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# ON THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE AMERICAN DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Peter W.H. Smith & David. A.Rickards

## Abstract

Thomas Jefferson, the architect and author of the American Declaration of Independence (ADOI) is revered, and yet, even during his lifetime questions were raised about his authorship. One name linked with the ADOI is Thomas Paine, better known as the author of *Common Sense and The Rights of Man*. This study uses stylometric analysis to compare the writing styles of Jefferson and Paine in an attempt to solve the authorship controversy. A study is conducted using function words and multivariate statistical analysis which reveals that both Jefferson and Paine exhibit a consistent style of writing. A comparison of their writing reveals that they can be discriminated with statistical significance. A feature set of ten grammatical constructs are then created, based around two frequently occurring function words that consistently discriminate between Jefferson and Paine and their grammatical function within the ADOI. The study gives unequivocal results based on an analysis of all known texts by Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine written *prior to* the signing of the ADOI. A study of the sources of the ADOI is made demonstrating the need to analyse the ADOI in separate parts. Further work is conducted on 344 phrases and grammatical fragments from the ADOI, the results of which support the findings.

## Introduction

At least seven different versions of the ADOI are known to exist Hazelton (1906), although fragments of an even earlier version have been found (Boyd 1999). These versions are:

1. A Copy in the handwriting of Thomas Jefferson – known as *The Rough Draft*. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston).
2. A Copy in the handwriting of John Adams – thought to be an early copy of *The Rough Draft*. (Also at Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston).
3. A Further copy in the handwriting of Thomas Jefferson. (New York Public Library).
4. A Draft in the handwriting of Thomas Jefferson (American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia).
5. The Declaration as printed by Dunlap under the orders of Congress.
6. The Declaration written out in the corrected journal.
7. The Declaration on parchment at the Department of State.

At first glance, the ADOI looks unsuitable for a stylometric analysis study, because such an important document would almost certainly have been much changed by committee and Congress. Moreover, the evidence for Jefferson's authorship, would appear to be incontrovertible, on the face of it. However, a copy was produced prior to any amendments by congress and also, even the earliest known version appears to have been copied from an earlier copy now lost (Hazelton 1906, Boyd 1999). Furthermore, remarks made by Jefferson, that he drafted the ADOI, 'without reference to pamphlet or book' are puzzling given the nature of its contents.

The version that was chosen for this analysis is known as *The Adams' Copy*. There has been much speculation about it, though it seems clear, from a detailed analysis (Hazelton 1906), that it is a copy of *The Rough Draft*. That it is in John Adams' handwriting, is not in dispute as his handwriting is confirmed in his biography by his grandson (Adams 1856). John Adams was also known to have sent this copy to his wife which supports the view that the copy is indeed in his handwriting.

There are differences between *The Adams' Copy* and *The Rough Draft* that are puzzling. They are minor, as they consist largely of punctuation, but there are also a few minor spelling variations and couple of small grammatical changes. It has been suggested by (Whissell 2003) that these may be accounted for if *The Adams' copy* was written down by dictation. This simple explanation appears highly plausible, but in no way affects our study. Of the spelling variants between *The Adams' Copy* and *The Rough Draft*, it was discovered that the spelling variant *tryal* was used by John Adams - in Clarendon No. 3 (Thompson 2000).

This spelling variant was never used by either Paine or Jefferson - a small, but possibly significant finding that supports Whissell's theory.

Therefore, *The Adams' Copy* was chosen, because it is free of corrections made by Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin or by Congress. For the remainder of this paper, unless otherwise stated, we refer to *The Adams' Copy* of the ADOI.

## Method

The study is in four parts:

- 1 A study of Thomas Paine's and Thomas Jefferson's works for internal consistency, i.e. the extent to which they have an identifiable, individual style.
- 2 A cross comparison study of Paine and Jefferson to see the extent to which their style can be distinguished.
- 3 A comparison of the ADOI with all known works of Jefferson (71 texts) and Paine (22 texts) written prior to it.
- 4 Sources of the ADOI, text and content of the ADOI and the anti-slavery clause.

### The Internal Consistency of Thomas Paine's Writings.

The following works by Paine were chosen:

1. Common Sense (1775) [sense]
2. The American Crisis (1776-1778) [crs1]
3. The American Crisis pt 2 (1778-1783) [crs2]
4. Rights of Man (1792) [rom]
5. The Age of Reason (1795) [aor]

First, the texts were homogenised following Smith and Smart (2002) and adapted from (Smith 1992). They were manually processed to remove chapter headers, editor's comments, foreign quotes and phrases and also quotations embedded in the text. Next, all punctuation was removed, words abbreviated by apostrophes were expanded and hyphenated words were rejoined. All text was changed to lower case and finally function words were standardised, e.g. *an* changed to *a* and *these* changed to *this* etc. After the text had been cleaned up, it was split up into block sizes of 1000 words and function word frequency counts were made of each block. The top 15-20 function words were used in this study.

A discriminant analysis on sets of three texts was then carried out to determine whether it was possible to separate out one text from others (separation being measured along the first discriminant). The top 15 function words were used for this analysis and no significant difference emerged by increasing the set of function words (up to 25) used in the analysis. This was repeated on all possible combinations of three texts from the five given above (a total of ten tests). The results did not separate any of the works except for a small separation on *Age of Reason* which indicated some drift in style from the other works. This was attributed that to the fact that it was written considerably later in his life and was also written during an exceptionally stressful period for him (he was awaiting execution by guillotine).

**Table 1 – The Top 10 Function Word Frequencies for Palne's Works**

word	r-o-m	sens e	crs 1	crs 2	a or
the	1	1	1	1	1
of	2	2	2	2	2
an d	3	3	3	3	3
to	4	4	4	4	4
a	5	5	5	5	7
in	6	6	6	6	6
it	7	8	7	8	8
tha t	8	7	8	7	5
as	9	10	9	12	9
not	10	9	12	11	1 0

Table 1 shows that the rank ordering for the top 10 function words of these texts are consistent; four of which share the same top six function words by rank ordering according to frequency. This demonstrates consistency of style based on function word frequencies.

## Figure 1 – Proximity of Paine's Works Represented as a Dendrogram

rom crs1 sense crs2 aor

Figure 1 uses a nearness metric and proximity matrix based on function word frequencies developed in Smith and De Jong (2006) and confirms the comments made about *The Age of Reason*.

### The Internal Consistency of Thomas Jefferson's Writings

Letters and miscellaneous texts written by Jefferson were used for this study (written over a period of 60 years) and his autobiography - a total of 7 text files (consisting of approximately 280,000 words) for comparison purposes. The procedure for cleaning up the text was as described above. The texts were as follows:

1. Jefferson letters and documents 1760-1786 [j1]
2. Jefferson letters and documents 1786-1792 [j2]
3. Jefferson letters and documents 1792-1803 [j3]
4. Jefferson letters and documents 1803-1811 [j4]
5. Jefferson letters and documents 1812-1817 [j5]
6. Jefferson letters and documents 1817-1822 [j6]
7. Jefferson's autobiography 1821 [auto]

Table 2 shows a remarkable consistency in function word ranking – the first eight function words being in exactly the same relative frequency. In fact, with the exception of his later writing, Jefferson was far more consistent than Paine.

