may be led astray for a moment, but will soon correct themselves.” Thus, as he instructed Carrington, “Do not be too severe upon their errors, but reclaim them by enlightening them.” Instead of punishing them, Jefferson called on politicians in America to instead enlighten malcontents.<sup>27</sup>

The solution to domestic problems, then, was enlightenment—which explains Jefferson’s faith in “the good sense of the people” to correct the “ignorance” of events like Shays’s Rebellion. The social hope that education would enlighten citizens and stabilize the nation was foundational to modernity. “The modern world-view,” Zygmunt Bauman writes, “proclaimed the unlimited potential of education and self-perfection. Everything was possible, with due effort and good will. Man was at birth a *tabula rasa*, an empty cabinet, later to be covered and filled, in the course of the civilizing process, with contents supplied by the levelling-up pressure of shared cultural ideas.” As Bauman argues, modernity creates the faith that individuals can be molded, reformed, and hence changed. The purpose of disciplined democracy, then, is to create a stable polis by enlightening citizens through rational education. Most elites at this time agreed that to enter into politics citizens had to become

rational. Though only rational beings had a place in public affairs and social intercourse, then, Jefferson held out hope that citizens could be taught to be rational and law-abiding, which would allow for greater political participation and also temper the violence of postwar America through education.<sup>28</sup>

For Jefferson, education would play an essential role in the public affairs of the United States. In 1786, he praised education by writing, "I think by far the most important bill in our whole [Virginia Commonwealth] code is that for the diffusion of knowledge among the people. No other sure foundation can be devised for the preservation of freedom, and happiness." Similarly, he wrote in the 1818 plan for the University of Virginia that education was designed

to develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order; To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts, and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life; And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves.<sup>29</sup>

Universities would hence serve a vital purpose in the United States, for at these institutions students develop internal disciplinarians that would function like Jefferson's head. For Jefferson, if citizens could develop "reasoning faculties" that would help them learn the "precepts of order," and if they could be formed in the "habits of reflection and correct action," then the dream of a self-regulating society was obtainable as citizens, and not armies, repressed their disorderly inclinations. By advocating a society based on education, Jefferson was participating in an epistemological shift that Friedrich Nietzsche labels "the *internalization* of man," whereby individuals were taught to regulate themselves through the development of conscience (or, in Adam Smith's terms, the man within the breast). If all citizens were like Jefferson, and would only learn to discipline themselves through self-reflection, there would be no need for the coercive state violence of despotism.<sup>30</sup>

I therefore read Jefferson's October 26, 1786, letter to Maria Cosway as the key to understanding his political psychology and also his response to Shays's Rebellion. After all, his lost love and his response to the rebellion were coterminous. In a December 1786 letter to John Adams requesting information about Shays's Rebellion, Jefferson told Adams, "I can never fear that things will go far wrong where common sense has fair play. I but just begin to use my pen a little with my right hand, but with pain"; and he similarly began a letter to Abigail Adams the next day by noting, "An unfortunate dislocation of my right wrist has for three months deprived me of the honor of writing to you. I begin now to use my pen a little, but it is in great pain, and I have no other use of my hand." His

hand still aching from his fall, and his heart still wounded from Cosway's departure, Jefferson learned about Shays's Rebellion and formulated his response as he coped with the heartbreak of a lost love. How his head came to rule his heart is thus relevant to how Shays's Rebellion and other popular uprisings might be resolved. If citizens could be enlightened—taught to internalize society's norms and then use the man within the breast to guide their actions—then they could regulate themselves. This, in turn, would ensure that their actions were not labeled “anarchy,” thereby removing any justifications for transforming the U.S. government into despotism based on the coercion of “*anarchia*.”<sup>31</sup>

