

THE ORPHIC REPUBLIC: THE CITIZEN ORATOR

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ABSTRACT. Stolz explores the political legacies and writings of John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams. He traces their rhetoric to its foundation in Roman oratorical traditions and celebrates their vision and defense of the American Orphic Republic. He analyzes the son's *Lectures* and *Memoirs* which reveal dimensions of a politics long neglected or misunderstood by Americans. Stolz argues that Adams often implies that there are depths and dimensions to American politics that can be explored through the action of its citizens. Although politics may be only a human convention, Stolz concedes, he claims that Adams insists that even a democratic politics serves both high and low, both ordinary and extraordinary practices. He argues that more often than not Adams reads a sublime politics in the principles of the *Declaration* as opposed to an everyday politics of the Constitution. Adams, the author insists, endorses, accordingly, a patriotism of action.

KEY WORDS: John Adams, John Quincy Adams, the Constitution, politics, citizen, orator

In this paper I propose to explicate the three part distinctions among the deep layers of American political thought and action: the revolutionary, the normal and the extraordinary. The normal politics best represented by the Constitution, and Madison's reading of that document, offers a narrow interpretation of the Revolution and yet has established the parameters of everyday political life. The orphic musings of Adams, on the other hand,

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with its vision of the citizen-orator stand closer to the principles of the Revolution; action upon them, however, remains dormant until the citizen-orator, alone or in association with others, acts them out in a sublime manner. Only then can American politics escape the ordinary and become extraordinary. Adams exemplifies that sublimity of behavior. Furthermore, his speculations regarding America as an orphic republic envisions the Republic free from the Madisonian reduction of the citizen to political spectator. The role of the citizen distinguishes in a fundamental manner the distance between normal and extraordinary politics in the American Republic. The Orphic Republic perishes lacking the principled sublime of the citizen-orator.

To understand the meanings of the political sublime as imagined and acted out by Adams we must attend to the texts that he wrote and passed on to us: his *Memoirs* and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*. Both texts specify the role of the citizen-orator in American politics. Adams's evaluation of the *Memoirs* may lack modesty, and might strike some readers as bizarre; yet, Adams's words capture the political vision that shines through in his speech and deeds.

There has been perhaps not another individual of the human race whose daily existence from childhood to fourscore years had been noted down with his own hand as minutely as mine... If my intellectual powers had been such as sometimes committed by the Creator of men to single individuals of my species, my diary would have been next to the Holy Scriptures, the most precious and invaluable book ever written by human hands, and I should have been one of the greatest benefactors of my country and mankind. I would by the irresistible power of genius and the irrepressible energy of my will and the favor of Almighty God have banished war and slavery from the world.¹

1 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. VII, 272.

Adams implies that his diary is more than a hidden private document that he writes for a larger audience than himself and his children, that the public would read and learn from the thousands of pages that he had written over a lifetime. Because the Scriptures deal with matters of truth and salvation, he subordinates his own profane observations to them. Nevertheless, Adams embraces for himself and those who read him the great conflicts of the world: peace against war, freedom against slavery. And, as we shall see, Adams declared these antagonisms an effective aspect of the deep structure of American politics from which would emerge both the terrible and the sublime.

The principles of the Orphic Republic would shape the Republic's public agon. Accordingly, Adams wrote more than a faithful record of his times. Besides picturing the interplay between the normal and extraordinary in American politics, he fashioned a galaxy of political examples both virtuous and corrupt and set them in action before the reader. Indeed, in the manner of Shakespeare, the political world was a stage upon which many actors paraded themselves. In a response to a toast he reflected upon that sentiment: "Gentlemen, the sublime language of your immortal poet, who asked a kingdom or a stage, princes to act, and monarchs to behold, the swelling scene is not large enough for the purposes of your institutions. Your theatre is not a single kingdom, but the whole of the habitable globe. Your actors are princes and monarchs, the beholders are the blessed spirits that encircle the throne of the Omnipotence."² America, however, lacks princes and monarchs; rather its republican drama narrates the actions of citizens, where exemplary actors are to be imitated and the corrupt, shunned. The *Memoirs* work as a mirror for citizens.

Still his *Memoirs* do not function isolated from the principles of republican politics. On the contrary, Adams celebrates in *The*

2 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. III, 378.

Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory the rhetorical sublime that fashions the citizen-orator into an instrument fit for a free republic. The work is the one crucial foundation of his sublime fusion of thought and action. That fusion allows Adams to project a vision of American politics strong enough to challenge the legitimacy of *The Federalist Papers* in American political thought. Nevertheless, as I have indicated, his speculations receive only perverse neglect. Adams's biographers give them fleeting recognition and none deal with their substance. Even Brooks and Henry Adams totally ignore their existence. Only the historians of rhetoric take notice of them. George Kennedy places Adams's lectures in their proper intellectual context. Among American teachers of rhetoric, the strongest classical influence is seen in the lectures given in 1806 by John Quincy Adams "... a subject which has exhausted the genius of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintillian", said the future president, in the opening lecture, "can neither admit nor add much additional illustration. To select, combine, and apply their precepts, is the only duty left for the followers of all succeeding times, and to obtain a perfect familiarity with their instructions is to arrive at the mastery of their art"; "his presentation is one of the most classical to be found in modern times..."³ Still, his *Lectures* appear nowhere in the traditional treatment of American political thought.

When we add Adams's own evaluation of his *Lectures* to Kennedy's judgment as to their place in the American rhetorical tradition they force an extended consideration of this work in relationship to his public life and to American political thought. "These lectures", he contends, "are the measure of my powers, moral and intellectual. In the composition of them I spared no labor, and omitted no exertion of which I am capable. I shall never, unless by the favor of Heaven, accomplish any work of

3 George Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 246.

higher elevation or more extensive compass.”⁴ Certainly, in 1806, he could not have foreseen the sublime moments of his political career (he believed his life in politics ended) nor the larger historical significance of his words and deeds. But the date of his *Lectures* marks the initial moment of Adams’s significance achievement. In those pages, Adams elaborates the principles, explores that vision of the Republic that he will defend even though it ruined his first political career in the Senate. The citizen-orator could not be a good party man. Prepared and delivered while under intense personal attack by his party they constitute a powerful, and systematic defense, of the republican tradition and the most persuasive vindication of the vocation of citizenship penned by an American. Without them it would prove more difficult to explain his enraged reaction to the activities of the slave-powers in the House. Slavery dominates that reaction; but, as we shall see, the Gag-Rule imposed by the House to quiet the debate over slavery violates his sense of America as a republic vessel.

Adams, nevertheless, ignores the hidden antagonism between his republicanism and that of Madison. He accepts the Virginian as the major contributor to *The Federalist Papers* with its proclamation of a new science of republican politics. Perhaps a deference to the members of the Founding generation, perhaps a sense that the constitutional issues are settled explain the public’s refusal to question theoretical grounding of the Federal Constitution. Jefferson, whose politics Madison understood to be at odds with his own, places *The Federalist* on a status equal to that of the *Declaration*. Both constitute necessary aspects of an education in Political Science. At least an education needed by American citizens. In his proposal for the teaching of Political Science, Jefferson acknowledges that “*The Federalist*” is an au-

4 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. II, 148.

thority to which appeal is habitually made by all... those who accepted the Constitution of the United States, on questions as to genuine meaning.”⁵ Even those, such as Sheldon Wolin, who dispute the political theory behind the Constitution note that it was the beginning to present political ending.

Over the two centuries since ratification, the influence of *The Federalist* has, if anything, increased. Its conception of politics... has become so ingrained in the American political consciousness, that few fully realize the extent to which they have absorbed a particular theory of the Constitution.⁶ Although I structure my argument around the hidden antagonism between Adams’s political theory and Madison’s contribution to *The Federalist Papers*, Adams’s public deference to its authors must be admitted. Perhaps Adams’s association with the Founders fuses a belief that few practical alternatives exist to their domination of American politics secures his failure to reconsider any major theoretical differences between himself and Madison. In his eulogy of 1836, declaimed upon Madison’s public career he finds it to be a paradigmatic achievement:

Of the public life of James Madison what could I say that is not deeply impressed upon the memory and heart of everyone within the sound of my voice?... Is it not in a pre-eminent degree by emanation from his mind that we are assembled here as representatives of the people of the United States and the Union? Is it not transcendently by his exertions that we address each other by the endearing appellation of countrymen and fellow citizens?⁷

Yet, as we have begun to explain, as Adams finds his own public voice he announces an American politics powerfully opposed

5 *The Complete Jefferson*, ed. by Saul K. Padover (New York, NY: An Essential Book, 1943), 1112.

6 Sheldon S. Wolin, *The Presence of the Past* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 84.

7 William H. Seward, *Life and Public Services of John Quincy Adams* (Auburn, NY: Derby, Miller and Company, 1849), 267.

to that of Madison. When Adams contemplated the eruption of the “terrible sublime”, he happily foresaw the dismantling of Madison’s achievement—the Union, the Constitution itself.

Slavery becomes the fundamental division; but obscured beneath that contentious matter lay Madison’s contempt for the concept of an active citizenry and its authorization of the Orphic Republic. Both Adams and Madison advocate representative government; however, the Virginian perceives it as an instrument (indeed a major manifestation) to exclude the citizenry from any active role in governance. This adjustment away from citizenship seems to have been secured by his admiration for David Hume. Jefferson is closer to the old republicanism when he thunders his anathema against the conservative Scotsman. Prejudices and falsehoods plague Hume’s *Histories*: but, Jefferson admits “so bewitching was his style and manner that... all England became Tories by the magic of his art.”⁸ Furthermore, he secures by his art the illegitimate argument that English history documents the superiority of conquest and power over human rights. “If first read”, Jefferson concludes, “Hume makes an English Tory, from whence it is an easy step to American Toryism.”⁹ Adams might appear more conservative than Jefferson and those open to the artful appeals of Hume supporting stability over liberty. However, his republican passions prompt distaste for Hume’s political heresies: “New England”, he wrote, “is the child of that puritan race, whom avid Humean, with extorted reluctance, acknowledges to have been the founders of *all* the liberties of the English nation.”¹⁰ Adams, as a consequence,

8 *The Complete Jefferson*, ed. by Saul K. Padover (New York, NY: An Essential Book, 1943), 1904.

9 *The Complete Jefferson*, ed. by Saul K. Padover (New York, NY: An Essential Book, 1943), 1096.

10 George A. Lipsky, *John Quincy Adams* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1950), 163.

draws a line perhaps hidden between the grounding of his politics and that of the Humean-charged Madison. That line needs a public illumination.

Recent scholarship on Madison reveals that the author of *The Federalist* shared Hume's fear of the passions that drove democratic sentiments in the public world. And that prior to the Federal Convention Madison read Hume's "idea of a Perfect Government" and made it a component of the *Federalist's* new science of politics. He accepts the injunction that all "plans of government, which suppose great reformation in the manners of mankind, are plainly imaginary."¹¹ That attitude moves both Hume and Madison to argue for the unchanging nature of the democratic element in society. Hume summarizes that argument in a manner that suggests that representative institutions cure the effects of public opinion closed to the power of persuasive speech:

Democracies are turbulent... In a large government... there is compass and room enough to refine the democracy... At the same time, the parts are so distant and remote, that it is very difficult, either by intrigue, prejudice, or passion to hurry them into any measures against the public interest.¹²

Madison will take this analysis and make it crucial to his representative war against the democracy in *Federalist* 10. He will substitute the machinery of the constitution for the active voice of the citizen.

Another argument contends that the distance between Madison and Adams may not be too great, as both accept the politics of persuasion. Only that to a larger degree than Adams Madison seeks to tame demagogic democracy. "How then", asks Bryan

11 David Hume, *Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 500.

12 David Hume, *Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 514-515.

Garsten, “can demagoguery be avoided? It cannot. Because persuasion is a central practice of democratic life, democracy will always be subject to its vices.”¹³ Garsten insists, accordingly, that the constitutional forms of representation that Madison favors tames the demagogue and allows for a Ciceronian politics of persuasion. Nothing could be farther from the intentions of Madison. The new science of politics replaces the human persuasive of the ancients. He belittles the city-states that gave birth to liberty and democratic persuasion. The enlarged role they provided for the majority of citizens make their example “repugnant to the genius of America...”.¹⁴ Madison assures his reader that Americans naturally incline towards a constitution that balances liberty with stability, but he can only sell his case by tying it to the arguments of the new political science. Political science dictates the proper distance of the citizen from the exercise of deliberation and power. The experience of the Greeks demonstrates that the mass of humanity cannot separate the politics of persuasion from their own unstable passions. Representative forms, a well-constructed, senate above all, promotes “the cool and deliberative sense of the community...”.¹⁵ The improvident politics of Athenian democracy reflected absence of any representative institutions.

What bitter anguish would not the people of Athens have often escaped, if their government have contained so provident a safeguard against the tyranny of their own passions? Popular liberty might then have escaped the indelible reproach of decreeing to the same citizens, the hemlock on one day, and statues on the next.¹⁶

13 Bryan Garsten, *Saving Persuasion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 200.

14 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 267.

15 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 214.

16 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 214.

Representation works its political magic by removing citizens from the realm of public debate: they stand aside from the sphere of public debate. “The true distinction”, Madison contends, “between these and the American Government lies in *the total exclusion of the people in their collective capacity* from any share in the *latter*, and not in the *total exclusion of representatives of the people*, from the administration of the *former*.”¹⁷ Madison next expands his doubts about political speech by advocating a House, small in size, against the attractions of a large one. Those with philosophic temperaments must be protected from the torrent of political speech. “In all very numerous assemblies”, he insists, “passion never failed to wrest the scepter from reason. Had every Athenian citizen been a **Socrates**, every **Athenian Assembly** would have been a mob.”¹⁸ Madison extends his assault upon the public world forged by persuasion with this repudiation of “direct democracy”: the basic institution in Adams’s vision of the orphic republic:

From this view of the subject it may be concluded that a pure democracy, by which I mean a society consisting of a small number of citizens, who assemble and administer a government in person, can admit of no cure for the mischief of faction. A common, passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by the majority of the whole; a communication and concert results from the form of government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual.¹⁹

Where representation is lacking persuasion may activate a powerful community of active citizens. The institutional order of the

17 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 217.