A comparison with the table for Paine reveals that the rank ordering of function words *to* and *and* is reversed for the two authors. This difference will be examined in detail below. A discriminant analysis was carried out for all combinations of 3 texts of Jefferson (35 tests in all). Apart from the autobiography and some separation between early and late Jefferson, there was a remarkable consistency of style. It was also noted that pairs of text files taken chronologically tended to group closest together, e.g. text files two and three grouped closely together. The dendrogram shown in figure 2 clearly shows drift with age.

**Table 2 – The Top 10 Function Word Frequency Rankings for Thomas Jefferson**

word	j 1	j 2	j 3	j 4	j 5	j 6	auto
the	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
of	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
and	4	4	4	4	3	3	4
to	3	3	3	3	4	4	3
a	5	5	5	5	5	6	6
in	6	6	6	6	6	5	5
it	8	8	8	8	8	8	8
that	7	7	7	7	7	7	7
as	10	10	9	9	9	10	14
not	13	13	12	16	13	14	17

**Figure 2 – Proximity of Jefferson's Texts Represented as a Dendrogram**

j1      j2    j3    j4    j5    j6    auto

**A Comparison of Thomas Paine and Thomas Jefferson**

Next, the texts of Jefferson and Paine were compared against each other to examine the extent to which they were separable using discriminant analysis. *Age of Reason* was omitted from this part of the study leaving four files by Paine and seven by Jefferson.

As before texts were grouped into threes. This time they



consisted of either two texts by Paine and one by Jefferson or one text by Paine and two texts by Jefferson – a total of 126 tests.

Each text by Jefferson was tested with all possible combinations of two works by Paine and in 40 out of 42 cases, the Jefferson text was separated out from the Paine text. By random chance 14/42 separations would be expected and a binomial test for significance demonstrates that Jefferson texts can be separated out from Paine texts with significance at well below the 1% level.

Each text by Paine was then taken and tested against all combinations of two Jefferson texts (21 tests for each text). The results are given in table 3.

**Table 3 Comparison Tests on Paine's Works**

<b>Text</b>	<b>Separation</b>	<b>Significance</b>
Rights of Man	18/21	$10^{-5}$
Common Sense	11/21	0.052
American Crisis 1	17/21	$10^{-4}$
American Crisis 2	12/21	0.02

The Jefferson autobiography made a major contribution to the false results. These justify the claim that Paine and Jefferson's writings can be separated out using function words. Figure 3 is a dendrogram using the distance metric previously described Smith and De Jong (2006), demonstrating a clear separation of Jefferson and Paine's writing.

**Figure 3 – Proximity of Paine/Jefferson Works Combined**

j1 j2 j5 j6 j3 j4 ja sen cr2 aor rom cr1

### Jefferson and Paine's Use of Function Words *And/To*

Both Jefferson and Paine consistently used function words *the* and *of* most frequently. However the frequency of their third and fourth function words was consistently reversed (see table 4 below). Jefferson used *to* more than *and* – the order is reversed for Paine. This ordering reversed for Jefferson later in life.

**Table 4 – Jefferson/Paine Most Frequent Function words**

Word	Jefferson /100 words	Paine /100 words		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
the	59.94	8.74	69.00	13.56
of	44.04	8.12	46.38	5.70
to	40.08	7.78	30.76	6.67
and	26.73	5.97	35.81	4.44

Attention then focused on the use of these words, because of their potential to discriminate between Jefferson and Paine. It was also decided to examine why this difference between the authors existed.

Function words *and* and *to* have multiple uses Quirk et al. (1986). A recent study on forensic data Smith and De Jong (2006) identified 16 different categories of use for the function word *to*

and 38 different uses for the function word *and*. *To* is primarily used in either a *to-infinitive clause* or as a *preposition*. *And* is used mostly in *clausal co-ordination* and as a *sentence connector*, although it also has other less frequently occurring uses.

The texts chosen for the second phase of the study were all of Jefferson's and Paine's output written *prior to* the signing of the ADOI. These comprised of 71 texts by Jefferson consisting of letters, resolutions (including *Summary View* and *The Virginia Constitution*) and miscellaneous documents - in total about 53,000 words Boyd (1950). Paine's writing consisted of 22 texts, including *Common Sense* - in total about 54,000 words Conway (1894). The texts are listed in Appendix 1.

A study of the texts, revealed that Jefferson used *to-infinitive clauses* with high frequency. One feature that stood out in Paine's writing was his frequent use of *co-ordinated binomial and phrases*. Attention then focused further on *to-infinitives* and *co-ordinated binomial and phrases*.

Co-ordinated binomial phrases Biber et al. (2000) pair words from all four major grammatical categories using *and/or* (for this study, only *and* is considered). *And* may co-ordinate noun and noun, e.g. *fish and chips*, verb and verb, e.g. *go and see*, adjective and adjective, e.g. *black and white* or even adverb and adverb, e.g. *slowly and deliberately*.

A study was made of other writers from this period in history, including John Adams and Benjamin Franklin and concluded that Jefferson's use of *to-infinitives* was above average though not abnormally so. However, Paine's use of *co-ordinated binomial and phrases* seemed unusual, at around 11 per one thousand words, compared with Jefferson's average of 2.3. A more extensive study of late 18<sup>th</sup> century writers was then conducted (Table 5). This revealed that Jefferson was below average compared to other writers from that period. On the other hand, Paine's average was higher than any other 18<sup>th</sup> Century author chosen (in modern English, their usage is between 0.5 – 1.5 per thousand words Biber et al. (2000)).

The texts used in table 5 were mostly taken from the Gutenberg Project ([www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org)) and sample sizes of between 50,000-100,000 words were used.

**Table 5 – Frequency of Co-Ordinated Binomial And Phrases for 18<sup>th</sup> Century Writers**

<b>Writer</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Frequency/1000 words</b>
Samuel Adams	1722-1803	4.1
William Beckford	1759-1844	6.2
James Boswell	1740-1795	6.3
Frances Brooke	1724-1789	2.8
Edmund Burke	1729-1797	7.3
Fanny Burney	1752-1840	2.2
Thomas Clarkson	1760-1846	7.9
Adam Ferguson	1723-1816	5.8
Edward Gibbon	1737-1794	6.1
Alexander Hamilton	1757-1804	8.9
Samuel Johnson	1709-1784	8.2
Robert Kerr	1755-1813	3.6
James Madison	1751-1836	9.2
Ann Radcliffe	1764-1823	9.6
Adam Smith	1723-1790	6.3
Horace Walpole	1717-1797	0.8
Gilbert White	1720-1793	1.6

Mary Wollstonecraft	1759-1797	8.4

### The Division of the ADOI and Feature Set Selection

The ADOI can be broadly divided up into three main sections:

- 1 The Introduction
- 2 The List of Grievances
- 3 The Closing Section

The List of Grievances were copied and edited almost in their entirety from *The Virginia Constitution* at least one draft of which was written by Thomas Jefferson (Boyd 1950). It was therefore decided to examine the central section of the ADOI separately from the rest. The Introduction of the ADOI was placed into a file that will be referred to as ADOIA. The List of Grievances, was placed in a file - ADOIB. The remainder of the ADOI was appended onto ADOIA.

