
Of Salt Mountains, Prairie Dogs, and Horned Frogs

The Louisiana Purchase and the Evolution of
Federalist Satire 1803–1812

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In November 1803, President Thomas Jefferson presented to the United States Congress a report on the newly acquired Louisiana Territory. The report offered a wide-ranging description of the territory, including geographic boundaries, accounts of the various inhabitants, and the natural resources contained within the region. While the published account ran more than sixty pages and covered a variety of topics, the description of the geography and wildlife seemed to have the greatest hold on the imagination of its readers. The most fantastic of these was a description of an “extraordinary . . . *Salt Mountain*.” The mountain, according to the report, “exists about 1000 miles up the Missouri, and not far from that river” and was “180 miles long, and 45 in width, composed of solid rock salt, without any trees, or even shrubs on it.” For Jefferson and his supporters the news of the salt mountain and the other natural wonders contained within the Louisiana Territory provided cause for celebration. For some members of the Federalist opposition, however, these natural wonders offered grist for the political mill. The

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Journal of the Early Republic, 35 (Spring 2015)

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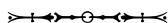
Gazette of the United States declared “some of the democrats carry their complaisance to Mr. Jefferson to such lengths as seriously to pretend that they believe in the existence of a vast mountain of solid, rock salt.” Another piece employed a bit of wit calling on “Mr. Jefferson to depute a committee of wise ones to enquire and report whether the *Mountain of Salt* . . . may not be *Lot’s wife*, magnified by the process of time.”¹

Federalists did not limit their scorn for the contents of the newly acquired territory to accounts of the salt mountain. As reports of the “Louisiana Curiosities,” including news of horned frogs and “the wild dog of the prairie,” continued to be publicized, members of the Federalist minority continued to satirize them, printing ‘news’ of “a considerable lake of pure whiskey” and vast rivers of “*golden eagles* ready coined.” While this back and forth is colorful, historians often treat it as little more than an interesting aside in studies of the Federalist response to the Louisiana Purchase, focusing instead on larger issues of constitutional authority, the extension of slavery, and even northern secession.²

1. *An Account of Louisiana Laid Before Congress at the Direction of the President of the United States, November 14, 1803* (Providence, RI, 1803), 16. *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Nov. 22, 1803. The connection between Lot’s wife and the biblical story of Sodom would not have been lost on the *Gazette’s* readers—thus implying connection between the land of Sodom and the newly acquired Louisiana territory. Other Federalist satirists would make similar connections between the Louisiana territory and the land of Laputa from Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels* (see discussion below).

2. *New York Gazette* (New York), Jan. 12, 1805. *Boston Gazette*, Aug. 26, 1805. *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford), Jan. 5, 1804. *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Dec. 5, 1803. Recent examinations of the Federalists’ response to the Louisiana Purchase include Jon Kukla, *A Wilderness so Immense: The Louisiana Purchase and the Destiny of America* (New York, 2003), 289–301; Andrew Siegel, “‘Steady Habits’ Under Siege: The Defense of Federalism in Jeffersonian Connecticut,” in *Federalists Reconsidered*, ed. Doron Ben-Atar and Barbara Oberg (Charlottesville, VA, 1998), 217–19; Kevin Gannon, “Escaping ‘Mr. Jefferson’s Plan of Destruction’: New England Federalists and the Idea of a Northern Confederacy, 1803–1804,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 21 (Fall 2001), 413–43; and Peter Kastor, “‘What Are the Advantages of the Acquisition?’: Inventing Expansion in the Early American Republic,” *American Quarterly* 4 (2008), 1003–1035. For more on Federalist visions of expansion see Andrew R. L. Cayton, “Radicals in the ‘Western World’: The Federalist Conquest of Trans-Appalachian North America,” in *Federalists Reconsidered*, ed. Ben-Atar and Oberg, 77–96.

Yet to relegate these “curiosities” to a secondary role misses an important moment in the development of American politics. More than simply serving as entertaining political banter, the Federalist critique of the Louisiana Purchase became an essential piece of the minority party’s ongoing satire of the Jefferson administration. These efforts became a form of shorthand that made up a key part of a moderate Federalist identity as they sought to navigate a shifting political landscape in earliest decades of the nineteenth century.³



In the wake of the election of 1800, many Federalists found themselves adrift. Internal divisions between young and old, extremist and moderate, Hamiltonian “high Federalists” and Adams’s supporters had all contributed to their defeat. The response to Jefferson’s victory was as varied as the factors that had contributed to their loss, leaving the Federalists “a party in search of an issue.”⁴

Yet for all of their division, many Federalist continued to cling to a vision of the young republic that had its roots in classical republican political theory, founded upon a precarious balance between reason and passion. Whether defined as a legacy of the “Moderate Enlightenment” or an “American Augustan Age,” the Federalists believed that following revolutionary change it was the responsibility of those in power to “keep the calm after the storm, maintain the government steady and responsible, create the excellence which the revolutionaries had demanded.” This Augustan tradition underpinned much of the Federalists’ governing philosophy during the Washington and Adams administrations. Even after their defeat in 1800, rather than rejecting this Augustan philosophy as part of a failed experiment, many Federalists clung even more tightly to their vision, as Linda Kerber has argued, “not merely because they had lost office, patronage, and power . . . but because America appeared

3. In parallel to the Federalist moderation, Henry May in *The Enlightenment in America*, 274–75, and more recently Seth Cotlar, *Tom Paine’s America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic* (Charlottesville, VA, 2011), have argued for a similar moderation among many of the mainstream Republicans away from the more radical “Jacobinical” wing of the party.

4. David Hackett Fischer in *The Revolution of American Conservatism: The Federalist Party in the Era of Jeffersonian Democracy* (New York, 1965), 150.

to be developing a civilization they did not understand and of which they certainly did not approve.”⁵

Despite their commitment to this Augustan vision, many in the newly minted minority recognized the need to adapt their tactics to the realities of the young republic. Even before their defeat in 1800 many Federalists found it difficult to communicate their vision of an ordered society to a broader American audience. For all of their efforts to dismiss and silence the Republican opposition as little more than stylized rhetoric, some Federalists came to recognize the power of public opinion and began to cultivate their own literary style in attempting to mobilize “rational” and “disciplined” Federalist crowds.⁶

In its earliest form this battle over public opinion between the nascent parties became a “civil war of *belles lettres*” with a barrage of satire, slander, invective, and abuse in both prose and poetry. As early as 1792, John Adams declared that “Nothing . . . [must] pass unanswered; reasoning must be answered with reasoning; wit by wit, humor by humor; satire by satire; burlesque by burlesque and even buffoonery by buffoonery.” Satire, for the Federalists seemed to be a means of communicating their Augustan vision to the “middling classes” who might otherwise fail to understand the Federalist message.⁷

Although Federalist satire varied widely in form and tone, much of it retained a moderate Augustan character. At the heart of these satirical efforts was an attempt to attack what the Jeffersonians were—immoral philosophes with a proclivity for deism and an affinity for the leveling

5. Henry F. May, *The Enlightenment in America* (New York, 1976), 88–101, 253. Linda Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent: Imagery and Ideology in Jeffersonian America* (Ithaca, NY, 1970), 1–11. Darren Staloff, *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding* (New York, 2005), 30–34.