By attempting to leap over the Parisian fountain, and failing, Jefferson projected himself into the future as a marker of the limitations of governance and the need for an enlightened polis. As his head suggested, Jefferson's behavior was romantic and irrational; he let his bodily desires and his childish fantasies determine his actions. Just as Jefferson's creaky body could only do so much (and perhaps not enough for a woman 16 years his junior), the body politic had boundaries that could not be transgressed. By attempting an action that he could not complete, Jefferson brushed up against his *physical* limitations, but he also brushed up against *political* limitations when Maria Cosway left France, and *rhetorical* limitations when he failed to persuade her to love him as he loved her. Though he was a powerful politician and a Renaissance man, Jefferson's agency was bounded; yet he failed to listen to his head, and therefore he failed to govern his body in line with those boundaries, breaking his wrist. The agent in him, his heart, reached outward, toward others, toward Maria Cosway, toward friendship, toward love; the spectator in him, his head, turned inward. Jefferson's broken wrist thus had something in common with Shays's Rebellion. When he behaved as though his agency was unlimited, he behaved like the participants in Shays's Rebellion, who acted as though the government could not discipline them. Leaping over the fountain was like shooting a rebellious gun; both were transgressions against order, and both should be overcome, according to Jefferson, through rational education. That is, if only citizens would listen to the man within the breast—which undoubtedly would sound a lot like Jefferson.

## NOTES

1. Henry Steele Commager, *Jefferson, Nationalism, and the Enlightenment* (New York: George Braziller, 1975), 73; Garry Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978), 118; Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1978), 301–2; Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage, 1991), 236; Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States, 1492–Present* (1980; New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 89; Merrill D. Peterson, *Thomas Jefferson and the New Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 30–31.

2. Thomas Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, October 20, 1786, and to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian Boyd (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1950–2004), 10:478–79, 446; Joseph J. Ellis, *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 94; the contemporary's quote on Cosway's beauty can be found in Helen Duprey Bullock, *My Head and My Heart: A Little History of Thomas Jefferson and Maria Cosway* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1945), 14. For further background on their affair, in addition to Bullock's *My Head and My Heart*, see William Howard Adams, *The Paris Years of Thomas Jefferson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); and John P. Kaminski, ed., *Jefferson in Love: The Love Letters between Thomas Jefferson and Maria Cosway* (Lanham, MD: Madison House Books, 1999), 3–38.
3. Douglas Wilson, "Jefferson and the Republic of Letters," in *Jeffersonian Legacies*, ed. Peter S. Onuf (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1993), 68; and on Jefferson's letter writing habits, see Ellis, *American Sphinx*, 276–77; Wills, *Inventing America*, 189, 283; Richard Matthews, *The Radical Politics of Thomas Jefferson: A Revisionist View* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1984), 61; Morton White, *The Philosophy of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 121; Julian Boyd, footnote to Jefferson's "Letter to Maria Cosway," *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, 10:453.
4. Stephen E. Lucas, "Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document," *American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 69; and see also his "The Rhetorical Ancestry of the Declaration of Independence," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1 (1998): 143–84; Stephen Howard Browne, *Jefferson's Call for Nationhood: The First Inaugural Address* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 10.
5. Beth Innocenti Manolescu, "Style and Spectator Judgment in Fisher Ames's Jay Treaty Speech," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 62–79; Cicero, *De Oratore, or On the Character of the Orator*, in *Cicero on Oratory and Orators*, trans. and ed. J. S. Watson (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1970), 198–99; Stephen E. Lucas, *Portents of Rebellion: Rhetoric and Revolution in Philadelphia, 1765–76* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), 173; Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (Dublin: Whitestone, Colles, etc., 1783), 1:244, 245.
6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 105; and see also Michel Foucault's discussion of the "will to truth" in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 76–100. For a discussion of the rhetorical features of definitions, see Edward Schiappa, *Defining Reality: Definitions and the Politics of Meaning* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); and note as well that Richard Weaver claims that rhetoricians should view what people say "as a set of definitions which are struggling to get themselves defined in the real world." Richard M. Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (1953; Davis, CA: Hermagoras Press, 1985), 112.
7. Thomas Jefferson to Maria Cosway, October 12, 1786, 443, 453 [hereafter cited parenthetically in essay]; Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 1:58.
8. Thomas Jefferson to Robert Skipworth, August 3, 1771, in *Thomas Jefferson: Writings*, ed. Merrill D. Peterson (New York: Library of America, 1984), 740–45; on Small, see Wills, *Inventing America*, 176–80.
9. Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (1759; Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1976), 116, 117, 307; for a discussion of Smith's desire to