The feature set initially contained *to-infinitive clauses* and *co-ordinated binomial and clauses*. Following a detailed study of the whole ADOI, five more features that included *and/to* were added. These were:

- 1 it...to infinitive. Empty it subject as primary clause (not subordinating). e.g. '*it* is their duty to *throw off* such government...'  
[empty-it + to inf]
- 2 binomial and phrases using to infinitive. e.g. '*to invade and deluge* us in blood...'  
[binomial and + to inf]
- 3 and + to infinitive e.g. '*and to* institute new government'. This feature obviously combines both function words. [and + to inf]
- 4 to infinitive begins sentence. e.g. 'To prove this, let facts be submitted...'  
[to-inf begins]
- 5 Non-finite clauses including to be, of the form X to be Y, where Y cannot be a verb and *to be* cannot be part of a compound. such as *ought to be*. e.g. 'We hold these truths to be self evident'  
[to-be +]

Three additional features were then added, found in the ADOI that were grammatically unusual. These all involved word order.

- 1 Adjective/noun inversion, e.g. 'rights inherent and unalienable' (inherent and unalienable rights). [PP adj]

- 2 Adverb/verb inversion, e.g. 'begun at a distinguish'd period and *pursuing invariably...*'. [PP adv]
- 3 Noun/verb/adjective word order. e.g. 'no one *fact stands single or solitary...*' (no single or solitary fact stands...) [adj/verb]

### Analysis of The Feature Set

A detailed study was then made of all texts of Jefferson and Paine, listed in Appendix 1. The results are tabulated and presented in Table 6 – the target numbers apply only to ADOIA.

**Table 6 – Feature Set Chosen from the American Declaration of Independence**

Feature	to- inf	empty-it + to inf	binomial and + to inf	and + to inf	binomial and
J Total	77 4	0	6	22	122
P Total	70 8	65	16	12	585
J Mean	15. 6	0	0.06	0.41	2.3
P Mean	13. 1	1.2	0.3	0.22	10.9
DOI Target	13	3	1	5	18

Feature	PP adj	PP adv	adj/ver b	To-inf begins	to be +
J Total	1	4	1	9	27
P Total	9	31	28	15	44
J Mean	0.02	0.08	0.02	0.17	0.51
P Mean	0.17	0.57	0.52	0.28	0.82
DOI Target	3	2	1	1	1

In Table 6 – the column headings refer to the feature set described above, the total number of occurrences of the features

are tabulated for the two authors (J Total and P Total). The means are then computed, and compared against the ADOJ target figures.

Mosteller and Wallace (1964) in their study of the authorship of the disputed Federalist Papers, observed that function words tended to obey the poisson distribution. Eight of the ten features closely followed the poisson distribution, the other two occurred with sufficient frequency to consider parametric tests for normality and are considered separately below. P-values for the 8 features were then computed and likelihood ratios for Jefferson/Paine were calculated (Table 7). They give unequivocal results - clearly pointing to Thomas Paine as author.

**Table 7 – P-values and Likelihood Ratios for the Poisson Distributions**

Feature	Empty-it+ to inf	binomial and + to inf	and + to	PP adj
P Value	$P \geq 3$	$P \geq 1$	$P \geq 5$	$P \geq 3$
P val –J	0	0.0952	0.0001	0
P val –P	0.1203	0.2591	0	0.0012
likelihood ratio J: P	1 : $\infty$	1 : 2.72	too small	too small

Feature	PP adv	adj/ver b	To inf begins	to be +
P Value	$P \geq 2$	$P \geq 1$	$P \geq 1$	$P \geq 1$
P val –J	0.0047	0	0.1813	0.393 5
P val –P	0.1220	0.393 5	0.2591	0.550 7
likelihood ratio J: P	1 : 25.96	1 : $\infty$	1 : 1.36	1 : 1.48

**Table 8 – Statistics For To-Infinitive Clauses and Binomial And Phrases**

Feature	Statistic	Jefferso n	Pain e

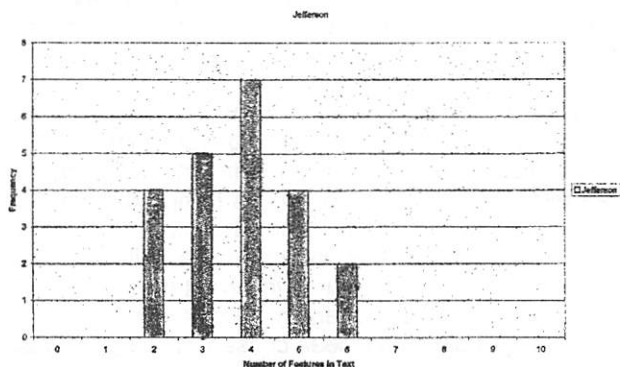
	<b>Total</b>	<b>774</b>	<b>708</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>13.1</b>
	<b>DOI Target</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
	<b><math>\sigma</math> (standard deviation)</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>3.73</b>
	<b>No. of SDs from Target</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>	<b>&lt;1</b>
	<b>Range of Values</b>	<b>9-21</b>	<b>7-20</b>
	<b>Ranking Percentile</b>	<b>60-70</b>	<b>40-50</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>585</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>10.9</b>
	<b>DOI Target</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b><math>\sigma</math> (standard deviation)</b>	<b>1.58</b>	<b>4.64</b>
	<b>No. of SDs from Target</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>2</b>
	<b>Range of Values</b>	<b>0-6</b>	<b>5-24</b>
	<b>Ranking Percentile</b>	<b>&gt;100</b>	<b>80-90</b>

Table 8 presents the data for the two remaining features. The *to-infinitive* does not present strong evidence either way, but the *co-ordinated binomial and phrase* provides further evidence to support Paine, the mean and standard deviation for Jefferson is so low that it makes it highly implausible for him (more than 10 standard deviations away from the target) to be the author, on the other hand the data provides some additional evidence for Paine as the target figure of 18 for ADOIA is plausible as it is within the 80-90th percentile and is within two standard deviations of his mean score.

Another measure that was taken, we call, feature set richness. Feature set richness is a measure of how many features from the chosen feature set appear together in one document. In



other words, it is a measure of the extent to which the target authors use the chosen feature set in the same place. To obtain this data, we chose a document size of roughly 2500 words and where possible examined features in only one document. This meant combining some of the Jefferson's documents chronologically into roughly equal sized groups. Of the longer texts, only *Summary View* was divided into two and *Common Sense* was also subdivided. The graphs given below provide us with very clear evidence that supports our findings above.



**Figure 4: Feature Set Richness for Thomas Jefferson**

**Figure 5: Feature Set Richness for Thomas Paine**

Figure 4 shows that the mode for Thomas Jefferson is 4, with a maximum of 6, whereas the mode for Thomas Paine is 6 with a maximum of 10. Once again this provides strong evidence of Thomas Paine's authorship.

#### **Possible Sources of Bias in the Study**

Any stylometric analysis study needs to control as much as possible two of three variables - time, authorship and genre. Authorship is carefully controlled by cleaning texts thoroughly to remove all extraneous data, e.g. quotes, foreign language phrases etc. Also by considering only texts available from authoritative sources – Boyd (1950) for Jefferson and Conway (1894) for Paine. Textual purity for Jefferson was slightly more problematic. Many of his texts are bills and petitions which exist in several forms and

drafts. In one case Jefferson's authorship is slightly dubious (*Report of the Committee on the Cedar's Cartel*). However, this has been sufficiently controlled as not to affect the study. Time is not a problem because all texts for the feature set study are fairly well documented. Only texts written prior to the writing of the ADOI were chosen, because of a possible contamination of style by its existence. Genre was largely out of our control, though Paine's texts consisted mainly of essays on various topics, many of which were directly related to the cause for Independence. Jefferson's texts included letters, bills and declarations. In some respects the texts biased against Paine, because many of the documents written by Jefferson were directly related to or were predecessors of the ADOI.