6. David Waldstreicher, “Federalism, the Styles of Politics, and the Politics of Style,” in *Federalists Reconsidered*, 99–103. Fischer in *The Revolution of American Conservatism* offered one of the first studies to trace the evolution of the Federalists from party to reform societies. For a more recent study of the evolution of the Federalists see Todd Estes, *The Jay Treaty Debate, Public Opinion, and the Evolution of Early American Political Culture* (Amherst, MA, 2008).

7. For more on the “civil war of *belle lettres*,” see V. L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought, Volume 1: The Colonial Mind 1620–1800* (Norman, OK, 1987), 357–95. Gary Nash, “The American Clergy and the French Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 22 (July 1965), 392–412.

turmoil of the French Revolution. Under Republican leadership, the Federalists contended, the United States would be put on a path toward becoming a satellite state in Napoleon's empire. If the young nation were to avoid this fate, many Federalists argued, it would only be by embracing the steady principles and habits of the people of New England who had not yet been infected by the contagion of Jeffersonian ideology.⁸

Connecticut Federalist David Daggett's Fourth of July oration "Sun-Beams May Be Extracted from Cucumbers, But the Process Is Tedious" embodies many of these August Federalist themes. Even in its presentation the oration, delivered "at the request of the citizens of New Haven," epitomized how Federalists believed national holidays ought to be observed—a civilized, orderly, gathering that stood in stark contrast to the noisy promiscuous crowds that frequented Republican celebrations.⁹

Drawing his title from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, Daggett used a description of the experiments at the academy in the fictional city of Lagado on the flying island of Laputa as a comparative starting point for a critique of Jefferson and his supporters. Daggett argued that while the efforts of the "artists" at the Lagado academy to make a pin cushion out of a piece of marble, prevent the growth of wool upon two young lambs, abolish words, and extract sunbeams out of cucumbers, might be laughable in their absurdity, they were not wholly different from the efforts of Daggett's Republican contemporaries. The projects of these American "literati" who sought to construct a machine (which they called an *Automaton*) "designed to transport from place to place, by land, any load without the aid of horses, oxen, or any other animal"; travel by air (the only "truly philosophical mode" of travel); or design "a *submarine* boat or *driving machine*" which would allow them to travel "among shark, sturgeon and sea-horses" were, in Daggett's eyes every bit as absurd as the efforts of the scholars at Lagado.¹⁰

Daggett's critique of the Republican experiments did not end with their fantastic inventions. He argued that the philosophic principles that

8. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent*, 4–5, 11–13; May, *The Enlightenment in America*, 252–63.

9. David Daggett, *Sun-Beams May Be Extracted from Cucumbers But the Process Is Tedious. An Oration Pronounced on the Fourth of July, 1799 at the Request of the Citizens of New-Haven* (New Haven, CT, 1799).

10. *Ibid.*, 6–8. Daggett was not alone in his use of Swift's work in satirizing the Jeffersonians; see Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent*, 16–22.

had led some to seek these new modes of transportation had inspired others to call for a complete reform of child-rearing. Rather than celebrating and respecting the wisdom of their elders, these new theories called on parents to allow children to discover the world for themselves, as any “inclination to imitate the example of parents and other ancestors, is the great bane of the peace, dignity and glory of young men, and that reason will conduct them, if not fettered with habits, to the perfection of human nature.” This challenge to tradition, Daggett noted, had been espoused by the French philosophe and friend of Thomas Jefferson, Constantin-François de Chasseboeuf, Comte de Volney, who had spent much of the previous four years traveling among Democratic-Republican circles in the United States.¹¹

These philosophic theories were not limited to a rejection the established norms of childhood education. Daggett contended that Jeffersonian visions of equality and liberty stemmed from the same root. The logical extension of a rejection of the wisdom of ages in raising children was a belief that “men are all equal, and of course no *restraints* are imposed by society—no *distinctions* can exist, except to gratify the pride of the *ambitious*, the cruelty of the *despotic*.” To achieve this democratic vision, “all former systems of thinking and acting must be annihilated,” so that the “reign of reason” could be firmly established. Returning to his opening theme, Daggett noted that the head of the efforts to implement this new era of “liberty” in the United States was a philosopher “who has taken an accurate mesuration of the Mammoth’s bones—made surprising discoveries in the doctrine of vibrating pendulums, and astonished the world with the precise gauge and dimensions of all the aboriginals of America.” In this reading, Jefferson himself proved no better than the artists at Lagado biding their time as they waited for their outrageous inventions and theories to come to fruition.¹²

In the face of this Republican threat to the established order, Daggett, like many of his Federalist contemporaries, believed New England virtue to be the best hope to preserve American character and tradition. Daggett contrasted the efforts of a group of Republicans who had “discovered” new techniques which “rendered sowing and reaping unnecessary” and were now “hourly expecting to ‘reap where he hath

11. Daggett, *Sun-Beams*, 10–15.

12. *Ibid.*

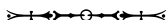
not sown and gather where he hath not strawed” with those of “old fashioned” New Englanders who “rise early and set up late, and eat the bread of industry.” Having outlined the silliness of Republican thought, Daggett ultimately offered a more serious assessment of the threat posed by the emerging Republican philosophy. Tracing the spread of these “novel theories” in the Atlantic world, Daggett observed that while they had merely “dawned upon New England,” already they “glowed in the southern states,” and “have burnt in France.” The implementation of these theories “under the pretense of making men perfect—of establishing perfect Liberty—perfect Equality—and an entirely new order of things” had so degraded France that “she has become one great Bedlam.” It was Daggett’s hope and belief that the news of French calamity would convince the majority of Americans of the folly of this philosophical revisioning of the social order. “If many of our countrymen approve the measures of France, and applaud them in their mad career of domination, I speak with confidence, the body of our citizens entertain different opinions. Such will cordially join in protecting our government, and in supporting an energetic administration.” Despite a brief turn to the looming threat of French disorder, the tone of Daggett’s sermon remained one of moderate satire, playing on the folly of the Jeffersonian world view and appealing to the common sense of his audience in rejecting such an absurd vision for the future of the republic.¹³

Daggett and many of his Federalist contemporaries found in *Gulliver’s Travels* a ready-made template for their satirical attacks. In its original iteration Swift’s work had been an Augustan satire directed against the impractical and abstract efforts of the Royal Society of London. Jefferson’s interest in science and the natural world made a ready proxy for Swift’s Royal Society. A year after Daggett’s oration, in the lead-up to the election of 1800, the Federalist press again turned to the Swiftian imagery in a satirical news piece that was printed in both New York and Philadelphia. The *Gazette of the United States* and New York’s *Daily Advertiser* reported that as it was expected that “a war with Great Britain will be one of the first steps of Mr. J’s administration” the Republicans were contemplating “the establishment of an Academy, after the model of that of Lagado,” where “young gentlemen will be particularly instructed in the *best* method of calcining Ice into Gunpowder.” Echoing

13. Daggett, *Sun-Beams*, 9, 15–18, 24.

Daggett's critique this Federalist effort fused the absurdity of Lagadan-style experiments with the very real threat of renewed hostilities with England.¹⁴

The language of Lagado appeared and reappeared throughout Federalist satire of the Jefferson administration. One of the most widely printed uses of the notion of the absurdity of Lagadan projects came in a series of essays entitled "The Projector" that originally appeared in the *Massachusetts Mercury and New England Palladium* in January 1801. The series was then reprinted, at least in part, in newspapers throughout the United States. The themes of the "The Projector" series closely mirror that of Daggett's "Sunbeams" oration (Linda Kerber has suggested that Daggett may well have been the author of these essays). Alluding to Swift's work, "The Projector" satirically declared that the existing "system of education tends to cramp the genius." With such constraints, "doubtless, many great geniuses are fettered, enfeebled, *belittled*, and, at length destroyed by our stupid *New England compresses and bandages* of education. My project is to let the child literally *have his own way*." Federalists satirists argued that these Jeffersonian ideas could be seen as little better than the absurd projects of the fictional Laputians, which if left unchecked would destroy the young United States.¹⁵



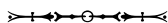
In the face of the Jeffersonian threat, these satirical efforts and the world of letters more broadly allowed some Federalists to establish a virtual refuge for their vision of America. The result was the creation of a literary community that transcended local boundaries and established a reading community based on a view of "insiders and outsiders, friends and enemies" that helped move the political culture of the United States toward

14. *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Mar. 26, 1800; and *Daily Advertiser* (New York), Mar. 29, 1800.