18 Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1999), 340.

19 Clinton Rossiter, ed., *The Federalist Papers* (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1999), 76.

new Constitution serves to disarm the power of democratic speech.

Madison so mistrusts popular rhetoric that he defends the Federal Constitution in large part because it shatters the public space in which public might become effective. He gathers his evidence against the small republic, “the direct democracy”, both from antiquity and the demagogic attacks upon the property and the rich in the several states. Rhode Island provides him with the specifics against democracy in America, from which he abstracts general indictment of popular government. The public voice of the people is most likely to be “inverted” by “men of factious tempers, of local prejudices.”²⁰ Where persuasion governs justice will in time be subverted by prejudice and passion. Passion and faction always dominate a politic that remains local with the active voice of citizens deliberating the course of action.

Madison denies that an unmediated politics can ever produce a shared good judgment. The “human passions”, he claims, “have in turn divided mankind into parties, inflamed them with mutual animosities, and rendered them more disposed to vex and oppress each other, than to cooperate for the common good.”²¹ Accordingly, even the least serious of opinions are likely to produce violent conflict. If this consequence is to be avoided politics at some level must be chilled down from the hot passions of local politics. Madison, therefore, argues for a representative government that will expel the citizen from public decision-making while leaving that prerogative in the hands of a distant few. Distance provides the best hope for the appearance of wisdom among decision makers. The anti-Federalist asserts government should mirror the interests of citizens. The Federalists speak of refining public opinion: “The effect of the first difference”, between democracy and representative government, “is on the one

20 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 150.

21 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 147.

hand to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.”²² Since passion may enter the halls of representation requires placemen within an enlarged political universe. He denies the traditional republic maxim that republics and democracies must be limited spaces in which citizens may easily address one another. Liberty of a certain nature exists only in an extended polity.

Madison so mistrusts the effects of popular rhetoric that he defends the new Constitution because it shatters the public space in which majority speech and opinion might become effective. An extensive republic, one incorporating vast geographical distances, renders political communication difficult if not impossible. The concert and communication sanctioned by direct democracy rips apart plunging citizens into silence, or keeping them at a shouting distance from one another. “Extend the sphere”, Madison declaims, “and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens...” or “to act in unison with one another.”²³ Indeed, if we accept Madison as the creator of the nation’s constitutional paradigm then notice must be taken that he rejects a political for a religious understanding of the nature of freedom. “In a free government”, he appeals to the recent history of religious toleration, “the security for civil rights must be the same as that for religious rights. It consists in the one case in the multiplicity of interests, and in other in the multiplicity of sects.”²⁴ Once again,

22 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 150.

23 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 78.

24 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 321.

Madison concludes society must be extended and broken up to allow that diversity to manifest itself. Madison may value political liberty, but politics never provides the model of liberty to which he attaches his deepest loyalties. At the core of his analysis Madison seeks an asylum for the conscience of the free individual. Man's first right is the possession of his/her own mind. "Conscience", he pleads, "is the most sacred of all property, other property depending in part on positive law, the existence of that being a natural and inevitable right",²⁵ although he follows a line of presentation developed by Voltaire in his *Lettres Philosophiques*. He explains English toleration, and the freedom of individual religious conscience, in the following manner: "If there were only one religion in England, despotism would be expected. If there were two of them, they would cut one another's throats; but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness."²⁶ Many religions—many competing sects and churches—assure peace and liberty for all.

Madison advocated that position very early in his intellectual life. In 1774 he writes William Bradford that conscience is freer in Massachusetts than in Virginia, because in the former colony there exists many religious persuasions but in the latter only one—the Church of England. The evidence of history demonstrates that religious conformity stifles the conscience. Diversity, consequently, is the only basis for individual freedom. Nevertheless, I think that Madison recognizes that his paradigm of liberty develops from the recent acceptance of toleration and is indifferent to the older republican understandings. The normal political universe fashioned by constitutional arrangements provides an inhospitable environment for the active citizen-orator. Madison acknowledges that in an early letter to Jefferson.

25 James Madison, *The Writings of James Madison*, ed. by Gaillard Hunt (New York, NY: G. P. Putnam, 1900), vol. VI, 162.

26 Voltaire, *Lettres Philosophiques* (Paris: Garnier, 1962), 29.

Divide et impera, the reprobated policy of tyranny, is under certain qualifications the only policy, by which a republican be can be administered on just principles... so in an extensive one, a defensive concert may be rendered too difficult against the oppression of those entrusted with the administration.²⁷

Even though he recognizes the dangers, Madison takes apart the political world; and, accordingly, rejects the citizen-based republican tradition.

His argument against the old republican ways finishes with a polemic against the equality that nourishes citizenship and the public orator whom he equates with the demagogue. The republic requires a passion for equality so that no citizen may be precluded from participating in the life of politics. Public opinion, accordingly, embeds the love of equality into the very foundations of civic life. This is dangerous. Madison censures republican theorists for assuming “that by reducing man to perfect equality in their political, rights they could at the time be perfectly equalized, and assimilated in their possessions, their opinion and passions.”²⁸ Equality, moreover, permits the emergence of faction whose dangerous conflict the new constitution has been designed to control. Lacking such control the orator-demagogue and not the citizen-orator gains political dominance. To Madison the orator never rises to virtue, can never be the guardian of the republic; instead he serves passion and becomes the artificer of opinion. Eloquence is his power, and that makes him a potential despot. In governments based upon opinion the manipulator of public persuasion alone is secure. “In ancient republics”, Madison explains, “a single orator... was generally seen to rule with as complete a sway as if a scepter had been placed

27 Michael Kammen, *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 72.

28 Michael Kammen, *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 149.

in his single hand.”²⁹ This conjecture makes up part of Madison’s defense of small representative bodies. And allows him to conclude his invective against politics and persuasion. Madison warns his readers that “the more multitudinous a representative assembly may be rendered, the more it will partake of the infirmities incident to collective meetings of the people. Ignorance will be the dupe of cunning, and passion the slave of sophistry and declamation.”³⁰ With that, Madison dismisses the active voice of the people from the life of the American Republic.

Adams, on the other hand, wrestles to give symbolic and theoretical legitimacy to his great inheritance. His obsession with a design for Great Seal of the United States exemplifies his republican passion. Adams’s desire to recast the emblem of the nation’s union escapes eccentricity, for it provides a means to educate the American people to the great politics of the revolutionary and constitutive periods. He shares that imperative with many republicans active at the end of the 18th and 19th centuries. Indeed, after the terror of the French Revolution alienates many Americans from French affairs, the passion to get the symbols of republican culture correct remain one of the few matters on which French and American republicans are in agreement. Adams might well embrace the argument advanced by the French deputy Gregoire on the need for a new republic to design and promulgate symbols to replace the cultural signs of the old regime. “When one constructs a government anew”, Gregoire observes that “it is necessary to republicanize everything. The legislator who ignores the importance of signs will fail at his mission; he should not let any occasion for grabbing hold of the senses, for awakening republican ideas.”³¹ Adams’s reworking of the Great

29 Clinton Rossiter, ed. *The Federalist Papers* (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1999), 358.

30 Clinton Rossiter, ed. *The Federalist Papers* (New York, NY: Signet Classic, 1999), 358.

31 Lynn Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution”, *Representations* 1.2 (Spring 1983): 97.

Seal arises out of dissatisfaction with the symbolism adopted in 1782, almost a wish to reconstitute the Republic through correction of the faulty work of the Founders.

Certainly reason exists for his dislike of the original Seal. Between 1776 and 1792, many Americans struggled to shape an appropriate design. Yet the final design exhibit a very uncertain relationship to republican principles or the spirit of the American Revolution. In 1776, Franklin, Jefferson and John Adams all present to the Continental Congress proposals concerning the proper iconography for the Seal. All would capture the spirit of independence. “Dr. F.”, John Adams writes to his wife Abigail, “proposals a device for a seal. Moses lifting up his wand, and driving the Red Sea, Pharaoh in his chariot overwhelmed with the waters.—This motto. Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God.”³² Jefferson continues this fusion of religious and political symbolism by offering a design which on one side portrays the Children of Israel being led through the wilderness to the promised-land and on the other, the Anglo-Saxon chiefs Hengist and Horsa. The last images reflect Jefferson’s conviction that through its revolution the new Republic had recovered lost Anglo-Saxon liberties.

John Adams incorporates a figure who becomes a figure common both to the American and French Revolutions—Hercules:

The hero resting on his club. Virtue pointing to the rugged mountain, on the one hand persuading him to ascend. Sloth, glancing at her flowerily path of pleasure, wantonly reclining on the ground, displaying the charms both of her eloquence and person, to seduce him into vice.³³

However, save for the motto “e pluribus union”, the Great Seal of 1782 appears divorced from the republican and revolutionary

32 L. H. Butterfield, ed., *The Book of Abigail and John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 155-156.

33 L. H. Butterfield, ed., *The Book of Abigail and John* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 156.

symbols that intrigued Franklin, Jefferson and Adams. But what of the American bald eagle that now seems so correct, so appropriate? According to Lynn Hunt, the eagle can only be ambiguously related the American Revolution having been an imperial emblem. “The eagle”, she writes, “was the emblem of Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor, and it had been taken from the German book of emblems and devices.”³⁴ To John Quincy Adams, all reference to the orphic harmonies of the republican Union may appeared lost in the uncertain meanings of the imperial eagle. Indeed the Seal of 1782 points more towards the marital and expansionist America that Adams fights against, at least towards the end of his life, than it does towards the republic of speech and persuasion in which he places his best hopes. Adams’s design incorporates the orphic moment into a new, proposed Great Seal.

The moral application of the emblem is, that the same power of harmony which originally produced the institutions of civil government to regulate the association of individual men, now presides in the federal association of the American States; that harmony is the soul of the combination... It is the lyre of Orpheus that now leads the stars, as it originally drew after it the rocks and the trees. It is harmony that now binds in its influence the American States, as it originally drew individual men from the solitude of nature to the assemblages that now formed states and nations. The lesson of the emblem is Union.³⁵

A Union, an Orphic Union that is the political formation that Adams placed at the core of his one attempt at systematic political speculation. The way he understood it clearly distinguished his thought from that of his father’s with its obsession with balance. The Federalist, although having little but contempt for

34 Lynn Hunt, “Hercules and the Radical Image in the French Revolution”, *Representations* 1.2 (Spring 1983): 105.

35 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. III, 441.

John Adams' politics of virtue and balance, were also technicians of balance. "But the longer I live", he writes in 1816 to his father, "I find my national feelings grow upon me, and... my system of politics more and more inclines to strengthen the union and its government."³⁶ Adams continues, however, by linking the authority of that union to its moral purpose: "But the truth is that the American union, while united, may be certain of success in every rightful cause, and may if it please never have any but a rightful cause to maintain."³⁷ One may address the formal powers of the constitutions of the United States, but Adams will do little of that while concerning himself, at least in his political theory, with the moral-political substance of the American Republic, its orphic harmonies and disharmonies. Adams will repudiate the contention that politics can be no more than the constraint of faction, for the powers of speech can transpose antagonistic silence and discord into harmony. Not all readings of the myth of Orpheus are rich with political meanings. But Adams selects the treatment of the myth that celebrates Orpheus and his music as symbols of political creation. He alludes to the poet Horace: "the meaning of the allegory is explained by Horace, *Ars Poetica*, v. 390. Orpheus was a legislator whose eloquence charmed the rude and savage men of age to associate together in the state of civil society, to submit to the salutary restraints of law, to submit to the worship of their Creator. It was the lyre of Orpheus that civilized savage man. It was only in harmony that the first political institutions could be formed... ."³⁸

The actual words of Horace make evident that Adams does not exaggerate their political content. "When men still roamed the wood", the poet sings, "Orpheus, the holy prophet of the

36 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 288.

37 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 288.

38 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 95.

gods, men then shank from bloodshed and brutal living, hence to the fable that he tamed tigers and ravening lions... In days of yore, this was wisdom to draw a line between public and private, between things sacred and things common, to check vagrant union, to give rules for wedded life, to build towns, and grave laws on tables of wood; and so honor and fame fell to bards and their songs as things divine.”³⁹ This origin myth breaks both back and forwards in the Western political tradition denying, whether found in St. Augustine or Machiavelli, that founding requires an act of creative violence. Orphic legislation certainly questions St. Augustine’s rendering of the archetype understanding that the city of man can never escape the influence of its bloody foundations, that the murder of Abel by Cain prefigures the political history of mankind.

And this founder of the earthly city was a fratricide... So that we cannot be surprised that this first specimen, or as the Greeks say, archetype of crime, should, long afterwards, find a corresponding crime at the foundation of the city which was destined to reign over so many nations, and be the head of the earthly city of which we speak. For that city also, as one of their poets has mentioned, “the first walls were stained with a brother’s blood”, or as Roman history records, Remus was slain by Romulus.⁴⁰ Another image of the founding act also introduces the idea that blood induced the necessary action. Humanity needs the escape to escape from the bloody conflicts that define the state of nature. Neither image nor myth finds anything of pleasure in the creation of political communities.