The feature set was chosen to discriminate between Paine and Jefferson. The function words *and* and *to* were found to be significant discriminators between the two writers and seven out of the ten features relate to these function words using grammatical features that appeared in the ADOI itself. The remaining three features were chosen because they were grammatically unusual and also appeared in the ADOI. Features involving these function words that were used by either Jefferson or Paine that did not appear in the ADOI might also have been chosen. However, it was difficult to see the purpose of such a choice and it would have been difficult to choose such a feature set without introducing bias into the study. Smith and De Jong (2006) point out that not all grammatical features of a function word necessarily serve as indicators of authorship. For example, the function word *to* is also used as a *preposition of direction*. – Something that is more likely to be contextual rather than stylistic.

Next, Jefferson's and Paine's style of writing will be considered along with influences that may have been brought to bear upon them from the standpoint of the ADOI.

### **Paine and Jefferson's Style of Writing**

While the discussion of the style of any writer is bound to be subjective to some extent, it is worth making some comments on the different styles of Paine and Jefferson. In their investigation of the evolution of text of the ADOI Boyd (1999) goes well beyond objectivity describing Thomas Jefferson's writing as:

Franklin was not given to reaching such majestic heights as was Jefferson's habit.

Jefferson's writing is almost certainly at its best in *Summary View*, but is significantly worse in several other documents, e.g. *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking up Arms*. The examples below, although selective are typical of Jefferson's early style and by no means difficult to find. The 'majestic heights' described by Boyd only seem to be present in the ADOI itself.

- 1 'If they are printed, it will abridge my request and you trouble to the sending me a printed copy...' (Letter to McPherson 25/02/1773)
- 2 'I hope you will find it fine and it came to me genuine from the island...' (Letter to William Small 07/05/1775)
- 2 'Can it be beleived [sic] that a grateful people will suffer those to be consigned to execution whose sole crime has been the developing and asserting their rights?' (Letter to William Small 07/05/1775)
- 3 'The past and future operations of the war must confirm or undeceive them on that head.' (Letter to John Randolph 21/08/1775)
- 4 '...and gathering there those laurels for the superior brave.' (Draft of a Declaration on the British treatment of Ethan Allen 02/02/1776)
- 5 '...our affairs in Canada go still retrograde' (Draft of a Declaration on the British treatment of Ethan Allen 02/02/1776)

An unanswerable question is whether Jefferson could have "raised his game" in drafting the ADOI. *Summary View* is undoubtedly well written, and one may argue that Jefferson had no need to write well in his letters or even in his draft resolutions and declarations. The one that really mattered was the ADOI itself. We know this with the benefit of hindsight. The ADOI has totally eclipsed everything else that Jefferson wrote in terms of historical significance. But for example, when Jefferson wrote his draft of *Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms* he was trying to galvanise the colonies to take action against Great Britain and at the time, it may well have seemed the most important thing he ever wrote at that time. We can only apply the argument about the ADOI from a historical perspective. Based on the stylometric study just described, there is no evidence that Jefferson could have changed his writing style to such an extent as to be able to write the ADOI. Furthermore there is one characteristic mistake in *The Rough Draft* of the ADOI where he

stumbled on a feature that he doesn't use in his other writing. In writing 'Rights, inherent and unalienable...' in *The Rough Draft*, Jefferson initially started writing 'inherent...' then crossed it out - one of the corrections cited by Hazelton (1906) as evidence that he was copying from an earlier version. However, this mistake may also be cited as evidence that Jefferson was unused to placing adjectives after nouns - not in itself conclusive, but nevertheless a piece of corroborative evidence.

Paine, on the other hand was singled out for his writing ability. Indeed even Jefferson praised his writing abilities

his writings prove him a stronger advocate for liberty than any of his countrymen (Letter to Francis Eppes 1821) (Boyd 1950a).

Paine exhibited none of the inconsistencies that are characteristic of Jefferson's writing.

It is instructive to examine the feature set and its occurrence in both ADOIB and the section of the Virginia Constitution (VC) from which it is derived. The VC contains only two of the ten chosen features (an item of data that must be treated with some caution due to its small size - about 450 words). On the other hand, ADOIB contains five out of the ten chosen features, providing possible evidence that the original grievances listed in the VC were edited by Paine - the anti-slavery clause is considered separately.

The ADOI was not created *in vacuo* and it is necessary to consider some of the textual influences and origins of the document.

### **Textual influences on the American Declaration of Independence**

The ADOI was the culmination of a whole series of documents, resolutions and ideas in which both Jefferson and Paine played their parts; the former possibly more so than the latter.

#### *The Virginia Constitution and the ADOI*

Assuming that the VC was written before the ADOI, then it follows that Thomas Jefferson was the author of ADOIB. The evidence for this is incontrovertible. Many of the grievances given in the ADOI are verbatim copies of the originals from the VC. Of the 23

grievances, 16 of them are given in order that they appear in the VC. This is highly unlikely to have happened by chance.

However, it raises two very interesting questions:

1. Why, if Thomas Jefferson was acknowledged to be the author of the VC and it had already been, did he state that in drafting the ADOI, he referred to neither book, nor pamphlet?
2. Why, of all the grievances listed, was the anti-slavery clause the only one that was significantly embellished?

The anti-slavery clause will be considered separately. As Jefferson is acknowledged to be the author of at least part of the Virginia Constitution Boyd (1950), it seems odd that he made this remark. It is also plain that other documents known to have been authored by Jefferson were influential in the writing of the ADOI. As he made this comment in response to attack made upon his authorship, it is curious that he never made reference to the VC at least. One possibility is that the VC was written after not before the ADOI, but another is simply that Jefferson copied *The Rough Draft* from a draft prepared by Paine.

#### *The Influence of Summary View on The ADOI*

There are two important documents authored by Thomas Jefferson that predate the ADOI:

- a. *Draft of Instructions to the Virginia Delegates in Continental Congress (Summary View)*.
- b. *The Declaration of Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms*, predating the VC.

Additional precursors to the VC are *The Virginia Non-importation Resolutions* of 1769 and 1770, but of these, the most important document is *Summary View*.

*Summary View* has several phrases and ideas that it shares with the ADOI that are quite striking (listed in Appendix 2). It also contains many ideas and arguments that appear in the ADOI (listed in Appendix 3).

The evidence presented in Appendices 2 and 3 make it clear that the contents and views expressed in the *Summary View* considerably influenced contents of the ADOI itself. The authorship tests and this evidence appear to be contradictory. Therefore, it was decided to investigate this further by separating out grammar and content, but before that, influences of Paine and others will

be investigated.

*Influences of Texts Authored by Thomas Paine*

Paine's *Common Sense* is primarily a well argued case for Independence built upon a reasoned case for the abolition of monarchy. However, many of his writings just prior to the ADOI cannot be ignored. *A Dialogue Between General Wolfe and General Gage in a Wood Near Boston, The Dream Interpreted, Thoughts on Defensive War, A Dialogue Between the ghost of General Montgomery, just arrived from the Elysian Fields and an American Delegate in a wood near Philadelphia, Epistle to Quakers* and the four *Forester's Letters* are all concerned with the American War of Independence or more directly with Independence itself.