15. *Massachusetts Mercury and New England Palladium* (Boston), Jan. 13, 1801. The original series appeared in the *Mercury* on Jan. 2, 6, 13, 20, 23, 1801, and was reprinted in the *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford), Jan. 12 and Mar. 2, 1801; *Political Repository* (Brookfield, MA), Jan. 13, 1801; *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Jan. 20, 21, 22, 27, and Feb. 4, 1801; the *Alexandria Advertiser* (VA), Jan. 25, Feb. 5, 20, 1801; *The Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), Feb. 12, 1801. For more of the widespread use of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, see Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent*, 16–22.

a form of partisan engagement that embraced the inevitability of dissent. In “sneering back” at their opponents, the Federalists helped to construct a framework for the exact style of political infrastructure that they had attempted to eschew or even suppress as the party in power.¹⁶

The evolving partisan infrastructure of this virtual Federalism helped make politics in the young United States about more than direct public action; instead Americans could express political affiliation through acts of reading, buying, or simply feeling. Facilitated by an expanding press, the virtual community established through a Federalist world of letters meant that political participation did not require electoral or legislative triumphs, but could be as simple as a “burst of sardonic laughter or a quick flood of tears.” In such a political world, satire could do as much to cement political bonds as electoral or legislative victories. It was in this Federalist world of letters that the core of the moderate Augustan ideology survived even after the election of 1800.¹⁷



The Louisiana Purchase proved a true test of the Federalist ability to weather the Jeffersonian storm. For many Federalists the acquisition of the new territory embodied everything that they had feared from a Jeffersonian presidency. Responding to news of the purchase, Fisher Ames declared, “I renounce the wrangling world of politics, and devote myself in future to pigs and poultry.”¹⁸

Yet, it was not the issue of expansion, in and of itself, that disheartened these Federalists. Indeed Federalist supporters of the Northwest Ordinance believed that an orderly and controlled expansion might allow not only a “replication of the East but an improvement on it.” By 1803,

16. Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent*, 21, 11. John Brooke, *Columbia Rising: Civil Life on the Hudson River from the Revolution to the Age of Jackson* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), 302. For more on Federalist literary culture and satire in the early republic, see Catherine O’Donnell Kaplan, *Men of Letters in the Early Republic: Cultivating Forums of Citizenship* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2008); David S. Shields, *Civil Tongues and Polite Letters in British America* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1997); and Christopher Grasso, *A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999), 311–18.

17. Kaplan, *Men of Letters*, 136–37.

18. Fisher Ames to Oliver Wolcott, Mar. 9, 1803, quoted in Kerber, *Federalists in Dissent*, 162.

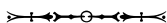
however, many Federalists who had supported westward expansion in the 1790s feared that under Jefferson's leadership their vision of an orderly move west seemed doomed to be replaced by a chaotic over-spreading of the continent. This Jeffersonian expansion, they argued, would create a "hothouse of selfishness" which would undermine all social order and ultimately lead to the destruction of the United States. Federalist Manasseh Cutler, who had once celebrated the possibilities of expansion into the Ohio Valley, feared that the acquisition of Louisiana meant that "the seeds of separation are planted." Where the westward movement of the American people had once represented an opportunity for improvement (if properly controlled), under Republican leadership, the annexation of the Louisiana territory represented a wave of uncontrolled growth into the "capacious wilderness" and seemed to secure a permanent majority for slave-holding interests, leaving Federalists to wander in the wilderness.¹⁹

Fear of an uncontrolled westward expansion seemed to convince the most zealous proponents of a New England patriotism, the extreme conservative wing of the Federalists, that the only course of action was out of the Union. Timothy Pickering, former secretary of state and senator from Massachusetts, led a group of New England congressmen and senators in a plot to bring about the creation of an independent northern confederacy, within which the traditional vision of a Federalist nation could continue to grow, free from the threat of the expanding slave power. Pickering and his fellow secession-minded New Englanders engaged in a campaign to drum up support for their vision among leading northeasterners. Roger Griswold of Connecticut busied himself lobbying his constituents, trying to convince them that there was no choice but to abandon the nation that was now under the control of "that dreadful system of Jacobinism." Federalists in New Hampshire found themselves inundated by the efforts of William Plumer, who composed over four hundred letters to his constituents, declaring his hope that "New England will retain her federalism," even if that meant leaving the existing Union.²⁰

19. Fisher Ames, *The Dangers of American Democracy in The Works of Fisher Ames*, ed. Seth Ames (Boston, 1854) 377-79. Cayton, "Radicals in the 'Western World,'" 78, 83, 94-95.

20. Roger Griswold to Oliver Wolcott, Mar. 11, 1804; William Plumer to Jeremiah Smith, December 4, 1803, quoted in Gannon, "Escaping 'Mr. Jefferson's Plan of Destruction,'" 436.

These secession-minded Federalists went as far as to court Aaron Burr to join their cause, working to exploit the rift that had emerged between Jefferson and his vice president. Pickering and his co-conspirators played on Burr's personal ambition and planned to support the sitting vice president in a bid to become governor of New York, at which time Burr could lead the Empire State out of the Union, as the first step toward a northern confederacy. Despite secessionist hopes, the 1804 elections delivered a crushing blow to these efforts to create a new Federalist republic. Burr's loss in the New York election was only one in a series of defeats for the secessionist movement in the New England states during the fall of 1804. While the separatist impulse and strong regional patriotism would remain a part of Federalist politics, increasingly it was in the world of letters and the Federalist literary culture that served to sustain a moderate Federalist opposition as they sought to come to terms with their minority status.²¹



The Federalist world of letters, drawing on the established Augustan tropes of Federalist satire—returning to the use of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* in decrying the administration's handling of the new territory, provided a moderate faction of Federalists solace in the face of the Louisiana Purchase. Members of the Federalist press found the opportunity to invoke the language of Laputa as early as February 1804 when Congressional Republicans attempted to suppress a report from the new