Against Augustine’s division of the city between that of man and that of God, Adams incorporates into his thought the civic

39 Horace, *Satires, Epistles, and Ars Poetica* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 483.

40 St. Augustine, *The Political Writings of St. Augustine* (Chicago, IL: Henry Regney, 1965), 16.

humanism of the Renaissance that occupies a theoretical position contrary both to Augustine and Machiavelli. Vico, to take an example, finds in Orpheus a rejection of “those principles of evil politics: that civil governments were born either of open violence or of fraud which later broke out into violence.”⁴¹ Giambattista Vico locates behind the fable a compendium of real political events. The sages or statesmen of Greece had to deal with civil discord verging on civil war between those whom Vico calls the nobles and the plebs. Not violence, however, but an eloquence that sang of the authority of the city and its gods return the plebes to the boundaries of the polis. “By singing to the Greek plebs of the force of the gods in the auspices... they kept the plebes in subjection to their heroic orders.”⁴² That secured Athens as an oligarchic city, but that order excluded many from citizenship. Yet Vico notes that Solon, also a poet and singer of political songs, “admonished the plebians to reflect upon themselves and to realize that they were of like human nature with the nobles and should therefore be made equal to them in civil rights...”⁴³ After the establishment of democracy the Athenians celebrate the goddess Peitho as the divinity of civic persuasion. “In fifth century Athens”, according to I. F. Stone, “Peitho developed into a civic goddess of democracy, a symbol of transition to rule by popular consent and consensus, achieved by debate and persuasion.”⁴⁴ As sage, lawgiver and founder of democratic Athens, Solon reconstitutes a new Athens through the giving of laws and his harmonizing political voice. Foucault intensifies the

41 Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 80.

42 Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 249.

43 Giambattista Vico, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1968), 133.

44 Isidore Feinstein, *The Trial of Socrates* (New York, NY: Little, Brown and Co., 1988), 206.

concept of free speech among the ancients as endorsing an element called *parrhesia*. That translates as fearless speech that may be a dangerous practice, but one required by democracy.

But we can say quite generally that *parrhesia* was a guideline for democracy as well as an ethical and personal attitude characteristic of the good citizen... *Parrhesia*, which is a requisite for public speech, takes place between citizens as individuals, and also between citizens construed as an assembly. Moreover, the *agora* is the place where *parrhesia* appears.⁴⁵ The citizen who exercises fearless speech stands out against the majority, takes the risk of alienating them and tells his truth with courage and frankness. Thus, despite Madison the songs of courage generated by freedom speech produce sublime citizens and individuals.

Solon's orphic achievement illuminates a tradition of founding that separates from the violence of those whom Machiavelli praises as exemplary founders: Moses, Cyrus, Theseus and Romulus. The lesson that Machiavelli takes from them is that "all armed prophets were victorious and the unarmed came to ruin."⁴⁶ Some might argue that the orphic tradition terminates with Machiavelli, and, without a doubt, his conception of founding dominates contemporary political thought and action. Adams, nevertheless, works within a civic humanism hostile to the influence of Machiavelli. He may be unaware of the renaissance treatment of Orpheus, but it corresponds to his rhetorical republicanism. The humanists transform the myth into an apology for eloquent speech. "For Boccaccio", Patricia Vicari notes, "Orpheus' lyre was the faculty of oratory and its seven strings the seven kinds of oratorical discourse. Orpheus ('best voice') was the wisest and most eloquent of men, for only wise men with

45 Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles, CA: Semiotext, 2001), 22.

46 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Portable Machiavelli*, ed. and trans. by Peter Bondanella (New York, NY: Penguin, 1979), 95.

beautiful voices can achieve the pinnacles of oratorical art.”⁴⁷ By adopting the myth of Orpheus as his own, Adams accepts a politics that links the United States to the Greeks and to the humanists of the Renaissance. “Orpheus”, according to John Warden, “is the statesman or legislator who with his *dolce parlare* brings men to life together in communities. The civil life is the essence of *humanitas* – man is a political being.”⁴⁸ Moreover, within the myth of Orpheus the political person transmutes into a political artist, not merely actor but fashioner of the world in which that action occurs. At the same moment the sweet songs of Orpheus turn humanity from brutality to the pleasures of civilization. As Boccaccio puts it, “He makes wild beasts gentle, that is to say bloody and rapacious men whose eloquence recalls to gentleness and humanity.”⁴⁹ The myth of Orpheus reunites politics with the pleasures of civilization.

Adams’s vision of an orphic American republic remains the most imaginative explication of civic republicanism ever penned by an American. Perhaps, I must admit, less complete in its reach than that of John Adams, however, the son emerges as more inventive than the father. His classical, rhetorical republicanism collates three elements that don’t entirely fuse, but cohere fairly well with one another. The first element, and this establishes the uniqueness of his theoretical enterprise, was Adams appeal to the experience of the Greek polis as an exemplar for American politics. The first movement of his thought led to a second position that distinguished Adams from many of his contemporaries. Because he defends the primacy of Greece, in his advocacy of rhetorical politics, Adams took from the history of Rome primarily negative examples. His reading of Tacitus turns Rome into a

47 John Warden, ed., *Orpheus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 67-8.

48 John Warden, ed., *Orpheus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 90.

49 John Warden, ed., *Orpheus* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 90.

warning against what the American Republic might become. Finely, but in tension with his infatuation with the Greek city-state, Adams advances Cicero as the exemplar of the citizen-orator, an embodiment of all that was sublime, glorious and virtuous in classical republicanism. It should be noted, however, that Cicero was a great advocate of Greek philosophy and rhetorical thought and that his Philippics invoked the speeches in which Demosthenes attacked Phillip of Macedon for the subversion of Greek independence and liberty. He sought to give Greek culture and politics a Roman meaning.

If, however, we can relate these elements in a roughly persuasive manner then we might recover an aspect of what Arendt called our “lost treasure”. Not only does Adams seek to emulate Cicero, the citizen-orator; but perhaps seeks to perform the role that Cicero’s teacher saw him picking up regarding Greece and Rome. “Thee, indeed oh Cicero”, proclaimed Apollinius, “I admire and commend; but Greece I pity for her sad future, since I see that even the only glories left to us, culture and eloquence, are through thee to belong also to the Romans.”⁵⁰ If culture and eloquence are beyond Americans then the deepest moments of American political thought remain beyond practical recovery at least we might be able to judge more accurately the bitter grandeur of our collective loss. Adams begins his classical elucidation of American politics with a defense of politics and political speech against its detractors. In the contest between philosophy and rhetoric he sided with Demosthenes and Cicero against Plato and the philosophers. On this matter he follows the tracks of Cicero very closely. “But where Plato”, Helen Struever writes, “had suggested in the *Phaedrus* fitting rhetoric into a philosophical framework, Cicero inserts philosophy into the larger context of eloquence.”⁵¹ Prior to this furious debate Democratis defended the art of persuasion as the path to wisdom:

50 Plutarch, *Lives* (Harvard, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 93.

51 Nancy Struever, *The Language of History on the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 27.

The man who employs exhortation and persuasion will turn out to be a more effective guide to virtue than he who employs law and compulsion. For the man who is prevented by law from wrongdoing will probably do wrong in secret, where as the man who is led towards duty by persuasion will probably not do anything untoward either secretly or openly. Therefore the man who acts rightly through understanding and knowledge becomes at the same time brave and upright.⁵²

Not only does the free man merit education through persuasion, the process fosters the virtues required by a citizen of a free polis.

In “Gorgias”, the sophist Gorgias offers an elaborate justification of rhetoric as the art of persuasion whose possession is necessary for those who would rule over their fellow citizens. Furthermore, the sophist identifies political victory as the essence of the good: “That good, Socrates, which is truly the greatest, being that which gives men freedom in their own persons, and to individuals the power of ruling over others in their several states.”⁵³ From the perspective of Socrates their teachings have little to do with the truth. That may well be true; nevertheless, Socrates nearly always combines his attack upon the Sophists with one upon democracy and its citizens. Socrates discounts this political maxim of Democritus: “Poverty under democracy is as much to be preferred to so-called prosperity under an autocracy a freedom to slavery.”⁵⁴ Indeed, in a public world defined by the action of citizens, Socrates proclaims himself the only citizen who practices the art of politics. “I am”, he declaims, “one of the very

52 Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 108.

53 Benjamin Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato* (London: Oxford University Press, 1892), 332.

54 Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 114.

few Athenians, not to say the only one, engaged in the true political art, and that of the men of today I alone practice statesmanship.”⁵⁵ Socrates labels his fellow citizens as children. That is the condition to which the Sophist-Orator has brought the *demos*. Against the defense of Sophistry, Socrates responds that the great orators, those citizens such as Pericles ruined Athens, they made the city and is citizens worse because they failed to understand the true enterprise of politics which is the care of the soul. That may tame even the soul⁵⁶ of democratic Athens, but the orators encouraged a demonic democracy. Socrates hammers Pericles with the accusation, “Then Pericles was no good statesman by this account?” That makes rhetoric, according to Socrates, “the ghost or counterfeit of a part of politics.”⁵⁷ It attends to the body, the power of the city and its citizens and not, once again, the soul, justice within city and citizens.

Plato imagines a city in harmony with its self, but has that order imposed upon the citizens of the city by the Philosopher-King: justice never emerges out of the free action of the citizenry. Cicero, to the contrary recovers for the Romans the story that rhetoric emerges at that moment when the citizens of Syracuse attempt to govern themselves without the order imposed by tyranny. “Thus Aristotle says that in Sicily, after the expulsion of the tyrants... Corax and Tisias the Sicilians... first put together some theoretical precepts; that before them, while many had taken pains to speak with care... no one had followed a definite method or art.”⁵⁸ That may be an orphic art; but with Socrates anything akin to the music of Orpheus retreats from the public

55 Plato, *The Collective Dialogues* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1961), see “Gorgias,” 302.

56 Plato, *The Collective Dialogues* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1961), 298 (515-d).

57 Plato, *The Collective Dialogues* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1961), 345.

58 Cicero, *Brutus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1961), xii, 46-47.

world to find manifestation in the soul of the Philosopher. Accordingly, Laches declares Socrates to be the only one “entitled... to complete freedom of speech.”⁵⁹ Yet, listening to Socrates erects a barrier to discourse with others. His inner harmony drowns out the chorus of voices that sing the city into existence:

For whenever I hear a man discoursing of virtue... I am delighted beyond measure... and I compare a man and his words, and not the harmony and correspondence of them. And such a one I deem to be true musician, attuned to a fairer than that of the lyre... for he has in his life a harmony of words and deeds arranged... in the true Hellenic mode, which is the Dorian... Such a man makes me merry with the sound of his voice, and when I hear him I am thought to be a lover of discourse... But a man whose actions do not agree with his words is an annoyance to me, and the better he speaks the more I hate him, and then I seem a hater of discourse.⁶⁰

Without the frame of absolute truth and justice the songs of humanity transmute into wretched disharmonies.

Cicero, in many places, denigrates philosophy as he declares the virtues of practice. “And”, he observes, “service is better than mere theoretical knowledge, for the study... would somehow be lame and defective, were no practical results to follow. Such results, moreover, are best seen in the safeguarding of human interests.”⁶¹ Adams emulates Cicero easily as he perceives himself to be the most practical of men. “I never had much relish”, he comments to his father, “for the speculations of first philosophy. In that respect I resemble your eels in vinegar, and your mites in cheese, more than you do... Now (perhaps with too much humility) my theory is more like your practice, and my practice

59 Cicero, *Brutus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), “Laches,” 133.

60 Cicero, *Brutus* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 132.

61 Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), XLIII, 155.

more like your theory. I never took too much delight in reasoning high upon *Fix'd fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute...*”⁶² Adams moves beyond the personal very quickly in his *Lectures* to assault the philosophic critic of rhetoric in a republican manner. He likens the philosopher to the despot. He deplores, accordingly, both the “frosty rigor of the logician” that reviles “eloquence” as “an insidious appeal to the passions of men”; “and the hatred of the despot who asserts eloquence is the instrument of turbulence and the weapon of faction.”⁶³ In an uncanny manner Adams, as he often does, presages Arendt’s rejection of the reign of truth and philosophy over politics. “Truth”, she contends, “carries within itself an element of coercion, and the frequently tyrannical tendencies so deplorably obvious among professional truth-tellers may be caused less by a failing of character than by the strain of living under a kind of compulsion.”⁶⁴ As a bearer of the truth the philosopher, in the Dialogues of Plato, returns from his exile, represented in the death of Socrates, to exercise the authority of truth over the city.

Against the dominion of truth Adams and Arendt defend the prerogatives of judgment, which entails the ability to take enter into the perspective of all who enter the space of politics. Foresight, the consequence of judgment, is the foundation of political thinking. Adams finds that the greatest of orators possess this capacity. His recognition of the virtues of oratory begins Adams’s defense against the claim that “its tendencies are to subject the reason of men to the control of their passions, to pervert private justice and to destroy public liberty.”⁶⁵ Quite the contrary, the

62 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 289.

63 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 72.

64 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1968), 239.

65 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 54.

arts of persuasion demands an almost political conversion. By the power of imagination the orator undergoes a virtual transformation. He identifies himself either with the person, in whose behalf he would excite the sentiment of compassion, or with the antagonist, against whom he is to contend, or with the auditor, whom he is to convince or persuade; or successively with each one of them in turn.⁶⁶

Arendt develops this position so as to distinguish the logic of the philosopher from political judgment. “That the capacity to judge”, she relates, “is a specifically political ability... the ability to see things not only from one’s point of view but from the perspective of all those who happen to be present... it enables him to orient himself in the public world... The Greeks called this ability... insight... And they considered it the principle virtue or excellence of the statesman in distinction from the wisdom of the philosopher.”⁶⁷ Judgment mobilizes common sense against that speculative wisdom that transcends good sense. Arendt adopts the tradition of humanism, and places herself unconsciously close to Adams, through her embrace of Cicero. Not the Greeks but the Romans defended the substance of cultural and civic humanism.

The Roman *humanitas* applied to men who were free in every respect, for whom the question, of not being coerced, was the decisive one. Cicero says: “In what concerns my association with men and things, I refuse to be coerced even by truth, even by beauty.”⁶⁸

Thus by indirection Arendt returns us to Adams’s orphic speculation. Adams stoutly supported the sophistry of Gorgias, Prodicus, Protagoras and Antiphon against Plato whom, he

66 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 382.