In *Common Sense* we find several textual parallels:

1. (ADOI) Governments are instituted among men...  
(CS) There is an echo to this where Paine argues for the reasons why governments have to exist.
2. (ADOI) He has *prostituted* his negative  
(CS) ...who is attached to a *prostitute* also ...can ye give to *prostitution*.
3. (ADOI) All men are created *equal*  
(CS) Mankind being originally *equals* in the order of creation.
4. (ADOI) *eat out* their substance...  
(CS) and *eaten out* the virtue of the House of Commons
5. (ADOI) unremitting *injuries and* usurpations  
(CS) but the *injuries and* disadvantages we sustain by that connection are without number
6. (ADOI) these were affected at the expense of our own *blood and treasure*  
(CS) to the expense of *blood and treasure*
7. (ADOI) exercise of *negative* power  
(CS) he will have a *negative* over the whole legislation
8. (ADOI) He has *suffered* the administration to cease  
(CS) he will *suffer* no law to be made here

In *African Slavery* we find these similarities:

(ADOI) violating its most sacred Right of Life and Liberty in the Persons of a distant *People who never* offended him  
(African Slavery) they had no permission to catch and enslave

people who never injured them

(ADOI) giving his Assent to their *pretended* Acts of Legislation  
(African Slavery) ...to be practised by *pretended* Christians

There are clear influences of Locke and Sydney in *The Dialogue Between General Wolfe and General Gage*: ...ceases to be a British subject when he ceases to be governed by rulers chosen or approved of by himself.

The co-ordinated binomial phrase *blood and treasure* is repeated in *The Dialogue Between the Ghost of General Montgomery and An American Delegate*:  
And is no satisfaction to be made to the Colonies for the *blood and treasure* they have expended...

There is a direct reference to Algernon Sydney (see below) at the end of *The Dialogue Between the Ghost of General Montgomery and An American Delegate*.

The textual parallels from Paine's works are more similarities of phrasing and vocabulary than of content – evidence to support the theory that Paine may have drafted the ADOI.

#### *Influences of John Locke, Algernon Sidney and Others*

There are clear signs of influence by John Locke and Algernon Sydney in Paine's pre-ADOI writing. There is also a reference to *The Dutch Act of Abjuration* (1581) in *Common Sense*. It is not so easy to find similar influences on Jefferson in his pre-ADOI writing. One criticism made of Jefferson was that he extensively relied on John Locke as a source Hazelton (1906) although this is not an issue where authorship is concerned. However, the influence of John Locke and others should be explored further Becker (1922). Ideas from *Common Sense* come from *The First Treatise on Government* Locke (1680) and phrases used in the ADOI also appear in *The Second Treatise on Government* Locke (1690):

1. (ADOI) ...but when a long train of abuses and usurpations pursuing invariably...

(Locke II: 210) if a long train of Actings shew the Councils...  
Becker (1922), Laslett (1967). (The ADOI quote appears to be an amalgamation of *Summary View* and *The Second Treatise*)

2. (ADOI) ...mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves...

(Locke II: 230) ...the People, who are more disposed to suffer, than right themselves by Resistance, are not apt to stir. Becker (1922).

There are other parallels with John Locke's Treatises on Government apart from ones pointed out by Laslett and Becker, above. In (Locke II:4) he refers to 'A State of equality – without subordination or subjection' a theme that is developed in the ADOI. In (Locke II:6) he even uses the phrase *equal and independent*.

John Locke argued against the view that 'all government is absolute monarchy' and that a monarch is above the law – views expressed by Robert Filmer (Filmer R. 1652 *Observations upon Aristotle's Politiques touching the form of Government*. Filmer R. 1648 *The Necessity of the Absolute Power of All Kings*). Filmer's views on monarchy should be viewed in the context of the age in which he lived as these were written around the time of the Interregnum after Charles I had been deposed and before the monarchy had been restored. Locke also argued that God gave men dominion over all the earth.

He also discusses the problem of a monarch on his throne who dies as soon as his heir is born. These arguments are also used in *Common Sense* to argue against government by monarchy. This is not the only parallel with *Common Sense*. In (Locke II:109) the same biblical references are used as in *Common Sense*.

Algernon Sydney's writing Robertson (1772) is also thought to have influenced the drafting of the ADOI. Sydney argued that humans had a God-given right to choose their own form of government, which could only be by consent of the people. Although this might be a monarchy, a king cannot inherit the right to govern. Sydney's contribution might be seen in the light of Charles II's attempt to circumvent parliament and rule alone and his subsequent attempt to have his brother (James) appointed as his successor. Sydney's contribution is recognised by James Madison, who wrote in a letter to Thomas Jefferson that Sydney would 'impress on young minds the right of Nations to establish their own Governments'.

Another possible source and inspiration for the ADOI is the Act of Abjuration of 1581 – The Dutch Declaration of Independence (against the Spanish) Thatcher (1907). It has similar arguments to those given in the ADOI – i.e. that God did not create people to be a slave to their monarch, but that when they are treated thus, their monarch is no longer a king, but a



tyrant. The parallel doesn't end there: it states that when a monarch behaves like a tyrant towards his people, his people have the right to reject him and choose another for their leader. The layout of the Dutch Declaration is also similar to that of the ADOI. Once again, the Dutch position is referenced by Thomas Paine in *Common Sense*.

Stylometric tests based on grammatical features centred around the use of function words *and/to* have established Paine's authorship. On the other hand, a considerable amount of material contained within it has been taken from other sources. In order to test the consistency of the authorship results, a further test was devised based on the use of 344 fragments taken from the ADOI and the extent to which these fragments appear in the writings of Jefferson and Paine prior to the signing of the ADOI.

### **Grammar and Content of the American Declaration of Independence**

This part of the study commenced with the selection of 344 fragments taken from the ADOI. These fragments consisted of short phrases of words (of between 2-5 words in length) that co-occurred in the text. The aim of this test was to examine the ways in which unique grammatical fragments and content fragments are distributed for each author within the ADOI. The fragments were chosen from two coarse-grained categories:

1. Function word complexes or combinations of function words and lexical words/pronouns/modal auxiliary verbs. e.g *and to, opinions of, they should*. This set is designed to test the extent to which grammatical features from the ADOI are used by both authors.
2. Phrases and Expressions that involve content words, e.g. *the laws of nature, all men* and more content specific features such as *governments are instituted*. This set is devised to examine the extent to which content is used elsewhere by the two authors.

A search was then conducted for the existence of these fragments in the works of Jefferson and Paine (Appendix 1). The fragments were divided up into 4 categories:

1. Fragments unique to Jefferson.
2. Fragments unique to Paine.
3. Fragments used by both.
4. Fragments used by neither.

These are recorded in table 9 below.

**Table 9 – Fragment Usage Categories**

<b>Jefferson Only</b>	<b>Paine Only</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Neither</b>
40	28	69	207

The categories were further subdivided according to whether the fragments were function word based or content based. The results are given in table 10.

**Table 10 – Fragment Usage by Content/Function Word**

	<b>Syntactic</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>Jefferson</b>	16	24
<b>Paine</b>	16	12
<b>Both</b>	58	11
<b>Neither</b>	30	177

The results presented in table 10 show that Jefferson scores proportionately higher on content but Paine scores proportionately higher on syntactic fragments. However, the distribution of the fragments unique to each author is also interesting.

ADOIB is considered next along with the equivalent section of the VC (table 11).