- create order in “a fatherless world” without God, see Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet, and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 218–52.
10. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 113, 130, 131, 134, 137.
  11. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 153.
  12. Epicurus claimed that the goal of life is the avoidance of pain; for him, “we do everything for the sake of being neither in pain nor in terror,” and thus “the purest security is that which comes from a quiet life and withdrawal from the many.” Jefferson, in turn, called himself an “Epicurian,” and noted that Epicurus’s philosophy contained “everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us.” Epicurus, “Letter to Menoecus” and “The Principle Doctrines,” in *The Epicurus Reader: Selected Writings and Testimonia*, trans. and ed. Brad Inwood and L. P. Gerson (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994), 30, 33; Thomas Jefferson to William Short, October 31, 1819, in Peterson, *Writings*, 1430. One can also see Rousseau in the head’s call for isolation; Rousseau once argued in the tradition of Epicurus, “Let me give myself over entirely to the pleasure of conversing with my soul, since this is the only pleasure that men cannot take away from me.” Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, trans. Peter France (1782; New York: Penguin, 1979), 32. This move, the turn inward to meditate on the self during correspondence with others, is fundamental to modernity’s emphasis on what Michel Foucault calls “the cultivation of the self.” As he argues, “Around the care of the self, there developed an entire activity of speaking and writing in which the work of oneself on oneself and communication with others were linked together.” See *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, *The Care of the Self*, trans. Robert Hurley (1984; New York: Vintage, 1988), 51.
  13. Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*, 26.
  14. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1749), ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (1888; Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1978), 415; Wills, *Inventing America*, 224.
  15. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 146–47; Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (1787), ed. William Peden (1954; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 159; and on the skepticism of the Enlightenment in America, see May, *Enlightenment in America*, 105–49; for a discussion of natural history and Jefferson’s attempts to find political lessons in nature, see Christopher Looby, “The Constitution of Nature: Taxonomy as Politics in Jefferson, Peale, and Bartram,” *Early American Literature* 22 (1987): 252–73; for discussions of Jefferson and other founders’ attacks on mixing religion with politics (resulting, in Jefferson’s pithy phrase, in a “wall of separation between church and state”), see Issac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: The Case Against Religious Correctness* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997).
  16. James R. Otteson, *Adam Smith’s Marketplace of Life* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 79–80; Browne, *Jefferson’s Call for Nationhood*, 93.
  17. Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres*, 1:417–20.
  18. Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, 216; Tocqueville’s *L’ancien régime* quoted in Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*, 23; Douglas Adair, *Fame and the Founding Fathers*, ed. Trevor Colbourn (New York: W. W. Norton, 1974), 3–26; Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language, and the Culture of Performance* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); and for another useful discussion of character in the early Republic, see Joanne B. Freeman, *Affairs of Honor: National Politics in the New Republic* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 11–61; for an analysis of Jefferson’s politics of friendship,