67 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 221.

68 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 225.

noted, “slandered as word weavers”.⁶⁹ All know the maxim commonly attributed to Protagoras; yet his praise of eloquence would surely have pleased Cicero and Adams. “Eloquence however is difficult, yet its flowers are rich and new... .”⁷⁰ He abuses language of Plato’s *Republic* and *Laws* as “absurd” and impartibly, the creation of a philosopher whose “writings are not only poetical to the extremist boundaries of poetry”, and “often encroach upon the borders of mysticism, and approach the undistinguishable regions of intellectual chaos.”⁷¹ But always the matter of liberty stands between Adams and Plato. Against the political silence of Plato’s republic Adams moves to affirm he historical intertwine between rhetoric and political liberty. It is speech that connects one to another and makes us human. Nevertheless, Adams acknowledges that the contest between Plato, his teacher Socrates, and Cicero one begun is unlikely to end. The status of Rhetoric “still remains an inquiry among men, as in the age of Plato, and that of Cicero, whether eloquence is an art, worth of the cultivation of a wise and virtuous man.”⁷² Among philosophers Adams favors Aristotle for perceiving that as “the necessary adjunct and vehicle of reason the faculty of speech was also bestowed as an exclusive privilege of man... It is by means of speech that the most precious blessings of social life are communicated to man...”⁷³ Adams thought, however, that as with the race of philosophers Aristotle failed to appreciate fully the great gift of the world: political liberty. Adams, therefore, attended

69 Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 81.

70 Kathleen Freeman, *Ancilla to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 127.

71 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 81.

72 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 13.

73 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 14.

primarily to the great practitioners of the art of oratory and the science of politics:

Call up the shades of Demosthenes and Cicero to vouch for your words; point to their immortal works, and say, these are not only the sublimest strains of oratory, that ever issued from the uninspired lips of mortal man; they are the expiring accents of liberty the nations, which shed the brightest luster on the names of man.⁷⁴

Adams will argue that the style of the Greek best fits the politics of democracy while that of the Roman accommodates itself to the aristocratic practices; nevertheless, they are united by their passionate defense of liberty. For the art and science of political speech is parasitic on the great declamations of the great citizen-orators of antiquity. They alone in Greece and Rome illuminated the necessary connections between politics, political liberty and eloquence. Most students of Greek political thought have lamented the absence of philosophers who defend the institutions of democracy. “We today are plagued”, writes Arlene Saxonhouse, “in our study of ancient democracy by the lack of any author from Athens whom we might legitimately name a democratic theorist. No Rousseau, no Jefferson, no Mill populated the Athenian theoretical landscape.”⁷⁵ The orators and teachers of Rhetoric compensate for that lacuna in ancient thought. While the philosophers stuck to a vertical vision between high and low, between political corruption and soulful transcendence, while the orators wrestled with a horizontal, historical plane in which liberty and slavery existed side by side in the same worldly context. It is of course an old and familiar argument that the practice of political liberty began in the Greek city-states, and evolved into a full democracy in Athens. But, as I have pointed out, Athenian democracy was hardly the standard by which the Founders

74 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 72.

75 Arlene W. Saxonhouse, *Athenian Democracy* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), 6.

established the best image of a political community. The elder Adams asserts, “Athens was never free... Athens never had assemblies of representatives... The collective assemblies of the people were made sovereign in all cases whatsoever by Solon... “and” began to render property, liberty and life insecure.⁷⁶ As if to compensate for a deficiency in the political history of his father’s generation Adams provides his auditors with an oratorical version of the chronology and substance of human liberty.

The polis claims priority in Adams’s political speculations but without the barriers the American Constitution places upon the effective practice of political speech by its citizens. “The Grecian commonwealths”, Adams exalts, “furnish the earliest examples in history of confederate states with free governments; and there also art of oratory was first practiced, and the science of rhetoric first invented; and both were raised to a pitch of unrivaled excellence and glory.”⁷⁷ That observation defines the foundations of Adams’s political thought. Time was required to perfect oratory and rhetoric; therefore that process was impossible without the preexistence of political liberty. In such a political order authority has already been replaced by the association of free citizens who possess the habits of a free people:

The only birthplace of eloquence therefore must be a free state. Under arbitrary governments, where the lot is cast upon one man to command, and all the rest to obey; where the despot, like Roman centurion, has only to say to one man go, and he goeth and to another come, and he cometh; persuasion is of no avail. Between authority and obedience there can be no deliberation and where so ever submission is the principle of government in a nation, eloquence can never arise.⁷⁸

76 John Quincy Adams, *The Works of John Adams* (Boston, MA: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), vol. VI, 138.

77 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 69-70.

78 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 68.

The eloquence that arises from political liberty, moreover, has little to do with learned books but is schooled by the “spirit of liberty”. That spirit flourishes when the citizens are free both to legislate and to determine sovereign matters between states. It thrives in a community where “the independence of man is corroborated by the independence of the state... “where the same power of persuasion, which influences the will of the citizens at home, has the means of operating upon the will and conduct of sovereign states... .”⁷⁹ The habit of independence marks the nature of republican government; associations is which “government itself has no arms but those of persuasion...”⁸⁰ Certainly the imperatives Adams’s political thought drive his argument at this juncture in his argument; yet clearly he duplicates Arendt’s distinction between persuasion and violence, the political and the pre political. As does Adams she attributes this discovery to the Greeks:

To be political, to live in a *polis*, meant that everything was decided through words and persuasion, to force people by violence, to command rather than to persuade, were pre-political... the *polis* was... a way of life in which speech and only speech made sense and where the central concern of all citizens was to talk with each other.⁸¹

Unlike the American Science of Politics the participatory elements of the Greek polis attract Adams, and lead him to neglect any extensive consideration of representative government and its benefits. “The assemblies of the people,” he notes, “of the select councils, or the senate, in Athens and Rome, were held for

79 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 68.

80 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 30.

81 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 26-27.

the purposes of real deliberation. The fate of a measure was not decided before they were proposed. Eloquence produced a powerful effect, not only on the minds of the hearers, but upon the issue of deliberation.”⁸² Adams deems ancient oratory superior to that of the moderns because the voices of the citizens of Greece and Rome were heard directly in their assemblies – they suffered no dilution by representation.

Deliberation differs from the other forms of oratory, eulogy panegyric, as persuasion regards action that will influence the future as its primary purpose. “Of deliberative and judicial eloquence persuasion”, Adams insists, “is the great and fundamental object... There is no better test... for the excellence of any example in the practice of oratory, than its aptitude to persuade.”⁸³ In a republic deliberation, persuasion and freedom fuse into one political act uniting the orator with his fellow citizens.

Deliberation presupposes a freedom of election in the deliberating body. It presupposes alternatives, which may be accepted or rejected. The issue of deliberation is action, and, in the final determination, what that action shall be... [the] object of the orator the is to persuade his hearers, and to influence their conduct in relation to a future measure.⁸⁴

Perhaps he exaggerates, but Adams connects the spur to great ambition, the sublime, with the political activities of the city: “At

82 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 22.

83 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 37.

84 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 253.

Athens and Rome a town meeting could scarcely be held, without being destined for immortality...⁸⁵ Furthermore, power belongs not to the sovereign or distant anonymous bureaucrats but to the citizen-orators themselves:

In the flourishing periods of Athens and Rome eloquence was power. It was at once the instrument and the spur to ambition. The talent of public speaking was the key to the highest dignities; the passport to the supreme domination of the state... [the] most powerful human passions were enlisted in the cause of eloquence, and eloquence in return was the most effectual auxiliary of passion.⁸⁶

Given the mixture of contemporary political forms, Adams allows that of the “pulpit is especially the throne of modern eloquence. There it is, that speech is summoned to realize the fabled wonders of the orphean lyre.” The preacher’s “only weapon is his voice.”⁸⁷

Before John Quincy Adams, Longinus, Adams’s father, and after him Arendt stress the element of shining forth, being seen or revealing one’s self in the harsh glare of public freedom that distinguishes politics governed by speech and persuasion from other political systems. Longinus equates the light of a free politics with the sublime and in counterpoint Arendt distinguishes the anonymity of the bureaucrat from the public performance of the citizen. Arendt speaks of the bureaucrat as a modern figure who dominates in modern societies where politics and the politician have been pushed to the margins of authority. The citizen as actor has disappeared from a bureaucratic world. That

85 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 19.

86 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 19.

87 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 46.

as an always present possibility marks one of the great unifying fears of republicans.

As we know from the most social form of government, that is from is, from bureaucracy... the rule of by nobody is not necessarily no-rule; it may indeed, under certain circumstances, even turn out to be one of its cruelest and most tyrannical versions.⁸⁸

Against the invisibility of the bureaucrat she cites Dante: “For in every action intended by the doer... is the disclosure of his own image... Thus noting acts unless [by acting] it makes patent its latent self.”⁸⁹ That longing for disclosure, according to Arendt, accompanies our human condition. Much of humanity is lost when that act of disclosure becomes impossible. John Adams would concur with that judgment. Adams finds in the human soul the passion for distinction, to be seen and acclaimed: “to feel ourselves unheeded chills the most pleasing hope, tempers his fond desire, checks the most agreeable wish, disappointments the most ardent expectations of human nature.”⁹⁰

The shame of the poor man, I extend that shame to one without power, lies with his invisibility. “He feels himself”, Adams observes, “out of the sight of others, groping in the dark. No one takes notice of him. He rambles and wanders unheeded... he is not disapproved, censured or reproached, he is only not seen.”⁹¹ On the other hand, in the republic, the orphic republic of the ancients and the one that John Quincy envisions for the United States all are summoned to “shine in councils and in camp to

88 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 40.

89 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 175.

90 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 183.

91 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 183.

dare”.⁹² However, following the lead of Tacitus and Longinus, Adams fears that tyranny can terminate the persuasive sublime sustained by the “harp of Orpheus and the lyre of Amphion”. As slavery triumphs over public liberty the citizen-orator falls silent or his eloquence is tarnished by the need to flatter the tyrant: “With the dissolution of Roman liberty... [under] the despotism of the Caesars, the end of eloquence was perverted from persuasion to panegyric... .”⁹³ Adams takes the dark readings of Tacitus to reveal the corruption under the reign to silence to subvert not merely the brilliance of oratory but public character of the polity and its citizens,

In the times in which they lived, a man who ventured to open all his thoughts, the next day might receive an invitation to open his veins. Distinction of every kind was an irredeemable crime. Treachery crept into the intimacies of friendship; into the bosom of domestic life. The confidence in the ties of kindred and of personal attachment, which constitutes the charm or the consolation of human existence, was dissolved. Every man of note was watched by a spy... In such a state of things the mind was compelled to seek a sepulcher in concealment or a varnish of disguise...⁹⁴

Darkness dulls the sublime brightness that radiated from the speech of free men seeking to persuade in the most eloquent manner the acquiescence of other free citizens. “Between that natural tendency to expansion”, Adams relates, “which is the natural tendency of thought to expansion, which is at all times the property of thought, and that effort of suppression, dictated

92 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 79.

93 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 20.

94 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), vol. II, 180.

by the instinct of self-preservation, was generated this dark, enigmatical fashion of speech, which unveils itself by halves, and makes the hearer of the discourse perform half the labor of composition.”⁹⁵ Adams’s backwards glance at the tragedy of the Roman Republic constitutes a warning for the citizen-orators of his own country as to what they lose should the powers of slavery triumph against the principles of liberty.

Both early and late Adams fear that indifference to the fate of their liberties might render Americans inattentive to that possibility. In his *Lectures* Adams insists that they never forget that the United States is an orphic republic resting upon persuasion rather than force and authority. That leads Adams to construct a vision of the constitutional order quite at odds with the Federal paradigm. He substitutes persuasion and eloquence for the political machinery favored by Hamilton and Madison, deliberation for the checks and balances of the Federal system. Adams’s American political science, accordingly, equates the sum of politics with the activity of deliberation. “The objects of deliberation”, he elaborates, “they are almost co-extensive with human affairs. They embrace everything, which can be a subject of advice, of exhortation, of consolation, or of petition... [they] include all the subjects of legislation, of taxation, of public debt, public credit... of commerce; treaties and alliances; war and peace.”⁹⁶ To secure a politics of deliberation, the United States as an orphic Republic, Adams imagines the Republic as a federation of deliberative assemblies, organized from top to bottom and reaching out from the public realm deep into the closet spaces of human decision.

From the preponderance of democracy in the political constitutions of our country, deliberative assemblies are more numerous, and the objects of their consideration are more diversified, than they have

95 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), vol. II, 180.

96 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 258.

ever been in any age or nation. From the formation of a national constitution to the management of a turnpike, every object of concern to more than one individual is transacted by deliberative bodies. National and state for the purpose of forming constitutions, the congress of the United States, the legislatures of the several states are all deliberative bodies.⁹⁷

He surrounds this invocation of the assembly of American deliberative bodies with a discussion of the talents and virtues that rhetoric demands of the citizen-orator. In the Orphic Republic rhetoric authorizes the eloquent speaker. “Consecrate”, Adams invokes his students; “above all, the faculties of your life to the cause of truth, of freedom and of humanity. So shall, your country ever gladden at the sounds of your voice... .”⁹⁸ They should recognize that the precepts of rhetoric are meant for the public realm and are inappropriate to conversation among friends, to the transactions of the world of business. The citizen-orator centers his life upon the interests of the Republic and the service to which it summons him:

Under governments purely republican in nature where every citizen has a deep interest in the affairs of the nation, and, in some public assembly or another, has the means of communicating his sentiments by speech; where government itself has no arms but persuasion; where prejudice has not yet acquired an uncontrolled ascendancy, and faction is yet confined within the barriers of peace; the voice of eloquence will not be heard in vain.⁹⁹

Adams commends the teaching of rhetorical technique, not only for displays of virtuosity but as acquiring for acquiring the

97 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 254.