**Table 11 – Fragments Occurring in ADOIB**

	<b>V C</b>	<b>Non- VC</b>
<b>Jefferson</b>	1 0	3
<b>Paine</b>	2	8
<b>Both</b>	8	6

13 fragments are unique to Jefferson and 10 are unique to Paine within ADOIB, these are proportionately about what would be expected, because ADOIB makes up about 30% of the total. However, a comparison of ADOIB and the VC reveals an interesting pattern: only two out of ten Paine fragments also appear in VC, whereas 10 out of the 13 of the Jefferson fragments also appear in the VC. The pattern indicates consistency of authorship for Jefferson for ADOIB and the VC. However, it also points at the influence of Paine in ADOIB, but not in the VC – possible evidence that ADOIB was edited by Paine based on the VC. There is less than a 1% probability that the results occurred by chance.

Next, it is necessary to consider all sections of the ADOI that are directly influenced by *Summary View* – (Appendix 2 and 3). In these, a count of the occurrence of fragments unique to Jefferson or Paine was made and the results are shown in table 12.

**Table 12 – Fragments Occurring Within Sections Influenced by *Summary View***

Unique to Jefferson	Unique to Paine	Both
18	4	10

The low score for Paine is not surprising, however what is interesting is that almost half of the fragments unique to Jefferson appear within only 10% of the total text. Fragments unique to Paine are more evenly distributed.

The following conclusions may be drawn from these findings:

- 2 Paine has proportionately more unique, syntactic fragments than Jefferson.
- 1 Jefferson's unique fragments occur disproportionately at the places where text is attributable to *Summary View*.
- 2 ADOIB contains significantly more fragments unique to Paine than occur in the comparable section of the Virginia Constitution.

These tests reinforce the view that there is a considerable influence of Jefferson in the content of the ADOI. However, grammatically it is more congruent with Paine's writing. Additionally, it suggests that Paine may have edited ADOIB using the VC as source material.

## The Anti-Slavery Clause

*The Adams' Copy* - as indeed does *The Rough Draft*, contains a clause that on first reading is vehemently opposed to the slave trade. Indeed the very existence of this clause has given rise to a great deal of speculation. For example Lewis (1947) uses it as evidence of Paine's authorship. His principal argument is that because Jefferson was himself a slave owner, he could not possibly have written the clause. Secondly, Paine had already opposed the slave trade ( *African Slavery 1774*). At the behest of two southern states, the clause was subsequently removed and hence does not appear in the final version of the ADOI. Jefferson himself is known to have been upset about this amendment to the ADOI Hazelton (1906).

However, Lewis's argument is untenable for several reasons. First of all, it is important to make the distinction between the abolition of slavery and the abolition of the importation of slaves. The former being humanitarian, the latter having more to do with simple economics. In fact the non-importation policy predates the ADOI by several years. *The Virginia Non Importation Resolutions of 1769* Boyd (1950) states:

That they will not import any Slaves, or purchase any imported, after...until the said Acts of Parliament are repealed.

Clearly an economic measure; there is a further reference in the VC:

by prompting our negroes to rise in arms...by an inhuman use of his negative he hath refused permission to exclude by law.

Furthermore, it is referred to again in *Summary View*:

The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies... it is necessary to exclude all further importations from Africa; yet our repeated attempts to effect this by prohibitions... have been hitherto defeated by his majesty's negative: ... and to the rights of human nature, deeply wounded by this infamous practice.

The existence of the last quotation appears to have been overlooked by Lewis and others. Clearly, a ban on the importation of slaves was policy and not something that Jefferson could afford to overlook.

Despite feelings expressed by Jefferson and others about incidents that occurred at Boston or in Canada for example, it is curious that of all the grievances taken from the original VC, that the anti-slavery clause is the only one that has been substantially altered.

## Conclusions

It has been demonstrated that Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine had consistent but different styles of writing.

Function words *to* and *and* were chosen as discriminators of Jefferson and Paine. A feature set consisting of 10 grammatical features was chosen, mostly based on the use of these function words within the ADOI. An extensive analysis of all known texts written prior to the ADOI by both Jefferson and Paine strongly suggest that Paine was the likely author of ADOIA – ADOIB having been taken from the Virginia Constitution, known to have been written by Jefferson. A further study based on 344 textual fragments from the ADOI corroborated the findings of the grammatical feature set.

The findings clearly show that the opening and closing sections of *The Adams' Copy* were more likely to have been written by Paine than by Jefferson. Evidence was also found that suggested that ADOIB was edited by Paine.

However, it is clear that Jefferson's contribution to independence and the ADOI is immense. The findings suggest that Paine was asked or instructed to draft the ADOI by Jefferson, or by one of the committee such as Franklin or Adams. It is almost certain that Jefferson instructed Paine to use material from both *Summary View* and *The Virginia Constitution*. While stylometric evidence can never be entirely conclusive, the results presented provide a compelling case for Paine's authorship.

Paine's commitment to independence is beyond doubt and he was in Philadelphia at the right time. His skills as a writer were well known to many members of the committee and he was known personally by Benjamin Franklin. He had already written anonymously and it would have been undesirable for an

Englishman to have drafted the ADOI. It has also been accepted by historians e.g. Hazelton (1906), that *The Rough Draft* was copied from an earlier version.

However, the contribution made by Thomas Paine in drafting the document should now be acknowledged.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **A. The Writings of Thomas Jefferson – Pre July 1776 (Boyd 1950)**

Letter to John Harvie (14/1/1760)  
Letter to John Page (25/12/1762)  
Letter to John Page (20/01/1763)  
Letter to John Page (15/07/1763)  
Letter to John Page (07/10/1763)  
Letter to William Fleming (10/1763)  
Letter to John Page (19/01/1764)  
Letter to John Page (23/01/1764)  
Letter to William Fleming (20/03/1764)  
Letter to John Page (09/04/1764)  
Letter to John Page (25/05/1766)  
Letter to Francis Willis (23/07/1766)  
Letter to William Preston (18/08/1768)  
Letter to Thomas Turpin (05/02/1769)  
Letter to Alexander White (19/04/1769)  
Resolutions for an answer to Gov Botetourt 1769  
Advertisement for a runaway slave 07/09/1769  
Letter to John Page (21/02/1770)  
Letter to Thomas Adams (11/07/1770)  
Letter to Peyton Randolph (23/07/1770)  
Letter to Thomas Adams (20/02/1771)  
Letter to James Ogilvie (20/02/1771)  
Letter to Inglis and Long (11/05/1771)  
Letter to Thomas Adams (01/06/1771)  
Letter to Thomas Burke (30/06/1771)  
Letter to Unknown (30/06/1771)  
Letter to Robert Skipworth (03/08/1771)  
Letter to Thomas Burke (06/12/1771)  
Amendments to a Bill Concerning Roads and Bridges (April 1772)  
Letter to Inglis and Long (11/06/1772)  
Letter to Inglis and Long (04/07/1772)  
Letter to William Wood (17/07/1772)  
Letter to William Cabel (03/09/1772)  
Letter to Samuel Inglis (13/10/1772)  
Letter to Charles McPherson (25/02/1773)  
Letter to William Fleming (19/05/1773)  
Resolutions of the Freeholders of Albemarle County (26/07/1774)



