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**THE AFFECTIVE PRESIDENCY**

by

**JOHN PATRICK KOCH**

**DISSERTATION**

Submitted to the Graduate School

of Wayne State University,

Detroit, Michigan

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

2016

MAJOR: COMMUNICATION

Approved By:

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Advisor

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

*This project is dedicated to my family and friends.*

*Thanks for always supporting me.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First, I want to thank my family. They have always been there for me. From kindergarten until now, I would not have made it without them. I am sure when I started school and needed to be in Title I reading and speech classes that they did not envision me writing a dissertation. My mom tells me that she cried when my teachers told her that I was learning at a slower pace than my peers in kindergarten and first grade. However, they also told her to keep working with me, which she did every day for hours after school. Eventually, because of her hard work, I became a pretty good student. In recent years, daily phone calls from my father to ask me if my “book” was done yet pushed me to finish this project. I am very fortunate to have parents that care. Without them, there would be no dissertation.

I would also be remised if I did not mention that I am a first-generation college student. Of my four grandparents, only one graduated high school. They had to leave high school in order to work on their family farms or raise children. Through their sacrifices, they provided a better life for their children and grandchildren. I will always be thankful for them and the opportunities that they opened for me.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The story of the rhetorical presidency is well established within the discipline of communication. In fact, as Mary Stuckey notes, the concept is 25 years old and we, as a discipline, have seemingly entered a period of codification, with each new case study reinforcing but not advancing it as an area of study. For this reason, Stuckey calls on scholars of presidential rhetoric to advance and think anew our understanding of the rhetorical presidency (“Rethinking”). In the spirit of this challenge, this project explores the intersection of presidential rhetoric and the affective dimension of politics. The aim is to place the development of presidential rhetoric within the historical development of rhetorical techniques that function to curb the excesses of democracy. In doing so, this project gives us a fuller account of how presidents participate in the construction of our democratic political culture. In short, this study rethinks presidential rhetoric by exploring its relationship to affect.

Stuckey writes that literature reviews of the rhetorical presidency “are now a pro forma element in doctoral dissertations...” (“Rethinking” 38). My project will be no different. With the publication of Jeffrey Tulis’ book *The Rhetorical Presidency* in 1987, the field of presidential rhetoric emerged as its own sub-discipline. In this formative study, Tulis argues that Wilson transformed the presidency from an insular office into one that interacted with Congress and the people in order to produce support for his agenda. In short, Tulis posits that Wilson made rhetoric the primary function of the presidency, contending that appeals made directly from the president to the people would encourage citizens to put pressure on Congress to enact the presidential agenda. Since the publication of *The Rhetorical Presidency*, research on presidential rhetoric has focused on two areas: (1) The ability of individual presidents to influence public opinion and activate citizens to put pressure on Congress in support of his agenda; and (2) the

president's use of rhetorical means to constitute us as a people and a nation (Stuckey "Rethinking"). Over the years, social scientists such as George Edwards and Sam Kernell have argued that presidential rhetoric has minimal to no direct effect, especially in relation to a president's ability to rhetorically influence the passage of legislation. On the other hand, rhetorical scholars such as Vanessa Beasley, Roderick Hart, Mary Stuckey, and David Zarefsky have argued that presidential rhetoric has a constitutive effect: an ability to constitute us as Americans, define concepts, and set the agenda for national discussion. These authors argue that while the field of rhetoric cannot quantitatively demonstrate that presidential rhetoric causes an increase in support for a president's agenda—which is Tulis' thesis, scholarship has noted that a potentiality exists for it to influence how, what, and why we think about issues that are part of the agenda and the role of citizens in our government.

Regardless of one's position in this debate, most scholars seem to agree on the idea that Wilson formalized the practice of going above the heads of Congress in order to influence public opinion and mobilize support for his agenda. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, this notion has become an integral part of the institution and the basis of scholarship about the branch. Stuckey, in calling for a rethinking of the assumptions about research on the rhetorical presidency, does not even go so far as to ask us to challenge this assumption in our work. In fact, she writes, "...there is widespread agreement whatever the specific history of the rhetorical presidency, presidents in the contemporary era are quite willing to go over the heads of Congress and to attempt to mobilize the public as a routine means of governance" ("Rethinking" 40). Thus, the postulate driving research on presidential rhetoric remains that presidents speak either to influence legislation (i.e., get their agenda passed) or to "form a mass out of an increasingly diversifying American people" (i.e., constitutive function) (Beasley, *You* 7). My study adds to

this work a third notion, which is that Wilson placed the rhetorical work of managing the excesses of democracy into the hands of the presidency.

While Matthew May is not the first scholar to note the selective nature of the writing of history, he correctly states, “The act of writing and rewriting history is always informed by the selection of one story out of the infinite story, so to speak, and the choice to tell that story in one way rather than another. History is therefore always motivated by a previous decision...hence it is always political” (xiii). Tulis’ political interests in logos, legislative deliberation, and the Constitution’s ability to encourage these ends represent this kind of partisan and selective choice, which drives the history of scholarly development about the rhetorical presidency. Those of us who have followed Tulis, while not all sharing his political interests, have sought to demonstrate that presidential rhetoric has some sort of effect or effectivity on the ability of presidents to pass their agenda or articulate a constitutive framework that eases the ability for the executive to push legislation. As evidence began to accumulate that there is no one-to-one correlation between presidential rhetoric and legislative success, this history required scholars to justify their interest in presidential rhetoric by turning to its constitutive function. Stuckey’s challenge to scholars, while needed, asks us to continue our research from a starting point that still embraces Tulis’ politics and history.

However, the current history of the concept of the rhetorical presidency does not take into account the important role that political emotions play in presidential rhetoric. Certainly, research on presidential rhetoric that explores how it functions to constitute us as citizens starts to hint at frameworks that control democratic impulses (Beasley *You*; Stuckey *Defining*). However, it does not explain how presidential rhetoric fosters, channels, and directs affect toward political ends.

“[W]hen a history becomes well-known and standard,” as Stuckey notes has been the case with the history of presidential rhetoric, “it can also become stale, and can serve more to codify than advance a field of study” (“Rethinking” 38-39). As a result, she contends we need “more theorizing...[to] codify less and challenge more of what we think we know, and let’s do it with more theory” (“Rethinking” 48). This dissertation provides the basis for theorizing the relationship between presidential rhetoric and affect. It is important to study the intersection of presidential rhetoric and affect because non-rationality is an unappreciated and understudied aspect of the political. Indeed, Lauren Berlant goes so far as to argue that non-rationality is “at the heart of the political” (“Unfeeling Kerry”). The potential potency of presidential rhetoric to influence the shape of our political culture requires us to attune to the affective dimension of politics if we are to fully understand how it operates in our political culture. The unpredictable and affective nature of much of the 2016 presidential election cycle would suggest that we need to learn more this potential. Thus, it is important to study the intersection of affect and presidential rhetoric because it offers the potentiality to tell a new history of the presidency, which could provide us with new questions and a new understanding of the presidency in the twenty-first century. It provides the basis for understanding presidential rhetoric’s role in curtailing democracy rather than operating as a means to increase democratic participation.

### **A Lack of Faith in Democracy**

I use the word democracy in its most expansive sense, as the ability of citizens “to collectively exercise control over their environment so that everyone...can flourish” (Engels, *The Politics* 148). Democracy is, as John McGowan writes about “politics,” “the ability of citizens, in whatever sphere or endeavor, to actively shape the terms of their participation and the outcomes of decision-making and action” (235). The democratic ideal is “each individual shall have the

opportunity for release, expression, fulfillment, of his distinctive capacities, and that the outcome shall further the establishment of a fund of shared values. Like every true ideal, it signifies something to be done rather than something already given, something ready-made" (Dewey *Democracy and Education* 91). When I use the word democracy and refer to citizens as we, I am not gesturing towards a particular normative model of democracy or citizenship; instead, I am gesturing towards an ideal or a telos where all of us in our pluralistic society have the agency to shape our participation in politics and contribute to the determination of outcomes.

The underlying argument of this study is that, since its founding, a dominant governing logic of the United States of America has been based on a fear of democracy and the need to curb its excesses before the impulses it breeds become dangerous to the existing order. While it is possible to consider the development of democracy as a natural human develop in response to the inequality of other governing systems, Jeremy Engels suggests that "while we experience unequal social, cultural, and political power as natural, they are anything but. There is nothing objective about how societies are structured...about who is included or excluded, about who can speak and who can't...(it) is always a construction" (*The Politics* 8). Democracy is perceived as dangerous when it fosters an attitude that allows for the cultivation of political language and skills that empower people to construct and reconstruct their political environment. In short, faith in democracy is a belief in the ability of citizens to self-govern. Unfortunately, we have been conditioned to lack this faith and to turn towards institutions and political actors rather than ourselves to do the work of democracy. This is a line of argument that has recently been taken up by a number of rhetorical scholars.

For example, the scholarship of Jeremy Engels and Jennifer Mercieca establishes that a lack of faith in democracy is the bedrock of our history. Examining *The Federalist Papers* and

the Constitution, Engels maintains that our founding documents are woven in a “hatred of democracy” (“The Trouble” 4). He locates this loathing in the writings of James Madison and Alexander Hamilton, who were concerned that democracy encouraged rule by emotions, not reason. In *Federalist Paper* No. 10, Madison worries about democracy creating factions, which he defined as “a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the aggregate interests of the community.” In this sentence, Engels argues that the word “impulse” is important for understanding how the Federalists viewed the demos. According to Engels, the word “impulse” indicates the Federalists viewed the demos as unable to regulate themselves and were thus in need of a strong central government. They worried “about the impulses of passion, welling up deep from within the...body and overriding reason” (“The Trouble” 10). Thus, it is clear that the Federalists worried about emotions overwhelming the rational part of the demos. After events such as Shays’ Rebellion demonstrated to the founders the destructiveness of emotions to our system of government, the Federalist’s rhetoric focused on the need for a strong central government and on justifications for limiting democracy.

For instance, as Woody Holton argues in *Unruly Americans and the Origins of the Constitution*, the parts of the Constitution that guarantee the rights of citizens are not in the original Constitution but are amendments to it. He argues that if opponents of the Constitution had not been successful in articulating the need for the inclusion of these rights, the document would be just an articulation of a need for a central government. This line of thought is supported by Hamilton, who observed in *Federalist Paper* No. 27 that the Constitution was better than the Articles of Confederation or existing state constitutions, because it was “less apt to be tainted by

the spirits of factions” and “more out of the reach of those occasional ill humors, or temporary prejudices and propensities, which, in smaller societies, frequently contaminate the public deliberations.” In the Federalists’ writings about our Constitution, Engels suggests, we see a rhetoric that argues not for the rights of citizens, but for a system of government that will protect the republic from the demos, to “achieve the purification of popular passions” through republicanism, and keep democracy from infecting the stability of the republic (“The Trouble” 7). This notion that active citizenship and national stability are at odds is the logic that underpins Federalist rhetoric, which manifests itself in support of a central government that can keep the demos in check, not the other way around.

Recently, Jennifer Mercieca has added to our understanding of the rhetorical techniques that have shaped our understanding of citizenship and democracy. In her book *Founding Fictions*, she discusses the stories or, as she calls them, political fictions of citizenship that existed in the early republic. Political fictions are the stories that we tell ourselves that define the range of legitimate political behaviors of citizens in this country. Mercieca’s argument is that, in the early years of the republic, three political fictions operated to define the legitimate parameters of citizenship. Initially, pre-American Revolutionary War citizens were portrayed as romantic heroes whose active participation in the political process was necessary to defend liberty from tyranny. After the Revolutionary War, elites became concerned that active citizenship threatened their wealth and privileged position in the public sphere. As a result, citizens were framed in the next political fiction as tragic victims who, because of personal and political corruption, could not ensure their own best interest. After this phase of political fiction, Mercieca notes that a new democratic political fiction emerged that imagined citizens as ironic

partisans. In this narrative, citizens were active members of elite-led political parties; however, their influence did not extend beyond the party sphere.

In Mercieca's rhetorical history, we see the evolution of democratic imaginings in the early days of the republic. Citizens went from being constructed as the democratic heroes who could create their own political culture through revolution to the Federalist construction of them as tragic victims whose impulses, if left unchecked, could threaten the vitality of the nation. However, this fiction did not hold, as citizens in the 1820s struggled to reconcile republicanism with the romantic accounts of citizenship and democracy articulated in the obituaries and newspaper accounts of the Revolutionary Generation. This created an exigency that required a new political fiction that could balance democracy and republicanism. The resulting fiction articulated democratic agency as flowing through and constrained by political parties.

According to Mercieca, the active citizen kept in check by a party structure is our current democratic fiction. This political fiction has resulted in the continued erosion of dynamic citizenship in favor of dependence on political leaders. Mercieca writes, "America's public sphere has never been the sphere for citizens; America's public sphere has always been the sphere for political leaders" (218). Moreover, since the Revolutionary War, citizens have been portrayed as being unable to do what was best for the country because of their political interests and emotions. In order to control democratic impulses and balance national stability with active citizenship, political elites created narratives that give the illusion of active democratic participation while they are in fact rhetorical frameworks that prevent its actualization.

In addition to the Federalist rhetoric and political fictions, the rhetoric of enemyship is another rhetorical technique that functions to control democratic impulses. Jeremy Engels argues that enemyship rhetoric functions to direct the passions of the demos towards external threats

rather than internal politics. In short, elites create a fear of the other and direct people's passions towards defeating the enemy rather than focusing on internal problems. Engels contends that in America, "the rhetorical management of fear" is "the essence of politics" (*Enemyship* 22). While Federalist rhetoric and political fictions provide a framework for taming the impulses of the demos, enemyship discourse directs this passion.

In examining the rhetorical history of our country, we can conclude that, since the founding of our nation, the governing logic of our republic has been defined through rhetorical techniques that function to curb the excesses of democracy. In other words, our country's rhetorical history is rooted in the idea that the irrationality of the masses needs to be tamed by elite discourses and structures. My intervention into this history is to expand our knowledge of presidential rhetoric and place it squarely within this rhetorical tradition.

### **The Affective Dimension of Presidential Rhetoric**

In rethinking presidential rhetoric through its relationship to the affective dimension of politics, this project begins from a different starting point than most studies about presidential rhetoric and public address. Traditionally, these areas of research define presidential rhetorical effect as persuading citizens to assent to a constitutive vision of the country, an idea, or legislation. In comparison, this study instead focuses on how the relationship between presidential rhetoric and affect nurtures investiture from citizens into the office of the presidency and how presidential rhetoric directs affect towards political ends.

This study is interested in two aspects of the affective dimension of the politics: affect and political emotions. These two terms represent the beginning and end points of what I refer to as the affective process. The chapters that follow are interested in the different stages of this process, so it is important to define and distinguish them as distinct terms.

In recent years, the field of rhetoric studies has recently experienced a blossoming of interest in the study of affect (Rice). Despite this interest, or perhaps because of it, the “concept of affect is not easily summarized” or defined (Rice 201). A brief review of this literature reveals that there are several available definitions and summaries of what constitutes the affective turn in humanities research. For the purposes of this project, I develop a definition that best allows for the study of affect in relation to the field of rhetorical criticism.

Deborah Gould uses the term affect to describe “the body’s ongoing and relatively amorphous inventory-taking of coming into contact and interacting with the world” (26). Furthermore, she uses affect to “indicate nonconscious and unnamed, but nevertheless registered, experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body” (26). For Gould, affect is the feeling the body has when something is impinging upon it; yet, these bodily intensities are inchoate and not yet articulable on a conscious level. This is the difference between affect and emotion. Affect is the intensity of feeling that exists before a feeling is knowable or translatable into a describable emotion. In other words, “affect is like a degree of intensity that is prior to an indexed or articulated referent” (Rice 201). Put differently, affect is a registered but nonconscious intensity of feeling and emotions are the actualized and coded into conscious expression of those feelings. In short, affect is emotion before our feelings are translated into systems of meaning and signification (Gould).

The review of presidential rhetorical theory revealed that, since our founding, political elites have employed several techniques to channel affect in predetermined ways such as through political fictions and republican institutions. These techniques function to prevent the emergence of affective states from threatening the status quo political order. In order to understand the development of presidential rhetoric as part of this rhetorical lineage, I am reading for ways in

which presidential rhetoric fosters, channels, and directs affect into knowable emotions and towards political outcomes. Thus, I will be focusing on what Jenny Rice calls political affect.

Understanding affect politically provides the basis for studying the nature of the relationship between affect and rhetoric. Erin Rand writes, “The rhetorical process of labeling the inchoate intensities of affect, of marshaling them in the name and direction of a particular emotion and towards the goals of a particular movement or cause...might be understood as the principle challenge of any activism” (131-132). She further adds, “...the affective relations of a group generate an array of intensities, when strategically interpreted into the language of emotion, can be harnessed in the service of political action” (132). Affect then is captured by rhetoric, “...wherein the fullness of affect is provisionally deferred” by translating it into emotion and directing it towards political ends (Rand 132).

Chapter 3 of this dissertation is interested primarily in the space between affect and emotion, where presidential rhetoric intervenes to channel affect by translating it into an intelligible emotion and directing it towards a political result. The space between the intensity of feeling that we call affect and its translation into emotion offers room for “enormous play” for affect to be mobilized and directed “in a variety of nonpredetermined ways” (Gould 27). Affect’s fluid nature allows for political contestation in the space before affect becomes directed towards and fixed as a knowable emotion. I argue, as Berlant does, it is in this space, where we find “the heart of the political,” because this is where our feelings are translated and directed towards political action (“Unfeeling Kerry”). Yet, the question remains: how does presidential rhetoric function in the space between affect and emotion, in order to direct our politics and shape our political culture?

In studying the relationship between affect and rhetoric, a critic reads for the arguments, figures, and tropes that emerge during particular affective states, paying particular attention to how circulating discourse and signs become articulated together. As Rice notes, this approach examines the accretion of linkages that adhere together in our public discourse to create sites of meaning and investment. These rhetorical linkages create an orienting device, which Sarah Ahmed argues, “involve (re)actions or relations of towardness or awayness in relation to objects” (*The Cultural* 8). Put simply, this project is interested in how objects become linked with political emotions. As Ahmed writes, “The very promise” that a certain feeling “is what you get for having the right association might be how we are directed towards certain things” (*The Promise* 2). What I am examining is how presidential rhetoric historically has functioned during affective states to associate particular objects with feelings that are promised to alleviate tensions or negative feelings during an affective moment. For instance, in Chapter 3, I examine the development of the affective presidency and how President Woodrow Wilson associated happiness with democracy.

While Chapter 3 focuses on affective associations, Chapter 4 explores a different relationship between presidential rhetoric and affect. Instead of asking how presidents rhetorically associate feelings with particular objects, this chapter investigates how presidential rhetoric and public memory foster an affective investment into the potential effectiveness of the office of the presidency to solve our problems. For example, I describe how presidential museums generate investment by constructing affectively charged narratives about the proper relationship between citizens and the presidency. Overall, Chapter 4 is about how the presidency itself has become an affective investment of last resort, the institution we put our faith in when all else has failed to alleviate our affective state.