21. Gannon, "Escaping 'Mr. Jefferson's Plan of Destruction,'" 438–43. While Gannon argues that the Federalist conspiracy of 1803–1804 "reveals some of the most important characteristics of American political culture in the early nineteenth century," I argue here that the more moderate tone adopted in the Federalist world of letters ultimately played a more significant role in the development of American politics in the nineteenth century than did their secessionist counterparts. For more on the post-1812 fortunes of Federalist ideology, see Harlow W. Sheidley, *Sectional Nationalism: Massachusetts Conservative Leaders and the Transformation of America, 1815–1836* (Ithaca, NY, 1998); Marshall Foletta, *Coming to Terms with Democracy: Federalist Intellectuals and the Shaping of an American Culture, 1800–1828* (Charlottesville, VA, 2001); Arkin, "The Federalist Trope: Power and Passion in Abolitionist Rhetoric"; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America: Visions of Violence from Anti-Jacobinism to Antislavery* (New York, 2009); and John Brooke, "Cultures of Nationalism, Movements of

American Governor of the Orleans Territory, William Claiborne. Federalist critics argued that the report offered evidence the Republicans had “authorized governor Claiborne to exercise *Legislative, Judicial, and Executive* powers,” and that the population of the territory lacked the tools necessary to be American citizens. One Federalist critic, writing under the pseudonym *Centinel*, noted that “a profound ignorance pervades them all. Not one in fifty can understand the English language” and “in fifty years they will not be able to comprehend the mystery of a trial by jury.” In the face of this observation, *Centinel* concluded, in true Augustan form, that “Fortunately” these “noble people” were in the “hands of a daring class of philosophical speculators, and . . . shall have all the theories of Laputa directing political experiments.” Almost from the first, Federalist satirist saw the Louisiana territory as a manifestation of Swift’s satirical island nation.²²

Jefferson’s own description of the purchase only fed the Federalist efforts to define the new acquisition as an American Laputa. The president’s celebration of the “great salt mountain” seemed to validate the Federalists’ point. “Such a ridiculous tale, told in such a place, by such an officer is deserving of the lash of satire,” the Hudson, New York *Balance* reported. The editors of the *Gazette of the United States* sarcastically declared their disappointment that in addition to the account of the salt mountain Jefferson had not asserted that “there flows a vast river of *golden eagles* ready coined, which at a trifling expence in cutting canals and constructing locks, may easily be turned into the treasury of the United States.” The *Newburyport Herald* reprinted an “epigram” comparing “Herottatus of old,” who sought “to eternize his name,” by setting “the Temple of Diana, all in a flame,” to Jefferson who “lately of Bonaparte bought, to pickle his fame, a Mountain of Salt.” The tone of this coverage sought to convince voters not of the imminent threat of collapse of the Union at the hands of Jacobins, but of the absurdity of

Reform, and the Composite-Federal Polity from Revolutionary Settlement to Antebellum Crisis,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 29 (Spring 2009), 1–33.

22. *Columbian Centinel* (Boston) Feb. 25, 1804, reprinted in *Newport Mercury* (RI), Mar. 3, 1804; *Jenkin’s Portland Gazette* (ME) Mar. 3, 1804; *Courier of New Hampshire* (Concord), Mar. 14, 1804; and *Green Mountain Patriot* (Peacham, VT), Mar. 20, 1804.

the Jefferson administration as they led Americans into their very own Swiftian world.²³

The descriptions of the salt mountain and many of the other wonders of the Louisiana Territory provided a means through which the opposition Federalists could attack administration policies while actively engaging in a critique of one of the most talked about issues of the day. Federalist questions of the president's fiscal responsibility stood at the heart of many of these attacks. While some Federalist papers directly addressed the issue of cost in their critiques of the Louisiana Territory, decrying that "Fifteen millions of debt have been imposed upon us for the purchase of Louisiana, and a new impost duty of two and a half percent," for which the nation had received little more than a collection of "Salt Mountains, horned frogs and naval backed hogs," a number of other Federalist editors continued to employ a more satirical approach. With a steady stream of news coming from Louisiana, Federalist satirists found a variety of new ways to let the reading public in on their jokes.²⁴

Baltimore's *Republican*, making full use of the initial tone of the coverage of the salt mountain, reported that "a violent admirer" of the president had proposed "that a *Statue of Salt* should be erected to the immortal Jefferson—and that Congress shall forthwith appropriate fifteen millions for this object." The expense of such an endeavor could be "defrayed by a tax of one cent per bushel on that article, sold from the mountain to the Indian tribes." The *Fredericktown Herald* continued in this vein, sarcastically celebrating "A Louisiana Blessing" and marveling that "for only 15,000,000 dollars" the United States had gained 'Immense prairies' too rich for trees, hogs who walk with 'navels on their backs,' Buffaloe frogs with six horns apiece, sweeping squirrels with broom tails, besides 180 miles in length and 45 in width of salt." The *Herald* concluded their comment on the nation's "blessings" by noting that "we can not omit to remind every body of another benefit," that "we are all to have the pleasure of paying a further duty or tax of two and an half per cent." While these Federalist editors made no effort to

23. *The Balance* (Hudson, NY), Dec. 12, 1803. *Newburyport Herald* (MA), Dec. 7, 1803.

24. *Alexandria Advertiser* (VA), Sept. 29, 1804, and *Evening Post* (New York) Nov. 9, 1804.

hide their disdain for the means by which the Louisiana Territory had been acquired, their use of sarcasm was a far cry from that of their secession-minded counterparts. While the New England secessionists lamented the Purchase as a clear sign that the end of the republic was nigh, many Federalist editors portrayed the purchase as yet another example of the administration's ineptitude, which as a result of their satire, they hoped was not lost on the reading public.²⁵

The Federalist message spread through a network of partisan newspapers that were "under the management of men of education, good breeding, and demonstrated facility in the field of polite letters." In Boston the *Massachusetts Mercy* operated under the editorship of Yale graduate Warren Dutton, "a gentleman of fine talents, and a scholar of high reputation" and was provided free of charge to every clergyman in New England. In New York, Andover Academy graduate and former Massachusetts lawyer William Coleman took the editorship at the newly created *Evening Post*. Federalists in and around the District of Columbia brought in a string of "gentlemen" to oversee the publication of the *Washington Federalist* including Elias Boudinot Caldwell, the Princeton-educated clerk of the Supreme Court. In Philadelphia it was Yale-educated Enos Bronson who assumed editorship of the *Gazette of the United States*. Bronson's editorship epitomized the new Federalist newspaper politics.²⁶

Enos Bronson's two decades at the head of the *Gazette of the United States/United States Gazette* is a testament to the longevity of this moderate style of Federalist politics. Born in Connecticut, in March 1774, on the eve of the American Revolution, Bronson graduated from Yale in 1798, and briefly served as principal of Deerfield Academy in Massachusetts before heading to Philadelphia in the waning days of the Adams administration. There, beginning in February 1801, he joined C. P. Wayne as editor of the Federalist *Gazette of the United States*. Bronson's

25. *Republican* (Baltimore), Dec. 7, 1803. *Fredericktown Herald* (MD), Sept. 1, 1804, reprinted in *Newburyport Herald* (MA), Sept. 11, 1804.

26. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 239–41. The actions and character of these printers stand in stark contrast to one of the most notorious Federalist printers of the early nineteenth century, Alexander Contee Hanson, Jr., editor of the Baltimore *Federalist Republican*. Although briefly a Federalist hero, Hanson's extreme vitriol ultimately left him an embarrassment to the Federalist cause and underscored the utility of the moderate approach.

partnership with Wayne was short lived, however, as after less than a year Wayne relinquished any control of the paper in the face of “seven prosecutions” commenced within a span of twelve months. Although the Jeffersonians had decried the use of federal power in silencing the opposition press, once in office Jefferson “concluded that some form of check on the press might be necessary after all,” and although he believed that the First Amendment barred federal prosecution of sedition, that states could and should punish such actions when necessary.²⁷

Despite the threat to the paper posed by these legal challenges and his own resignation, Wayne was certain that the *Gazette* was in good hands. In his departing address “to the public” he noted that since Bronson had arrived as co-editor the paper had added “eight hundred respectable supporters more than when [he] commenced it.” Wayne also praised Bronson, in good Federalist fashion, as “a gentleman, whose superior talents qualify him in an eminent degree for the arduous task” of editing the *Gazette*. As Bronson’s eighteen-year tenure would suggest, Wayne’s assessment of his partner was sound. While his predecessor faced numerous lawsuits and another of his co-editors was challenged to a duel in 1804, Bronson skillfully navigated his editorship without enduring either of these insults. Embodied in satirical pieces like the connection between the salt mountain and Lot’s wife, Bronson’s literary wit and satire proved carefully balanced. The editor employed skillful irony and sarcasm while avoiding anger and embodied the continuing Augustan mode of much of the Federalist press.²⁸

Federalist editors like Bronson continued this moderate Augustan tone highlighting what they viewed as Jefferson’s failings as president and incorporating aspects of their political philosophy into their satire, offering them as something of an explanation of their vision for the nation. The Federalist press’s coverage of the arrival of a delegation from the Osage Nation “to the City of Washington on a visit to the President of the United States” in early 1804 offers a clear example of how traditional Federalist ideology was integrated into the Louisiana criticism.

27. Pasley, *The Tyranny of Printers*, 264–65.

28. *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Nov. 2, 1801. Burton Alva Konkle, “Enos Bronson, 1774–1823,” in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 57 (1933), 355–58. Examples of Bronson’s Louisiana satire can be seen in the *Gazette of the United States*, Nov. 22, 1803; Dec. 5, 1803, and *The United States Gazette*, Aug. 20, 1805; Sept. 9, 1805.

While the Osage themselves were described with a great deal of respect, as having “a gigantic stature, being all (the men) above six feet in height and well proportioned,” their travelling companion, “a very curious species” of frog, served as the centerpiece for a new round of Federalist satire.²⁹

The widely distributed description of the horned toads portrayed the amphibians as having characteristics similar to that of a “land tortoise, very flat, covered with scales of a dark grey colour; a short tail, and a head formed like that of a buffaloe, and is ornamented with six horns.” The frogs, it was reported, were found on the prairies within the territory of the Osage nation, living “in association with a species of ground squirrel, and a species of snake.” Collectively these animals “occupy an area of from one to two acres of ground.” The squirrels keep the area “free from dust or grass,” using their tails as a brush. They also act as “centinels. As soon as any person appears the watch gives the signal, and they all instantly disappear.” As had been the case with the salt mountain, the alien nature of the frogs and their unusual association with their neighbors seemed a better fit to the land of Laputa than a part of the United States.³⁰

Now, in place of linking Republican idea directly to Laputa, Federalist papers simply reported that the president had opened talks with the surreal “triple confederacy” of the horned frogs, ground squirrels, and snakes. Their “croaking envoy,” the *New York Commercial Advertiser* reported, “has already had an audience of Mr. Jefferson” and “wants permission to remove the seat of their Commonwealth either to Carter’s or the Salt Mountain.” The *Commercial Advertiser* continued that negotiations had broken down when members of Jefferson’s cabinet had been unable to reach an agreement on how to proceed. The report added that the amphibious diplomat feared treachery and believed that members of the administration “conspired against his life, only differing yet about the means.” The “philosopher at the head of affairs [Jefferson] is for

29. *Alexandria Advertiser* (VA), June 26, 1804; *Maryland Herald* (Elizabethtown), June 27, 1804; *Daily Advertiser* (New York), June 29, 1804; *Spectator* (New York), June 30, 1804; *New England Palladium* (Boston), July 3, 1804; *New Jersey Journal* (Elizabethtown), July 3, 1804; *Connecticut Centinel* (Hartford), July 10, 1804; *Windham Herald* (CT), July 12, 1804; *Kennebec Gazette* (Augusta, ME), June 12, 1804.

30. *Ibid.*

seizing his diplomatic guest as a subject for the Anatomical knife,” while “the Genevese who guards the Treasury [Albert Gallatin], not having forgot his French taste, would immediately convert him into a fricassee, or cook him horns and all for a mess of soup.” Dissecting or eating a diplomat would, the Federalist editors observed, “no doubt be a breach of the laws of nations” and would bring down the wrath “of the other frogs, squirrels, and snakes now forming for us a new ‘Sister Republic.’” The report concluded with a warning that these “strange reports” not be given “undue credit, till further confirmation.” Rather than resorting to an anti-Republican jeremiad, these Federalist editors used humor to attempt to convey their message to a larger audience.³¹

The report of the trials and tribulations of the “croaking envoy,” while clearly satirical, not only highlighted Federalist attacks on Jefferson as an out-of-touch philosopher but also served to highlight a variety of long-held Federalist positions on issues such as Native American relations, the challenges of rapid expansion, and the French menace. The description of the members of the Osage Nation as worthy of respect suggested a continued Federalist belief that Native Americans might be dealt with in good faith (as suggested in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787). Comments on their traveling companion, by way of contrast, highlighted the somewhat contradictory concerns about the threat to national unity posed by expansion in the Louisiana Territory. Though humorous, the description of the negotiations with the “triple confederacy” of frogs, squirrels, and snakes echoed longstanding Federalist fears that residents of the trans-Mississippi west might descend to a more base form of existence where settlers in the “capacious wilderness” and “straggling” settlements would lack “any sense of patriotism.” Finally, in skewering Albert Gallatin as “the Genevese who guards the Treasury” and remarking on his “French taste” for frogs, the Federalist satirists reminded their readers of the sitting president’s connection to Revolutionary France.³²

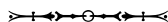
The political utility of the Louisiana satire was not limited to a critique of American expansion or the Republican fondness for Jacobin philosophy. The natural wonders of Louisiana also served as an avenue of attack

31. New York *Commercial Advertiser*, July 18, 1804, and *Daily Advertiser* (New York), July 20, 1804.

32. Fisher Ames, *The Dangers of American Democracy in The Works of Fisher Ames*, 377–79. See also Cayton, “Radicals in the ‘Western World,’” 78. *Ibid.*, 83, 91.

on Jefferson's handling of the Barbary threat in the Mediterranean. In late 1803, as the war with Tripoli seemed to have reached new lows for the United States following the capture of the USS *Philadelphia* by Tripolitan forces, the *Gazette of the United States* played on what Federalists viewed as the president's mishandling of the war, sarcastically noting that "we understand the Mediterranean squadron is to be immediately recalled and both them and the national ships in Dry Dock" are to be "ordered up the Mississippi and Missouri; to rendezvous in the neighborhood of the salt mountain announced by Mr. Jefferson." From there the ships will be able to travel up a canal dug by "our Indian brethren of that vicinity" under the oversight of "Captain Lewis." The ships will then be able to moor alongside the base of the mountain and transport this "useful commodity" to the east. In fusing their critique of the administration's handling of the Tripolitan conflict with the cost of the Louisiana Purchase these Federalists sought to highlight a pattern of irresponsible spending on the part of the administration, which had left the American people with a useless western territory and embroiled in a failing military conflict.³³

Using one of the great national issues of Jefferson's first term, Federalist sarcasm surrounding the Louisiana curiosities served as a touchstone to a national Federalist opposition. Grounded in the Federalist press, the Louisiana curiosities became a catch-all for critiques of the administration that drew Federalist from around the country together in common cause. This Augustan world of letters that allowed the Federalists to measure their success in ways other than simple elector victories allowed them to weather another round of electoral defeat in the election of 1804 far better than their secession-minded colleagues.