Draft of a Declaration of Rights for the Virginia Convention (Aug 1774)  
Draft of Instructions to the Virginia Delegates in Continental Congress (Summary View) (July 1774)  
Letter to Archibald Carey et al. (09/12/1774)  
Resolution on Land Grants (27/03/1775)  
Letter to Ebenezer Hazard (30/04/1775)  
Letter to William Small (07/05/1775)  
Letter to St. George Tucker (10/06/1775)  
Letter to Francis Eppes (26/06/1775)  
Letter to Francis Eppes (04/07/1775)  
Letter to George Gilmer (05/07/1775)  
Declaration of the Causes and Necessity for Taking Up Arms – Jefferson's Draft (06/07/1775)  
Resolutions of Congress on Lord North's Proposals – Jefferson's Draft (25/07/1775)  
Letter to John Randolph (25/08/1775)  
Letter to Francis Eppes (10/10/1775)  
Letter to Francis Eppes (24/10/1775)  
Letter to John Page (31/10/1775)  
Letter to Francis Eppes (07/11/1775)  
Letter to Francis Eppes (21/11/1775)  
Letter to John Randolph (29/11/1775)  
Letter to John Page (10/12/1775)  
Draft on a Declaration of the British Treatment of Ethan Allen (02/01/1776)  
Refutation of the Argument that the British Colonies were established at the expense of the British Nation (19/01/1776)  
Letter to Thomas Nelson 16/05/1776  
Letter to John Page 17/05/1776  
Notes of the Proceedings in the Continental Congress (07/06/1776)  
The Virginia Constitution (June 1776)  
Sherburne Testimony (17/06/1776)  
Report on the Committee of the Cedar's Cartel (17/06/1776) (dubious authorship)  
Letter to Benjamin Franklin (21/06/1776)  
Letter to Edmund Pendleton (30/06/1776)  
Letter to William Randolph (6/1776)  
Letter to George Wythe (6/1776)  
Proposed Resolution of Rotation of Membership in the Continental Congress (6/1776)  
Letter to William Fleming (01/07/1776)

**B. The Writings of Thomas Paine – Pre July 1776 (Conway 1894)**

Case of the Officers of Excise 1772

African Slavery 1774

A Dialogue Between General Wolfe and General Gage in a Wood near Boston 04/01/1775

The Magazine in America 24/01/1775

Useful and Entertaining Hints 10/02/1775

New Anecdotes of Alexander the Great 02/1775

Reflections on the Life and Death of Lord Clive 03/1775

Cupid and Hymen 03/1775

Duelling 05/1775

Reflections on Titles 05/1775

The Dream Interpreted 05/1775

Reflections on Unhappy Marriages 06/1775

Thoughts on Defensive War 07/1775

An Occasional Letter on the Female Sex 08/1775

A Serious Thought 18/10/1775

Common Sense 10/01/1776

A Dialogue between the ghost of General Montgomery, just arrived from the Elysian Fields and an American Delegate in a Wood near Philadelphia Jan 1776

Epistle to Quakers Feb 1776

The Forester's Letters 1 28/03/1776

The Forester's Letters 2 08/04/1776

The Forester's Letters 3 28/04/1776

The Forester's Letters 4 08/05/1776

**Appendix 2 – Textual Similarities Between Summary View and ADOI**

1. (ADOI) *When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary...*

(Summary View) *When in the course of late war it becomes expedient...*

2. (ADOI) *...that they should declare the causes which impel them to the change...*

(Summary View) *such being the causes for which the representative body should and should not be dissolved...*

3. (ADOI) ...*as to them shall seem most likely* to effect their safety and happiness...

(Summary View) ...*as to them shall seem most likely* to promote public happiness...

4. (ADOI) ...but when a long train of abuses and usurpations *begun at a distinguish'd period and pursuing invariably...*

(Summary View) ...but a series of oppressions *begun at a distinguished period and pursued unalterably...*

5. (ADOI) ...subject us to a jurisdiction foreign to our constitution...

(Summary View) the acts of power assumed by a body of men foreign to our constitutions...

6. (ADOI) ...*foreign to our constitution and unacknowledged by our laws...*

(Summary View) ...*foreign to our constitutions and unacknowledged by our laws...*

7. (ADOI) ...he has prostituted *his negative* for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit...

(Summary View) to resume the exercise of *his negative power* and to prevent the passage of laws...

8. (ADOI) we have warned them *from time to time* of attempts of their legislature...

(Summary View) his majesty has *from time to time* sent among us large bodies of armed forces.

9. (ADOI) that all Men are created *equal and independent...*

(Summary View) upon those rights which God and the laws have given *equally and independently...*

### **Appendix 3 – Ideas From Summary View that Appear in ADOI**

1. (Summary View) To remind him that our ancestors, before their emigration to America, were the free inhabitants of the British dominions in Europe...

(ADOI) We have reminded them of the Circumstances of our Emigration and Settlement here...

2. (Summary View) Their own blood was spilt in acquiring lands for

their settlement, their fortunes expended in making that settlement effectual...

(ADOI) That these were effected at the Expense of our own blood and treasure...

3. (Summary View) Not a shilling was ever issued from the public treasures of his majesty, or his ancestors, for their assistance...

(ADOI) unassisted by the wealth or strength of Great Britain...

4. (Summary View) That the exercise of free trade with all parts of the world... was next the object of unjust encroachment...

(ADOI) for cutting off our Trade with all Parts of the World...

(VC) for cutting off our trade with all parts of the world;

5. (Summary View) The true ground on which we declare these acts void is, that the British Parliament has no right to exercise authority over us.

(ADOI) but that Submission to their Parliament, was no Part of our Constitution, nor ever in Idea.

6. (Summary View) but a series of oppressions, begun at a distinguished period, and pursued unalterably through every change of ministers...

(ADOI) But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, begun at a distinguish'd Period, and pursuing invariably, the Same Object...

7. (Summary View) form that connected chain of parliamentary usurpation, which has already been the subject of frequent applications to his majesty...

(ADOI) We have warned them from time to time of attempts of their Legislature, to extend a Jurisdiction over these our States...

8. (Summary View) a murder committed there is, ..., to be tried in the court of the King's Bench...

(ADOI) for transporting us beyond Seas to be Tried for pretended Offences...

(VC) for transporting us beyond seas to be tried for pretended offences...

9. (Summary View) his majesty possesses the power of refusing to pass into law any bill which has already passed...

(ADOI) He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public Good.

(VC) By putting his negative on laws the most wholesome & necessary for ye public good

10. (Summary View) to resume the exercise of his negative power, and to prevent the passage of laws by any one legislature of the empire

(ADOI) he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt...

11. (Summary View) The abolition of domestic slavery is the great object of desire in those colonies, where it was unhappily introduced in their infant state.

(ADOI) determined to keep open a market where men should be bought and sold, and that this...

(VC) by an inhuman use of his negative he hath refused permission to exclude by law.

12. (Summary View) that his subjects should give up the glorious right of representation...

(ADOI) unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature...

(VC) unless the person to be benefited by them would relinquish the inestimable right of representation in the legislature.

13. (Summary View) After dissolving one house of representatives, they have refused to call another

(ADOI) He has dissolved representative houses, repeatedly and continually, for opposing...

(VC) by dissolving legislative assemblies repeatedly and continually for opposing...

14. (Summary View) if armed men of another country...might be brought into the realm at any time without consent of...

(ADOI) for quartering large bodies of troops among us

(VC) for quartering large bodies of troops among us

15. (Summary View) instead of subjecting the military to the civil powers, his majesty has expressly made the civil subordinate to the military...