In *Bad for Democracy: How the Presidency Undermines the Power of the People*, Dana Nelson describes this type of political affect. Nelson in this book begins to study the relationship between ever-expanding presidential power and how we are conditioned to feel about the relationship between democracy and the presidency. She contends that the presidency has become "...attached to a powerful logic that works to condition how citizens feel toward the president" (5). She calls this "developing logic presidentialism" and contends that it "shapes how citizens unconsciously feel about the presidency and democratic practice" (5). Presidentialism operates as a mythic framework, which constitutes the president as a father figure who is the leader of the nation and defender of democracy. Nelson argues this myth conditions citizens to invest their democratic energies into the office of the presidency and the every-four-year ritual of electing the right president, the person who will fix all of our problems. This myth and the accompanying habits that it fosters are "inculcated in us from our earliest days in school, reinforced by both popular culture and media coverage..." (Nelson 1-2). As a result, the myth functions to condition us from an early age to orient ourselves towards presidential politics, which prevent us from imagining different forms of democratic agency.

Returning to the language of rhetorical theory, presidentialism is a contemporary political fiction. It articulates a vision of citizenship and democracy that locates the presidency as the source of our political agency. Whereas political parties once served this function, now the ritual of electing a president to a large degree takes its place. Our democratic impulses are directed away from ourselves and towards the redemptive and wishful fantasies promised by the election of a new president. We are trained to think, if only we elect the right president, with the requisite amount of power, the new president will "restore calm and order to a messy world..." (Engels "Review" 479).

Despite its potential application to the study of presidential rhetoric, little scholarship has used Nelson's work as a starting point to open up new avenues of research. Because Nelson's study is not rhetorical in nature, there is ample ground for scholars of presidential rhetoric to add knowledge from our discipline to the investigation of presidentialism. This intervention is important for rhetorical scholars to partake because "as a rhetoric of the presidency...presidentialist messages and meanings are far less unified than the theory of presidentialism might suggest" (Parry-Giles 211). This is because Nelson's work does not take into account how the construct was formed rhetorically and "how it operates rhetorically to manifest specific, though multifaceted, visions of the American presidency..." (Parry-Giles 211). Perhaps most important for my study, previous work on presidentialism does not account for the relationship between affect, presidential rhetoric, and public memory. While Nelson describes presidential actions and words as capturing and directing our feelings and desires, she does not focus on why or how we have become affectively invested in the office. As a result, by exploring this relationship, this project will contribute to the study of presidentialism and public address by enhancing our understanding of the relationship between affect, presidential rhetoric, and public memory.

In order to make this contribution, I draw on contemporary affect theory scholarship about memory in order to offer an explanation about how we have become invested in the office of the presidency. Using a method developed by David Gruber, this Chapter 4 examines how narratives at presidential museums become affectively charged through sights, sounds, and the positioning of bodies in relation to artifacts. In short, I read for affect by analyzing the relationship between the museum's environment, the positioning of bodies in relation to artifacts,

and its rhetorical elements. This method reveals how the relationship between presidential rhetoric and public memory fosters investiture into the office of the presidency.

In studying both of these forms of political affect, this project allows us to begin mapping the relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric. What this understanding of affect and my chosen methods for study open up for rhetorical scholars is the prioritizing of questions about investiture, not assent, as the primary interest of presidential rhetoric study. This is important because, as Jeremy Engels argues, “rhetorical scholars are often so wrapped up in describing the whiplash power of propaganda that we forget to study our own role as citizens...” (*The Politics* 154). Starting with investiture instead of assent as the object of study allows for an examination of what investments we have made in the presidency and presidential power that have placed it as the heart of our democracy. This approach also allows us to examine what needs and desires are fulfilled or directed by presidential rhetoric. Rather than simply observing the “centrality of the presidency in our popular culture...”, this approach allows us to open up space to “...do more work that helps us understand [the rhetorical presidency] and how it may be translated into presidential power” (Stuckey “Rethinking” 48). By examining the relationship between presidential rhetoric and affect, we can begin to ask new questions, decouple these links, challenge our affective attachment to presidential power, and work on renewing our faith in democracy.

### **Guiding Questions**

In the preceding sections, I have hinted at the questions that this study aims to answer. The problematic revealed by my review of current presidential rhetoric literature is that the history of the rhetorical presidency has not been adequately challenged in the last 25 years, leading to a stale historical account. Whether scholars think that the rhetorical presidency has the

potency to influence legislation, constitute our political culture, or define us as a people—or not, few challenge that these are the areas of research for presidential rhetoric scholars. As discussed in Chapter 2, this likely occurs because President Wilson named these types of effects as the reasons for making rhetoric the primary function of the presidency. However, given the skepticism of rhetorical scholars towards accepting presidential speech and writings at face value, it seems odd that so few have challenged this dominant presidential narrative. Those who have challenged the narrative have limited their criticism to examples of the rhetorical presidency prior to Wilson (Medhurst “Beyond”). Even in this work, most scholars still find it useful to use Wilson as the dividing line between the past and modern presidency. If Wilson is the beginning of the modern presidency, what is it that makes this the case? Tulis provided one answer to this question, which has driven research on presidential rhetoric for over 25 years. In asking this question anew, we can start to theorize anew about presidential rhetoric rather than providing just more case studies that codify Tulis’ answer.

The overarching questions of this dissertation are: What is the nature of the relationship between presidential rhetoric and the affective dimension of politics? How does presidential rhetoric generate or channel affect? How does it direct political emotions and for what purpose? What arguments, figures, and tropes emerge over the course of the development of this type of rhetoric? Once these questions are answered, it becomes necessary to ask two broader questions: What are the implications of an affective presidency for citizenship and our notions of democracy? How does the affective presidency implicate how we argue and debate about political issues? In other words, how does studying the affective dimension of presidential rhetoric help us know its function, add to the rhetorical history of this type of rhetoric, and provide us a way to comprehend citizens’ ability to produce change in the twenty-first century?

## Chapter Outlines

While I have previously discussed the chapters regarding how I will read for affect, I now provide a more detailed outline of each chapter. This project consists of two parts. The first section details Woodrow Wilson's philosophy on the relationship between presidential rhetoric and affect. The second part includes two case studies that explore how presidential rhetoric generates or channels affect and the implications of it.

Chapter 2 is a history of Wilson's political philosophy and influence on the modern presidency. In this chapter, I examine Wilson's political speeches and writings from the early 1880s to his election as president, which covers the bulk of his thoughts about the relationship between democracy and presidential rhetoric. I argue that scholarship on the rhetorical presidency is too focused on Tulis' history, which has underappreciated the affective turn made by Wilson's presidency. Incongruently, scholars have argued that presidential rhetoric is both conservative and radical in its ability to transform our political culture. I argue this contradiction exists because Wilson did radically transform the office of the presidency by making management of political emotions a responsibility of the office, which resulted in conservative, not radical, ends. By examining this transformation, I argue that we can begin to study how presidents rhetorically intervene to translate affect into emotion and direct it politically. Unlike current scholarship, this project tells a fundamentally different story about the relationship between Wilson and presidential rhetoric. It suggests that Wilson developed a theory of presidential rhetoric based not on exploiting already known emotions but, instead, on capturing and directing affect for political ends.

In this version, Wilson inherited a political order devolving into emotion, or at least he thought this to be true at the time. As a result, he believed current institutions no longer could

temper the impulses of the masses, which, as noted earlier, is their function; thus, he conceptualized a presidency that could foster or capture affect in order to temper it. Rather than offer an account of the rhetorical president as a radical break from tradition, my reading of history argues that the rhetorical president is but another discursive technique to temper or direct the peoples' non-determined affective impulses before they radical threaten the status quo. Much like the Founding Fathers, Wilson also distrusted the people. However, he thought that the old political order—the one the Founders developed to limit active citizenship—was no longer adequate to keep citizens from disturbing the established order. Thus, Wilson made an old story new by reimagining the power of the presidency. I contend this rhetorical history is the root of the modern presidency.

After I establish this as a technique of rhetorical governance introduced to the office by Wilson, this study proceeds to Chapter 3, which examines Wilson' rhetoric during his tour in support of the League of Nations. These texts are a rich resource in which to explore the relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric, as Wilson noticed the impulses of the people and set out to capture and direct them towards spreading democracy in the form of international liberalism through the construction of global liberal institutions. Drawing on research about happiness, most prominently the work of Sarah Ahmed, I contend that Wilson associated happiness with the spreading of democracy in order to direct affect brought about by the Industrial Revolution and World War I towards global political ends; in this case, those ends were in the creation of liberal global political institutions. In doing so, he associated the promise of happiness with the political end of spreading democracy around the world. The conclusion of the chapter explores the implications of this for democratic practices both at home and abroad.

In Chapter 4, I examine another type of political affect, which focuses on the fostering of affective investiture into the office of the presidency. In order to study this relationship, the chapter examines the intersection of presidential rhetoric and public memory. At the turn of the twentieth century and the onset of the Great Depression, Connor P. Williams contends that political thinkers turned to history as a way to unify an increasingly fragmented populace. This turn to history was a result of the Civil War, which had “conclusively disabused American pretensions about the stability of the principles at the nation’s core” (Williams 2). It is with this context in mind that Wilson developed the affective presidency. This chapter extends the analysis of the affective presidency by examining the most obviously discursive historical sites tied to the presidency: presidential museums. Drawing upon Wilson’s writings about history and contemporary rhetorical scholarship about presidential museums and sites of memory, I look at how presidential museums serve as an attempt to anchor our politics and unify the country by telling affectively charged narratives that establish a model for president-citizen relations. In order to investigate the relationship between presidential rhetoric and public memory, I use texts that justify the creation and need for presidential museums, such as speeches from the groundbreaking ceremony for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s museum. Furthermore, I provide a detailed analysis of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum as an exemplar of this relationship.

It is my argument in this chapter that the Ford Museum fosters an affective investment in the presidency through an affectively charged narrative that positions the presidency as the center of our politics. This chapter deviates from the previous chapters by focusing not on how presidents’ link objects with feelings but, instead, on how history and the presidency itself have become a site of affective investiture. In doing so, I demonstrate how presidential rhetoric and

public memory operate to generate affective investment into the institution of the presidency and away from our own democratic agency.

This study concludes in Chapter 5 with a discussion of how understanding the affective dimension of presidential rhetoric contributes to existing scholarship, furthers avenues for research, and provides important implications for our contemporary politics. In doing so, I relate this project's finding to the current presidential election. This highlights that the affective investments we have made in presidential power have left us without the skills necessary to enact democratic agency in an age of declining trust in the presidency and governmental organizations. I conclude with an argument for delinking the concepts of hope and happiness from presidential power and embracing the uncertainty of affect and democracy.

## CHAPTER 2 WOODROW WILSON AND THE ROOTS OF THE AFFECTIVE PRESIDENCY

The rhetorical presidency as a construct assumes a paradigm of bifurcated development. Under this paradigm, Woodrow Wilson's presidency represents a major shift in the political development of the United States. On one side of this bifurcation is the traditional president, who largely stays out of debates over legislation and remains above the whims of popular opinion. On the other side of the line and after Wilson, is the rhetorical president, who uses rhetoric to persuade the masses to put pressure on Congress to enact his legislative agenda. The rhetorical president is at the center of our political debates and operates as the interpreter of mass opinion. This paradigm of bifurcation is the core of Jeffrey Tulis' book, *The Rhetorical Presidency*.

Interdisciplinary interest in the concept of the rhetorical presidency began with the publication of Tulis' book. Since the book's publication, it has become axiomatic at this point across several disciplines that Wilson fundamentally altered the character and function of the office of the presidency. In his book, Tulis argues that the rhetorical presidency was Wilson's effort to reinterpret the Constitution, after he accepted that it would be too difficult to amend it to be in line with his parliamentary views. Wilson's new interpretations of the document fundamentally changed the institution of the presidency and its relationship with the rest of the government and the citizenry. In order to prove this argument, Tulis compares Wilson's views to those of the Founders on the issues of separation of powers, representation, and executive independence. This comparison to the views of the Founders serves to illustrate that Wilson broke from the governmental vision of the Federalists and radically altered the presidency and our form of government.

In Tulis' version of history, he notes, "For Wilson, separation of powers was the central defect of American politics" (119). Instead, Wilson suggested that separation of powers was

synonymous with checks and balances. This interpretation of separation of powers advanced the idea that each branch of government was not limited by what was in the Constitution but, instead, on the ability of each branch to restrain overreach by the other branches. According to Tulis, Wilson thought this was a necessary interpretation because it strengthened the executive branch by not impeding its ability to act in certain areas. He also thought checks and balances best fostered proper deliberation on legislation in Congress and between the branches. Put differently, Tulis contends Wilson encountered a political system dominated by the legislature and thought more power was needed in the executive branch in order to balance the system, coordinate policy, and ensure proper deliberation. His solution for this problem was to implicate and integrate the presidency and Congress into each other's activities. Wilson maintained that, "Although Congress had failed as a deliberative body, it could now be restored to its true function by presidential leadership that raised and defended key policies" (qtd. in Tulis *The Rhetorical* 123). Here we see the two major purposes of Wilson's theory: leadership and deliberation. Thus, whereas the Founders placed trust in structural separations of power, such as through the veto, in order to keep Congress from dominating the republican system, Wilson preferred the integration of the branches into each other's affairs and a strong executive.

In terms of representation, the Federalists attempted to create an executive that was insulated from popular opinion. They thought the executive, unlike members of Congress, should be free from the changing winds of constituent opinion. However, Wilson had a different view of the office. According to Tulis, Wilson thought that because the presidency was the only office with a national mandate, the president should serve as an interpreter of popular opinion. Indeed, as Tulis writes, "Interpretation was the core of leadership for him" (125). In addition, Tulis adds, Wilson believed that it was necessary for the presidency to bring matters of policy to the people.

As noted earlier, Wilson was concerned by lack of deliberation in Congress. He thought there was a dearth of debate because policy matters were discussed without interest from the public. In order to solve this problem, he called for debates that were not just about a specific proposal at hand but also involved contests over principles. Tulis argues that this view differed greatly from those of the Founders who thought deliberation simply meant debates over the merits of policy, not “great debates over fundamental principles” (126). In short, according to Tulis, Wilson thought that the president should act as an interpreter of popular opinion and raise the level of discourse over matters of policy to matters of principle in order to galvanize public opinion and spur true deliberation.

Finally, according to Tulis, the Federalists created an executive branch that derived its authority not from Congress or the people, but from the Constitution. Thus, the president was insulated from popular opinion and free to take a stance on policy that was different from Congress or the people. Tulis contends Wilson agreed with this choice; however, he arrived at this conclusion because he felt as though the president was the only official with a national mandate. Wilson argued that with this national mandate, the president “[c]ould translate the people’s felt desires into public policy” (128). In sum, the president’s role was to act as interpreter-in-chief, which afforded him the ability to translate the sentiments behind contradictory positions and explain his policies in a way that people understood as benefitting them.

By Tulis’ account, Wilson’s idea of a rhetorical presidency changed the office from an insular one to one that interacted with Congress and the people in order to promote deliberation and leadership. These changes manifested themselves rhetorically in three ways. First, presidential policy rhetoric changed from solely addressing Congress to addressing the people as

well. The goal was for the public to put pressure on Congress to support the president's agenda. Second, presidents started to deliver visionary speeches with the intent to articulate a future and offer reasons why the people should embrace such a vision. Finally, presidents started to routinely tell the public where they stood on matters of policy and tried to compel the people to accept the same position. As a result, the sheer number of presidential addresses increased and the presidency took a more active role in the policy realm.

Tulis' concept of the rhetorical presidency relies on his reading of two of Woodrow Wilson's books, *Congressional Government* published in 1885 and *Constitutional Government* published in 1908. As Bimes and Skowronek note, "A great divide between old ways and new ways is generated by joining the first book's broadside critique of past practice with the last book's celebration of the potential of the president to act as the leader of national opinion" (28). In the former, Wilson argued that a congressionally-dominated form of government has resulted in the usurpation of power from other branches and an inability to form national opinion. After diagnosing this problem, he argued for major changes to the Constitution and the development of a British parliamentary government in the United States. Under this model, the president would "become a figurehead in law as he was already in fact" and all authority, except judicial, would be invested in Congress (Bimes and Skowronek 31). However, twenty-three years later, in *Constitutional Government*, he would drop his arguments for radical reform to the existing governmental order.

In *Constitutional Government*, Wilson praised the Founders as "practical statesmen with an experienced eye for affair and a quick practical sagacity in respect of the actual structure of government (1908 57). He credited them with creating a "thoroughly workable model" of government, one that was "sufficiently broad and elastic to allow for the play of life and

circumstance” (1908 57). Given the circumstances of the late 1800s, one place where Wilson envisioned room for play was the expansion of presidential power. It is in this work where Wilson made his case for the president as the leader of national opinion. He wrote, “If Congress be overborne by [the president], it will be no fault of the makers of the Constitution—it will be from no lack of constitutional power on its part, but only because the President has the nation behind him, and Congress has not” (1908 70). In other words, Wilson saw the potential power of the presidency if the chief executive could unite the country behind him. In referencing this passage, Terri Bimes and Stephen Skowronek write:

Having discovered that the presidency could be transformed into something far greater than the beleaguered constitutional office he had treated so disparagingly in *Congressional Government*, Wilson dispensed with the limited role of the traditional chief executive and designated the president as America’s premier vehicle for the expression of popular will. (32)

No longer was there a need for radical reform because the president could assume the role of national opinion leader, which was a function he thought had been abdicated by Congress.

This bifurcated framing of the role of the president that posited the Federalists versus Wilson has become the accepted view in the fields of political science and presidential rhetoric. However, as Bimes and Skowronek argue, “Whatever value this bifurcated frame may have as a platform for advocacy or criticism, it has some serious limitations as an analytic tool. Pitting the merits of the ‘Framer’s doctrine’ against the merits of the ‘Wilson Doctrine’ simply assumes the history which gives the debate meaning” (39). In the case of Tulis, with his concern for deliberation and original intent of the Constitution, he uses Wilson as evidence of the root of what he perceives to be the deterioration of his preferred normative political model. Framing Wilson’s presidency as representing a radical change from the Federalists’ views provides Tulis a platform upon which to advocate for a return to an originalist understanding of the

Constitution. Given this, Bimes and Skowronek argue, “It is difficult to see how we can progress much further within this debate, much less beyond it, without a reexamination of the premises on which it has been built” (39). Whereas Bimes and Skowronek focus their attention on dismantling the bifurcated paradigm writ large, I do not contest the idea that Wilson represents a dividing line between traditional and modern presidents. However, unlike Tulis, for me, the dividing line is in regards to the function of presidential rhetoric, not between two forms of leadership.

It is the argument of this chapter that Wilson does not represent a radical departure from the Federalist vision of the role of government. His theories of democracy, government, and presidential rhetoric is in line with originalist views that government should function to curb the excesses of democracy. The difference between Wilson and the Federalists is not in how they conceptualize democracy or the role of the presidency; instead, it is in the idea that the presidency, not other institutions, is better equipped to manage the impulses of the masses. Wilson did not create the rhetorical presidency; it has always been rhetorical. However, he did think other institutions were failing to curb the excesses of democracy. Thus, he developed a model of presidential rhetoric that he thought was necessary to intervene into the affective processes of society and give the peoples’ impulses proper direction away from revolution and towards incremental reform. This understanding of Wilson’s contributions to the development of the presidency places his reforms squarely in a rhetorical tradition that attempts to capture the impulses of the people and translate them in a way that directs them towards maintenance or modest reform of the status quo. Rather than representing a radical shift from our historical governing logic, Wilson’s presidency was bifurcated in the sense that the presidency used radical tactics to fulfill an old governmental role—i.e., curbing the excesses of democracy.