98 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 31.

99 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 30.

means for effective speech between free citizens. The arts of ancient oratory, Adams concludes, have faltered on the continent and among the British only to recover among the Americans.

When he celebrates the role of representative bodies at the national level of government, Adams emphasizes their function as spaces of speech and deliberation rather than as sources of checks and balances, which help to minimize the authority of democratic rhetoric. Although Adams understands the dangers of parties and factions, he nevertheless embraces the virtues of local government and private associations in a manner quite foreign to the Federalists. Hamilton and Madison scorned local government as the source of parochial majority tyranny, while Adams perceives these institutions as the foundation of a citizen politics. He offers New England as the model for this deep, deliberative politics: “Besides which, in our part of the country, every town, every parish or religious society, every association of individuals incorporated for purposes of interest, of education, of charity, or of science, forms a deliberative assembly, and presents opportunities for the exhibition of deliberative eloquence.”¹⁰⁰ For a brief moment, Adams shared this appreciation of local government with both American and foreign observers. Both Jefferson, whom Adams saw as his patron, and Tocqueville, with whom he talked as old man, were quite attracted to the New England town as the foundation upon which a democratic politics might rest. For the three of them it established the connection between liberty and power necessary to republican politics.

Indeed it is appropriate to note at this junction in the argument that the town meeting republicanism, and the extraordinary politics that it fed was shared by others than John Quincy Adams. Alone, however, he elevates the vision into a systematic perspective of American politics. Still it is interesting that three political figures that celebrate the town have intimate or passing connections with Adams. The revolutionary spirit, according to

100 John Adams, *The Political Writings of John Adams* (New York, NY: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), 30.

his father, originated into the active interplay of four participatory institutions: the town or districts, the congregations, the schools and the militia. The towns were miniature orphic republics “the consequences”, of which “have been, that the inhabitants have acquired from their infancy the habit of discussion, of deliberating, and of judging public affairs...”¹⁰¹ When he was President Jefferson insisted that the opposition of the New England towns shook his administration on the matter of the trade boycott. Yet his consideration of the towns transcends issues of partisan politics as he aspired to reconstitute the constitution in a manner reflecting Adams’s orphic vision.

Did the younger Adams influence the political hopes of his older benefactor? Perhaps not. Nevertheless, during the period of Jefferson’s greatest discontent with the constitutions of the United States he possessed copy of Adams’s *Lectures*. I mark these years as lasting between 1810 and 1816. Toward the end of this period Jefferson insisted that the constitution of Virginia, and no reason exists not to extend that criticism to the other founding documents “occasioned gross departures... from genuine republican canons.”¹⁰² His exasperation with the new Constitutions leads him to explain that republican principles survive only in the free-flouting virtues of the American people. “Where then”, he asks, “is our republicanism to be found? Not in our Constitution certainly, but merely in the spirit of our people... Owing to this spirit, and to nothing in the form of our Constitution, all things have gone well.”¹⁰³ In 1812, nevertheless, Jefferson already possessed a copy of Adams’s *Lectures* and if we have little evidence of the Virginians judgment of their content we do know that he approved of John Quincy’s political principles.

101 John Quincy Adams, *The Works of John Adams* (Boston, MA: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1851), vol. V, 451.

102 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 553.

103 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 555.

“Some extracts”, he enthuses to John Adams, “from these volumes which I have seen in the public papers had prepared me to receive them with favorable expectations. These have not been disappointed; for... they are a mine of learning and taste, and a proof that the author of the inimitable reviews of Ames and Pickering excels in more than one character of writing.”¹⁰⁴ Jefferson allows that John Quincy excels in the writing of other than political attack pieces.

Jefferson desires to place the government upon appropriate foundations: “The true foundation is the equal right of every citizen, in his person and property and their management.”¹⁰⁵ Because he fails to advance the citizen to the citizen-orator, as does Adams, Jefferson’s republic lacks the orphic emphasis on political speech and rhetoric. Yet comes very close to duplicating the republic of Adams best imagination. On one matter they differ, as Adams often perceives the whole Republic as already existing in his orphic vision while Jefferson seeks to make the New England model universal. And, at this juncture in the argument the crucial difference between the Federalist republic and that of their antagonists resurfaces. Madison constitutional republic, as we have seen, divides the citizenry making difficult for them to act in association. The town meeting republic creates public spaces that draw the citizens into active participation. That is a political model while it is fair to recognize that Madison consciously abandons the political conception of freedom for one basically religious. Society itself, he argues, “will be broken into so many parts, interests, and classes of citizens that the rights of the individuals or of the minority will be in little danger from interested combinations of the majority. In a free government,

104 *The Adams Jefferson Letters: The Complete Correspondence Between Thomas Jefferson and Abigail and John Adams* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1959), vol. II, 293.

105 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 555.

the security for civil rights must be the same as for the religious rights.”¹⁰⁶

Despite contention over the nature of power in the Federal Constitution, Madison and the document he helps write favors the rights of private conscience, over those of active citizenship. “Conscience”, he declaims, “is the most sacred of all property; other property depending in part on positive law, the exercise of that being a natural and inalienable right.”¹⁰⁷ Nothing in that would offend Jefferson or Adams yet much is askew. The inward turn of Madison’s conception of liberty violates Adams’s search for the public sublime as well as Jefferson’s passion to foster the attention of the citizens to the political Republic. Madison insists that liberty requires that the political passion of the citizens must be divided and so conquered and diminished. As if to response to Madison Jefferson advances a contrary perspective: “Divide the counties into wards of such a size as that every citizen can attend, when called on, and act in person.”¹⁰⁸ And that participation will produce generations of ferocious citizens:

Where every man is a sharer in the direction of his public ward... not merely at an election one day in the year, but every day; when there shall not be a man in the State who will not be a member of some one of its councils... he will let the heart be torn out of his body sooner than his power be wrested from him by a Caesar or a Napoleon.¹⁰⁹

Beyond this point, Jefferson replicates Adams’s hierarchy of republican political spaces which are “cemented by giving to every

106 Michael Kammen, ed., *The Origins of the American Constitution* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 1986), 205.

107 James Madison, *The Mind of the Founder* (Lebanon, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1981), 187.

108 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 557.

109 *The Life and Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1944), 661.

citizen personally, a part in the administration of public affairs.”¹¹⁰ Moreover, he fills in the blanks regarding the public responsibility of each level of the constitutional order from the administration of schools and roads to the determination of war and peace. Always, however, he preserves highest commendation for the towns of the North East: “These wards, called town meetings in New England, are the vial principles of their governments, and have proven themselves the wisest invention ever devised for the perfect exercise of self-government and its preservation... it is by division and subdivision of duties alone, that all matters, great and small, can be managed to perfection. And the whole is cemented by giving to every citizen, personally, a part, in the administration of public affairs.”¹¹¹ In his letters, Jefferson highlights the act of power giving and preservation that characterizes town meeting republicanism.

And yet, unlike Adams who believes that the American Republic at its foundations was an orphic republic, Jefferson perhaps the more realistic of the two argues that he is only describing a geographically isolated part of the nation. And since he fears that all constitution-making must be completed within the first generation of the founding and that the corruption of American political culture proceeds rapidly under the impact of economic inequality and citizen apathy offering little hope for a true re-founding of the American Republic.

Besides the spirit of the times may alter, will alter. Our rulers will become corrupt, our people careless... From the conclusion of this war we will be going down. It will not be necessary to resort every moment to the people for support. They will be forgotten, therefore, and their rights disregarded. They will forget themselves, but

110 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 556.

111 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 557.

in the sole faculty of money making, and will never think of uniting to effect a due respect for their rights.¹¹²

Adams, however, acts as a citizen-orator of a broken orphic republic whose fragments might be gathered and mended together once again.

As did Jefferson, Tocqueville, the great theorist of association, stressed the connection between the exercise of liberty, the sense of public obligation and the possession of power. But on one point he agrees with Adams – the towns preceded the Constitutions and the Revolution. “The American Revolution”, Tocqueville asserts, “broke out, and the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people came out of the townships and took possession of the state.”¹¹³ In 1831 he had met John Quincy Adams, but spoke only about the future of the Republic as conditioned by the existence of slavery. He found Adams quite pessimistic on the issue. The conversation never turned to the subject of the towns. On their political function Tocqueville relied on observation and materials sent to him by the Massachusetts historian Jared Sparks. Nevertheless, on one issue the Frenchman was closer to Adams’s perception of their universal influence and to Jefferson on the connection of public spirit and power. “Townships and town arrangements exist”, he observes, “in every state, but in no other part of the Union is a township to be met with precisely similar to those of New England.”¹¹⁴ While the condition of democracy in America fascinates Tocqueville he writes with the condition of France in mind and the lack of public spirit he finds among the citizens of post-revolutionary France. In the United States the presence of public spirit rests upon the culture of participation and power. “It is to be remembered too”, he recounts,

112 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 213.

113 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1945), vol. I, 59.

114 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1945), vol. I, 57.

“that the affections of men generally turn towards power. Patriotism is not durable in a conquered nation. The New Englander is attached to his township not so much he was born in it, but because it is a free and strong community, of which he is a member, and which deserves the care spent managing it... without power and independence a town may contain good subjects but it can have no active citizens.”¹¹⁵ It is, he concludes, activity that fashion public spirit and is the chief source of political education in the democracy.

In these three theorists (John Adams, Jefferson and Tocqueville) of the townships the orphic moment appears realized, if, save for Adams, unnamed. The *May Flower Compact* and the *Declaration of Independence* project orphic visions. Adams, as might be expected, extended liberty and power to include the sublime oratorical duties of each citizen. “These are scenes”, he exhorts his auditors, “in which your duties, as men or citizens, will frequently call upon all of you to engage.”¹¹⁶ The persuasive speech of the citizen-orator inform these public scenes. In his *Memoirs*, Adams takes up the question of political responsibility and develops it in such manner as to suggest a moral-political movement from the demands of self-preservation to republican commitment. Only the impoverished can plead diminished political obligations – their private need cancels engagements. Autonomy, freedom from economic necessity, enlarges each citizen’s public commitments. “There are also”, Adams contends, “the duties of citizenship to his country, which are binding upon all, and more forcibly binding in a republican government... upon the republican principle, every individual has a stake, an interest, and a voice in the common stock of society, and consequently lies under the obligation of attending to and promoting the common

115 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1945), vol. I, 53.

116 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 254.

interest to the utmost of his power, compatibly with the discharge of his more immediate duties of self-preservation and preservation of his kind.”¹¹⁷ Furthermore, aspects of the sublime frame these republican duties.

In an orphic republic citizens take pleasure in the speech of their fellow citizens because of their eloquent substance. “It is in deliberate oratory, and that alone”, Adams explains, “that eloquence and the art of persuasion may be considered, as terms perfectly synonymous.”¹¹⁸ Nor can the celebration of the citizen and his achievements be achieved in isolation or solitude it requires the “approbation, the applause of their fellow men”; those “are the precious rewards, which prompt the most exalted spirits to deathless achievements.”¹¹⁹ The political sublime caps the activity of citizens as they perform their persuasive duties in the republic of Adams’s best imagination. That compels him to assert the similarities between the political situation of the Greeks and that of the new American Republic. Adams demands that his students acknowledge the unique experiment in liberty and persuasion that grounds the Orphic Republic:

They cannot fail to remark, that their own nation is at this time precisely under the same circumstances, which were so propitious to the advancement of rhetoric and oratory among the Greeks. Like them we are divided into a number of separate commonwealths, all founded upon the principles of the most enlarged social and civil liberty... Our institutions, from the smallest municipal associations to the great national bond, which links this union, are republican. Their vital principle is liberty. Persuasion... is the great if not only instrument, whose operation can affect the acts of all our corporate

117 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. II, 12.

118 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. II, 12.

119 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. II, 233.

bodies: of towns, cities, counties, states, and of the whole confederated empire.¹²⁰

Adams's *Lectures* never present a utopian model of what might be possible; they constitute an attempt at political theory by envisioning a political community hidden beneath the normal politics of everyday life, and the action required to recover the voice of its citizens in an extraordinary public choral. The *Declaration of Independence* fills out that deep republican chorus. The active speech of American citizen, in Adams's expectations, would call the extraordinary Republic to an authority that would dominate the nation's public affairs. Furthermore, Adams would provide them an exemplary model of citizenship for their individual and collective emulation. In word and deed Cicero attracts Adams as the ideal republican political actor. In both his *Lectures* and *Memoirs*, Adams insists that the example of Cicero illuminated the conundrums of American public life and the corruptions of its leading public men. Accordingly, Adams inclines to read some of the disorders of American politics as a direct reflection of the inner disharmonies of politicians like Clay, Webster and Calhoun. Cicero, on the other hand, teaches what judgment these men have earned. However, his affection for the Roman orator remains very personal, one that Adams constantly mines for the public meanings that might justify his own political attitude toward American politics. His *Lectures* sing a panegyric to Cicero as the model of the citizen-orator. Even Adams's definition of the form tells much about his own self-fashioning emulation of Cicero:

Panegyric, whenever it is deserved, will certainly require vindication, as well as celebration. The great and heroic characters of every age and nation have generally lived in a continual struggle with the great proportion of mankind. Their principle merit often consists

120 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. II, 70.

in the firmness, perseverance, and fortitude, with which they bear up against the torrent of opposition from their fellow mortals.¹²¹

Shaping his own political vocation to fit that of Cicero, Adams believed himself fated, as we have already begun to see, to play out a public career marked by a sometimes, desperate struggle most often in opposition to slavery and corruption and with little chance for success. Nevertheless, his panegyric on Cicero confirmed those virtues required by a political vocation dedicated to the service of the Republic: virtues necessary for all who would accept the responsibilities of citizenship.