The *New York Gazette* greeted the year 1805 offering "Verses on the New Year; to be said or sung," including two dedicated to Louisiana. "Near Orleans raises to the view/With salt and horned frogs/?Twas bought with dollars not a few including prairies, bogs/In it there streams

33. *Gazette of the United States* (Philadelphia), Dec. 5, 1803. For more on the Tripolitan War, see Peskin, *Captives and Countrymen*; Frank Lambert, *The Barbary Wars: American Independence in the Atlantic World* (New York, 2005); and Michael Kitzen, *Tripoli and the United States at War* (London, 1993).

many a fountain/the wild beasts range at pleasure/Hills are higher than Carter's mountain/Not Gallatin can measure." Further North, in a series of letters to the Vermont *Post Boy*, "L" observed that the "purchase of Louisiana, astonished our imaginations, by the magnitude of the speculation and for a long time deprived us of the power of coolly examining its consequences." Upon closer examination, however, and with some distance, "L" argued, there seemed to be little of value for the majority of the American people. Jefferson's conduct in acquiring the territory suggested that "any deception may be anticipated," and despite the initial excitement, "after hearing so much of salt mountains, prairies, horned frogs associated under a democratic form of government . . . unless we can find some way to husband the territory of Louisiana, other than by letting it lie fallow, or selling it to Spain we must all agree that 15,000,000 were never laid out to less profit." In the face of continued electoral defeat the Louisiana satire continued to provide an issue around which the Federalist could criticize the administration.³⁴

The arrival of a new collection of curiosities gathered by the Corps of Discovery in mid-summer 1805 helped to sustain the satirical Federalist attacks. "It would seem," a number of Federalist papers noted, "that Mr. Jefferson begins to realize something for his fifteen millions of dollars," in the form of the "Louisiana Curiosities." Among these was "a living animal called the wild dog of the prairie and one mag pie." The lone magpie, the papers noted, was originally one of four, "but one of them destroyed the other three." In the *United States Gazette*, Bronson again deftly fused the news of the magpie with Federalist concerns about the challenges of incorporation the residents of the Louisiana Territory into the Union. Playing on Jeffersonian notions of equality, Bronson remarked "Mr. Jefferson . . . might have had four [magpies] had they been duly instructed in the *rights of mag pies*, and taught the observance of 'equal and exact justice.'" Much as Daggett had done in comparing Jefferson to the Lagado scholars, Bronson used the news of the magpies to demonstrate the difficulty of translating Jefferson's political philosophy into reality.³⁵

On a more practical level, the editors of the *Alexandria Advertiser*

34. *New York Gazette* Jan. 12, 1805. *Post Boy* (Windsor, VT), Jan. 1, 1805, and Jan. 8, 1805.

35. *United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), Aug. 20, 1805.

revived concerns over the cost of the Purchase. Rather than seeing a return for all the expense, the editors argued, the celebrated curiosities offered little that was new. Jefferson's mag pie, they observed, "is precisely the Mag pie of Europe," and the Prairie Dog, rather than being a completely new species, is "precisely in shape, size, colour, in the choice of its food, and in its manner of feeding . . . a *fox squirrel*, but it had lost part of the hair from its tail on the journey." Speaking to a national audience, Federalist editors did not miss an opportunity to employ any attention paid the trans-Mississippi west to their own ends, continuing unabated in their efforts to portray the new western territory as a great boondoggle foisted upon the American people by an inept administration.³⁶

While the reports from the Corps of the Discovery provided new fodder for a well-established line of attack, international relations offered the Federalists their greatest traction during Jefferson's second term. The collapse of the Peace of Amiens in 1803 marked a renewed threat of impressment for American sailors. Shortly after the election of 1804, Federalists launched a vigorous campaign calling for the president to defend the rights of American sailors abroad. As they had in criticizing the administration's initial struggles in the Tripolitan War, the Federalists employed the Louisiana satire to highlight Jefferson's new round of foreign policy challenges. In dealing with the issue of impressment, the opposition party again charged that the administration cared more about the natural wonders of the trans-Mississippi West than he did about the fortunes of American sailors. Throughout the country, opposition newspapers carried attacks citing the president's seeming obsession with the natural wonders of Louisiana as evidence that Jefferson failed to understand the significance of the threat of impressment.

Returning to their well-established tropes the Federalist papers declared that "our administration, sufficiently occupied and amused about horned frogs, salt mountains, and prairie dogs, leave the subordinate concerns of national rights to take their own course." Jefferson's

36. Reprinted in *Boston Gazette*, Aug. 26, 1805; *Salem Gazette* (MA), Aug. 27, 1805; *Connecticut Courant* (Hartford), Aug. 28, 1805. See also Andrea Wulf, *Founding Gardeners: The Revolutionary Generation, Nature, and the Shaping of the American Nation* (New York, 2011), 161; and Keith Stewart Thomson, *A Passion for Nature: Thomas Jefferson and Natural History* (Charlottesville, VA, 2008), 80, 115-19.

fixation on the oddities of the new territory, a behavior the Federalists had once dismissed as mere frivolity or fiscal irresponsibility, now assumed a menacing cast threatening the liberty of Americans. The “content Magistrate of the Union, who having in his hands the means of protecting our rights looks on with perfect unconcern for month after month, and sees them made the sport, the derision, and the prey of every paltry picaroon that navigates our waters, while he is amusing himself and the nation with knick-knacks and playthings that would disgrace a school boy.” According to the Federalists, while Jefferson toyed with his Louisiana menagerie, American sailors were subject to European depre-
dation.³⁷

In addition to the continued threat to American sailors, the Jefferson administration experienced a political setback as the result of a botched negotiation in an effort to secure control of West Florida from Spain in late 1805. As part of this effort Jefferson had requested two million dollars from Congress for an undisclosed diplomatic initiative. The hope was that Napoleon might be convinced to persuade the Spanish to relinquish their claim to West Florida, which had become increasingly populated by American settlers throughout the first decade of the nineteenth century. Despite the administration’s efforts, a member of its own party, John Randolph, fearing that the plan was inherently unrepugnant, had leaked news of the negotiations to the press. The failed diplomatic initiative created a new perfect opportunity for Federalist satire.³⁸

In the wake of these failed negotiations engraver James Akin, one of the founders of American political cartooning, published his *The Prairie Dog Sickened at the Sting of the Hornet* (Figure 2). Although the bulk of Akin’s political satire would not appear until after the Election of 1824, much of Akin’s early work fed the growing Federalist critique of the Jefferson administration. Akin’s first political engraving, entitled *A Philosophic Cock* (Figure 1), appeared in 1804 and included many of the characteristics of his *Prairie Dog* piece two years later. This initial effort

37. *The United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), Sept. 9, 1805; *Alexandria Advertiser* (VA), Sept. 23, 1805; *Newport Mercury* (RI), Sept. 28, 1805. Denver Brunsmann, “Subjects vs. Citizens: Impressment and Identity in the Anglo-American Atlantic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 30 (Winter 2010), 573–77; and James Zimmerman, *Impressment of American Seamen* (New York, 1925).