In order to flesh out this argument, I first discuss the roots of Wilson's political philosophy. Next, I detail his opinions on democracy and discuss what he saw as the problems with governmental structures and society in the late 1880s and early 1900s. After this, I explain his view on leadership and rhetoric in order to understand how he envisioned his theory of presidential rhetoric mediating the problems of his age and curbing the excesses of democracy. Finally, I offer a brief summary and some concluding thoughts.

### **The Roots of Wilson's Political Philosophy**

The transition to the twentieth century began was marked by tremendous philosophical turmoil. As Conor Williams, a historian of political philosophy, writes, "traditional metaphysical foundations arrived in the early twentieth century in a shabby state, and many insisted upon attempting to resuscitate them" (54). The crisis of the early twentieth century "represented fragmentation of the nation's Enlightenment foundation" (Williams 6). John Patrick Diggins describes the impact of the turn of the century on Enlightenment reasoning: "Man, once regarded as a rational creature capable of intellectual and moral progress, was now conceived as little more than a 'feeble atom or molecule' at the mercy of unconscious drives and infinite mechanisms" (23). The Enlightenment, "with its tenuous balance of reason and passion and its faith in 'self-evident' truths, had succumbed to new discoveries of the irrational forces within man and the deterministic forces within nature and history" (Diggins 23). With the foundation of the Enlightenment shaken to its core, political theorists, such as Woodrow Wilson, searched for a new form of political and social stability.

The event preceding the crisis affecting Enlightenment principles and thought was the Civil War. As Louis Menard writes,

For the generation that lived through it, the Civil War was a terrible and traumatic experience. It tore a hole in their lives. To some of them, the war seemed not just

a failure of democracy, but a failure of culture, a failure of ideas. As traumatic wars do...the Civil War discredited the beliefs and assumptions of the era that preceded it. Those beliefs had not prevented the country from going to war; they had not prepared it for the astonishing violence the war unleashed; they seemed absurdly obsolete in the new postwar world. The Civil War swept away the slave civilization of the South, but it swept away almost the whole intellectual culture of the North along with it. (440-441)

Conor Williams also notes, “The United States had fought other wars, but the Civil War conclusively disabused American pretensions about the stability of the principles at the nation’s core” (2). For Wilson, born in 1850’s Virginia and raised in Georgia and South Carolina, the Civil War would be a formative event in his life and the life of the nation (Berg). According to A. Scott Berg, Wilson, “[c]osseted though he was...was indelibly scarred by the Civil War” (37). In later life, Wilson would reflect on the impact of the Civil War on his political views, saying, “It is all very well to talk of detachment of view, and of the effort to be national in spirit and in purpose, but a boy never gets over his boyhood, and never can change those subtle influences which have become part of him, that were bred in him as a child” (qtd. in Berg 38). He would write of the Civil War, “in the matter of secession the South was absolutely right from the point of view of a lawyer, though quite wrong from the point of view of a statesman” (qtd. in Berg 110). The war was wrong from the point of view of the statesman because it was a result of “misunderstanding and of passion,” not sound judgment (qtd. in Berg 121). In these reflections, Wilson placed the blame for the war not on the North or the South, but on the passions of the people and the politicians who gave in to these passions. This is a subject that Wilson explored in greater detail in his work, *On Being Human*.

In this essay, Wilson asked, “Could any man hesitate to say that Abraham Lincoln was more human than William Lloyd Garrison?” (47). To answer this question, one must first know how to define the word “human.” According to Wilson, “This is our conception of the truly

human man: a man in whom there is a just balance of faculties, a catholic sympathy—no brawler, no fanatic, no Pharisee; not too credulous in hope, not too desperate in purpose; warm, but not hasty; ardent...but not running about to be pleased and deceived by every new thing” (18). With this definition in mind, Wilson answered his question by writing, “Does not every one know that it was the practical Free-Soilers who made emancipation possible, and not the hot, impracticable Abolitionists; that the country was infinitely more moved by Lincoln’s temperate sagacity than by any man’s enthusiasm” (48). Further, he added, “We know how serviceable the intense and headlong agitator was in bringing to their feet men of action; but we feel uneasy while he lives, and vouchsafe him our full sympathy only when he is dead” (48). Therefore, according to Wilson, Lincoln was a statesman who brought the war to the end and made emancipation possible through the temperate qualities of his character.

On the other hand, those who were hasty, of intense passion, brought upon the destruction of the country through war. In summarizing this line of thought, Wilson wrote, “We know that the genial forces of nature which work daily, equably, and without violence are infinitely more serviceable, infinitely more admirable, than the rude violence of the storm...” (48). In this essay, what emerges from Wilson’s thought is the idea that passions result in violence and that to be human is to not give into them but, instead, work to contain them. As Wilson biographer August Heckscher argues “a sense of the war’s encroaching chaos remained with him in later life, less in the form of conscious memories than of impulses to create unity and stability in the world around him” (qtd. in Kazianis par. 3). For Wilson, the question that animated his political philosophy was: how to maintain order amid storms of passion? For him, modern democracy made this a pressing question of importance.

## **Wilson and Democracy**

Within Tulis' version of the bifurcated frame, Wilson brought popular rhetoric to the forefront of presidential practice in order to put pressure on Congress to enact a progressive agenda. However, this version of history overlooks Wilson's conservative views on democracy and the purpose of government. As Drew Maciag writes, "The more traditional and conservative aspects of [Wilson's personality] have been de-emphasized in legend because they do not fit the 'authorized' narrative of progress" (158). In examining Wilson's writings on democracy and government produced in-between the publication of *Congressional Government* and *Constitutional Government*, what emerges is a philosophy of government and understanding of democracy that is consistent with the Federalists. Indeed, after the publication of *Congressional Government*, Wilson increasingly identified himself as a Federalist (Maciag 150). Far from being the radical progressive portrayed in *The Rhetorical Presidency*, Wilson's philosophy "stemmed from his hatred of disorder and radicalism, and his deep admiration for the anti-revolutionary British political tradition" (Maciag 150). Given his loathing of radicalism and disorder, Wilson's political philosophy displayed "a Burkean instinct that was as old as the American Federalists..." (Maciag 150). Wilson's primary interest, like the Federalists, was in formulating governing principles that would maintain social order and control passions. For Wilson, "the first duty of society, is the preservation of society" (qtd. in Maciag 151). At the turn of the twentieth century, Wilson became increasingly anxious about the durability of status quo society, especially in relation to the expansion of democracy.

In the 1890s, Wilson delivered his lecture entitled "Democracy" more than any other speech. According to Arthur S. Link, the editor of his papers, "one is tempted to believe it was his favorite public speech of the decade" ("Editorial Note" 344). In this lecture, Wilson

ruminated on modern democracy and the role of political leaders in modern democratic states. He began the lecture by discussing the differences between traditional and modern democracy. The major difference for Wilson is that a traditional democracy took place in the sphere in places such as town meetings where citizens met face to face to discuss the issues of the day and reason together about what courses of action should be taken to remedy problems. According to Wilson, “a town-meeting is the epitome of a long history of freedom” (*Papers 7:347*). However, because of rapid changes to society, this form of democracy was giving way to a new form. He noted,

...modern democracy in which the people who are said to govern are not the people of a commune or a township, but all the people of a great nation, a vast population which never musters into any single assembly, whose members never see each other's faces or hear each other's voices, but live, millions strong, up and down the reaches of continents; building scores of great cities throughout fair provinces that would in other days have been separate kingdoms; following all callings under all climes; and yet not separate, but standing vast in vital union of thought and of institutions, conceiving themselves a corporate whole; acting so, and so accepted by the world. (*Papers 7:347*)

According to Wilson, the problem with modern democracy was that it gave power to the people to govern the nation's interest. However, unlike in the township, citizens could not know the nation's interests, only those of their local communities. These separate interests formerly would have found a home in different communities, but were not part of the whole. As a result, modern democracy prevented the emergence of a unity of purpose. Instead, by its very nature, it fermented division and factions. This was especially problematic for Wilson because technological changes made possible sudden majorities that could disrupt the existing order. The new world, fragmented, “hot with steam, tremulous with electricity” and “eager, restless, tireless in its pursuit of things both new and old” presented a problem for the functioning of government. (*Papers 7: 349*).

After noting this distinction between traditional and modern forms of democracy, Wilson argued that the Federalists “...thought, in order to be pure and efficient, government ought to exist for the people, ought to serve their determinant purposes and all of their permanent interests” (*Papers* 7:350). However, he continued,

...they thought also that it ought to be guarded against the heats and hastes, the passions and the thoughtless impulses of the people, no less than against selfish dynasties and hurtful class intrigues. Accordingly, they made it only in part a directly democratic government. They carefully sought to break the force of sudden majorities. (*Papers* 7:350)

He summed up this section of the lecture by arguing that the Federalists “...meant the government they were building to stand firm, whatever storms of passion, whatever sudden tumults of party, whatever keen ardours of too sanguine reform might for a time prevail” (*Papers* 7:351). Modern notions of democracy were undoing this form of government, he argued, because the country had come to believe that the people were sovereign and their will must be made operative in all aspects of society and government.

The expansion of democracy in the late 1800s had undone the work of the delegates at the Constitutional Convention. In providing evidence for this point, Wilson maintained:

Year by year we have sought to bring government nearer to the people despite the original plan. We nominate the President now in popular convention: we seek to determine at the ballot box who our federal senators shall be when our state legislators shall have met to register our preferences, and we warn the Senators, when once they are fairly chosen, not to brave too rashly the displeasure of the triumphant majority which the people have sent to the lower house. We grow daily more and more uneasy because a man may be made President who has not received a popular majority in the vote of electors. (*Papers* 7:351)

As a result of these changes, Wilson said that the “pressure of public opinion,” through “[t]he newspaper, the pulpit, the friendly disputation, the curtain lecture, command[s] what should be done...” (*Papers* 7:351). Therefore, in Wilson’s assessment, the sovereign power of public

opinion had supplanted the power of the government. This is what Wilson was fighting against when he declared, “I believe in the people: in their honesty and sincerity and sagacity; but I do not believe in them as my governors” (*Papers* 7:356). For Wilson, the people should have a voice in the government, but popular opinion should not dictate governmental action.

It is clear at this point that Wilson did not support the idea of direct democracy or even what we may think of now as participatory democracy. He articulated a view of government that was consistent with the views of the Federalists, as was discussed in Chapter 1. Like the Founders, Wilson thought that government needs to hold at bay the passions and impulses of the people. Citizens represented a threat to the republican form of government. Thus, he finished his lecture on democracy by enunciating a view of it that is consistent with the views of the Federalists.

How then did Wilson define democracy? As the above discussion makes clear, he was not in favor of understanding democracy in terms of government dictated by popular opinion or the will of voters. Indeed, he was not even a proponent of universal suffrage. Instead, he understood democracy as being rooted in representative government. After laying out his concerns with modern democracy, he argued, “...the pleasure of the people, though it may be the source of authority, it is not therefore authority itself, according to any logic I have yet heard of.... There must be rule, under whatever polity, and there must be rulers” (*Papers* 7:352-353). In devising democracy as rule by the people, he argued that we have conceived of democracy incorrectly. Instead, he stated, “What we really mean when we say that the people govern is that they freely consent to be governed, on condition that a certain part of them do the governing—that part...be selected out of the mass and elevated to places of rule—and that is the best democratic government...” (*Papers* 7:356). For Wilson, this form of government is “eminently

democratic, if we understand democracy as history has given it to us. It is democratic in this sense, that it draws all the governing material from the people—from such part of the people as will fit themselves for the function” (*Papers* 7:356). Wilson added, that this understanding of democracy is “much higher,” and “much more nobler than the other...” (*Papers* 7:357). In these passages, Wilson made clear that democracy rests in ideas of representation and in governing institutions, not the ability of people to self-direct politics. His conception of democracy is best summed up when he said, his view “of the life of a free nation” is “a people not self-directed, but directed by its boldest most prevalent minds...” (*Papers* 7:360). Democracy in this view is intimately tied to leaders and institutions, not to the people.

It should be no surprise then that Wilson spent a portion of this lecture defending representative government. In defending it, he said, “The freedom of the democratic nation consists...in making undictated choice of the things it will accept and of the men it will follow.... This, it seems to me, is an infinitely more vital, animating way to conceive democracy than to imagine the people what they are not, our masters” (*Papers* 7:359). It is the notion of democracy, he argued, that will keep a democratic nation from embracing its rash impulses. According to Wilson, democratic institutions and representative government are necessary to balance the competing forces of society. He said, a nation can avoid the dangers of modern democracy, “so long as it retains that love of order, and the consciousness of the need for law...its ineradicable feeling for institutions is its equipoise; and with that equipoise it has attained its sovereignty. This is the sovereignty over itself, the sovereignty of self-respect and self-control...” (*Papers* 7:358-359). In short, Wilson argued that in order to avoid hasty urges, sovereignty must rest in institutions, not the people, as institutions regulate impulses and foster

self-control. This view of democracy and government would not seem out of place in *The Federalist Papers*.

In concluding this lecture, Wilson noted, “You may say that these are lessons in conservatism read to a generation of progress. Well, a little emphasis put just now on conservatism would not harm us...” (*Papers* 7:365). However, he did not view his own position as being opposed to progress, but added, “...progress is a march, not a scamper. It is achieved by advance in hosts and under discipline, not by running hither and thither of inquisitive crowds. It is a slow thing...not an elegant intellectual diversion of dreaming dreams and then forming societies to carry them out” (*Papers* 7:365). He classified his position as “liberal minded moderation which is fearless in examining the foundations of things, but fearful of disturbing them too rashly” (*Papers* 7:363). In this conclusion and his previous warnings about modern democracy, the core of Wilson’s political philosophy emerges from behind the authorized tale of his progressive philosophy; uncovered is the conservatism behind his reforms. He thought that reforms, not radical changes, were necessary to revive trust in institutions and stave off revolution. An excess of democracy threatened the existing order, but he warned we needed to be careful not to move too fast. Wilson feared democracy and thought institutions were necessary to check radicalism, control the impulses of the masses, and maintain the functioning of society. However, he feared that contemporary institutions were no longer serving this function.

### **Wilson’s Critiques of Institutions**

I have so far established that Wilson held a view similar to the Federalists in regards to democracy and government. Wilson advanced an argument in his most popular lecture of the 1890s that equated democracy with representative government and maintained this perspective was the best because representative institutions regulated the impulses of the people

and imposed self-control. Curbing political passions was necessary to slow down change, maintain the foundations upon which society were built, and stave off revolution. However, Wilson feared that the institutions of his time were no longer serving these functions and were instead exacerbating the problems of modern democracy. In particular, he turned his ire towards political parties, Congress, and the presidency.

Wilson began his essay, "Cabinet Government in the United States," by noting, "Anxiety about the future of our institutions seems to be daily becoming stronger in the minds of thoughtful Americans. A feeling of uneasiness is undoubtedly present..." (127). He added that this apprehension was inducing fear in the populace and leading to a distrust of those who had been elected to serve in government. Wilson placed blame for this fear and distrust at the feet of Congress. In particular, he argued that Congress no longer did its business in public, but through standing committees. The essential feature of the standing committee, he posited, "is a vicious suppression of [public] debate" (134). This suppression of debate though was not problematic for the legislation that it produced, but that "different sections of a great country" could no longer "learn each other's feelings and interests" (128). For Wilson, "Legislation is but the oil of government. It is that which lubricates its channels and speeds its wheels....It issues orders which others obey...but it does not do the actual work of governing" (*Congressional Government* 161). Instead, governing involves discussing issues and informing the public about them. Wilson wrote, "The informing function of Congress should be preferred even to its legislative function" (*Congressional Government* 161). It is Congress' informing function, open discussion about public issues, which "clears the public mind and shapes the demand of public opinion" (*Congressional Government* 162). With Congress abandoning this public function in favor of closed-door standing committees, Wilson warned that the public would no longer heed it

and question its legitimacy. As a result, he contended that Congress was no longer the voice of the nation. Congress, he argued, should “not only speak the will of the nation,” but also “lead it to its conclusions, to utter the voice of its opinions, and to serve as its eyes in superintending all matters of government, —which Congress does not do” (*Congressional Government* 159). In short, Congress’s function was to inform and direct public opinion. However, Wilson believed that Congress’ reliance on standing committees diminished this function and, as a result, the public mind could not be cleared and opinion properly fashioned.

For Wilson, the central defect of the legislature was that it was not shaping public opinion. Perhaps contradictory to our understanding of why Congress would operate behind closed doors, Wilson maintained that Congress merely followed public opinion. He wrote, “The gossip of the street is listened to rather than the words of the law-maker. The [newspaper] editor directs public opinion, the congressman obeys” (*Congressional Government* 168). If the function of institutions was to regulate and give shape to public opinion and if that was necessary to the preservation of society, then it is clear why this would upset Wilson. The problem from his perspective was that by merely following public opinion and not shaping it, “Talk is not sobered by any necessity imposed upon by those who utter it to suit their actions to their words” (*Congressional Government* 167). For Wilson, what should be imposed on any utterance of speech is a commitment to the welfare of the nation. However, because congressmen were merely following public opinion, he feared that they merely spoke for their constituents and not the nation as a whole.

Wilson feared that the failure of institutions like Congress to nurture a national consensus would lead to factionalism. In his lecture on democracy, Wilson’s concern with modern democracy was that, because of advances in technology and travel, nation-states were becoming

too large. The fear for Wilson was that this would result in an inability to form national opinion and sectional conflict. In *Congressional Government*, Wilson applied this fear to the United States. He saw the roots of this problem in the U.S., stating, “The sphere and influence of national administration and national legislation is widening rapidly” (167). In particular, he noted that the population of the South and West would continue to grow in the future. He warned, “Whether these sections are to be harmonious or dissentient depends almost entirely upon the methods and policy of the federal government” (167). Wilson’s worry was that by following local public opinion instead of cultivating a national opinion, lawmakers were not making policy with the national welfare in mind. The consequences of this were that “sectional lines must and will be known; citizens of one part of the country may look with jealousy and even with hatred upon their fellow citizens of another part; and faction must tear and dissension distract a country which Providence would bless, but which men may curse” (167). For Wilson, Congress’ inability to generate national public opinion was creating regional blocs which threatened the stability of the country. Whereas the Federalists thought Congress would regulate factions, Wilson saw it creating them. Lacking concern for national welfare by following local public opinion and not shaping consensus through its informing function, Congress was exacerbating Wilson’s fears of democracy.

Despite his fear of factions, Wilson he did not oppose political parties. Indeed, as he argued in his lecture on democracy, “I can justify my tolerance of parties, and my impatience with those who scorn them and make as if they could do without them. Parties preserve impulses, which would otherwise be diffused and lost” (qtd. in DiNunzio 302). He made this statement in a section about how stable government depended on people not self-directing their political life. Wilson reluctantly supported political parties because parties gave voice to citizens, who

otherwise would have been diffused into multiple factions. In other words, he tolerated parties because, like government, they were representative and directed impulses. This view of the functioning of political parties is in line with the rhetorical work of Jennifer Merceica who argues that political parties function to give the illusion of active citizenship but work as an extra-Constitutional check on democratic impulses.