Already we have noted immortal antagonism that Adams establishes between Cicero and all the Caesars. That is a republican trope that informs the rediscovery of the worldly value of public life. In the early Renaissance, the Florentines found in Cicero an advocate of their republican liberties in the contest against despotism. “As Petrarch”, writes Hans Baron, “had examined the political situation at the end of the Roman civil wars through the partisans of Caesar, so Vergerio revived Cicero’s and Brutus’ faith in the continued vitality of republican liberty—their firm conviction that the Roma civic spirit had not been destroyed for good by the corruption of the moment.”¹²² Petrarch argues the inferiority of Cicero to Caesar in character and intelligence; yet Renaissance humanism soon shifted against Caesar and towards Cicero and other defenders of the Republic. Leonardo Bruni argued that Florence was the living embodiment of humanist political theory. “For Bruni, then”, observes Struever, “rhetoric is both means and end: rhetoric is the means for achieving public honor, and at the same time the free practice of rhetorical powers is the goal of political development, the

121 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 78.

122 Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 127-128.

proof of liberty.”¹²³ Bruni presages Adams by co-joining Rome with Athens as one of the ancient historical moments in which rhetoric and liberty promote one another.

Many American patriots of the revolutionary generation admired Cicero with a passion; however, only Adams shapes that passion into a theory of the citizen-orator. The works of Cicero were widely read in the American colonies during the pre-revolutionary period. John Adams rated the Roman as highly as his son. “As all the ages of the world”, he asserts, “have not produced a greater statesman and philosopher united than Cicero, his authority should have great weight.”¹²⁴ Jefferson, furthermore, praised at least two of his books: “Cicero wrote two volumes of discourses on government which, perhaps were worth all the rest of his works.”¹²⁵ Jefferson’s judgment is a cautious one and excludes Cicero’s writings on rhetoric and oratory, and that is not uncommon as most Americans celebrate aspects of Cicero’s life and work but rarely draw a composite picture of the orator as political actor. That constitutes Adams’s achievement, as the citizen-orator he finds in the Roman becomes the republican performer of the orphic republic as well as his personal inspiration. Adams takes the fragments of American republican thought on Cicero and molds them into a theoretical whole. Fragments taken from Cicero show that he was admired for his advocacy of the mixed constitution and for being a philosopher of virtue and justice. His public oratory was read as incantations on these themes. “As to his political conduct”, wrote Conyers Middleton in the 18th century, “no man was ever a more determined patriot... His general view therefore was always one and the same; to support the peace and liberty of the Republic in

123 Nancy Struever, *The Language of History on the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 121.

124 Meyer Reinhold, *The Classic Pages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 49.

125 Meyer Reinhold, *The Classic Pages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 49.

that form and constitution of it, which their ancestors had delivered own to them."¹²⁶ Americans praised the Roman citizen perhaps, however, they might be sympathetic to Jefferson's dismissal of Cicero as an orator: "I doubt that is a man in the world who can know read any of his oratory through but as a piece of task work."¹²⁷ Perhaps we may date the loss of a major theorist when his work is appreciated only in fragments and when many of his books are ignored.

Where and how therefore does Adams begin his theoretical and practical attempt to make transform Cicero into an exemplary figure? One who acts out the injunctions of his political science? We already understand that he identifies with Cicero's embodiment of the Roman contest between liberty and slavery, and will take the republican martyrs *Phillipics* as the spur to his own redemptive politics. However, as Adams conceives the art of oratory, the defense of liberty, as reason joined to passion his first note marked the Longinian sublime in Cicero. Longinus argues that Demosthenes achieves a sublime that transcends the declamations of Cicero, yet allows that the latter "like a spreading conflagration. Ranges and rolls over the whole field; the fire which burns is within him, plentiful and constant, distributed as he will now in one part, now in another, and fed with fuel in relays."¹²⁸ This description of Cicero matches Adams's conception of the ideal orator in whom reason, passion and speech conspire to win the attention of his audience and then inspire them to extraordinary action. The genuine orator "must have a soul of fire", and "must wield the nation with a breath; he must kindle or compose their passions at his pleasure. Now he must cool them to justice, now inflame them to glory."¹²⁹ The breath of the orator reasserts

126 Meyer Reinhold, *The Classic Pages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 200.

127 Meyer Reinhold, *The Classic Pages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), 50.

128 Longinus, *On the Sublime* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 28.

129 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 103-104.

the orphic moment in the republic. If we ask who is Cicero to Adams then the answer is quite clear: he is the sublime orator who, at the same time wills to place that transcendent capacity on the side of liberty. “It is the remark of Rochefoucault, that no man ever exerted his faculties to the full extent, of which they was an exception to the universality of that remark, it was Cicero... there never was so illustrious, so sublime an example as himself.”¹³⁰ The qualities of the sublime orator, as exemplified by Cicero make the orator superior to the philosopher. Adams, at the very least, places Cicero above Plato in the acuity of worldly vision. The limited focus of the philosophy disqualifies him from the highest rank among humanity. The scope of the orator incorporates, according to Adams, the breadth of human achievement. “He must”, according to Adams, “have a soul of fire... iron application in writing and composition... constant reading of the poets, orators, and historians; the practice of declamation... railery and humor... tempered with the soberest judgment, to the point of their application.”¹³¹ Finally, Cicero is “the instructor of ages, the legislator of mankind.”¹³²

Adams, in his *Lectures*, attends more to Cicero on the art of oratory and the science of politics, but the special book he recommends is the Roman’s *De Officiis*: “His book of Offices should be the manual of every republican; nay it should be the pocket and pillow companion of every man; desiring to discipline his heart to the love and practice of every virtue.”¹³³ What does Adams take from this book, what would he have us find in it? In many respects, Cicero speeches and his writings on oratory introduce us to the virtuoso aspects of this performance art. In his

130 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 99.

131 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 103.

132 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 57.

133 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 136.

other, more political speculations, treat of the substance that Cicero hopes might inform the deliberative eloquence of the politician—the politician, however, mutated into the statesman. The problem of the statesman demands that Cicero deal with questions of wisdom and justice. “Here”, Adams observes, “is an axiom of universal application, drawn by Cicero as an inference from his meditations upon the duties, which his particular situation extracted from him... that an accomplished orator should be thoroughly versed in the science of ethics, as well as that of dialectics... A mind unaccustomed to inquire into and meditate upon the nature of his duties as a social being could never have fallen into such a train of thought... it was the logician uniting with the moralist; it was intellect operating upon integrity, which brought forth this lesson of wisdom for the benefit of succeeding ages.”¹³⁴ That treatment coexists with his judgment that practice cannot be separated from justice acts and consequently politics out ranks philosophic speculation.

Cicero admits that later in his life he took up philosophy but his explanation might well have fascinated Adams. Twice political extinction threatened Adams, the first time he defied the Massachusetts’s Federalists by supporting Jefferson’s Embargo, and, the second, after his defeat by Andrew Jackson. Both times he thought of escaping into a world of scholarship. Instead he plunged back onto public life with a passion. Cicero was unable to do so, and his lamentations for the loss of politics may have touched the active nerves in Adams public mind. Only after the tyrant had seized power, when all republicans were barred from politics did he substitute philosophy for public service. He experienced that substitution as the great calamity of his life. Philosophy, Cicero admits, has much and its study disciplined his post-political life, offered him consolation from the defeat of all his plans for Rome. In retirement he attributes more to philosophy than was usual in his speculations. Philosophy builds cities and

134 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 56.

secures the fruitful powers of speech, however, beyond any human endeavor humanity can seek philosophy as the final consolation. “Oh philosophy, thou guide to life, o thou explorer of virtue and vice... to thee I fly for refuge, from thee I look for aid to thee I entrust myself, as once in ample measure, so now wholly and entirely.”¹³⁵ Yet Cicero admits the but he turned to speculative matters only “everything had passed under the absolute control if the despot and there was no longer any room for statesmanship or authority of mind... and... when I had lost the friends who had been associated with me in the task of serving the state... .¹³⁶ That comment suggests that philosophy may be a less human activity than politics as it is practiced in isolation rather than in the company of others.

Prior to his exile from politics Cicero never failed to admonish others that the art of politics was the most worthy of human endeavors. A citizen owes a life to the city when necessary to serve the common good. The “director of the commonwealth has as his aim for his fellow-citizens a happy life, fortified by wealth, rich in material resources, great in glory and honoured for virtue. I want him to bring to perfection his achievement, which the greatest and best possible among men...¹³⁷ The statesmen never plummets to the corrupt levels of a Pompey or Julius Caesar, nor neglect the nature of the political environment. Unlike the philosopher the statesmen cannot deal in the ideal forms fixed by thought. Cicero knows as well as Machiavelli that *fortuna*, surprises and uncertainties, forever knit themselves into the fabric of politics. The political actor cannot avoid a world made uncertain by the complexity and the flux of events. Cicero recalls

135 Neil Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 57.

136 Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 169.

137 Cicero, *The Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 251.

as a political lesson that even good citizens can be tumbled, at election time, by the fickle swing of public opinion:

All these defeats were unexpected and could not even be explained when they had occurred. Storms... often break unexpectedly for some obscure reason that defies explanation. In the way you may often recognize in elections the sign responsible for the storm brought on by the voters, but the cause is often so obscure that it appears to have blown up quite by chance.¹³⁸

Obscure causes, as Cicero himself experiences, sometimes raises a citizen to immortality and then sentences him to be murdered by friends. The statesman may find his life rule by the principles of probability. Nevertheless, the sublime politician owes a life to his city as a partial reward for his recognition.

To contribute to the orphic republic virtue must be armed with the eloquence that pleases the audience of into compliance with the common good, sings them into the public chorus. Technique transforms the citizen into the citizen orator. Later on we will consider that theme in both of our republican heroes. We return here to the influence of Rome on Adams. Because he was never debarred from politics, as Cicero had been, Adams hastened his return to politics and so immersed himself in politics as to elevate Scipio to a possible model for emulation, public business so occupied that great statesman's thoughts that he left behind no books on these matters, only his example. Cicero writes with approval, "Scipio used to say that he was never less idle than when he had nothing to do and never was lonely than when he was alone... It shows that even in his leisure hours his thoughts were occupied with public business and that he used to commune with himself when alone..."¹³⁹ Adams's *Memoirs* may

138 Neil Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 181.

139 Neil Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 271.

be taken as the continuation of the inner dialogues that he conducts about persons and politics.

That attention to politics, the public good, constitutes both for Cicero and Adams the duties common to the citizen and the statesman. The Roman excuses those who are unfit for the rough turns of political fortune, but “those whom nature has endowed with capacity for administering public affairs should put aside all hesitation, enter the race or public office; and take a hand in directing the government; for in no other way can a government be administered or greatness of spirit be made manifest.”¹⁴⁰ Cicero demands that such citizens exercise a persistence attention to public matters; and Adams recalls Cicero’s injunction, when advising his students, that “it be remembered, that this inflexible, unremitting pursuit of ideal and unattainable excellence is the source of all the real excellence, which the world has seen.”¹⁴¹ The duties may be systematically stated, as does Cicero, but only the active acceptance of these imperatives that confirms them towards the republic and one’s fellow citizens. This suggests a political-moral frame in which even the most skilled orator must perform. Perhaps the first public duty of the citizen-orator is an appropriate understanding of the art of oratory itself.

Adams, once again, reads Cicero as engaged in a defense of oratory against its great philosophic antagonists – Plato:

At the zenith of modern civilization the palm of answered eloquence was awarded to the writer who maintained that sciences had always prompted rather the misery of than the happiness of mankind... that Rhetoric cannot be dignified with the name of art; that it is but a mere pernicious practice... and it still remains an inquiry

140 Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 75.

141 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 110.

a mere but a mere pernicious practice... and it still remains an inquiry among men, as in the age of Plato and that of Cicero, whether eloquence is an art worthy of the cultivation of a wise virtuous man.¹⁴²

However, Cicero's stance within the context of that debate has the most lasting effect on Adams's conception of the substance of the orator's art and what he would teach his Harvard audience. His more general judgment regarding Cicero's teaching affirms the centrality of virtue. Sublime virtuosity suffices not for glory; but virtue is "both good and fair..." and to "do good and to communicate it thus the only solid foundation for legitimate praise..."¹⁴³ Adams discovers in the possession of virtue to be the foundation of the orator's persuasive powers: "To form the perfect ideal orator, the model of a fair imagination, to the imitation of which every public speaker would constantly aspire, honesty, or virtuous principle, is the first and most essential ingredient. None but the good man therefore can be such and orator, and incorruptible integrity is the most powerful of all the engines of persuasion."¹⁴⁴ That conclusion returns us to Adams's assertion that persuasion rather than force binds the free republic together.

That comprises the core of Adams's dutiful treatment of the citizen-orator. In this matter, as I have already noted, his republicanism contradicts that fashioned by Machiavelli and his reworking of the republican tradition of Cicero. As Quentin Skinner has noted the Florentine reversed the classical republican line, as expressed by Cicero, on the foundations of political order. Again the classic answer had been furnished by Cicero in *Moral*

142 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. 1, 13.

143 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 243.

144 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. I, 157.

Obligation, “Fear is but a poor safeguard of lasting power”, whereas love “may be trusted to keep it forever”. Again, Machiavelli registers his total dissent. “It much safer”, he retorts, “for a prince to be feared than loved.”¹⁴⁵ Cicero, Machiavelli implies, writes of imaginary polities when he celebrates the practical power of love. Cicero responds, as he does to his contemporaries, that the matter is one of expediency – the practical truth of the matter for which Machiavelli was to search centuries later. That truth, according to Machiavelli, demands that all political actors perceive humanity, at least for political reason, as evil. No matter how good or just a person might be political effectiveness requires that a “prince who wishes to maintain his position to learn how not to be good, and to use this knowledge or not according to necessity.”¹⁴⁶ Cicero recognizes that political actors often are evil, or become so; nevertheless, the faithful speech that sustains a political community more likely reigns, rules or constrains the more likely forms of political vice.