38. James C. Kelly and B. S. Lovell “Thomas Jefferson: His Friends and Foes,” *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 101 (Jan. 1993), 133–57; and

portrayed Jefferson as a cock standing guard over a hen that was intended to look like Sally Hemings. In the upper right-hand corner appears the quote “Tis not a set of features or complexion or tincture of a Skin that I admire.” The image not only played on the Jefferson-Hemings affair, a Federalist favorite, but the multiple meanings of Jefferson as a “cock” would not have been lost on the reading public. In addition to the literal imagery, and the more vulgar insult, the cock was a symbol of Revolutionary France.³⁹

Akin’s *Prairie Dog Sickened* again featured Jefferson’s head on the body of an animal, however, this time it was one of his Louisiana Curiosities, a prairie dog. The prairie dog is depicted vomiting “two millions” of dollars as he is stung by a Napoleon-headed hornet. A dancing marquis holds maps of East and West Florida in his hands and carries instructions from French minister Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand in his pocket. The image of Jefferson as a prairie dog seemed a perfect fit for this style of political attack. The Federalist rhetoric of the previous months and years transitioned seamlessly into Akin’s imagery. Additionally, given the rarity of political cartoons during this period, the appearance of the prairie dog meme in this cartoon suggests just how

J. C. A. Stagg, *Borderlines in Borderlands: James Madison and the Spanish American Frontier, 1776–1821* (New Haven, CT, 2009), 54–63. See Figures 1 and 2.

39. Kelly and Lovell, “Thomas Jefferson: His Friends and Foes.” For more on Akin see Maureen O’Brien Quimby, “The Political Art of James Akin,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 7 (1972), 59–112. For more on the political cartoons in American history, see Donald Dewey, *The Art of Ill Will: The Story of American Political Cartoons* (New York, 2007); and Stephen Hess and Milton Kaplan, *The Ungentlemanly Art: A History of American Political Cartoons* (New York, 1975). Political cartoons were a relative rarity in the United States before the first lithograph was imported in 1818. Until the arrival of the lithograph any original image needed to be engraved on copper or cut into wood blocks in order to be reproduced. Such a practice made the creation of satirical images a costly and time-consuming enterprise, with relatively little financial return. Additionally, any effort to incorporate these drawings into newspapers required a further investment of time. Newspapers in the early United States usually consisted of a series of narrow columns (largely the result of the contemporary printing technology) which meant that printers either needed to adjust the columns for one page of the printing (drastically slowing down the process) or attempt to squeeze the entire image into a narrow column; neither of these options were terribly appealing to either the printers or the engravers. The use of animal imagery in political cartoons was also well established most notably in the form of a urinating dog, which often suggested disorder.



Figure 1: James Akin, *A Philosophic Cock*, 1804. Courtesy of the American Antiquarian Society.

entrenched in political discourse the Louisiana rhetoric had become. Although the cartoon appeared only as a stand-alone print, a description of Akin's work appeared in Federalist newspapers all along the East coast. The *New York Gazette* declared that "it may not be amiss to give a short description of this inimitable performance." The prairie dog "represents a certain *great* personage, of whom, the head of the Dog preserves an exact likeness. Bonaparte is in the act of stinging him with the sting of a HORNET," which caused the terror struck animal to disgorge

See Paul Revere, *The Bloody Massacre in King-Street, March 5, 1770, 1770*; Philip Dawe, *A Society of Patriotic Ladies, at Edenton in North Carolina, 1775*.



Figure 2: James Akin, *The Prairie Dog Sickened at the Sting of the Hornet*, 1806. Library of Congress.

“Two Millions of Dollars at the feet of certain little Marquis.” The *Gazette* went on to comment that “this piece is interesting to the amateur and the connoisseur of fine paintings, but more particularly to the politician—being a faithful portrait of some strange occurrences which have taken place within a few months, derogatory, in the highest degree to the honor and interest of the United States.” Akin’s prints represented the continuing growth and evolution of Federalist satire as they worked to find their voice as the political opposition at the national level. Jefferson as a prairie dog served as a shorthand version of all of the Federalist critiques of the president and presented these attacks in a memorable and accessible manner.⁴⁰

Following in the vein of Akin’s cartoon, two papers in northern New England ran an “advertisement” for a “magnificent engraving, being an emblematical and historical portrait of the Sage of Monticello at whole length.” The image was to depict the “enlightened Philosopher, Hero

40. *New York Gazette*, May 12, 1806, and *United States Gazette* (Philadelphia), May 19, 1806.

and Statesman” sitting in a “*whirlgig chair*, alternately examining a survey of the wild lands in the moon, and viewing with great complacency the diploma he has received from the French National Institute,” additionally, “under his table are a prairie dog and a horned frog asleep.” The “advertisement” concluded with a final reference to the failed negotiations remarking that “the work shall be begun as soon as ‘Two Millions of Dollars’ shall be subscribed.” Another Federalist paper, the *Charleston Courier*, provided a recipe “for the cure of the bite of a mad dog.” First, “take 1 oz of the jaw bone of a prairie dog, or of a horned frog, burned . . . in the crucible of jacobinism.” Second, “take the false tongue of a newly made democrat and powder it as above.” Third, “take one scruple of the verdigrease collected on the copper of the frigates which are laid up at Washington; add them together, with a little salt taken from the huge *salt-mountain in Louisiana*, and let the patient take the whole in the form of a bolus.” The continued focus on the natural wonders of Louisiana, even as international events turned in favor of the Federalists, suggest how deeply ingrained this rhetoric had become and how useful the imagery of the natural world had been to Federalist critics.⁴¹

Jefferson’s failed gambit in West Florida served as prelude to his greatest foreign policy failure, the Embargo of 1807. Following the *Chesapeake-Leopard* affair—in which the HMS *Leopard* had attacked the USS *Chesapeake* and seized four crewmen from the American vessel—and renewed French threats to seize any American vessel trading with England, Jefferson, rather than risking war with either nation, launched an embargo on all American commerce abroad. The Embargo was a disaster from the first. Resistance was widespread, with Americans in almost every port city and along the borders with British and Spanish possessions illegally exporting goods. The Jefferson administration reacted to this disregard for the embargo by imposing increasingly draconian measures to enforce it, eventually authorizing the use of state militia, regular military, and the navy to enforce civil law. Even as Federal officials ramped up effort to enforce the Embargo opposition only continued to grow. Smugglers bribed or intimidated Federal agents, evidence of

41. *Vermont Centinel* (Burlington), July 9, 1806, and *Portland Gazette* (ME), Sept. 1, 1806. Reprinted in *Spectator* (New York), May 7, 1806, and *Hampshire Federalist* (Springfield, MA), May 13, 1806.

smuggling often disappeared from warehouses, and juries refused to convict accused smugglers.⁴²