While Wilson would continue to espouse the benefits of political parties throughout his life, he became concerned about their effectiveness. In *Constitutional Government in the United States*, he wrote, “parties are absolutely necessary to hold the things thus disconnected and dispersed together and give some coherence to the action of political forces” (2005 194). He continued:

It is clear without them it would hardly have been possible for the voters of the country to be united in truly national judgments upon national questions. For a hundred years or more we have been a nation in the making, and it would be hard to exaggerate the importance of the nationalizing influence of our great political parties. Without them, in a country so various as ours, with communities at early stages of development, separated into parts by the sharpest economic contrasts and social differences, with local problems and conditions of their own which seemed to give them a separate interest very difficult to combine with any other, full of keen rivalries...national opinions, national judgments, could never have been formulated or enforced without the instrumentality of well disciplined parties which extended their organization in a close network over the whole country, and which had always the desire for office and for the power which office brings to urge as their conclusive reason,—a reason which every voter could understand,—why there should be agreement in opinion and in program as between section and section, whatever the temptation to divide and act separately, as the conclusive argument against local interest and preference. (2005 200)

Unlike Congress, political parties were able to form national opinion. As a result, they were able to bring together local interests under the banner of a national program. While a multitude of various factions existed in the country, political parties absorbed them into a national coalition. Given the “difficulties and hazards of our national history,” Wilson noted, “it has been nothing

less than a marvel how the network of parties has taken up and broken the restless strain of contest and jealousy, like an invisible network of kindly oil upon the disordered waters of the sea” (2005 201).

Despite his tentative acceptance of parties, Wilson worried that they were also no longer representatives of the people. The problem with political parties, as Wilson encountered them, was that they were run by bosses who assigned offices by appointment. Critiquing this practice of patronage, Wilson wrote:

It is a difficult and hazardous not only because it is irregular and only partially protected by law, but also because the people look askance at it and often with sudden disgust turn upon it and break it up, for a little while rendering it impossible. The reason for the occasional outbursts of discontent and resentment is evident and substantial enough. (2005 198)

Political parties, which once held factions together, now were coming apart due to dissatisfaction with the process of appointments to offices. As a result, local issues were undoing the national coalitions that the parties built over the last hundred years. This situation Wilson noted caused people to change their feelings toward the party structure. He described the situation in stating, the people “happen to realize that under existing party machinery they have virtually no control at all over nominations for office...they are cut off from exercising real representative self-government—that they have been solemnly taking place in a farce” (2005 198). As a result, in an earlier writing, he claimed:

My chief reflection has been, not that our national parties are in a state of disintegration; that is not a reflection. It is a mere patent fact. But that such a course of things is tending to, so to say, to individualize our politics is a reflection...The old parties, to put it in the vernacular have ‘played out,’ and we are choosing here a man and there a man who means what he says.... (“Wanted” 206-207)

Thus, parties, like Congress, had stopped functioning to form national opinion and cohere a national unity. Instead, politics had become individualized, with the focus on individual lawmakers, not on parties. This was not necessarily a problem for Wilson because voters could focus their attention on holding individuals, and not parties, accountable. However, Wilson was also concerned with the individualization of politics, especially in regards to presidential leadership.

It is clear at this point that Wilson's political theory was shaped by an emphasis on the need for institutions to channel the passions of the people. According to Wilson, Congress and political parties were failing to channel passions and, as a result, the country was fractured. Thus, he turned his attention to the office of the presidency as a remedy. In doing so, he offered a critique of modern presidential leadership. While Tulis' thesis relies on the assumption that Wilson represents a break between traditional constitutionally authorized leadership and popular leadership, in the next section, I illustrate that Wilson thought that this break had already occurred and was responsible for amplifying the passions of the people. Thus, instead of arguing for popular leadership, Wilson sought to reform its implementation.

Tulis' assumptions about the creation of the rhetorical presidency have been questioned in numerous essays, most notably in an edited volume entitled *Before the Rhetorical Presidency*. In the introduction to this collection of essays, Martin Medhurst points out that one problem with Tulis' thesis is that it limits the concept of presidential rhetoric to discourse spoken in front of popular audiences. However, if we expand the definition of presidential rhetoric, there are several instances of presidents trying to influence the passage of legislation. In expanding the definition to include newspaper opinion articles, Medhurst writes, one "argument is clear: there was a rhetorical presidency —long before Roosevelt and Wilson, and those rhetorical

presidencies can be seen in the practices and procedures of many holders of the presidential office, beginning with George Washington” (“Was There” 3). Indeed, David Zarefsky argues that the rhetorical presidency is as old as the republic, as, “the strategy of ‘going public’ is very old. It can be traced back to George Washington’s first term” (qtd. in Medhurst “Was There” 2 ).

Nowhere is this idea better illustrated than in tracing the history of presidential newspapers. For example, Mel Laracey traces this history and finds that Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, John Tyler, James Polk, Zachary Taylor, and James Buchanan each worked with newspapers in order to persuade audiences on various issues of legislation. He notes, “These papers really were ‘presidential newspapers.’ They were conduits for the policy pronouncements of presidents rather than just party newspapers, as is sometimes claimed” (21). As evidence for this claim, he provides quotations from newspaper editors about the relationship between the president and their newspaper. For example, the editor of the *Washington Globe* met daily with Andrew Jackson to discuss what would be in each day’s paper. Jackson and editor Francis Blair viewed the *Washington Globe* as the “organ to announce the policy and defend the Administration” (qtd. in Laracey 20). Similarly, James Polk met with the editor of his paper, the *Washington Union*, regularly. The purpose of these meetings, according to Polk, was to figure out “the best ways to present policies and ideas to the public and to Congress” (qtd. in Laracey 22). Thus, expanding the conception of what constitutes rhetoric tears apart the assumption that popular leadership is an idea originated by Wilson. In fact, a careful reading of Wilson shows that he did not give birth to the idea of popular leadership; instead, he critiqued it and tried to reign it in.

In *Constitutional Government*, Wilson wrote, “Some of our presidents have felt the need, which unquestionably exists in our system, for some spokesman of the nation as a whole, in

matters of legislation no less than in other matters, and have tried to supply Congress with leadership of suggestion....” (2005 185). He further argued that the president “is undoubtedly the only spokesperson of the whole people....The Constitution bids him speak, and times of stress and change must more and more thrust upon him the attitude of originator of policies” (2005 185). Tulis portrays this claim as a radical departure from past practice. However, the above account of the practice of presidential newspapers shows this not to be the case. Instead, as Bimes and Skowronek note, in writing about popular leadership, “Wilson was grappling with the historic mutability of the Constitution and trying to formulate a methodology for adjustment that would limit change only to that which was absolutely necessary” (49). In short, Wilson, across a number of works, advanced the argument that the presidency had always been active and rhetorical, especially in times of crisis; a claim supported by contemporary research on the rhetorical presidency. However, Wilson found no models, besides Lincoln, for active presidential leadership that functioned to curb the excesses of democracy. Instead, he found the opposite to be true; models of presidential leadership and rhetoric that stirred the passions of the people.

For instance, of Thomas Jefferson, Wilson wrote, he was “abstract, sentimental” and “artificial” (“Calendar” 85). Bimes and Skowronek note that Wilson thought Jefferson’s “ideas that when taken seriously threatened to radicalize politics, level class distinctions, and debase governmental affairs (41). While critical of Jefferson, he was especially scornful of Andrew Jackson. He wrote, Jackson was “alert, but uncultured; honest and manly, but a bit vulgar and quite without poise; self conscious, but not self-contained” (*Division 7*). According to Bimes and Skowronek, Wilson saw Jackson as lacking “patience, skill, and maturity” and forcing the country “down a personal course without concern for the precedents and traditions he was destroying in the process” (45). Wilson especially critiqued Jackson’s notion that “a vote of the

people” should “override the action of all constituted authorities” (qtd. in Bimes and Skowronek 44). For Wilson, Jackson’s leadership style, the idea that he was the instrument for the enactment of popular opinion, represented a “revolutionary doctrine” (History 4: 88). Most worrisome for Wilson, Jackson “left office before either he or the men who loved and followed him were aware of what mischief he had unwittingly done—how the whole framework of settled politics had been shaken and loosened at every joint by his willful supremacy” (History 4: 62). In summarizing Jackson’s leadership style, Wilson argued Jackson’s politics are “the bane and reproach of American politics” (*Division* 29). In short, Wilson argued that Jackson followed popular opinion, but did not shape it. As a result, the American political system was reshaped to understand the presidency as the enactor of popular opinion. Instead of restraining the impulses of democracy, Jackson unleashed them. The violence that resulted from this form of leadership deeply troubled Wilson. More troublesome to him, however, was the precedent for leadership Jackson set for those who followed him.

In writing about Andrew Johnson, William Jennings Bryan, and Theodore Roosevelt, Wilson argued that they were “apostles of passion” (*History* 5:54). He notes that Johnson was “crude, uncompromising,” and attempted “mastery without any wisdom or moderation” (*History* 5:1). Of Bryan, Wilson commented that his speeches are “wrought, not of argument, but of fire” (*History* 5: 258). According to Bimes and Skowronek, Wilson was especially scornful of Bryan because he thought “Bryan reversed Cleveland’s noble stand against the passions of the moment....Rather than try to assuage the revolt in the ranks, Bryan flattered its most irrational elements and precipitated the break-up of the Democratic Party” (45). In these two men, Wilson saw the continuation of Jackson’s style of leadership that stoked, rather than extinguished, the flames of irrationality.

If one president was the truest embodiment of Jacksonian leadership for Wilson, it was Theodore Roosevelt. He called Roosevelt the “old spirit of Andrew Jackson’s time over again, the feeling of disrespect and desire to make everything common property” (qtd. in Ellis 147-148). Under Roosevelt’s leadership, the United States was “growing no older” (Wilson, “Princeton”). Instead, like under Jackson, the presidency was beholden to the will of the voters and reshaped by the whims of every new generation. Wilson, with a commitment to institutions and traditions, saw in Roosevelt’s leadership style the same demagoguery he found in Jackson. In fact, as Bimes and Skowronek note, in tracing leadership from Jefferson to Roosevelt, Wilson found “no satisfactory assurances against demagogues to be found in institutions; they had repeatedly proven inadequate to their central purpose of generating leaders who were capable of interpreting the national sentiment without simply mirroring the passions of the people” (47). Concerned with controlling popular passions, Wilson’s problem was that popular leadership as he encountered it did not guard against the desires and impulses of the people; rather, it encouraged them to fester.

In summarizing Wilson’s view of popular leadership, Bimes and Skowronek write, “Wilson’s historical vignettes portray popular appeals, momentary passions, and fleeting memories as part of a tradition of leadership already well established in the nineteenth-century America” (46). However, Wilson was not out to legitimate this style of leadership. Instead, “these works are motivated by the fear that the nation might not grow out of it” (46). Wilson was not motivated to “liberate the populist impulse,” but to direct its containment (46). In other words, as with Congress and political parties, he saw presidential leadership as exacerbating the problems of modern democracy, namely the fostering rather than restraining of popular passions. Far from endorsing contemporary notions of popular leadership, as argued by Tulis, Wilson was

actively trying to condemn it. If not for the authorized history of Wilson as a radical progressive, his accounts of leadership would mark him the last Federalist.

Overall, Wilson's primary political concern was the maintenance of social stability. Through that lens, Wilson viewed modern democracy as a primary threat to the social order, because it creates factions and does not offer direction for the impulses and passions of citizens. The old forms of managing these impulses—e.g., Congress, political parties, and popular leadership—were no longer containing them, but exacerbating them.

With this argument established, I will now turn to how Wilson looked to presidential leadership and rhetoric to offer a new model for managing the passions of the people. He referred to this method as "interpretation." In doing so, Wilson sought to recover our Federalist roots, a governing logic that directed the impulses of the people away from revolution and towards reform.

### **Presidential Leadership and Rhetoric**

In *The Rhetorical Presidency*, Tulis argues that Woodrow Wilson offered interpretation as his method for bypassing Congress and establishing popular leadership and rhetoric as the essential tasks of the presidency. However, Wilson's thoughts about popular leadership and contemporary research on presidential rhetoric establishes that Wilson was not the first popular leader or rhetorical president. Further, Tulis contends that presidential rhetoric "is offered as the antidote for 'gridlock' in our pluralistic constitutional system, the cure for the sickness of ungovernability" (4). However, in his writings, Wilson does not solely offer leadership and presidential rhetoric as cures for legislative stalemate; he also sees them as essential for controlling the passions of the people. Wilson was not concerned with government's legislative function as much as he was concerned with its informing function. Certainly Wilson thought that

effective presidential rhetoric would increase support for the presidential legislative agenda, but this would be a byproduct of channeling passions in proper directions, not the primary function. As Bimes and Skowronek note, Wilson remained throughout his career principally concerned with controlling the desires and impulses of the people (46). While Tulis and subsequent scholars, such as Mary Stuckey, have argued that Wilson's reforms to presidential practice were ideologically driven, given his writings, it is imperative that we consider the idea that they were driven by a desire to control the urges and whims of the people. Wilson was not theorizing about how to make the presidency and government at large more responsive to the people or to increase passage of a legislative agenda; rather, he wanted to limit change to what was absolutely necessary. In order to do this, he argued that the United States needed responsible leaders.

To understand Wilson's theories of leadership and rhetoric, it is important to go back to his notions of sovereignty. I have already established that Wilson was concerned with the idea of popular sovereignty, the idea that the people possessed ultimate power. This was a popular idea in his time. As a result, Wilson was an advocate for understanding democracy and sovereignty in relation to democratic institutions rather than the masses. In summarizing his view of democratic sovereignty, Wilson said, "History warrants and necessitates government for the people, but it has not made possible government by the people. Sovereignty must still be lodged, intelligent, and independent" (*Papers* 7:81). For Wilson, independent and intelligent sovereignty should be lodged in institutions, which provide "guidance, initiative, conduct of affairs, and for none of these things is 'the common will' fitted" (*Papers* 7:81). The common will is not fitted for these tasks because when the masses decide, "[e]vidence is excluded from most minds by reason of haste of preoccupation" (Wilson, *Papers* 7:81). In short, Wilson thought only a few responsible and trained leaders could ever understand the questions of government and reach a rational

decision. In comparison, popular sovereignty threatened to dislodge this notion and the existence of traditional institutions. As a result, government would be controlled by the impulses of the people, not the anchor of their containment.

In extrapolating on his theory of sovereignty, Wilson argued for a shift from a Newtonian to a Darwinian understanding of government. Under his theory, it was best to think of the people as an organism and the state as an organ. The organism evolves and the government must adapt to this evolution or risk becoming irrelevant. As Wilson explains, “Sovereignty, if it be a definite and separable thing at all, is not unlimited—is not identical with the power of the community. It is not the general vitality of the organism, but the specific origination power of certain organs” (*Papers* 7:337). The purpose of government—the organ—is to give “command and direction” to the impulses and feelings of the organism (*Papers* 7:337). Thus, he noted, “The will of the community, the disposition and desires of the organic State as a whole, are indeed...the foundation, as they are also in many instances the direct and immediate source of law” (*Papers* 7:337). However, Wilson clarified “that will is exercised by way of approval or disapproval, acquiescence or resistance, it is not an agency of initial choice. The sanctioning judgments of a people are passive...waiting to have things put to them, unable themselves to suggest anything, because without organs of utterance suggestion” (*Papers* 7:337). Thus, while “[t]he organism unquestionably dominates the organs...there are, nevertheless, organs and organs of origination which command and rule” (*Papers* 7:337). In Wilson’s view, the notion of popular sovereignty was creating confusion as “[t]he springs of political action” were being confused with “governing power” (*Papers* 7:341). He empathetically stated, “Those who choose the governors are not themselves the government” (*Papers* 7:341).

Under this view of sovereignty and government, the people provide the raw sentiment that forces the government to respond to them. However, they in and of themselves do not have political power. The people have given their sovereignty to “[a] supreme directing organ” that exercises sovereignty on their behalf (Wilson, *Papers* 7:340). The function of this ultimate guiding organ is to regulate and form obedience. As Wilson explained, “The sovereign power is that to which ‘the bulk of the community is habitually obedient....’” (*Papers* 7:334). In short, the purpose of government is to check the people in their exercise of sovereignty. As Wilson lost faith in the ability of Congress, political parties, and popular leaders to function as this check, he turned his attention to the presidency to serve as a check on the hastes and urges of the masses.

In *Constitutional Government*, Wilson again reiterates his theory of government. However, what changed during his thirty years of writing is that he now advanced the position that the presidency must be the supreme governing organ, not Congress. For example, Wilson argued, “Greatly as the practice and influence of Presidents has varied, there can be no mistaking the fact that we have grown more and more inclined from generation to generation to look to the President as the unifying force in our complex system, the leader both of his party and of the nation” (2005 178). In Wilson’s view, the presidency had become the institution that people turned to as the legitimate organ of their authority. As a result, Wilson was not arguing for popular leadership as a new form of governing power; he thought it was already prevalent. Instead, he was searching for a theory of presidential leadership that would serve as a check on popular sovereignty. Because no other organ could give direction to the organism, foster obedience to the organ and not the whims of the organism, presidential leadership became necessary to give the organism direction.

Richard Longaker writes, Woodrow Wilson, as president, “believed that he should represent and interpret national morality, that he should draw raw sentiment from the nation and, as national preacher, articulates the nation’s moral sense” (75). This assessment is consistent with Wilson view of government: the governing organ should understand the raw sentiment, the animating force of the people, but not bow to it. Instead, leaders needed to interpret the people’s desires into a position that satisfied the national interest. In “Leaders of Men,” Wilson maintained that the leader “supplies the power; others supply only the materials upon which that power operates.” The role of practical leadership is not to buckle to the will of the masses, but “to give a direction, a form, a technical dress, and a specific sanction, to the general sense of the community.” In comparing this form of leadership to demagoguery, Wilson argues, the statesmen trims “the inclinations of the moment,” while the demagogue is “obedient only to the permanent purposes of the public mind.” Wilson further compares practical leadership to demagoguery in saying, “The one ministers to himself, the other to the race.” For Wilson, leaders needed to serve as ministers to the masses, directing them away from individual impulses and towards the national interest. Thus, the supreme task of leaders of the modern democratic state was to direct the masses, not become one of them.

Wilson thought this form of leadership necessary to slow down the pace of progress. According to Robert Kraig, Wilson thought that “[t]he democratic leader was one who not only understood the direction of social evolution but who could work at its pace, helping it along, but in no way creating it” (70). The role of the representative leader was to understand the sentiments of the people yet slow them down in their march towards progress. As Wilson contended, the leader “cannot be of the school of the prophets; he must be of the number of those who studiously serve the slow-paced daily demand” (“Leaders of Men”). This was necessary,

Wilson thought, because fast-paced radical reform to existing institutions would lead to the collapse of society or, at least, a loss of the traditions and precedents upon which it was built. As he explains, “no reform may succeed for which the major thought of the nation is not prepared....” (“Leader of Men”). Because society was an organism, incapable of expressing direction, the masses of society could not prepare the nation for radical change. Therefore, if leaders buckled to popular sovereignty, they were risking change that would cause further division in the country. More importantly, because they risked too much change, a leader was necessary to limit change to that which was necessary and prudent. As a result, only the governing organ of the state could prepare the country for change.

In order to facilitate this method of leadership, Wilson developed what he called “interpretation.” In “Leaders of Men,” Wilson most succinctly explained interpretation:

Leadership, for the statesmen, is interpretation. He must read the common thought; he must test and calculate very circumspectly the preparation of the nation for the next progress of politics. If he fairly hit the popular thought, when we have missed are we to say that he is a demagogue? The nice point is to distinguish the firm and progressive popular thought from the momentary and whimsical popular mood, the transitory or mistaken popular passion.