Machiavelli insists that only the fear of punishment can maintain the chain of obligation that will sustain the political order for any length of time. The rule of law may fit some situations, but “as I said above, as long as it is possible, he should not stray from the good, but he should know how to enter into evil when necessity commands.”¹⁴⁷ While Cicero certainly acted in a political world in which civil war degraded humanity he took from that experience lessons that make him an anti-Machiavelli before Machiavelli lived and wrote. Civic fear he argued cut the ties of communication and trust that allowed a free and well-ordered republic to survive. Here Cicero suggests that every human order at its foundation possesses an orphic aspect that may be perverted by war and fear. He says: “The first principle is that

145 Quentin Skinner, *Machiavelli* (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1981), 46.

146 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Portable Machiavelli*, ed. and trans. by Peter Bondanella (New York, NY: Penguin, 1979), 127.

147 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Portable Machiavelli*, ed. and trans. by Peter Bondanella (New York, NY: Penguin, 1979), 134.

which is that which is founded in the connection subsisting between all the members of the human race; and that bond of connection is reason and speech, which be the process of teaching and learning, of communicating, discussing, and reasoning associate men together and unite them in a sort of natural fraternity.”¹⁴⁸ Cicero aspires to metaphors appropriate to this human condition, and all express the virtue of a human association based upon forms of public friendship and love. That fraternity that the citizen-orator should cultivate, and here may be rooted Adams’s passion to be the president of all the, requires that politics transcend the most extreme expressions of party spirit. Civil war, on the other hand, is the creature of party for partisan spirit shatters all public restraints:

As a result of this party spirit bitter strife arose at Athens, and in our own country not only dissensions but also civil wars broke out. All this the citizen who is patriotic... will shun with abhorrence... and he will devote himself to the state in its entirety in such a way to further the interests of all.¹⁴⁹

It is that understanding of political reality that prompts Cicero to praise the rhetoric of peace rather than that of war, to affirm the language of political fraternity and to eschew that of hatred and violent anger. Given the heated nature of Roman politics united with his own political passions Cicero often falls victim to violent tirades against his enemies.

Adams, as we have seen, translates the rejection of hatred and violence into the politics of persuasion. Furthermore, when we consider Cicero’s elaboration of the role of the citizen-orator in *The Republic*, Adams’s debt to the orator becomes even more evident. Without citing the myth of Orpheus, Cicero describes the

148 Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 53-55.

149 Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 87-89.

citizen-orator as a political performer who restores the republic to harmony with his eloquent songs.

For just as in the music of harps and flutes or in the voice of singers a certain harmony of different tones and must be preserved... so also in a state made harmonious by agreement among dissimilar elements, brought about by a fair and reasonable blending together of the upper-, middle-, and lower-classes, just as if they were musical tones. What the musicians call harmony in song is concord in the state... and such concord can never be brought about without the aid of justice.¹⁵⁰

Justice, moreover, requires that as auditors all citizens be attuned to the harmonious words sung by the citizen-orator. Again, according to Adams, party spirit can break the harmonies of deliberate assemblies and render persuasion impotent.

It has sometimes happened in the parliamentary of other nations, and is not unexampled in our own, that majorities, in the exultation and abuse of their powers, have affected to carry their measures in defiance of all discussion; and without attempting to refute any objection, reply to their antagonists only by a vote.¹⁵¹

Practiced words may possess the power of “uniting the race of men, solitary before, by the pleasant bond of communication by speech.”¹⁵² Then the exemplary citizen, the orator, serves as a “mirror to his fellow – citizens by the supreme excellence of his life and character.”¹⁵³ Becoming a mirror to other citizens always

150 Cicero, *The Republic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1952), 181-183.

151 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 89.

152 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 185.

153 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 181.

requires a repudiation of the Machiavellian mode of political discourse in lieu of what both Cicero and Adams perceive as a more adequate grasp of political reality. In a notorious attack on common place assumptions, Machiavelli proclaims that those “who have accomplished great deeds are those who have cared little for keeping their promises... and in the end they have surpassed those who laid their foundations upon honesty.”¹⁵⁴ Yet if justice constitutes the foundations of political order than honesty rather than deception is good policy. According to Cicero, good faith helps to secure an unforced public order: “the foundation of justice is good faith—that is, truth and fidelity to promises and agreements.”¹⁵⁵ Adams perhaps repeats Cicero’s dictum but gives it more political detail and demands honesty of every citizen. “To be honest”, Adams asserts, “is the duty and in power of all. To be eloquent can be the privilege of the few... Let us all then all be honest; for honesty is wisdom, is pleasantness; is peace.”¹⁵⁶ Honest practice Adams learns from Cicero is wisdom as it alone can secure that persuasive harmony, the concord in peace that Adams places at the foundations of the republican ideal. Without honest citizens place little faith in the spoken word and the persuasive union of the association shatters. The citizen-orators reputation for honesty aids in the maintenance, and continuing renewal of the mutual faith shared by the members of a free polity. This reflection leads Adams to define the ideal orator: “To form the perfect ideal orator, that model of a fair imagination, to the imitation of which every public speaker would constantly aspire, honestly, or virtuous principle, is the first most essential ingredient. None but a good man can therefore can ever be such an orator; and incorruptible integrity is

154 Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Portable Machiavelli*, ed. and trans. by Peter Bondanella (New York, NY: Penguin, 1979), 133.

155 Cicero, *De Officiis* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 25.

156 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 159.

the most powerful of all the engines of persuasion.”¹⁵⁷ In his *Memoirs*, Adams strives to elevate faith to a cosmic principle:

Can I trace and unfold to demonstrate the indissoluble link between religious and moral faith? Can I show that it is the link of responsibility between man and his Maker, and the only bond between man and his brother? That it is the characteristic of his immortal nature? That it is the adamant of all human society? The cohesive principle of the gregarious animal, man? Can I define its legitimate powers; its vitality to the institutions of government; to the relations of domestic life; to the peace and justice of independent communities; to the intercourse of trade and commerce; to all the public and private duties of man?¹⁵⁸

To become political, however, the citizen-orator must translate these principles into persuasive arguments specific political community in which he speaks and acts. Thus, according to Adams, it “is this very faculty of pointing the general principles of moral and political science to the specific objects in debate... that constitutes the permanent powers and glory of the public speaker.”¹⁵⁹ Even that prudential advice requires to be rendered more specific. What, we may ask, are the active principles of a republic as expressed in the substantive rhetoric of American republicanism? Adams appeals the contest between liberty and slavery, yet what concepts does he assert unique to the orphic American Republic? The active principles of the American sublime emerge from the *Declaration of Independence*, which can generate a politics that is both terrible and sublime. He postulates a double foundation that matches the imperfections of the American Constitution against the principles of Jefferson’s document.

157 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 157.

158 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. X, 356.

159 John Quincy Adams, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory* (Cambridge, MA: Hilliard and Metcalf, 1810), vol. II, 56.

In his *Inaugural Address* Adams summarizes the achievements of the Union “under a Constitution founded upon the republican principle of individual rights”, while warning that “dissensions have been... founded upon differences of speculation in the theory of republican government...”.¹⁶⁰ In this interpretation the Constitution must be read from the perspective of the *Declaration of Independence*. In periods of political crisis Adams always returns to the *Declaration* as the ground of his public conduct.

How, then, does Adams imagine the specific field in American politics, especially in his own generation, where the principles of the orphic Republic collide with the practice of slavery, where the sublime might appear through the action of its citizens? The *Declaration* embodies a “sublime idea of the character of man”.¹⁶¹ That sublimity entails the natural equality of humanity. He acknowledges that other government rested upon a social compact, however, the consent that empowers the *Declaration* is unique in the political history of states and nation. The social contract, even in the English tradition, demanded the surrender of all rights to the states.

Government had never before explicitly to be based upon this foundation. Governments had by the people of England been declared to be founded upon a compact between the sovereign and the people... by entering into the social compact man surrendered *all* his rights, and took in return such as the ruling power was pleased to bestow upon him. The *Declaration of Independence* acknowledges no such principle. It recognizes no despotism, monarchical, aristocratic or democratic. It declares individual man born with rights of which... no government can deprive him.¹⁶²

160 *The Life and Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: The Modern Library, 1944), 355.

161 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 398.

162 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 398.

The equality of rights bares both the alienation of the right as well as their force full appropriation. So does the *Declaration* inscribe into the foundations the orphic hostility between persuasion and force: the eternal antipathy between the darkness of violence and freedom's light. "His reason", Adams continues, "is given him by his Creator to govern his conduct through life, and he can neither be deprived of it by violence, nor can he transfer it to another. And hence the rights derived from it are declared inalienable."¹⁶³

Without a doubt, Adams might well argue that the *Declaration of Independence* may be characterized as an orphic document. While stressing the consent of the people, perhaps creating that people through that act of consent giving, its author bids to persuade the opinion of mankind to the cause of the American Revolution. The document concludes by recognizing that no act of coercion can bind those who sign it together, only verbal promises can do that: "And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of the divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor."¹⁶⁴ No historical abstraction to Adams, Leslie Lipsky notes that he treated the document as part of the public law of the United States. In the Amistad case, Adams in the absence of statutes, treaties "relating to the case" argues that "in reality the *Declaration of Independence* was the 'Law of Nature's God' and had been imported into the Constitution."¹⁶⁵ Adams will cite the active presence of the *Declaration* in all definitive moments of sublime activity, but hidden away in his *Memoirs* Adams imagines a drama in which the struggle between *Declaration* and slavery erupts into what he anticipates as the "terrible sublime".

163 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 399.

164 Thomas Jefferson, *The Portable Jefferson* (New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1975), 241.

165 George Lipsky, *John Quincy Adams* (New York, NY: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1965), 213.

On some occasions Adams, often to defend the rights of his constituents appeals to the *Declaration* in the Constitution, but when his cause is in greatest danger he resorts to the *Declaration* and its principles as the orphic Republics founding document. Then the power of speech stretches to its limits and Adams imagines the Republic tumbling into civil war or dismemberment. As early as 1819, during the crisis over the admission of Missouri to the Union, either as a slave or a free state, Adams imagines that the power of slavery may actively engage with the pure principles of the *Declaration*. That can set in motion the “terrible sublime”. Practical politics prompt Adams to support the Compromise while in his *Memoirs* he rehearses an apocalyptic future of the Union. As Secretary of State, he favored the Missouri Compromise... believing it to be, he said, “all that could be affected under the present Constitution, and from an extreme unwillingness to put the Union in hazard.”¹⁶⁶ Yet, as he emerges from private to public abolitionism, Adams’s best visions of what might have been done become a large part of his public activism. Not even Jefferson, Adams believes, understood the historical and political reach of the document he authored:

His *Declaration of Independence* is an unabridged Alcoran of political doctrine, laying open the first foundations of civil society; but he does not appear to have been aware that it laid open a precipice into which the slave-holding planters of his country must fall. With the *Declaration of Independence* on their lips, and the merciless scourge of slavery on their hands, a more flagrant image of inconsistency can scarcely be conceived that our Southern slave-holding republicans... The seeds of the *Declaration of Independence* are yet maturing. The harvest will be what West, the painter, calls the terrible sublime.¹⁶⁷

166 Henry Wilson, *The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1872), 149.

167 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. IV, 492.

It was a painting by Benjamin West that set Adams's mind to work on the "terrible sublime". Although the first American painter of European reputation, West remained a Loyalist but, nevertheless, "acquired his great Enlightenment reputation... because he saw so clearly what was required of revolutionary art."¹⁶⁸

In a series of works dealing with British and American political and military events, West instructed a generation of artists how best to fashion image that captured the Enlightenment conception of secular heroism. West, and his American students, portrayed Washington, Jefferson and John Adams as citizens in the reflected glory of their achievements as revolutionists and lawgivers. Consequently, West was almost the Adams family artist. So it was natural that Adams visited West when the painter toured America in 1816, West showed him a work in progress, the larger version of *Death on a Pale Horse*. He told Adams that to be finished to his satisfaction the painting "must be in the terrible sublime style".¹⁶⁹

Only that style could render appropriately West's subject; the Apocalypse of St. John, chapter 6, verses 7 and 8:

And when he opened up the fourth seal, I heard a voice of the fourth beast say, come forth and see. And I looked, and behold a fourth horse; and his name that sat upon him was Death, and Hell followed after him. And power was given to them over the fourth part of the world, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death the bests of the earth.

168 Garry Willis, *Cincinnatus* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 218.

169 Robert Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1978), 376.

This vision of the Apocalypse awakens Adams sense the “terrible sublime” and invokes in him a political-religious awe as he contemplates the terrible conflict, “the destructive process,” that will be necessary to rid the Republic of slavery.¹⁷⁰

Adams would be President of all the people, yet in 1819, his imagination races to embrace disunion or war, between the States. As with “all great religious and religious reformations”, Adams believes, “it is terrible in its means, though happy and glorious in its outcome.”¹⁷¹

Adams imagines a Republic reconstituted on pure orphic principles but he never is quite clear whether that process can commence or be completed without violence. The Orphic nature of the American Republic keeps him in doubt. Yet at the boundaries Adams’s politics thought violence for the sake of taking back rights emerges as legitimate. By 1819, most who would become Abolitionist had declared themselves pacifists and considered “worthy of the most exalted soul whether its total abolition is or is not practicable... A dissolution, at least temporary, of the Union as now constituted would certainly be necessary, and the dissolution must be on the point of slavery and no other. The Union might then be reorganized upon the fundamental principle of emancipation. The object is vast in its compass, awful in its prospects, sublime and beautiful in its issue. A life devoted to it would seem to be nobly spent or sacrificed.”¹⁷²

Does Adams slip, at this point in his passionate distaste for slavery, into nullification? On the contrary, his position is at points both with those who preach nullification, and those who might be labeled constitutionalists. The people play the consti-

170 Robert Alberts, *Benjamin West* (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin, 1978), 529.

171 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. IV, 530.