(ADOI) He has affected to render the military, independent of, and Superior to, the civil Power.

(VC) to render the military, independent of, and superior to, the civil power.

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## *Book Review*

**Thomas Paine His Life, His Time and The Birth of Modern Nations.** Craig Nelson. 398pp, Profile Books, London, 2007, hardback, illustrated, ISBN 1 86197 638 0. £20

Why, one wonders, has Craig Nelson moved from writing travel books and an account of a wartime American bombing raid on Japan to a biography to a biography of Thomas Paine. Its not as if there is a shortage of such works, indeed the bibliography lists several from the pioneering writings of Rickman, Cobbett and Conway to more recent books by Aldridge, Ayer and Keane. Nelson's book adds nothing new to our knowledge of Paine's life and work but it does contain a massive amount of information and opinion about the Enlightenment era. It is not bedside reading but if you have plenty of time it fully rewards the effort of reading it.

Some of the facts that Nelson records are inspiring such as American militia charging into battle shouting the famous lines from *Common Sense*: "These are the times that try means' souls". Nearly two centuries after it was penned American veteran opponents of the Vietnam War would call themselves winter soldiers, another quotation from Paine. Paine's efforts as a propagandist for American independence far outweighed his efforts as an infantryman.

Other facts are of little interest to political historians, although I found the presentation of a chamber pot by Louis XVI to the duchesse Polignac de Sevres illustrated with an engraving of Franklin, who described Paine as his adopted political son and the circulation of pornographic drawings of Marie Antoinette rather amusing.

Nelson records Paine's bitter opposition to slavery. Paine wrote in *African Slavery in America*: "Our traders in men...must know the wickedness of the slave trade, if they attend to reasoning or the dictates of their own hearts..." Five weeks after its publication the first abolitionist organisation in America, the Pennsylvania Society for the Relief of Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage was formed. What humbug is displayed by the British ruling class, Elizabeth

Windsor presiding at a ceremony to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the slave trade when the British aristocracy and the Anglican Church made a vast fortune out of it, the slaves of the Anglicans were branded with the word "society". Paine would have supported the Africans such as Nanny of the Maroons (now a national heroine in Jamaica) who revolted against slavery. Slavery was abolished in Pennsylvania in 1780 but millions remained in bondage in the other states.

Nelson sees Paine very much as a product of the 18th century enlightenment and he contrasts the plebian coffee houses and taverns of America with the aristocratic salons of pre-Revolutionary France. The revolutions of the enlightenment raised an important question which still remains unanswered. Is it inevitable that revolutions aimed at liberating humanity and building a better world always end with the enslavement of the people by new and worse tyrannies? The American and Russian revolutions created so much hope only to end with the rule of corrupt plutocratic oligarchies.

Paine took a positive view of Native Americans and while secretary to the United States Council of Safety negotiated new treaties with Iroquois leader Last Night. Paine thought that the English government had but half the sense this Indian had. The Iroquois confederation of six tribes was governed by the Great Law of Peace. Many of its ideas would later be found in the American Constitution. By the end of the 19th century the Native Americans had been the victims of legalised robbery and genocide, an impoverished remnant living as second class citizens in their own land.

Paine was a scientist as well as a revolutionary and Nelson relates how he and Washington experimented with igniting gas bubbles stirred up from the bottom of a muddy river. He tells us that Joseph Priestley, who fled to America to escape the Church and King mob, invented seltzer by capturing the gas released by a Leeds brewery.

Nelson devotes an entire chapter to The Age of Reason which Paine wrote while imprisoned as a victim of the Terror during the French Revolution and which led to his denunciation as a "dirty little atheist". Paine made it clear that he believed in one God and hoped for happiness beyond this life. He did not believe in the



creed professed by the Jewish, Roman or any other church. Like many advanced Frenchmen and Americans Paine was a deist. While Paine's religion of doing good was better than that of the established Protestant and Catholic churches as an atheist I find belief in any God irrational and unproven. However in an age of fundamentalist fanaticism and jihad suicide bombings *The Age of Reason* should be translated into Arabic and Urdu and widely circulated in the Islamic community. But I fear its publishers would suffer a worse fate than the Englishmen who were imprisoned in the 19th century for publishing it. In his later life Paine would become a regular contributor to *The Prospect* published by the blind Presbyterian turned deist Elihu Palmer.

Nelson is nothing if not an opinionated writer. He describes Rousseau as an "...expert on parenting who abandoned all of his children; the deist who proclaimed all other deists as infidels." He describes Jane Austen as writing "a good skewering". In my view her twee tales could be marketed as a cure for insomnia.

One subject Nelson doesn't address is the influence of Freemasonry on the American Revolution. Paine was of too humble an origin to be a mason but Washington He was initiated into the Fredericksburg Lodge in 1752. The Masonic eye in the pyramid symbol appears on Federal Reserve notes. It was said that the execution of Louis Capot was revenge for the execution of the medieval Templar Jacques De Molay. Paine himself narrowly escaped execution himself no thanks to his former close friend Washington.

Sadly Paine, largely rejected and even deprived of a vote by the America he had helped create, spent the last two years of his life as an invalid afflicted by bouts of fever and dropsy. He died on June 8, 1809. He was placed in a mahogany coffin and buried in New Rochelle having been refused a plot in New York's Quaker cemetery. His tombstone proclaimed: "Thomas Paine, author of Common Sense, died June 8 1809, aged 74 years." A year later Cobbett and his son removed the remains to England. When the bankrupt Cobbett died in 1835 they became lost. Some of his writings suffered the same fate. A collection which came into the hands of Benjamin Bonneville was destroyed by fire.

But Paine's ideas and influence lived on. Craft weavers in Leeds opposed to the dark satanic mills of the industrial revolution

gathered in a Thomas Paine hall. Welsh radicals met in secret to read his books which they had hidden under rocks. In Sheffield God Save Great Thomas Paine was sung to the tune of the National Anthem. The Chartists lauded him, when his name appeared in George Hamey's *Red Republican* it was printed in capitals. Secularists named their children for him. Paine birthday events were widely popular on both sides of the Atlantic.

In America was an influence on such various persons as the Feminist Susan B Taylor, the Socialist Eugene Debs and the reformist Democrat President Franklin Rossevelt. Abraham Lincoln, the father of the modern Republican Party, was converted to deism by reading *The Age of Reason*. He wrote a pamphlet extolling Paine's views which his friends tossed into the stove. Even the bumbling third rate movie actor Ronald Reagan could quote Paine correctly although I suspect Paine would have been with the Black Panthers who led Californian students in chanting: "\*\*\*\* Ronald Reagan."

Not one of the golden statues of Paine proposed by Napoleon has ever been constructed. When in the early 1960s a group of Americans commissioned a statue to be constructed by Charles Wheeler and erected in Thetford local reactionaries opposed this. The chair of the women's' section of the British Legion exploded: "Tom Paine, the philanderer and an unmitigated scamp, is the last man Thetford should honour." The Tory deputy mayor wanted an inscription about Paine's conviction for treason be engraved on the base. Happily this move was defeated. Out of this incident the Thomas Paine Society was formed. It exists to this day to promote the legacy of Paine's revolutionary democracy. But it always needs more active members.

This is a big book and will require considerable effort to read it. But the effort should prove worthwhile.

Terry Liddle.