For Wilson, the art of interpretation would allow the statesman to differentiate between the permanent popular thought at a given time in history from the hasty passions of the people. In doing so, the leader could differentiate between the change that was necessary and the temporary whims of society. It is in this differentiation where Tulis wages his most sustained attack on Wilson’s political theory: “If popular opinion is the source of the leader’s rhetoric, what basis apart from popular opinion itself is there to distinguish the ‘permanent’ from the ‘transient?’” (130). Certainly, Tulis is somewhat correct that there are practical problems with distinguishing between popular thought and transient passion. However, it should by now be clear that the

source of the leader's rhetoric is not popular opinion understood as popular sovereignty. Instead, the source of the leader's rhetoric is his understanding of popular sentiment and his ability to interpret it. In other words, Tulis conflates popular opinion with popular sovereignty, which Wilson described as distinct entities. The difference between permanent and transient interests of the community rests on the ability of the leader to interpret the feelings of the community and give them a permanent form. In fact, Wilson noted that "the general sense of the community" is "inchoate and vague, and the statesman must formulate and make it explicit" ("Leaders of Men"). For Wilson, the sense of the community was always rudimentary and unclear and thus transient and dangerous, which is why leaders needed to give it focus. As a result, Tulis is correct that there is no objective way to distinguish between permanent and transient interests. Rather, it is subjective, distinguished only in the mind of the leader. What comes to be understood as permanent or transient is dependent on the ability of the leader to interpret public feeling and direct it towards a form that receives acquiescence from the public. Ultimately, for Wilson, the president interprets and originates, the public follows; not the other way around.

In order to properly interpret the feelings of the community, Wilson argued for leaders to adopt a form of rhetoric that he calls "expedient speech." Wilson says that expedient speech is "[n]ot that which creates distemper and overheats, overmasters the judgment: but that which points out the best means of accommodation and of progress by means of accommodation" (qtd. in Kraig 87). Further, he wrote, the goal of an orator is to "anticipate common thought and give it the best and most reasonable expression" (qtd. in Kraig 73). In short, the aim of public address in the modern democratic state was to ensure the "ascendency of reason over passion" (*Papers* 5: 90). To accomplish this goal, Wilson called on orators to avoid the passions of the people and to school them "in order and self-restraint" (*History* 3:167). In addition, he said, speechmakers

must show the masses the “wise way,” which allows the country “to examine the foundations of things, but to be fearful of disturbing them to rashly” (*Papers* 7: 365). In these writings, Wilson is advancing the idea that government has an informing function, or the obligation to teach the masses. On this point, Tulis rightly notes that Wilson “favored an interplay between representative and constituent that would, in fact, educate the constituent” (125).

However, teaching the people the “wise ways” was only one function of popular oratory for Wilson. He also wrote about its potential affective function. This function of rhetoric for Wilson is two-fold: (1) direct the people towards an object of desire and (2) foster an affective investment in the office of the presidency as the legitimate organ of government. In regards to the first function, Wilson wrote, “With the start and irritation of a rude and sudden summons from sleep, Society at first resents the disturbance of its restful unconsciousness, and for a moment racks itself with hasty passion” (“Leaders”). It is in moments such as these, where passion overwhelms reason, that a leader is most needed, as the people do not have the judgment necessary to not give in to their impulses. Wilson further explained, when “something intervenes between the people and the government, there must be some arm direct enough and strong enough to thrust aside the something that comes in the way” (*The New* 236). In Wilson’s writings, it is clear that the “something that intervenes” is affect, the unconscious but registered impulses of the people. If left unchecked or, even worse, encouraged by popular leaders, these urges threaten existing institutions and principles. As Wilson wrote, “There are other counselors, the source of whose counsel is passion, and with them I cannot agree. It is not wise, it is not possible to guide national policy under the impulse of passion...One cool judgment is worth a thousand hasty counsels. The thing to be supplied is light, not heat” (*Papers* 36: 27, 33). In

*Constitutional Government*, Wilson provides insight into how the president could provide such light.

While Wilson's philosophical writings outline a theory of rationality, some of his solutions to the problems of passions are anti-rationalist in nature. For instance, Wilson suggested, "Institutions must be adjusted to human nature; of which reason plays a part, but by no means the principle part" (*Papers* 18: 594). Additionally, while recognizing that institutions must be adapted to meet the complexities of human nature, Wilson also understood that in order to do so, people must be attuned towards them. In Chapter 1, it was noted that part of the affective process is capturing affect by giving it direction towards a known emotion such as happiness. Wilson argued for this form of affective rhetoric, when he wrote, "Every generation" must set "before itself some favorite object which it pursues as the very substance of its liberty and happiness" (*Constitutional Government* 1908 4). If reason played a part, but only a small part, in the affective process, then leaders also needed to quiet the passions of the people by directing them towards an object of desire. This form of rhetoric will be explored further in Chapter 3, which examines Wilson's directing of affect towards the happiness that would follow from the creation of global liberal democratic institutions.

In *Constitutional Government*, Wilson also started to theorize about the role of rhetoric in creating an affective investment in the office of the presidency. If a strong arm was necessary to direct the people's impulses, people had to view the presidency as a legitimate arm of power. In other words, they had to willingly recognize its power as the exercise of their sovereignty. He wrote, the masses are willing to do so and "have again and again...manifested their satisfaction when [the president] has boldly accepted the role of leader..." (2005 184). If the president were to lead, Wilson contended, "the people stand ready to overwhelm him by running to him with

every question, great and small. They are as eager to have him settle a literary question as a political, hear him acquiescently with regard to matters...and call upon him to quiet all troubles by his personal intervention” (2005 188). In short, if the president could articulate the national sentiment, citizens would turn to him in times of trouble. During these moments of hasty passions, the people would not act on their impulses, but, by habit, instead turn towards the power of the presidency to resolve the matter. In short, the people would acquiesce to presidential power instead of activating their own democratic agency.

For Wilson, submission to presidential power would be a result of a president’s ability to articulate the national sentiment. He argued that the president:

...is the only national voice in affairs. Let him once win the admiration and confidence of the country, and no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him. His position takes the imagination of the country. He is the representative of no constituency, but the whole people. When he speaks in his true character, he speaks for no special interest. If he rightly interprets the national thought and boldly insist upon it, he is irresistible; and the country never feels the zest of action so much as when its president is of such insight and caliber. Its instinct is for unified action, and it craves such a leader. (*Constitutional Government* 2005 183)

This view flips our understanding of the role of rhetoric. Here, Wilson is not arguing that the people need to be persuaded to act. Instead, the leader needs to nurture the admiration and confidence of the people because they crave a leader who will insist upon a unified course of action. Because the president is the only national voice, he must be the one to do it. This is not a rhetoric of assent but of investiture. In other words, the orator recognizes the investments of the people—in this case, the desire for unity—and encourages investment in a particular agent to fulfill those desires. Thus, the role of presidential rhetoric is to illustrate that the presidency is the place to locate investment for the purposes of committing to unified action. In a country divided,

with people yearning for unified action, they need to invest in presidential power as the only potential source for rectifying the nation's problems.

How though could the president nurture this investment? In other writings, Wilson hinted that history will play a role in this form of investment. He contends, "The art of persuasion is to mingle the old with the new" (qtd. in Kraig 87). In connecting the old with the new, the power of the leader, which later evolves to take the form of the presidency, "may come to be regarded as authoritative, indeed, but commonplace...." (*Papers* 7:367). In other words, the power of the presidency needed to be regarded as ordinary, the natural governmental agent of the people's sovereignty. In making this case, Wilson laid the groundwork for what Dana Nelson refers to as presidentialism, the idea that the presidency is the heart of our democracy. According to Wilson, the people were already invested in this idea; they just had to come to feel that the enactment of presidential power was commonplace and natural. As the government continues to grow and the president becomes its leader, Wilson contended that the people and presidents "will come to feel that [presidents] are administering its true purpose...less and less executive officers and more and more directors of affairs and leaders of men, —men of counsel and of the sort of action that makes for enlightenment" (*Constitutional Government* 2005 189-190). Feeling its true purpose was just as important for Wilson as informing about its true purpose. This form of affective rhetoric, which nurtures investment in presidential power, will be further explored in Chapter 4, which discusses the role of history, public memory, and presidential rhetoric at presidential museums.

In summary, the role of rhetoric for Woodrow Wilson is to control the impulses and passions of the people. Wilson outlines two ways for a president to do this: (1) inform and educate the masses or (2) intervene in the affective process to direct it or foster investment in the

presidency. The second type of rhetoric acknowledges Wilson's understanding of the non-rational aspects of our democratic political culture. This form of rhetoric also has been underappreciated and understudied by scholars of the rhetorical presidency.

### **Conclusion**

For over twenty-five years, the development of the field of presidential rhetoric has followed or responded to the history presented by Tulis in *The Rhetorical Presidency*. The foundation of this history is that Wilson represents a radical departure from past presidential practice. Tulis argues that this change is located in Wilson's advocacy for and development of popular leadership. However, as this chapter and previous research has noted, popular leadership existed before Wilson. If Tulis is correct that Wilson represents a change in presidential practice, but this change is not located in notions of popular leadership, then what did Wilson change? If Wilson has views that differ from the Federalists in regards to separation of powers, independence of the executive, and popular opinion, what type of change does he represent to presidential practice? The answer is that he offered a different vision of these ideas in order to reformulate the functioning of the presidency towards the preservation of our historical governing logic: a fear of democracy. While the Federalists envisioned the Constitution and a number of governmental agents as being sufficient to check the impulses of the people, Wilson thought they were failing at their task. Thus, he theorized about a model of presidential leadership that would function to check the impulses of the people. This means that Wilson is the dividing line between traditional and modern presidential practices. However, it places his changes in line with the historical development of our governing logic. He represents a departure from past presidential practice, but not a radical departure, as Tulis argues, from the central political logic of the Federalists.

The first implication of this history is that it highlights the need to study how presidential rhetoric functions to control the passions of the people. This shifts our focus from asking how presidents appeal to the desires of the people to how presidents control passions of the people. It also shifts our focus from asking how presidents take advantage of the national sentiment to how they interpret and direct it. Further, it removes our notion of the rhetorical presidency as beholden to popular sovereignty and replaces it with the idea that it is a check on its enactment. This history does not view Wilson's reforms as democratic, but as formulated in opposition to democracy. Wilson's theory was democratic only in its thinnest sense, as understood through representative institutions. However, if we understand democracy in its most expansive sense, as the ability of citizens to actively shape their political involvement, then his philosophy is rooted in a fear of democracy. While Tulis argues for understanding popular opinion as being linked to popular sovereignty, Wilson is clear that they are not one and the same. In fact, understanding them as such is dangerous according to him. For Wilson, the role of the president is to make inchoate popular opinion and passions explicit, to give them form. As Tulis argues, one form is potentially legislation. However, it is not the only form. As scholars of presidential rhetoric, we need to begin to study the other potential forms.

I have argued in this chapter that other potential forms are located in non-rational aspects of our democratic political culture. In addition to an informing function that educates the masses, Wilson also thought peoples' impulses needed to be directed towards an object of desire, in particular happiness. Additionally, he thought people needed to come to feel the presidency as the legitimate enactor of their sovereignty. Thus, Wilson's reforms of the presidency were not just rhetorical but affective. He not only argued for making rhetoric the essential feature of the presidency, he also argued for the primacy of its affective function. In the development of our

country, as noted by Engels, Holton, and Mercieca, the affective function of government has shifted from being located in the Constitution, then Congress, and then finally political parties. The history told by this project picks up from where these scholars left off and places the affective function of government into the office of the presidency. As a result, we need to study how presidential rhetoric intervenes into the non-rational elements of our political culture. I offer two forms of affective presidential rhetoric in this study in the succeeding chapters. However, the fact the presidential rhetoric has an affective function needs to be further explored by other scholars in order to flesh out all of its forms.

Finally, if Tulis is correct that the functioning of the presidency has become radically dislodged from Federalist governing logic, then we need to search for a new history that locates this change, as it is not to be found in Wilson. It is possible that Wilson failed to set an example of responsible leadership and future presidents ignored his reforms, or that his reforms were never practical for guarding against popular leadership. Richard Ellis, for instance, notes that Tulis largely ignores the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Perhaps it is here where the root of Tulis' criticisms should be focused. In addition, Jeremy Engels makes a strong argument for considering Richard Nixon as the source of the modern rhetorical presidency, as he conflated governing rhetoric with campaign rhetoric (*The Politics*). Whatever the case, the focus on Wilson has stymied our attention on other actors who may have radically reformed the rhetorical practices of the presidency and the founding governing logic of the Federalists.

Overall, I have presented a different history of Woodrow Wilson's development of a theory of presidential leadership and rhetoric. This history presents Wilson as being concerned about the excesses of democracy, the impulses and passions of the people, and theorizing and developing a presidency that could curb these excesses and passions of democracy. Different

from Tulis' history, this history sees the advent of the "rhetorical presidency" as anti-democratic. In the chapters that follow, I will further explore the anti-democratic implications of Wilson's rhetoric. These chapters will demonstrate how the affective presidency curbs the excesses of democracy and fosters investment in institutions and the presidency, not the enactment of democratic agency. In doing so, it will be argued that if Wilson represents the bifurcation line in the development of the presidency, it is not because he appealed to the people, but, instead, because he thought the presidency should control, not appeal to, the people.

This history, which shows a linear development in the thought of Woodrow Wilson towards the formulation of an affective presidency, opens up new avenues for research. It presents us with a new set of questions, which were outlined in Chapter 1. In the following chapters, I explore how Wilson's rhetoric attempted to capture the impulses of the people and directed them towards reform rather than reconstruction of the status quo. Thus, this study, following a different history of the development of presidential rhetoric, explores the forms and implications of what I refer to as the affective presidency, a presidency tasked with controlling the impulses and passions of the people.

### **CHAPTER 3 MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR DEMOCRACY: WOODROW WILSON AND THE PROMISE OF HAPPINESS**

On July 2, 1776, the United States declared its independence from the British Empire. In declaring their independence, the Founders announced, “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (qtd. in McMahon 314). From the beginning, notions of American identity were tied to the idea of happiness as a human right. While the United States was the first country founded on this principle, David McMahon notes, Thomas Jefferson and the other Founders were “merely summarizing a good century of reflection on the subject in Europe and America” (“The Quest” 67). It was a summarization of happiness as the horizon of life. However, despite the focus on happiness in Enlightenment philosophy, there was no consensus regarding the sources of happiness. Thus, since the birth of our nation, we have debated the questions: How do we pursue happiness? What does happiness look like?

After the events of World War I and the emergence of the United States as a global superpower, the stakes of this debate extended beyond our own shores. World War I, like the Civil War before it, shook the foundations of our country and the world. The question of how to ensure happiness and peace became a global concern. At the center of this debate stood President Woodrow Wilson on a crusade to make the world safe for democracy. In his “War Message” on April 2, 1917, Wilson declared:

The world must be made safe for democracy. Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundations of political liberty. We have no selfish ends to serve. We desire no conquest, no dominion. We seek no indemnities for ourselves, no material compensation for the sacrifices we shall freely make. We are but one of the champions of the rights of mankind. We shall be satisfied when those rights have been made as secure as the faith and the freedom of nations can make them.

He further added, the United States was entering the war:

...for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured. God helping her, she can do no other.

According to Wilson, the United States entered World War I willingly, in order to spill her blood for happiness, democracy, and world peace. In *Constitutional Government*, Wilson stated that “[e]very generation” must set “before itself some favorite object which it pursues as the very substance of its liberty and happiness” (4). For him, the pursuit of happiness became tied to the substance of spreading democracy across the globe. After the war, this pursuit of happiness would be linked to the creation of the League of Nations. In Chapter 2, I noted that Wilson thought that institutions needed to be adjusted to human nature. In particular, he argued institutions needed to be adjusted as necessary to control the passions of the people. Wilson maintained that institutions were required to give the desires of the people direction. He further advanced this argument in support of the League of Nations and democratic internationalism writ large. In doing so, his rhetoric is underpinned by this promise of happiness: if the world creates global democratic institutions and the U.S. becomes a world leader, passions will be controlled, there will be no more war, and happiness will follow.

The purpose of this chapter is to understand how Wilson invokes happiness to induce investiture in the idea of global democratic liberalism, the creation of global governmental institutions, and the prominence of U.S. leadership within such a system. In exploring Wilson’s rhetoric of happiness in relation to democracy, this chapter examines the relationship between

affect, foreign policy, and rhetoric. In particular, I analyze how Wilson translated public affect into happiness and directed it towards the goal of global democracy. Overall, the chapter provides an examination of how our politics become directed by the promise of happiness.

The argument of this chapter is that happiness under Wilson becomes an orienting device of U.S. foreign policy. In particular, happiness becomes the glue that binds institutional democracy, U.S. global leadership, and globally passion suppression together. This chapter thus explores the channeling of affect into the articulation of ideas, objects, and values that cohere into an investment of a specific image of the future. Affect is understood as a form of anticipatory logic, built on the promise of alleviation from our current condition if we follow the object of desire. Presidential rhetoric intervenes into the affective process by interpreting an affective state, bestowing an object with happiness, and directing us towards the object's promise. This is the process of translating affect into a known emotion and directing us towards the political form of its fulfillment.

In short, this chapter examines how Wilson translated the affective moment of early twentieth century America into a promise of happiness and directed it towards the proposed ratification of the League of Nations. What becomes evident from this analysis is that Wilson constructed a happiness archive, the social imaginary in which people could invest their hopes for the future. While Wilson's League of Nations ultimately failed, his rhetoric laid the foundation for what is still a happiness pointer in U.S. political discourse: the expansion of U.S.-inspired democratic global institutions.

I advance this argument by examining the set of speeches that Wilson delivers in support of the League of Nations. First, I discuss Wilson and his mission of exporting the pursuit of happiness. Next, I explore what ideas, objects, and values Wilson articulates as happiness and

unhappiness causes. Finally, I connect his rhetoric to our understandings of democracy and and discuss the implications of Wilson's happiness rhetoric.

### **The Promise of Happiness**

It is impossible to overstate the significance of Wilson's foreign policy rhetoric in the post-war years. As Jason Flanagan points out:

The significance of the presidency of Woodrow Wilson in American history is widely acknowledged by admirers and critics alike. Wilson's new vision of American foreign policy, while rejected in his own time, largely defined American foreign policy from the eve of World War II to the end of the Cold War and beyond. (115)

In fact, Wilson is often considered to be the patriarch of U.S. interventionist foreign policy (Gamble). However, while various scholars have studied Wilson's rhetoric, the transformative nature of it remains understudied. As Flanagan writes, "just how Wilson transformed the vision of America and its role in the world remains unclear" (116). It remains unclear because scholars have focused on the significance of his "international liberalism"—e.g., the consequences of it and its modern articulations—but not on the underpinnings of its originative formulation (Flanagan 16).

For instance, Mary Stuckey focuses on how Wilson articulated himself as the interpreter of universal values and in doing so expanded the power of the presidency. She writes that Wilson rhetorically constructed a "transcendent order," premised on American values, "that could be applied—indeed must be applied—to all peoples, everywhere, all of the time" ("The Domain" 2). It was the role of the president, as interpreter of these values, to ensure that they were adhered to around the world. Stuckey understands this transcendent order as being reinforced by presidential rhetoric and ideology. It is the argument of this chapter that, in order to understand the transformative nature of Wilson's rhetoric, it is important also to understand the wider

affective context. His rhetoric was intervening into an affective process, whereby he associated happiness with the spreading of democracy, particularly in its institutional form.