172 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. IV, 530.

tutive role in Adams's understanding of the founding of the Republic. Nor does he treat, as does Daniel Webster, the Constitution as the ultimate source of authority consummating the principles of the Federal Union, but divorced from it in any active manner after 1787. Adams considers that the *Declaration* placed the basic principles of freedom at the foundations of the Republic and that the Constitution, while in some matters well done, is but an imperfect compromise with the slave powers. He affirms the "utter and unqualified inconsistency of slavery, in any of its forms, with the principles of the North American Revolution and the *Declaration of Independence...*", but adds that the "associated wealth of the slaveholders outweighed the principles of the Revolution and by the Constitution of the United States a compromise was established between slaver and freedom. The extent of the sacrifice of principle made by the North in this compromise can only be estimated by its practical effects."¹⁷³

While moved by the aesthetic-religious imagery of West's terrible sublime, and believing that the emancipation of the slaves would fulfill Christian duties, Adams locates their liberation in political rather than spiritual time. The *Declaration* and not the will of God, structures the political apocalypse into the foundations of the America Republic. Adams would have all acknowledge the orphic authority of this political fact.

The *Declaration of Independence* not only asserts the natural equality of all men, and their inalienable right to liberty, but that the only just powers are derived from the consent of the governed. A power for one part of the people to make slaves of the other can never be derived from consent, and is therefore not just power.¹⁷⁴

The constituting principles of the Republic are speech and persuasion, consent and they anathematize the violence of slavery,

173 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 394.

174 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. V, 6.

or any other threat to the dominion of free speech. The irony of this situation is that when these principles clash with the power of slavery, speech stops and war begins. Would the new nation that emerges from such a conflict still be of an orphic nature or would it now be based, as most other political orders had been on blood, the murder of brothers by brothers?

Adams never addresses that problem. Instead he recognizes an American politics engendered by a type of double foundation, and consequently always conflicted to the edge of violence. Of practical importance, however, the “bargain between freedom and slavery contained in the Constitution of the United States has been morally and practically vicious... The consequence has been that this slave representation has governed the Union.”¹⁷⁵ These consequences are quite specific in their nature: the balance of power in the House lies with the representatives of slavery; over the years the Presidency and the members of his administration are selected from those favorable to the dubious institution; over the years the majority of those on the Supreme Court are slaveholders. Adams disputes the claim that the political majority can mobilize their numbers and negate the power the slave oligarchy. The majority are scattered as Madison hoped and find it difficult to withstand the power of a compact minority:

Do you not see that the one hundred representatives of persons, property, and slavery, marching in solid phalanx upon every question of interest to their constituents, will always outnumber the one and forty representatives only of persons and freedom, scattered as their votes will always be by conflicting interests, prejudices and passions?¹⁷⁶

175 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. V, 10.

176 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 395.

Considering the relative weakness of the North in relationship to the South, Adams considers other alternatives to a direct confrontation with the South. He is unwilling to put the Union at risk perhaps awaiting the political moment when power and opinion swings in the direction of emancipation.

Adams, accepting the political facts that frame the crisis, favors “this Missouri compromise, believing it all that could be affected under the present Constitution... till it should have been terminated in a convention of the States to revise and amend the Constitution.”¹⁷⁷ While he believes that the time is unripe for this alternative, Adams announces his disappointment with the orphic element in what he hoped might be a more passionate opposition to the extension of slavery. He laments the lack of passion demonstrated by the representatives of the free states. No great and sublime citizen-orator has appeared to preach the moral and political necessity of freedom. While the southern representatives express their horror at any attack upon their property Adam declares “their greatest real defect is their timidity.”¹⁷⁸ The political moment calls for the advocacy of a great citizen-orator: “Never since human sentiments and human emotions were influence by human speech was there a theme for eloquence like the free side of this question now before the Congress of this Union.”¹⁷⁹ At that moment, however, and much to Adams’s despair the orphic Republic collapses into a one-sided polemic, one that fails to do justice to the cause of liberty.

By what fatality does it happen that all the most eloquent orators of the body are on the slavish side? There is a great mass of cool judgment and plain sense of the side of freedom and humanity, but

177 *The Selected writings of John and John Quincy Adams*, ed. by Adrienne Koch and William Peden (New York, NY: A. Knopf, 1946), 306.

178 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. IV, 524.

179 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. IV, 524.

the ardent spirits and passions are on the side of oppression. Oh, if one man could arise with the genius capable of communicating those eternal truths that belong to this question, to lay bare in all its nakedness that outrage upon the goodness of God, human slavery, now is the time, and this is the occasion, upon which such a man would perform the duties of an angel on earth.¹⁸⁰

Cool sense and judgment separated from spirits and passion as if the ideal orator had been asunder. In time, however, Adams reassembles the ideal orator and takes up these eloquent and passionate duties. When he “shines through great antagonisms” Adams, although not quite alone, will reopen the orphic Republic.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study is to analyze and share some of the thoughts expressed by John Quincy Adams in relation with 19th century American politics in both philosophy and practice. This subject became a major purpose of the present study, since one needs explicate the three part distinctions among the deep layers of American political speech and action, which are the revolutionary, the normal and the extraordinary.

This paper started from an observable situation in 19th century American politics, when it was not uncommon to think of normal politics as best represented by the American Constitution. A leading position in support of this thesis is Madison’s interpretation of the Constitution, which narrows the implications of such key events in the then American life as the Revolution, and yet it retains the influence of these events on common Americans and their everyday lives. In Adams’s case, however, we find another vision of the citizen-orator which we deem closer to the principles of the American Revolution. The major difference between the two interpretations of a political event is that in this

180 Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of John Quincy Adams* (Philadelphia, PA: J. B. Lippincott, 1874), vol. IV, 524.

latter example action upon those principles becomes effective only with the help of the citizen-orator who exercises his function in sublime tones.

Adams was not a supporter of easy politics, and he insisted that American politics should become extraordinary starting with the very personal and public example. Adams exemplifies that sublimity of behavior and states, contrary to Madison, that America is best represented as an orphic republic if its citizens escape Madisonian reductionism and turn from simple political spectators to citizens. He then defines the role of the citizen as the one who creates a fundamental distinction between normal and extraordinary in the American Republic. His ideas of sublime and the Orphic Republic are thus tangled through the sublimity of this citizen-orator.

Adams always attached clarifying pieces of literature to his ideas. In this particular discussion about the Orphic Republic, he adds such personal texts as his *Memoirs* and *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, which were extensively used here firstly because they promote his mature thoughts on the subject, and secondly because they link his views as an orator with kindred thoughts from his favorite works on the Republic submitting some premiere insights on the concept. Thirdly, these texts deal with the role of the citizen-orator in his contemporary American politics.

In these works, Adams analyzes for himself and his readers the great conflicts of the world, and he is especially concerned with peace against war and freedom against slavery; these polarized conflicts offer him a clear view of the deep structure of American politics from which both the terrible and the sublime emerge.

We were next interested in seeing what Adams's principles of an Orphic Republic are. Adams gives examples of the interplay between the normal and extraordinary in American politics, and also of virtuous and corrupt politics which are set in action before the readers. Because, he shows, America lacked monarchy,

it displays a republican drama that narrates the actions of citizens, be they exemplary actors, and then we need to imitate them, or corrupt actors, and then they must be exposed.

Adams's *Memoirs* are nothing else than a mirror with personal reflexes for his American citizens. They are closely related to the principles he set forth for republican politics which are also present in his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Oratory*, where he highlights the rhetorical sublime of the fittest promoter of a free republic: the citizen-orator. This work is the basis for Adams's idea of fusion between thought and action, an element which helps him dream of American politics that dare challenge the legitimacy of the opposing *Federalist Papers* in political thought.

Though antagonistic, we showed that Adams does not go against Madison in his depiction of true republican politics, in part due to his open-mindedness in this field, and possibly as a sign of respect for the Federalists and the Constitution. Because politics is a science in itself, Adams and Jefferson, for that matter, ignored unsettling issues in Madison's thought and are ready to admit that both forums for their ideas, *The Federalist* and the *Declaration of Independence* are equally meritorious as they represent different aspects of the much needed political education in America. These first documents function as educators of American political science as they are the debates of the day. Yet, Madison stressed, the American public must learn to keep aside from the sphere of public debate, thus a new political theory began to settle and the role of representatives came into place. In other words, both parties supported the necessary distinction between the representatives of the people and the American Government, but in Madison's opinion, this lies in the total exclusion of the people in their collective capacity from any share in the latter, and not in the total exclusion of representatives of the people.

This disjunction we then followed in Madison's writing on popular rhetoric, which he does not trust to be objective, and the Federal Constitution with its image of a small republic or

“direct democracy”. Opponents of this republic, who consequently are supporters of the extensive republic, are met with a series of quotes, images, and names that exemplify their form of government. Taken from as far as the antiquity, Madison proves their demagogic attacks upon the property and the rich to be good examples of the public voice of the people oftentimes “inverted” by “men of factious tempers and local prejudices”.

Thus, Madison declares the need for a representative government that will expel the citizen from public decision-making while leaving that prerogative in the hands of a distant few. Distance, he thinks, provides the best hope for the appearance of wisdom among decision makers. However, the anti-Federalists object by stating that the government should not elaborate laws to serve its own interests, but to mirror those of citizens without refining public opinion.

Madison mistrusted the effects of popular rhetoric because of its lack of detachment and its subjectivity, thus he defended the new Constitution which shattered the public space and speech. An extensive republic, he states, would incorporate vast geographical distances and render political communication difficult if not impossible, a position he advocates early in his intellectual life.

At the opposite side, Adams gives a symbolic and theoretical legitimacy to his great inheritance and his concept of the republic. Adams is even concerned with the aesthetics and symbolism of the Great Seal, for instance, and it is his desire to recast the emblem of the nation’s union as a means to educate the American people to the great politics of the revolutionary and constitutive periods. This imperative he shared with many republicans in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Unlike Madison, who rejected possible imitations of ancient political models by his citizens, Adams underlines the participatory elements of the Greek polis, and thus neglects the idea of a representative government and its benefits. His accent falls on such ancient images as the assemblies of the people, the select

councils, and the senate in Athens and Rome, which were spaces of debates and deliberation. He declares himself to be against absurd situations where the fate of a measure is decided before it is even proposed, as was the case with representatives of the people and the small republic. Eloquence was dearly appreciated in antiquity, he says; it produced powerful effects on the hearers and it helped deliberation.

Adams celebrates the role of representative bodies at the national level of government, but emphasizes their function as spaces of speech and deliberation rather than as sources of checks and balances. Adams understands the dangers of parties and factions, however he embraces the virtues of local government and private associations against his Federalists opponents like Hamilton and Madison, for whom local governments were sources of parochial majority tyranny. To Adams, they were instead the foundation of a citizen politics on the model of New England with its deliberative politics, which boosted people's interest, education, charity, science, and presents them with the opportunity of eloquence and deliberation.

For Adams, the most eloquent ancient example of a politician and orator was Cicero, who also inspired generations of American patriots with the passion which Adams shapes into his theory of the citizen-orator. Even Jefferson praised Cicero's books, stating that his volumes of discourses on government are evocative of his political craft; he eludes, however, Cicero's writings on rhetoric and oratory, an aspect of Cicero's work that in turn constitutes Adams's achievement. His citizen-orator finds in this Roman model the performer of the orphic republic as well as a personal inspiration. Adams targets especially Cicero's rhetorical texts to build on them his American republican thought. In Cicero's likeness, Adams's conception of the ideal orator is one in whom reason, passion and speech conspire to win the attention of his audience and then inspire them to extraordinary action. The genuine orator, Adams shows, "must have a soul of fire", and "must wield the nation with a breath... Now he must cool

them to justice, now inflame them to glory. In his *Lectures*, Adams speaks of Cicero as orator, and he recommends his text *De Officiis* as the manual of every American republican.

Beside politics, philosophy is a discipline of the mind that Cicero used when politics failed in Rome, offering him consolation in retirement for it builds cities and secures the fruitful powers of speech, and beyond any human endeavor a citizen can seek philosophy as final consolation. It also helps rhetoric, and Adams searches for the active principles of a republic. In this context, Adams appeals the contest between liberty and slavery, satiating that the active principles of the American sublime emerge from the *Declaration of Independence*, which can generate a politics that is both terrible and sublime. He postulates a double foundation that matches the imperfections of the American Constitution against the principles of Jefferson's document.

Adams notices that the idea of equality of rights bares both the alienation of the right as well as their force full appropriation. Returning to the *Declaration* he claims that it admits into the foundations the orphic hostility between persuasion and force: the eternal antipathy between the darkness of violence and freedom's light. However, he does not elaborate on the possibility that this ideal orphic republic uses violence first as legitimate action in order to adjust society to its principles.

On the other hand, his ambiguity at this point does not shadow his distaste for slavery. Quite the contrary, we've seen, his position is at points both with those who preach nullification, and those who might be labeled constitutionalists. The people play the constitutive role in Adams's understanding of the founding of the Republic. Adams considers that the *Declaration of Independence* placed the basic principles of freedom at the foundations of the Republic, while the Constitution is an imperfect compromise with the slave powers, which contradict the principles of the North American Revolution and the *Declaration*

of *Independence*. The extent, he concludes, of the sacrifice of principle made by the North in this compromise can only be estimated by its practical effects.

With this in mind, Adams is ready to consider other alternatives to a direct confrontation between the North and the South, because he applauds the Union and does not want to endanger its effectiveness by waiting for the “right” political moment when power and opinion swing in the direction of emancipation. At this point, a weakness of the orphic element is that it lacks passionate opposition to the extension of slavery in the representatives of the free states. Thus, the Orphic Republic in Adams’s times was both revelatory and in some degree eschatological; still, not long after his death it proved to be a dream come true.

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