While the Embargo proved a winning issue for the Federalists, they continued to employ the Louisiana language in attacking the administration. Boston's *Columbian Centinel* attacked the president as "Tom Two-faces," who ruled the nation "with mountain salt, horned frogs, prairie dogs." As if trying to limit this line of Federalist attack, the Republicans, in defending the unpopular policy, employed natural world imagery of their own. "We are forced, like the mud Turtle, to retire, magnanimously as the President expresses it, within ourselves, and squat down for the present—That wise animal when walking, you know will on the approach of danger, draw in his head and legs and squat down." Whatever the Republican intent, the Federalists were quick to take up the turtle imagery both in print and cartoon. The Portland, Maine, *Gazette* declared that Jefferson, "by a touch of his wand, he pops us, like a turtle, plump into our shells." Such a power is "unknown in any other age or nation—a power unknown and contrary to our laws and constitution—he has contrived to shut us up by, in principle, A PERPETUAL EMBARGO."⁴³

The image of the Embargo as tortoise persisted well after the event itself. Engraver Alexander Anderson, who in the 1790s had operated a bookshop for children named "the Lilliputian Book-Store" and would later produce images for a number of nineteenth-century tract societies, repeatedly employed the image in his engravings. In *Ograbme, or the American Snapping Turtle* (Figure 3), the "Ograbme" turtle, holding a license under its right foot, snaps at the trousers of a would-be smuggler seeking to deliver a barrel of "superfine" tobacco to a waiting British vessel.⁴⁴

42. Joshua Smith, *Borderland Smuggling: Patriots, Loyalists, and Illicit Trade in the Northeast, 1783–1820* (Gainesville, FL, 2006), 49–61; Donald Hickey, *The War of 1812: A Forgotten Conflict* (Chicago, 1989), 19–22; Dumas Malone, *Jefferson the President: Second Term 1805–1809* (Boston, MA, 1974), 469–523; and Burton Spivak, *Jefferson's English Crisis: Commerce, Embargo, and the Republican Revolution* (Charlottesville, VA, 1979), 102–136.

43. *Columbian Centinel* (Boston) July 2, 1808. Cited in the *Hampshire Federalist* (Springfield, MA), Mar. 31, 1808. *Gazette* (Portland, ME), July 4, 1808.

44. It is not entirely clear if this engraving was originally produced during the Embargo or as part of a later history of the period. Regardless it is certain that the



Figure 3: Alexander Anderson, *Ograbme, or the American Snapping Turtle*. Cornell University Library.

In 1814 Anderson marked the end of the Embargo with an engraving published in the *New York Evening Post* (Figure 4), entitled *Death of the Embargo, With All its Restrictive Energies*. The image depicted James Madison engaged in battle with a large terrapin. In the engraving Madison lops off the head of his attacker, symbolizing an official end to the Embargo, yet even as Madison decapitates the turtle his attacker's mouth remains firmly clamped on the president's ear—symbolic of the lingering unpopularity of the Embargo that remained throughout Madison's presidency. The continuing allusions to the embargo as a turtle throughout the nineteenth century, both in contemporary works and as late as 1868

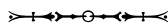
Ograbme engraving appeared in Benson Lossing's 1868 *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812*. Lossing himself noted that an original version had appeared at the time of the Embargo, but a recent study suggests that Lossing may have confused the *Ograbme* engraving with another of Anderson's works that appeared in 1814 in the *New York Evening Post* (see Figure 4). See Jane Pomeroy, *Alexander Anderson (1775–1870), Wood Engraver and Illustrator, An Annotated Bibliography* (New Castle, DE, 2005), 328–331 and 2409–2411.



DEATH OF THE TERRAPIN, OR THE EMBARGO.

Figure 4: Alexander Anderson, *New York Evening Post* (New York), April 25, 1814. Cornell University Library.

in Benson Lossing's *Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812* suggest the enduring nature of this satirical approach.⁴⁵



Despite a brief Federalist resurgence during the War of 1812, by 1816 the Federalist defeat was nearly complete. In addition to the mistimed Hartford Convention, Congress had admitted the Orleans territory to the Union as the eighteenth state on April 30, 1812. Confirming many Federalist fears, the creole population continued to play a prominent role in state politics maintaining the Louisiana Civil Code (rooted in Roman law rather than English common law) and publishing legislative acts in both French and English until the late nineteenth century. In spite of this defeat, the creation of a virtual Federalist community at the national level ultimately allowed the Federalists to have a greater impact on American culture than might have been the case had they simply retreated to

45. *Evening Post* (New York) Apr. 25, 1814. Pomeroy, *Alexander Anderson*, 553.

a policy of geographic isolation as some of their more radical counterparts had attempted. The salt mountain and the many other Louisiana Curiosities served as a centerpiece of the Federalist opposition to the policies of the Jefferson administration. When Jefferson's secret negotiations to acquire West Florida collapsed in 1805, James Akin needed to do little more than depict the president as a prairie dog to convey a deep and well-established criticism of the administration. When the Republicans sought to convince the American people of the wisdom of the embargo in 1807, they also drew on the imagery of the natural world suggesting that the nation draw in, as a turtle defending itself, to bring an end to European depredations. The Federalists were quick to turn this imagery back on the Republicans portraying the policy as the "cursed Ograbme." This colorful shorthand was a critical part of the Federalists transition to their status as a minority party, allowing them to maintain a voice in national political debate.

While the ill-timed Hartford Convention allowed the Federalists' political opponents to portray them as secession-minded traitors, an examination of the Federalist satire surrounding the Louisiana Purchase demonstrates that even after the election of 1800, the Federalist style remained a part of public discourse. Although some of the more radical elements of the Federalist minority believed the only hope for the future was the creation of a New England confederacy, it was the efforts of the moderate-minded members of the party that ultimately won the day and allowed the Federalists to create a lasting legacy in American political culture. In helping to maintain an Augustan discourse, Federalist satire provided a means through which their world view might survive even as the realm of electoral politics was closed to them. A generation after the Federalists exited the stage of national politics, abolitionists and reformers drew on the rhetoric and ideas of the Federalist world of letters.

The lingering impact of this Federalist style can be seen in the use of natural imagery in mid-nineteenth-century abolitionist rhetoric. William Lloyd Garrison decried southern leaders to be "like salamanders . . . [who] can breathe only in fire. Like toads, they suck no aliment from the earth but its poisons. When they rest in their lurking places, . . . it is like serpents in winter, the better to concoct their venom." In January 1847 the board of managers of the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society likened pro-slavery sentiment to a "scorpion" who had been encircled in the fire of public opinion and would as that fire grew "hotter and hotter and close nearer and near . . . be compelled to bury its sting in its own brain."

Shortly after the publication of the Massachusetts report the image of the scorpion's sting became a mainstay of anti-slavery rhetoric throughout the North. A generation after Federalists worked to create a national opposition to Republican policies through a discussion of salt mountains, horned frogs, and prairie dogs both their ideas and style remained a part of the national political debate.⁴⁶

46. William Lloyd Garrison to William H. Scott, the Young Men's Anti-Slavery Society of Philadelphia, Apr. 20, 1836, *Liberator* (Boston), June 4, 1836. *Fifteenth Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by Its Board of Managers* (Boston, 1847), 56 cited in James Oakes *The Scorpion's Sting: Antislavery and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 2014), 25–26. For more on the continued impact of Federalist ideology, see Sheidley, *Sectional Nationalism: Massachusetts Conservative Leaders and the Transformation of America, 1815–1836*; Foletta, *Coming to Terms with Democracy*; Arkin, “The Federalist Trope: Power and Passion in Abolitionist Rhetoric”; Rachel Hope Cleves, *The Reign of Terror in America*; and John Brooke, “Cultures of Nationalism, Movements of Reform.”