Sarah Ahmed provides the basis to begin mapping the relationship between affect, happiness, and rhetoric. In this chapter, I am interested in the part of the affective process where presidential rhetoric translates affect into an emotion and directs it for political ends. Specifically, I am interested in how particular objects become articulated as happiness-causes while others become unhappiness causes. In exploring this type of affective rhetoric, I understand it as “what sticks, or what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects” (Ahmed, “Happy Objects” 29). This notion of affective rhetoric understands belief systems as “being constituted through circulating signs and discourses that have been stuck together” in relation to emotions (Rice 205). In other words, the politics of affect is associational, as discourse coheres a belief system around affective investments to certain objects as the cause of particular feelings. Politics does not arise entirely out of “private deliberation” or “external imposition”; instead, they develop from how we are orientated towards objects, which we move towards and away from in relation. Affect “is thus an orienting device that shapes the political contours of our social imaginaries” (Rice 206). In particular, happiness is a glue that causes objects to cohere around it. If we come to think of something as causing happiness, or potentially causing it, we become directed towards it.

If we embrace the object, it promises to alleviate an affective state and result in happiness, the ultimate aim of life. Ahmed writes, “The promise of happiness takes this form: that if you have this or have that or do this or do that, then happiness is what follows” (“Happy Objects” 35). The promise of happiness intervenes into the affective process by creating investment in a shared orientation towards a future feeling. As a result, happiness is ends-

oriented; it is not the feeling of the moment, but the imagining of what will be felt at a future point. As Ahmed writes, “We are moved by things. And in being moved we make things” (“Happy Objects” 33). Affect propels us into action and creates the conditions for making things that promise to alleviate the affective state. The impulses and energies generated at the moment of affect are translated towards the promise of happiness. In other words, when we are affected, we invest in objects that will return us to a sense of normalcy and make us happy. As a result, these objects become desired, in the sense that they become the site of articulated investment in a promised future emotion such as happiness.

If happiness is the end, then the means for it become embedded as its cause. Aristotle argues, with happiness as our horizon, we conceive and invest in objects that “through their instrumentality we shall be happy” (8). In other words, objects become “happiness pointers, as if to follow their point would be to find happiness” (Ahmed “Happy Objects” 34). We cohere around these happiness pointers, investing in them as offering the potential for happiness. Thus, what is good is not only that which we know from experience causes happiness, but also that which is being disseminated as being good. In other words, “Certain objects are attributed as the cause of happiness, which means they already circulate as social goods before we ‘happen’ upon them...” (Ahmed “Happy Objects” 41). As a result, we come to understand an object in terms of how we expect to be affected by it. It takes on an affective quality because we have the expectation that a certain felt state will follow from its instrumentality. Despite the fact that the object does not exist in the present, it has an affective force because it becomes differentiated from that which has caused bad feeling and promises a better future if we follow it.

Happiness then is a form of world making. We often say we want to make someone happy. In this phrase is an understanding that happiness begins somewhere outside of the subject.

To recognize happiness in this way is to acknowledge that the promise of happiness has an affective life. An object is bestowed with happiness before our encounter with it because it has an affective life. It is already judged to be a happiness cause due to the rhetoric that surrounds it as a social good before we experience it. The promise of happiness relies on an anticipatory logic. We become directed toward an object because of the expectation of what will follow from it. Our world coheres around happiness as a promise of a better future feeling state.

In order to explore how Wilson articulated a promise of happiness at the end of World War I and named the League of Nations as a happiness pointer—the object that would bring the world out of the despair and suffering that brought about world war, I utilize Ahmed’s method of following the articulation of happiness. I locate what beliefs, objects, and values become stuck together as causes of happiness and unhappiness. What emerges from this method is what Ahmed calls a happiness archive: the arguments, figures, and tropes that cohere as the expression of what is and can cause happiness. In identifying what circulates around happiness, I can begin to understand the glue that holds together democratic institutionalism and the implications for democracy.

### **Wilson and the Pursuit of Happiness**

Wilson’s brief political career began with his election as Governor of New Jersey in 1910. Two years later, he would be elected President of the United States of America. After suffering a stroke in September 1919, his political life all but ended, as he disappeared for the most part from public view. Thus, the decade of the 1910s encompasses the totality of Wilson’s political career. For a man driven to find the means to establish order and unity, he inherited as president a world of dramatic turmoil; it was the ideal world for him to test his theories about the relationship between affect, rhetoric, and politics. This was a particularly affective time in our

nation's history, if an affective state is understood as the multiplicity of impingements upon body in a shared environment, a form of anxiety about the inchoate coming into being of a changing world. In the 1910s, U.S. citizens were grappling with societal changes brought about by industrialization and technology. For example, in the U.S. at this time, blacks, Native Americans, and other disenfranchised groups were fighting for equal rights. Women were organizing for their right to vote and for other opportunities to enter the public sphere. Around the world, the old order was breaking down and war was ravaging Europe. Furthermore, revolutions were breaking out across the globe, of which the ones in Mexico and Russia were of particular concern to Wilson. Millions of people would die during the decade of Wilson's political career, as a result of war and the Spanish Flu. Several outside events were intervening into the processes of status quo politics in the United States, giving alarm to those, such as Wilson, who were preoccupied with preserving traditional American political principles (Berg; Stuckey).

In his writings, Wilson is clear about the means necessary for the U.S. to work itself out of this affective moment. Wilson, in sensing the currents of passion flowing throughout the U.S. and the world, turned to the words of the Declaration of Independence to guide the nation. He wrote, the Declaration of Independence "leaves to each generation of men the determination of what they will do with their lives, what they will prefer as the form and object of their liberty, in what they will seek their happiness" (*Constitutional Government* 4). Thus, happiness, while a right, has no fixed meaning. Each generation must decide for itself what it will pursue as the object of its happiness. We have a right to pursue happiness, but we must as a nation decide the object of the pursuit. Wilson summarized this approach, when speaking about the Declaration of Independence, during the campaign of 1912:

The Declaration of Independence did not mention the questions of our day. It is of no consequence to us unless we can translate its general terms into examples of

the present day and substitute them in some vital way for the examples itself gives, so concrete, so intimately involved in the circumstances of the day it was conceived and written. It is an eminently practical document, meant for the use of practical men; not a thesis for philosophers, but a whip for tyrants; not a theory of government, but a program of action. Unless we can translate it into the questions of our own day, we are not worthy of it; we are not the sons of sires who acted in response to its challenge...What are to be the items of our new declaration of independence?" ("What is progress")

Therefore, Wilson's political philosophy denied the permanent nature of the Declaration and asserted the right for each generation to translate its principals for their own time. In Wilson's reasoning, if we are not happy, then we must figure out what will make us happy. The Declaration gives us the freedom to pursue happiness in our own time, we just have to figure out the proper translation. After the events of World War I, Wilson, as translator-in-chief, associated the pursuit of happiness with his definition of democracy.

At the end of World War I, the former warring nations gathered in Versailles to negotiate a peace treaty. Out of this conference, they agreed to form the League of Nations. This global institution was designed to provide members a forum for settling international disputes. If a nation thought its rights were being threatened or thought the conditions for war were emerging in other countries, they could bring the matter before the League to settle the dispute. At home, Wilson faced opposition to the idea, especially Article X, which opponents read as committing the U.S. to defending other League members and engaging in future wars. In September 1919, it was becoming clear that the Versailles Treaty would not get Senate ratification without the addition of reservations. Wilson refused to concede to the addition of any reservations and argued the U.S must commit itself fully to the first great liberal institution (Berg).

In this context, during September 1919, Wilson embarked on what would be a twenty-one-day tour of the U.S. in support of the Versailles Peace Treaty and the League of Nations.

Arthur Link, prominent Wilson biographer, remarked that Wilson thought of the tour and the fight for the League of Nations as “no less important than the great debate of 1787-1789 over the ratification of the Constitution” (qtd. in Kraig 182). During the tour, he spoke often about how the decision to enter the League of Nations was the most important decision in all of American history (Kraig). In embarking upon the tour, he said his task was “to go to the people and purify the well of public opinion that has been poisoned by the isolationists and opponents of unreserved ratification” (qtd. in Hogan 66). According to Michael Hogan, Wilson’s purpose for the tour was to educate the people about the peace treaty, explain the workings of the League of Nations, and describe the consequences if the U.S. failed to join it. Moreover, Wilson set out to inform the masses about his efforts to prevent another war, of which the League of Nations was the centerpiece. Wilson, as he declared in his “War Message,” was on a mission to make the world safe for democracy.

At the conclusion of World War I and the Versailles Peace Conference, Wilson made clear that the mission of the United States was to “rid the world of injustice and bring peace and happiness to mankind” (qtd. in Kennedy 14). Link attests that Wilson saw the U.S. as being on a “mission to serve mankind through leadership in moral purposes and in advancing peace and world unity” (qtd. in Kennedy 1). In short, as Harley Notter writes, Wilson argued:

[America’s] mission was to realize an ideal of liberty, provide a moral model of democracy, vindicate moral principles, give examples of actions and ideals of government and righteousness to an interdependent world, uphold the rights of man, work for humanity and the happiness of men everywhere, lead the thinking of the world, promote peace—in sum, to serve mankind and progress. (653)

The U.S. mission under Wilson was articulated as a moral crusade to persuade the world towards adopting democracy and the objects that ensure the peace and happiness of humanity. In order to understand Wilson’s mission, it is important to distinguish it from the concept that a nation is

superior to others. Richard Gamble argues that, for Wilson, mission “meant an outward-directed, salvic crusade” that posits the crusading nation as the redeemer of the world. As a result, it thinks of itself as not only superior but becomes invested in spreading its form of government and institutions around the world as the foundation for social order. For Wilson, the U.S. was not only superior but necessary for maintaining world order and ensuring happiness.

During the speaking tour, Wilson asserted that the U.S. had a duty “to rescue the free peoples of the world from the terror of autocracy...the infinite privilege of fulfilling her destiny and saving the world” (*Addresses* 336). In Wilson’s view, the redemption of the U.S. and the world was inextricably linked to fulfilling a promise to lead the world and save it from autocracy. Wilson put this in succinct terms when he said that the choice to join the League of Nations or reject it, “is nothing less than this: Shall America redeem her pledges to the world?...We have come to redeem the world by giving it liberty and justice. Now we are called upon before the tribunal of mankind to redeem that immortal pledge” (*Addresses* 47). In addition, the country was being called upon to enact a “happy vision,” in redeeming “the promise of America” (*Addresses* 373). In winning the war, the U.S. made the world safe for democracy. The question for Wilson was: were we going to honor that pledge in the post-war years or go back to the old order? The U.S. could enact a “happy vision” or go back to the era of “unhappy feeling” that ensures future war (*Addresses* 313). Wilson described his “happy vision,” as a world where “men everywhere should begin to look life and its facts in the face and come to calm counsels and purposes that will bring order and happiness and prosperity again” (*Addresses* 313). U.S. redemptive power resided in its ability to lead, maintain order, and bring happiness.

In Wilson’s vision, the U.S. would “stand at the front of the moral forces of the world” (*Addresses* 357). According to him, the world craved stability and happiness and the U.S. would

be “happy to lead along the paths of right” (*Addresses* 217). It would be a privilege, Wilson said, for the U.S. to fight for and lead a world order premised on “the principles that gave [the U.S.] birth and the happiness and the peace which we have treasured” (*Addresses* 177). For Wilson, this was nothing less than a crusade. He framed American soldier as “crusaders” and victory as the “fulfillment of the long prophecy of American history” to lead the world towards its principles (*Addresses* 351). The U.S., under Wilson’s leadership, was on a mission to export the promise of the pursuit of happiness. In the next section, I explore what beliefs, objects, and values become connected in Wilson’s rhetoric about his happiness mission.

### **Wilson’s Un/Happy Archive**

On September 5, 1919, Wilson made clear that the U.S.’s purpose in world affairs was to export our principles, provide guidance towards democracy, and ensure that malign influences did not interfere with the happiness of the world. He said the U.S.’s unique role is to provide “spiritual leadership” in the service of addressing “the problems of humanity” (*Addresses* 29). In making this argument, he would often state that it is evident that the U.S. had a higher purpose in the world that could not be achieved by being isolationist. He stated, later on in the tour, that the U.S. must be the leader of “the counsels of nations” in order to protect “the happiness and prosperity of our own beloved people....” (*Addresses* 242). According to Wilson, promotion of global institutions led by the U.S. was the only way to ensure happiness.

Throughout the tour, Wilson emphasized that only the U.S. possessed the moral character to serve as counsel to other nations. On September 24, 1919, in Cheyenne, Wyoming, he said, “the United States is the only nation in the world that has sufficient moral force with the rest of the world” (*Addresses* 344). As a result, he argued the U.S. must use its moral force to steady the rest of the world. In Wilson’s view, the U.S. was the only country in the world that other

countries trusted enough to build a new order. As a result, in Wilson's reasoning, America's promise was in its ability to lead other countries in destroying the old order.

What was the old way? According to Wilson, it was an international system built on the belief that "the strong had all the rights and need pay no attention to the rights of the weak...that the weak nations could cry out and cry out as they pleased and there would be no harkening ear anywhere to their rights" (*Addresses* 236). It was a system where the strong preyed upon the weak and there was no recourse for the U.S. or any other country to stop it. He lamented that "[t]here might be something brooding that that threatened the peace of the world, and you could not speak of it unless the interests of the United States were involved" (*Addresses* 354). As a result, the U.S.'s global role was that of a "people setting about," unable to insist upon adherence to the rights of weaker nations (*Addresses* 332). Thus, he argued it was the business of the United States to speak for and defend weaker nations. He said, "it is our business to prevent war, and if we do not take care of the weak nations of the world, there will be war" (*Addresses* 31). In order to prevent war, the business of the world must become the business of America.

Wilson further argued that the U.S. uniquely had the right to speak for the weaker nations of the world. According to Mary Stuckey, Wilson's rhetoric constructed the presidency as a form of synecchode, where the president represented the whole of the American people. To stand apart from him meant standing apart from the United States ("The Domain"). This identification rhetoric extended into the realm of foreign policy, where Wilson argued that the U.S. had the right to speak for others because we were the only country that represented the entire world. He said, "We of all peoples in the world" ought to understand the importance of the League of Nations, because "in this audience there are representatives of practically all the people dealt with in this treaty" (*Addresses* 12). Later in the tour, Wilson claimed, "You must not forget that

America is made up out of the whole world and that there is hardly a race of any influence in the world...that has not scores...of people living in America with whom they are in correspondence” (*Addresses* 203). In short, Wilson reasoned that the U.S. was made up of the peoples of the world who are already influenced by and desired the American way of life. Thus, we needed a world order that puts force behind their desires. Because their desires were our own, we must be the voice of the world. As the president speaks as the voice of the United States, the U.S. must speak as the voice of the world.

According to Wilson, the happiness of the U.S. and the world is tied to the idea that the U.S. has a special role to play in the world and that the rest of the world turns towards us to fulfill our obligations. Our role is to intervene in the business of the world and lead others towards our promise of redemption and away from the old ways of international relations. Within this discussion of Wilson’s articulation of the U.S. mission centered around happiness and the U.S.’s unique role in fulfilling it, we begin to see the emergence of the promise of happiness and what circulates as a social good in relation to it. Happiness becomes linked to U.S. global leadership, a right to intervene in the affairs of others, and a duty to speak for the weaker nations of the world. Central to the U.S. ability to fulfill its happiness mission is the destruction of the old order and the creation of the League of Nations.

Why must the previous system be destroyed? It should not come as a surprise that Wilson thought of the old order as a cause of unhappiness because it fueled extreme passions. He maintained that World War I came about because of a “hot anger that could not be suppressed” (*Addresses* 7). Echoing his earlier concerns about the processes of modern democracy, he argued throughout the tour that civilization was moving far too fast and governments had not adapted to modern conditions. Those who opposed the League of Nations, he contended “are apparently

willing to go back to the old and evil order which prevailed before this war began and which furnished a ready and fertile soil for those seeds of envy...that old and ugly plan...of watchful jealousies, of rapid antagonisms....” (*Addresses* 332). In short, Wilson claimed that the passions of the world were still alive. War can end one instance of their enactment, but it did not ensure against the reactivation of desires. For example, Wilson said, “The passions of this world are not dead. The rivalries of this world have not cooled. They have been rendered hotter than ever” (*Addresses* 8). The only way to prevent future war, he argued, was to cut out the taproot of war: human passion. To replace the previous order governed by desires with a new order that functioned to temper them. Then, and only then, he said, can the world “settle down to normal conditions” and know “what the future is going to be” (*Addresses* 347). Otherwise, he argued, disquieted populations would cause disorder and autocrats would funnel these passions into projects that preyed upon weaker nations and suppressed the rights of people. Ultimately for Wilson, war was inevitable in a world where passions remain unchecked.

One of his primary arguments for the League of Nations was that it would serve as a check on passions. Wilson argued, without the League of Nations, “when somebody sets up a fire somewhere in central Europe among those little nations...because the passions of the world have not cooled...the council of the league will confer as to the best methods of putting out that fire” (*Addresses* 324). In several speeches, he referred to war as a fire and passions as the timber and spark of fire. The League of Nations was to serve the role as the firefighters of the world to put out the fire. He warned, if the U.S. did not help extinguish flames in Europe and other parts of the world, the fire that breeds disorder and disturbances would extend to the U.S. Thus, he said, the world must embrace a “process of cooperation and good feeling....” (*Addresses* 40). The cause of unhappiness, according to Wilson, were bad feelings, such as jealousy, which cause

war. As a result, we needed a process that would temper passions and create good feelings among nations; the League of Nations achieved these ends according to Wilson.

Wilson extended his thinking about how to control passions in the U.S. to the world stage. As discussed in Chapter 2, he argued that institutions were needed in the U.S. in order to check the impulses of the people. Put somewhat differently, there needs to be barriers between the passions of the people and the actual functioning of government. When it comes to the relationships between governments in the world, Wilson articulated the need to establish global governmental institutions in order check impassioned governments or governments that incorrectly interpret the feeling of the body politic. In short, Wilson during the tour transposed his arguments about the need to tame individual passions to the larger context of controlling the passions of nations.

In his “War Message,” Wilson made clear that he had “no quarrel with the German people.” He added, “It was not upon their impulse that their government acted in entering this war...It was a war determined upon as wars used to be determined upon in the old, unhappy days when peoples were nowhere consulted by their rulers....” During the tour, Wilson further added, German leaders did not conceal “the purposes that they had in mind, but they had deceived their people as to the character of the methods they were going to use” (*Addresses* 6). Hence, the problem was not the passions of the German people. Instead, it was that German leaders ignored their true feelings and channeled them through deception for nefarious ends; they disregarded the rights of the German people, their sovereign right to provide the basis for action. According to Wilson, the League of Nations would restore this right and cut the heart out of war. In doing so, it would replace the old unhappy ways with the promise of happiness found in the rights of people, not governments.

For Wilson, “The same law that applies to individuals applies to nations” (*Addresses* 362). The same way that institutions were necessary to check the passions of individuals, global institutions were necessary to check governments that manipulate rather than control passions. In particular, he argued Article X of the League of Nations would check the impulses of governments to seize power and who were indifferent to the rights of citizens. Article X allowed any member of the League to bring before it any matter that the member thought potentially threatened world peace. Wilson pointed to this article as the reason why the U.S. needed to join the League in order to be a voice in world affairs. Once a member made a claim against another government, there was to be a nine-month arbitration process in order to discourage war.