- see Andrew Trees, *The Founding Fathers and the Politics of Character* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 13–43; on Jefferson's vendettas against Marshall and Burr, see Joseph Wheelan, *Jefferson's Vendetta: The Pursuit of Aaron Burr and the Judiciary* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2005); on the nascent "public sphere" in the eighteenth century, see Michael Warner, *The Letters of the Republic: Publication and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); and the articles by Christopher Looby, Bryan Waterman, Eric Slauter, Joanna Brooks, John L. Brooke, Ruth L. Bloch, and David Waldstreicher in *William and Mary Quarterly* 62 (2005): 3–112.
19. Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750–1800* (1982; Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 83–89; Thomas McFarland, *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1995), 77; Jefferson to Skipworth, August 3, 1771. The Kenrick translation of *Julie* was titled *Eloisa: or a series of original letters collected and published by J. J. Rousseau*, and Jefferson recommended *Eloisa* to Skipworth. For information on translations, see Judith H. McDowell's introduction to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *La nouvelle Héloïse. Julie, or the New Heloise: Letters of Two Lovers, Inhabitants of a Small Town at the Foot of the Alps*, trans. Judith H. McDowell (1761; University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 1–16.
  20. Samuel Richardson, *Familiar Letters on Important Occasions* (1741; London: George Routledge and Sons, 1928), 93, 94, 101, 102.
  21. McFarland, *Romanticism and the Heritage of Rousseau*, 252; Rousseau, *La nouvelle Héloïse*, 17, 52. On romanticism's rejection of reason, see Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, ed. Henry Hardy (1965; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 93–117; and Orrin N. C. Wang, *Fantastic Modernity: Dialectical Readings in Romanticism and Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1–36.
  22. Abigail Adams to Thomas Jefferson, January 29, 1787, in *The Adams-Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams*, ed. Lester J. Cappon (1959; Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 1:168; Benjamin Rush to Jeremy Belknap, May 6, 1788, in *Letters of Benjamin Rush*, ed. L. H. Butterfield (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1951), 1:460–61; *Worcester Magazine*, January 8, 1787; on the eighteenth-century discourse of madness, see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (1961; New York: Vintage, 1988); for a rhetorical analysis of Shays's Rebellion, see Jeremy Engels, "Reading the Riot Act: Rhetoric, Psychology, and Counter-Revolutionary Discourse in Shays's Rebellion," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 63–88.
  23. David Humphreys, Joel Barlow, John Trumbull, and Lemuel Hopkins, *The Anarchiad: A New England Poem, 1786–87*, ed. Luther G. Riggs and Thomas H. Pease (New Haven, CT: T. H. Pease, 1861), 20.
  24. Benjamin Rush, "An Account of the Influence of the Military and Political Events of the American Revolution Upon the Human Body" (1787), in *Medical Inquiries and Other Observations*, 2nd American ed. (Philadelphia: Thomas Dobson, 1794), 1:277; for a helpful discussion of social "anomie," see Emile Durkheim, *Suicide: A Study in Sociology*, ed. George Simpson, trans. John A. Spaulding and George Simpson (1897; New York: Free Press, 1979), 241–76.
  25. Thomas Jefferson to Abigail Adams, February 22, 1787, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 1:173; Jefferson to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787, in Boyd, *Papers*, 12:356; Jefferson to James Madison, January 30, 1787, in Boyd, *Papers*, 11:93. Like many others in the Revolutionary Era, Jefferson was grappling with what Peter Gay has called the

Enlightenment's "dilemma of heroic proportions": the simultaneous desire for freedom from governmental control and for the reform of premodern tendencies. As Gay writes, "with the overpowering presence of the illiterate masses and the absence of the habit of autonomy, freedom and reform were often incompatible." Jefferson recognized this dilemma better than most. As Hannah Arendt demonstrates, he was obsessed with preserving the spirit of political participation nourished during the Revolutionary War, and he often fell into either/or thinking on the subject, which explains his periodic bloody outbursts in favor of rebellion: for him, "the people must either sink into 'lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty,' or 'preserve the spirit of resistance' to whatever government they have elected, since the only power they retain is 'the reserve power of revolution.'" Jefferson thus stood in a bind that continues to haunt the republican tradition in the United States, for freedom is often opposed to reform, and therefore it becomes the philosopher's dilemma to find a type of reform that preserves freedom. Jefferson's solution was to nourish "the man within the breast," thereby making people free within the confines of accepted behaviors. Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, vol. 2, *The Science of Freedom* (1969; New York: W. W. Norton, 1996), 497; Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963), 240.

26. John Adams to Jefferson, November 30, 1786, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 1:156; Jefferson to Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787; Jefferson to Madison, January 30, 1787.
27. Jefferson to Madison, January 30, 1787; Jefferson to Richard Price, January 8, 1789, in Boyd, *Papers*, 14:420; Jefferson to Abigail Adams, February 22, 1787; Jefferson to Abigail Adams, December 21, 1786, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 159; Jefferson to Edward Carrington, January 16, 1787, in Boyd, *Papers*, 11:49.
28. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (1989; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000), 58; and on modernity and improvability, see also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (1975; New York: Vintage, 1995); and Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (1995; Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998).
29. Jefferson to George Wythe, August 13, 1786, in Boyd, *Papers*, 10:244; Jefferson, "Report of the Commissioners for the University of Virginia, August 4, 1818," in Peterson, *Writings*, 460.
30. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kauffman (1966; New York: Modern Library, 1992), 520; and for further theorizations of internalization, see Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930; New York: W. W. Norton, 1989); and Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* and *The Care of the Self*.
31. Jefferson to John Adams, December 20, 1786, and to Abigail Adams, December 21, 1786, in *Adams-Jefferson Letters*, 1:158-59.