Wilson maintained that arbitration was necessary to curb faulty human emotions. For instance, as Wilson suggested, “With a cooling space of nine months for human passion, not much of it will keep hot” (*Addresses* 371). To illustrate this point, he told a story about two of his friends who would always get into fights and use foul language. The town these two men lived in tired of their antics and made them promise that they would not fight or swear inside of the town limits. As a result, Wilson noted, “When the impulse next came upon them, they took a street car to go out of town to swear, and by the time they got out of town they did not want to swear” (*Addresses* 371). The men’s passions were tempered because they could not immediately act in the moment upon their impulses. Wilson concluded this story by saying, “Now, illustrating the great by the small, that is true of the passions of nations. It is true of the passions of men however you combine them. Give them space to cool off (*Addresses* 371). He added, if the world creates this cooling-off space, “it is going to lead us, and through us the world, out into pastures of quietness and peace such as the world never dreamed of before” (*Addresses* 371). Under the

League of Nations, war was to be replaced by arbitration, by a nine month cooling off period in which those governments who had the impulse to fight would tire and not act upon it.

The heart of the League of Nations was that others could intervene when a nation was not controlling the passions of its people, deceiving its people, or manipulating their impulses and directing them towards war. Indeed, Wilson argued that the heart of the treaty was that the rights of people transcend the rights of government. However, in Chapter 2, I discussed Wilson's understanding of the rights of people. According to Wilson, people's sovereignty rested in the ability to provide the seeds of government action and to elect representatives. It did not extend to the idea that their whims should be followed or that popular opinion should dictate governmental policy. In indicting the German government, but not the German citizens, Wilson is arguing that there needs to be checks on governments when they fail to control desires or when they manipulate them. This is a right of peoples not to have their passions misused by their government. Here we encounter, once again, Wilson's understanding of democracy as necessarily tied to representative institutions.

Wilson made the claim that a global representative government, where all representative voices would have a say in the final judgments of the body, was important because it was necessary to manage the "old rivalries and old jealousies and many of the intricate threads of history woven in unhappy patterns [that] have made the other nations of the world suspect one another..." (*Addresses* 279). Further, an assembly of voices, Wilson argued, collects the wisdom of the world, the experiences of "unhappy fortunes," and lets loose the voices of all to be "very useful counselors as to how some ray of hope and some prospect of happiness could be opened to its peoples" (*Addresses* 364). Note here that representatives of the people, not the people themselves, bring happiness to the citizens of the world. The purported miracle of the League of

Nations was that it would cool passions by adding an extra layer of separation between the people and the functioning of government. In addition, if a nation's leaders deceived their people, the League would temper desires through a process of arbitration and counseling. Ultimately, global democratic government in Wilson's rhetoric served as the final check on human passion before it manifests into war.

In addition to quieting the baser passions, the League of Nations also would ensure that countries representing the higher desires of the world would be in the majority. Speaking in Columbus, Ohio on September 4, 1919, at the first stop on the tour, Wilson told the crowd that we were "governed by a great representative assembly made up of human passions" and that the best that we can achieve through our institutions was "that the high and fine passions should be in the majority so that they could control the baser passions, so that they could check the things that are wrong. This treaty seeks something like that" (*Addresses* 14). By creating an assembly of the world's representatives, he contended, "it makes a league of the fine passions of the world," the desires "which has made ordered government possible...which has made justice and established it in the world" (*Addresses* 14). Wilson listed helpfulness, pity, and sympathy as the higher passions. Of which, he prioritized helpfulness as the passion that "has lifted us along the slow road of civilization" (*Addresses* 14). Thus, civilization would be saved by the League of Nations through giving into the higher desire of helping the weaker nations of the world.

In Wilson's rhetoric, passions emerge as happiness and unhappiness causes. The baser passions, such as jealousy, result in war. These are the desires that become identified with the unhappy old order. The League of Nations, in particular Article X, is required to check this passion and prevent future war. The higher passions, such as helpfulness, becomes identified with the promise of the League of Nations. By giving voice to all the governments of the world,

the League would have allowed members to identify when moments of the old order were starting to threaten the safety of the world. In addition, it required arbitration, where all members could have shared their wisdom and guided the world towards happiness. In short, Wilson's rhetoric cohered around a democratic happiness promised by the cooling of passions, the hindrance of the desires of the old order to cause war, and the emergence of a good and happy feeling between nations. The object that allowed this to occur is the League of Nations, the happiness pointer. If only we would ratify and follow the treaty, happiness would follow. Because the old order results in unhappiness, we needed the new order promised by the League of Nations.

Under the old order, there existed no global check on the passions that caused the "turmoil," "sorrow and despair" of war (Wilson, *Addresses* 180). Global democracy, Wilson contended, was necessary as a final check on desires. However, he was clear that the League of Nations could not provide a 100% assurance against future war. For instance, Wilson admitted, "You cannot insure men against human passion;" however, "[i]t is pretty hard to be crazy mad for nine months" (*Addresses* 331). While the League was not an absolute guarantee against war, it was better than the old system because, after the storm began to gather, governments could intervene and bring the matter before the council. Wilson contended that even if the chance of preventing war is 1%, the U.S. must take the chance. The promise of happiness—i.e., the chance to prevent war—thus operates on the 1% principle: even if it is only 1% better than the old order, then we must move forward toward the creation of a new global order. The difference between the new order and the old may be incremental, but, according to Wilson, it was the only possible instrument for preventing war. It was the 1% difference between a world directed by aggression and one directed on the principle of protection.

The 1% principle was underpinned by an anticipatory logic of future unhappiness. In particular, it was framed by the images of the future victims of unchecked human passion: today's children who would grow up to fight the next war and their weeping mothers. For example, Wilson asserted, "I do not hesitate to say that the war we have just been through, though it was shot through with terror of every kind, is not to be compared with the war we would have to face next time" (*Addresses* 353). With the technology of modern warfare rapidly expanding, he contended that his audience could not begin to comprehend the scope and magnitude of destruction of the next war. At several stops on the tour, he described meeting mothers of sons lost during the war who hoped that their sons ensured through victory that future mothers would not have to experience a similar unhappiness. For instance, as Wilson noted, mothers of the dead are "praying me to do all in my power to save the sons of other mothers from this terrible thing again" (*Addresses* 215). Mothers of the dead, he said, know better than others that those who sacrificed their lives to prevent others from having to die. Wilson referred to this as their "gift" to civilization. As a result, he proclaimed that his clients in the fight for the League of Nations were mothers and their children. His mission was to ensure that the U.S. did not take back the gift of life by failing to join the League of Nations.

At several stops on the tour, Wilson also described scenes of children running up to him. When he saw these children, Wilson said that he got a lump in his throat. He choked up because "[t]hese are the little people that I am arguing for. These are my clients, these lads coming on and these girls that, staying at home, would suffer more than the lads who died on the battle field, for it is the tears at home that are more bitter than the agony on the field" (*Addresses* 353). Note here that the pain for future mothers is worse than dying in battle. Wilson is speaking for the future generation, but especially for little girls who must not know the future sorrow of burying their

sons. However, Wilson is also fighting for little boys and their mothers. He said, “if by any evil counsel or unhappy mischance” the U.S. fails to join the League of Nations, “then women with boys at their breasts ought now to weep, because when those lads come to maturity the great battle will have to be fought over again” (*Addresses* 242). For it is their sons, who “will be sacrificed upon the alter of that war” (*Addresses* 345). Thus, if the League of Nations had only a 1% chance of working to avoid future wars, then it was worth it to stop the pain of mothers and the death of future generations.

In this archive of un/happiness, we come to understand how democracy, in the form of the League of Nations, coheres around Wilson’s translation of affect into happiness. During the tour, Wilson’s argument centers on the idea that the League of Nations is “a great method of cooperation,” which “may bring about a state of happiness and of prosperity such as the world has never known before” (*Addresses* 334). As the object of happiness, beliefs and values become associated with it as social goods. For instance, American principles, tamed passions, U.S. global power, and war prevention become associated with happiness and thus operate as happiness means. On the other hand, the baser passions, the future death of those who are now children, the old order, and the pain of mothers become associated with unhappiness; they are unhappiness means. Together, these causes of un/happiness cohere into an investment in the League of Nations—the manifestation of a new democratic global order—as the object of happiness and the means that will ensure happiness. This rhetorical archive of happiness guides attention towards an investment in this new order as a happiness pointer. It directs us towards a future where human passions will be checked across the globe before they manifest into war.

### **Conclusion: Implications of Wilson’s Global Pursuit of Happiness**

Philosopher Pascal Bruckner observes that, “Happiness is the sole horizon of contemporary democracies” (qtd. in McMahon, “The Quest” 71). The Federalists advanced the argument that the controlling of passions was necessary to ensure the stability of government. Wilson expands this idea to the context of world affairs and translates the primacy of American values and democratic institutions into a happiness mission to control passions and stabilize governments around the world. While Wilson failed in his quest to get the U.S. to join the League of Nations, we can hear the whispers of his rhetoric in the presidents who followed him. While a full tracing of a presidential rhetoric of happiness is beyond the scope of this chapter, a brief description of the rhetoric of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the George W. Bush administration indexes the power and traction that Wilson’s rhetoric gained through subsequent presidencies.

In his second Inaugural Address, FDR articulated the purpose of government as speeding “the time when there would be for all the people that security and peace essential to the pursuit of happiness.” In fact, FDR described the pursuit of happiness as the organizing logic of government. He said in a 1945 speech that “[w]e will never tolerate a force that destroys the life, the happiness, the free future of our children....It is an assertion of our American birthright to life, liberty, and happiness” (qtd. in Cannon 154-155). Here, FDR is continuing the work of Wilson by cohering the functioning of government around happiness. What was the happiness means for FDR? The United Nations, the institutional successor to the League of Nations. Speaking of the U.N., FDR said in his “Statement of War”, it was “an act of faith that military aggression, treaty violation, and calculated savagery should be remorselessly overwhelmed by...combined might and the sacred principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” The United Nations, he asserts, restored these “as cherished ideals of mankind.” Under FDR,

happiness again derived from the extension of American principles and democratic institutions around the globe.

Under George W. Bush, the promise of happiness was extended again in U.S. foreign policy rhetoric. In articulating the need to invade Iraq, he said, “I also want the young people to know that this country—we don’t conquer people; we liberate people, because we hold true to our values of life and liberty and the pursuit of happiness” (qtd. in Cannon 10). Bush here is echoing the words of Wilson that happiness is linked to the protection and defense of weaker nations. Perhaps the best description of the logic of U.S. foreign policy during the Bush years came from Secretary of State Colin Powell. Secretary Powell, speaking on July 4, 2002, said that life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness “are unalienable rights, meaning no one can take them away.” However, he said these were not the most important lines in the Declaration of Independence. Instead, it was the next line in the Declaration that he loved the most: “To secure these rights, governments are instituted amongst men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed....” After telling the audience that this is the next line, he connected these words to U.S. foreign policy, stating:

The Declaration of Independence says, “secure these rights.” Not protect them. Secure them. If people do not yet have them, get them, and give all people...these God-given rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

By choosing those words, secure those rights, Jefferson gave us a glimpse of his vision for the future.... And it is no less our responsibility as citizens of the world’s greatest democracy to ensure that our country, this great country of ours, remains a force for freedom all around the world. After all, inalienable rights were given to all of humankind. They belong to every man, woman, and child on this Earth....So just as we must always stand up for our own rights and the rights of our fellow citizens, Americans must always stand with courageous men and women all around the world who seek to secure the rights of their fellow citizens. (qtd in Cannon 264-265)

These words reflect Wilson's claim that "[t]here is only one way to be an American, and that is to fulfill the pledges that we gave the world at our birth..." (*Addresses* 183). In other words, to be American is to fight for the universal applicability of the pursuit of happiness. Our happiness is connected to the happiness of people around the world and, as a result, the U.S. has a right to intervene to secure happiness by spreading democracy. This is a brief account of how Wilson's happiness rhetoric has circulated in the years after his presidency. While Wilson failed to secure U.S support for the League of Nations, his deployment of happiness continues to affect our foreign policy discourse and support for the liberal internationalism.

This examination of Wilson's rhetoric and its subsequent circulation point towards two important implications. First, this chapter helps us understand the relationship between affect, democracy, and rhetoric. The central question of this chapter is how presidents translate affect into a known emotion and direct it. Through an examination of the rhetoric of Woodrow Wilson, I argue that Wilson's rhetoric cohered the world around happiness. In doing so, he translated the affective state of his time into an identified emotion and gave it direction. In particular, Wilson offered an interpretation of the feeling state at the end of the 1910s and advanced the League of Nations as a happiness pointer, that which would bring about a better future feeling state. In relation to this happiness pointer, American global power and institutions that can control passions become associated with happiness. As a result, this type of affective rhetoric provided the blueprint for pursuing a desired horizon. Wilson's rhetoric thus captured affect by coding it and giving it direction towards the future; it told us what we should be inclined towards. The president's discourse provides the framework for us to imagine happiness. It is a "whisper of the just ahead," which constructed an expected and desired end, if "things go the right way" (Ahmed, *The Promise* 182). Hence, presidential rhetoric orients us towards how we can feel, if

we follow the the right things. In short, this type of address attunes bodies toward certain paths and provides the trail toward our horizon.

Sarah Ahmed writes, “To pin hopes on the future is to imagine happiness as what lies ahead of us...unable to experience the past or the present as something other than hasty,” we conceive of the past and present “as something we have to get through, in order to be somewhere else” (*The Promise* 160). In rushing through the present, we become attached to a future vision of a more perfect social order. We anticipate the promise of a better future. As Ahmed further explains, “Anticipation is affective as an orientation toward the future, as that which is ahead of us, as that which is to come” (*The Promise* 181). The role of presidential rhetoric in this affective process is to bestow a not-yet-present object as a happiness means and direct people towards it. As this rhetoric circulates, certain beliefs, objects, and values acquire affective currency as the means of future enjoyment. In short, an affective economy, such as Wilson’s un/happiness archives, holds things in place as causes of certain feelings. As these beliefs, objects, and values circulate as un/happiness causes, the more they stick and hold together as an adhered promise of the future. Bad feelings in the present are deferred towards the promise of good feelings in the future. This is how a president translates affect into a known emotion and directs it. Affect takes the form of a coded emotion, but it is not yet present, but could be, if we all orient ourselves towards it fulfilment. In doing so, the emotion itself becomes part of an affective logic of futurity.

This points toward the idea that happiness is a “hope technology” of presidential rhetoric. It coheres the world around some future point. In the case of Wilson, he utilized “hope technology” to point us towards the League of Nations as a happiness method. He constructed the League of Nations as a future tool that would erase unhappiness in the world. It was a not-

yet-present instrument of future happiness. For the U.S., it would never become one. However, the beliefs and values that became attached to it, as what were necessary to ensure happiness, such as U.S. global leadership, the duty to protect weaker nations of the world, and the need to control passions outlived him in the form of the belief in liberal internationalism. In short, Wilson created the social imaginary in which future presidents could translate affect and rhetorically lodge new objects as the means of happiness. Wilson's rhetoric began the process of sticking together the beliefs and values that point towards our happiness and the object of their fulfillment: international liberalism. While the form of Wilson's international liberalism failed to gain acceptance, his articulation of the links between happiness and international liberalism survived. While more research is needed that traces the rhetoric of happiness in presidential discourse, the description of FDR and George W. Bush's rhetoric indicates that we still hear the echoes of Wilsonianism being directed towards new objects. As a result, what may be most important for understanding the effectivity of presidential rhetoric is not rational argumentation or ideology, but how it makes us, or could potentially makes us, feel.

Brian Masummi writes, "an American president can deploy troops overseas because it makes a population feel good...not because the leader is able to present well-honed arguments that convince the population that it is a justified use of force (*Politics* 31). I would alter this slightly to argue that happiness gives weight to arguments. The arguments that stick are those that have currency in an established affective economy. If happiness is our horizon, then what sticks are those objects that become associated with it. For example, Bush's arguments for war with Iraq were lodged within the circulation of international liberalism as a happiness cause. The people of Iraq needed to be liberated and given the gift of happiness. He placed Iraq within the constructed framework of what causes happiness and unhappiness. The Iraq War then was just

another method for fulfilling happiness. It is a product of a never-ending happiness mission. To invest in the Iraq War, Americans simply had to continue to follow the trail that had been placed before them by Wilson. His rhetoric constructed an affective archive of un/happiness. After him, this archive circulates to give weight to the arguments of other presidents. Sarah Ahmed notes this kind of effect in noting, “The desire for happiness sends happy objects forth, creating lines and pathways in their trail...” (*Promise* 160). Wilson’s rhetoric provided one such pathway for presidential rhetoric to follow. A pathway that, as it circulates, further coheres the world around Wilson’s happiness mission, gives weight to presidential rhetoric that follows it, and sustains an anticipatory logic of future feeling.

One implication of happiness rhetoric is that it directs politics towards the future. The present becomes something we have to get through in order to get somewhere we want to be. If we know the object that will bring about happiness, citizens can forego the messy work of democracy in the present. In short, present concerns become erased by the promise of a better future and our attention becomes diverted towards its fulfillment. Therefore, a wishful projection of the future takes the place of the present. Put differently, the role of citizens in this process is to wait for the future, not engage in the present. Citizenship becomes an act of deferment, an act of hope. As Masummi maintains, if hope is the basis of our politics, then there is “precious little to be had” (*Politics* 2). He contends that politics based on the promise of future outcomes establish the boundary conditions of the present. Thus, actions become limited in the present to what are necessary for the future. Thus, citizens become boxed in by the correct ways to maneuver towards the future. The big utopian picture, not the possible experimental steps to be found in the interaction of citizens, orders our world. In other words, future-based politics functions to preclude the emergence of experimentation that would threaten its happy vision. Thus, happy

citizens are those who follow the flow towards a happy world, not place the timber of experimentation along its path. Therefore, citizenship is an act of deferment towards the hope of future. Citizens stay in the present only in passing on a trail to a happy future. In this world, democracy takes the form of hope, not participation in world-making.

The second implication of this chapter is that it demonstrates the need to study the role of positive feelings in U.S. foreign policy rhetoric. Contemporary scholars, such as Jeremy Engels and Robert Ivie for instance, provide the basis for understanding the role of fear, hate, and resentment in U.S. foreign policy actions. In Ivie's work, he argues that the theme of savagery is critical to understand the construction of the enemy in U.S. foreign policy discourse. For example, he writes, "Although the trope of savagery is not unique to American war rhetoric, it is indigenous to it and deeply ingrained in the political culture" (56). From the War of 1812, where the British were described as "monsters that thirsted for American blood" to the War on Terrorism where Muslim terrorists are described as "evil," the rhetorical topoi of savagery has been prominent in U.S. foreign policy rhetoric (Ivie 56-61). Engels adds to Ivie's work in maintaining that this type of rhetoric coalesces into a rhetoric of "enemyship." Constructing and naming an enemy, "enemyship" directs outward the democratic impulses of citizens, focusing attention not on problems at home, but far from our shores. In short, both scholars have shown how fear of the "savage" and negative feelings has been rhetorically employed to garner support for war and direct our attention outwards toward an uncivilized other. However, what is missing from this analysis is the role of positive feelings, namely our founding good feeling, happiness.

This chapter illustrates how happiness has become connected to the controlling of passions, the excesses of democracy. Current research has indicated that presidential rhetoric operates by directing emotions outward. This chapter indicates that presidential rhetoric also

functions to direct emotions inward. If happiness is the result of controlling desires, then we need to check our own passions. The Federalists established institutional checks on the excesses of democracy. In arguing for the same, but on a global level, Wilson also creates an affective check on democracy. Ahmed notes how this happens in writing, “To consider happiness as a form of world making is to consider how happiness makes the world cohere around, as it were, the right people” (*The Promise* 13). By articulating what kinds of governments and people allow for happiness, Wilson also is indicating what are the right ways towards happiness. Primary to the correct means for happiness is the controlling of passions. This provides parameters for people to know how to achieve happiness. Those who operate outside of these parameters become affect aliens or unhappy subjects. Thus, happiness operates as a disciplining technology that orders people towards being happy subjects. Who is a happy subject according to Wilson? One who controls their passions for the social good of happiness. Thus, if people want to be happy, they need to discipline their impulses for the greater good. Happiness depends upon the ability of the subject to be the right kind of person. The desire to be happy, therefore, functions as one additional check on the excesses of democracy.

In short, Wilson’s rhetoric potentially curbed the excesses of democracy by directing politics towards the future and by establishing the parameters of what will bring about happiness. In this political culture, citizenship becomes an act of deferment, as one must actively check against wrong forms of citizenship, namely those forms understood as deriving out of passion, or they risk the promise of the future. This is a politics of hope, not action. In the succeeding chapters, this form of politics and its implications will be further fleshed out.

#### CHAPTER 4 LIKE WRITING HISTORY WITH LIGHTNING: PUBLIC MEMORY AND AFFECT AT THE GERALD R. FORD PRESIDENTIAL MUSEUM

On June 30, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt radically transformed presidential public memory practices. In dedicating his presidential library and museum, tasked with preserving his papers, relics, and, ultimately, memory of him, Roosevelt brought about the act of presidential self-commemoration. Presidents of the past, if they were deemed worthy, would have monuments built in their honor posthumously. However, since Roosevelt, every president has actively participated in the rhetorical construction of his own public memory site (Hufbauer).<sup>1</sup>

Currently, there are fourteen presidential libraries and museums and over a million citizens walk through their doors every year. Students in some of the most populace states, such as Ohio, Virginia, and California, are unlikely to go through their education without visiting a presidential museum at least once. This is especially true given that these museums are starting to build exhibits and interactive games for the purpose of attracting school groups (Hufbauer). While some may avoid ever visiting a presidential museum, they cannot escape coverage of them opening, funerals that take place at them, virtual CSPAN tours of them, or the research that comes from their archives. The presidential museum thus is a central nodal point for experiencing the history of the presidency.

While the presidential library and museum system would not begin until the presidency of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, contemporary affect theory and President Wilson's

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<sup>1</sup> Portions of Chapter 4, in particular the literature review and the analysis of the narrative at the Ford Museum, will be included in an upcoming book chapter. The citation for this work is: Koch, John. "Sinners and Saints: Public Memory, Civil Religion, and Citizenship at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, In *Rhetoric of American Civil Religion: Symbols, Sinners and Saints* (Ed.) Jason Edwards. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2016 (Forthcoming). Print.

views of history provide the basis for mapping the affective dimensions of presidential museums. In their essay, “Introduction: Rhetoric/Memory/Place,” Carole Blair, Greg Dickinson, and Brian Ott write, “public memory is typically understood as animated by affect” (7). However, despite this understanding, the affective dimension of museums is “[p]erhaps the most underdeveloped of public memory’s assumptions,” despite it being “one of the most central” (7). This is why Blair, Dickinson, and Ott call upon public memory scholars to study more specifically the “articulation of affects and and the ‘intensities’ and investments they furnish to public memory” (14). In exploring the relationship between public memory and affect, we, as rhetorical scholars, can begin to answer the following questions: what makes a memory stick What makes us invest in certain public memory narratives, but not others?

In exploring these questions, this chapter argues that presidential museums, particularly the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, are sites of affective public memory. Affective public memory works by offering an interpretation of the past as articulated through narratives, which are offered forth as lessons for the present. In addition to this public memory function, affective public memory also works through the sights, sounds, and positioning of bodies in relation to artifacts, which comprise its atmospheric environment. In conjunction with the textual elements of the museum, the affective dimension becomes part of a felt experience; not only is the past remembered through the exhibits and other information, but it is also physically and emotionally experienced. These felt states charge the narratives of the museum and perhaps help to explain why some investments and memories have currency over others in our politics. At the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, citizens come to inhabit the affective state of the 1970s and bear witness to the awe-inspiring power of the presidency. This affective experience augments the museum’s narrative, nurtures our investment in the presidency as a source of political power, and

leaves a trace of experience which we carry forward with the visitors that becomes active in similarly felt states outside the walls of the museum.

In order to unpack this argument, I first discuss relevant literature on public memory and presidential museums. Next, I detail how Wilson theorized the role of history for mediating the excesses of democracy. After this, I connect affect theory to Wilson's writings on history and explain how they provide a basis for understanding the affective dimension of presidential museums. Then, I analyze the narrative and felt experience of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. I conclude by offering implications of my reading of the museum and connecting these conclusions to the findings of the previous chapters.

### **Presidential Libraries and Museums**

Before Franklin D. Roosevelt, presidential papers were scattered at many different sites throughout the country. As an example, Wilson's papers can be found at Princeton, his posthumously constructed library, and in the Library of Congress. Arguing that presidential papers should be easily accessible to the public, Roosevelt set out to create a system that would consolidate the majority of papers in one place. As a result, the contemporary presidential library and museum system was created with his donation of land in Hyde Park, New York for the construction of a building that would keep his governmental records and preserve memories of him. While the federal government controls the records, the museum portion of these presidential sites is largely maintained by private trusts. Thus, even after a president dies, those who have a vested interest in the memory of a given president dictate the history that is presented at these sites (Cox; Hufbauer).

As a result of this shift towards presidential self-commemoration and memory preservation, Professor of Art History at the University of Louisville Benjamin Hufbauer notes

the significance of the modern presidential library and museum, arguing that the presidential museum “functions as the most important institution for the expansion of the civil religion of the American presidency ...[reifying] an ideology that claims all presidents as exceptional human beings and leaders worthy of reverential commemoration” (40). In constructing how they want to the public to remember them, presidents use their museums to highlight their appealing accomplishments and features and tell a story about why they deserve a place in our national civil religion. Whether they deserve inclusion or not is an irrelevant question, according to Hufbauer, because by having sites of memory dedicated to them, presidents and their stories “certainly are part of the civil religion of the United States. But the more important question is what is the nature of that religion?” (7).

This is the question that has driven recent scholarship on the relationship between the presidency and presidential museums. In *The Social Contract*, Jean-Jacques Rousseau writes that civil religion is expressed through the ideas and values that tie together society. These ideas are exemplified through the beliefs, symbols, and rituals that the collective view as sacred. Connecting this idea to an American context, noted Berkeley sociologist Robert Bellah writes that examples of this in the U.S. include the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the Star Spangled Banner, and the Washington Monument. These are all “powerful symbols of national solidarity [that are able to] mobilize deep levels of personal motivation for the attainment of national goals” (Bellah 8). In other words, these examples represent the sacred objects, places, and ritual practices of American civil religion.

Similarly, museums are rhetorically powerful places of civil religion in this country because, whether consciously or not, they “function as the secular oracles for the current moment of a civic culture, offering instructions in public identity and purpose...[nominating] particular

acts and agents of history as normative models for present and future modes of being ‘public’” (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 27). Carol Blair further notes, “[c]ommemorative places are perhaps the most obviously rhetorical of any sites we might consider. They call attention to themselves as destinations of historical significance and civic socialization, summoning tourists as citizen pilgrims to partake of their typically inspirational messages” (“Civil Rights”). In other words, cultural memory sites function to draw citizens to them in order to offer instruction in citizenship practices. More specifically, Blair argues that these sites “provide a wealth of information about the priorities, politics, and sensibilities of those who built it” (“Civil Rights”). Places of memory “are positioned perpetually as the sites of civic importance and their subject matters as the stories of the society. The stories they tell are thus favored by being made...to matter to the lives of the collective” (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 27). Thus, museums add a narrative element to our civil religion, as they become marked as the sacred instructional texts for how to be faithful citizens of our republic.

Building off of this connection between civil religion and public memory, Hufbauer argues that the presidential museum is a modern example of a sacred place of memory in our civil religion. According to Hufbauer, “[p]residential libraries are part of what has been called the civil religion of the United States,” because their function contains the four elements of civil religion: saints, sacred places, sacred objects, and ritual practices” (6-7). Presidential museums include these four elements because they present “an ideologically charged narrative that valorizes a presidential life, helping to incorporate it into the nation’s civil religion” (24). In other words, the narratives at these museums function to articulate individual presidents as saints worthy of being part of our civil religion. Further, these museums contain archives of preserved documents and “they project an aura of the sacred by entwining an individual’s life with national

history” (24). Finally, the narratives that they tell instruct visitors about how to perform American rituals of citizenship. Presidential museums, like other sites of public memory, are “nodal points for the negotiation of who we are as a people and where we are going....Each presidential monument not only represents that president but also projects an image of the nation and an ideology, into the future (7-8). It is this final aspect, which has received the most attention in contemporary rhetorical research on the relationship between presidential museums and civil religion.

This scholarly interest in what ideologies, images of the nation, and models of citizenship these sites impart onto visitors occurs for a good reason: in dedicating their museums, former presidents magnify the importance of these sites. For instance, when Roosevelt dedicated his museum, the first of its kind, he said,

It seems to me that the dedication of a library is in itself an act of faith. To bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men and women in the future, a Nation must believe in three things. It must believe in the past. It must believe in the future. It must above all, believe in the capacity of its own people to learn from the past that they can gain in judgment in creating their own future. (“Remarks at the Dedication”)

In rededicating Roosevelt’s museum on its fiftieth anniversary, Ronald Reagan noted the faith Roosevelt had in the American people to learn from the past and chart their own course for the future:

F.D.R. renewed the charter of the founders of our nation...he understood history and how history lives in a nation’s life...Yes, F.D.R knew the history of the Nation’s past is part of its charter for the future...Policies come and go. Leaders will pass from the stage. The enduring sail and compass of our nation is “We the People.” (“Remarks at the Franklin”)

Moreover, when dedicating his museum, Gerald Ford said the function of presidential museums is “to distill from the past the essence of the experience that may illuminate the dim path into the

future....The past can instruct the present not only in the art of leadership but also in the opportunities of citizenship” (“Remarks of Gerald”). In these remarks, it becomes clear that former presidents hope that these museums will offer lessons in citizenship practices. While past presidents cast these learning experiences as positive, rhetorical research notes their limitations and potential negative implications for practices of democracy (e.g., Hubauer, Kanter, Nelson). In doing so, rhetorical scholarship highlights the potential role presidential museums play in curbing the excesses of democracy.

Along these lines, Associate Professor of Theatre and Dance at George Washington University Jodi Kanter argues that presidential museums function as ritualistic sites because their exhibits provide a “model for experiencing American public life outside their walls” (350). She further suggests that presidential “libraries produce...moral imperatives for being American” (350). In other words, presidential museums articulate models of citizenship for citizens to enact in their daily lives. Kanter, in examining the Clinton and Reagan museums, contends that presidential museums encourage disengagement from our political culture. For instance, at the Reagan museum, citizens are to stand in awe of the power of the presidency. Additionally, the Clinton museum instructs citizens to engage in democracy by partnering with the presidency (366-368). Both presidential museums articulate presidents as being worthy of inclusion or canonization in our civil religion. What is problematic, according to scholarship, is that the museums do this through narratives that make the president the vocal point of our democracy and distances citizens from the practices of democratic citizenship (e.g., Kanter,).

In addition to Kanter, Kate Lukaszewicz notes that narratives at presidential museums either engage in embellishment or omission. For instance, at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Museum, she notes that the, “exhibits perpetuate the celebration of legacy rather

than present a balanced, instructive interpretation” (65). In this example, the Eisenhower administration’s problems, such as his handling of civil rights or poverty rates, are largely ignored, while highlights, such as the building of the interstate highway system, are foregrounded in exhibits. Indeed, only one of Eisenhower’s failures is mentioned in the museum: “the crash of the American U-2 spy plane in the Soviet Union” (65).

Unfortunately, the omission of failures is not unique to the Eisenhower Museum. For instance, when Lyndon Johnson’s museum opened in 1971, there was “nearly no content on the ongoing Vietnam War” (65). In addition, according to Lukazewicz, the Roosevelt Museum did not address Japanese internment for over 50 years and Reagan’s Museum whitewashes the Iran-Contra scandal (66). These museums fail to highlight the idea that presidents are not always right and that there is something to learn from their failures. Robert Burk, Distinguished Professor of American History at Muskingum University, summarizes the implications of omitting failures:

The presidential libraries, because of a combination of ideological and institutional limitations, have contributed to distorted public perspectives of American politics, most notably an undue faith in the capabilities of presidents by themselves to renovate the social order. Because Americans have assumed that presidents alone possessed the power and the inclination to remodel the face of society, unrealistic and simplistic perceptions of the nature of political power have been cultivated. Unrealistic expectations of presidential performance have resulted in subsequent disillusionment, cynicism, and apathy. That apathy, that withdrawal from citizen activity in politics, is the real tragedy of the cult of the presidency and the role of the presidential library in its perpetuation. (408)

While presidential museums offer instruction in citizenship, their narratives tell a story of an active presidency, but not an active citizenry. Thus, the power of the presidency is glorified, while the role of citizens is limited to standing in awe of that power or working with the presidency. These museums do not offer useful instruction in citizenship, but, instead, a lesson in

turning to and trusting the presidency to solve our problems. After all, if a president rarely fails, why not trust the presidency to solve our nation's problems?

While the current literature on presidential museums adequately highlights the potential for them to function in ways that curb the excesses of democracy, the analysis is limited by its adherence to a solely narrative-based reading of them. Regardless of the content of these museum narratives, they suggest that there should be a limited role for citizens in our politics. However, by adding to the discussion Wilson's view of history, public memory scholarship, and contemporary affect theory, we can begin to map the affective character of these sites. Adding a discussion of the affective dimension of presidential museums can help us understand how these sites not only present ideologically charged narratives, but affectively charged ones that foster an investment in presidential power as well.

### **Wilson and History**

While Woodrow Wilson did not oversee the establishment of presidential museums, he is important for our understanding of the affective presidency, as his writings provide the basis to understand the potential for affective public memory to limit the intensities of democracy. In his writings, Wilson did not think that history should just be studied and read by students. He thought in order for history to become the tether for our political epistemology, it needed to act upon the body. Citizens need not only learn history but also have past historical experiences weld itself with individuals' memories, as if these experiences were a part of their own experiences. In this view of history, citizens would not just look to the past for instruction, but would feel it and instinctively draw upon it as if it was part of their own lived experience. This embodiment of the past would facilitate, in Wilson's perspective, an attachment to past principles, which Wilson thought necessary to forestall irrational mobs from unsettling the established political order.

On February 18, 1915, Wilson watched a screening of the first movie ever shown in the White House. The film, *The Birth of a Nation*, depicted the injustices of Reconstruction and romanticized the rise of the Ku Klux Klan. In fact, the original subtitle of the film was *An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan*. According to A. Scott Berg, the film played on viewers' sentimentalities to reconsider the "growing acceptance of racial equality" (348). Given this context, Wilson's purported reaction to it would become perhaps his most infamous quotation: "It is like writing history with lightning. And my only regret is that it is all so terribly true" (349). Despite its notoriety, however, Wilson probably never said it, or at least the second part. In the only written correspondence about the movie, Wilson wrote, "I have always felt that this was an unfortunate production and I wish most sincerely that its production may have been avoided, particularly in communities where there are so many colored people" (qtd. in Berg 349). The contradiction in the two reviews has led historians to conclude that either only part of the quotation belongs to Wilson or it is a complete fabrication. As Berg notes, "The first sentence of the famous 'review' definitely captures the voice of a lyrical historian," however, the second sentence does not sound like Wilson, but Chief Justice Edward White, "who admitted to having shouldered a rifle as a Klansman in New Orleans" (349). Whether Wilson actually said the first part or not, it adequately summarizes Wilson's view on the potential for history to be an impactful force in the shaping of societal norms.

In writing about history, Wilson thought it had become the enemy of the masses. He noted, "The past is discredited among [the masses], because they played no choosing part in it. It was their enemy then, they say, and they will not learn of it. They wish to break with it forever; its lessons are tainted to their taste" ("Princeton" 24). Keeping with his theme of national stability, he warned, "In America, we run perpetually this risk of newness" ("Princeton" 25).

This perpetual newness put us at risk of never growing older as a country because we would constantly reconstructing society, not building off of past principle. If we were to change society, Wilson argued we must not be “forgetful of the old principles” and build from those principles that formed the country in the first place (“Princeton” 23). These writings illustrate Wilson’s conservative leanings about originality in thought leading to dangerous experimentation and revolution.

In contrast to those who Wilson perceived as radical, he argued, “The world’s memory must be kept alive, or we shall never see an end to old mistakes” (“Princeton”). Wilson viewed history as the anchor of change; its lessons are what would stop the radicalism of originality and tie together our past, present, and future towards a program of incremental reform. If people learned history, the change they advocated for would be tied to, rather than divorced from, old principles. A future “built” from “old stuffs whose grain and fiber they knew” would maintain social stability, not spur revolution (“Princeton”). In short, from Wilson’s perspective, in an age of threatening radical change to our society, lessons from history were the means for maintaining the social fabric of our country and staving off a revolution of original ideas that were untethered to founding principles.

Wilson’s conservative view of history was in line with others’ writing about history’s important role in maintaining social order during the Progressive Era. According to Conor Williams, Progressive Era scholars struggled with the question: “How should politics be conducted in a world where certainty has been fundamentally shaken?” (8). In answering this question, he writes that intellectuals, especially John Dewey, argued that “[h]uman knowing always builds upon the experiences we have; there is no ethereal means of moving beyond these resources to posit another world for judging knowledge” (101). As a result, if we desired

political stability, as did Wilson, we could not risk accepting ideas untested by past experience; instead, we must “draw upon lessons from the settled past to resolve the troubled present” (Williams 25). In this view of history, the past is the basis of a society’s epistemological foundation and its only hope of political stability. Put differently, history guides us to identify the political values that will help us adapt to and resolve the troubled present and it caution us away from adopting untested ideas and values to resolve our problems. This notion of history provides the basis for a Progressive Era incremental reform agenda: it provides the flexibility to tweak policies, but does not throw the baby out with the bathwater. By tying the validity of epistemological truth claims to past experiences, stables traditions, and values from our common history, arguments about “how the world *ought to be* will necessarily” have to make use of our historical commitments and values (Williams 98). In short, Wilson and Progressive Era scholars hypothesized that, if the validity of an idea’s truth claim must make use of history and not depend solely on notions of metaphysical truth, then the habits and customs of society would dictate the course of action. For those fearful of revolution but open to reform, this view of history and truth would moderate social change.

At this point, Wilson’s view of history is in concert with the narrative-based approach of the existing literature. In the previously cited writings, Wilson is advancing the idea that we should look to the past and learn from it, so we will remain faithful to the “old stuffs,” which have maintained the stability of our political order. However, Wilson worried there was not an appetite, as mentioned earlier, among the masses to learn history, as they associated anything with past political and social conditions as their enemy. Thus, the problem remained for Wilson: how to get the masses to learn history, to adopt the habits, customs, and values of the past, and not delude themselves into thinking that a radical break from the past was necessary to remedy

their current condition. In speaking about his fear that universities were creating radicals, Wilson said, "Help men, but do not delude them...Prepare them to be wise" ("Princeton"). He continued, "We have broken with the past and have come into a new world. Do you wonder, then, that I ask for the old drill, the old memory of times gone by, the old schooling in precedent and tradition...as preparation for leadership in the days of social change" ("Princeton" 30). He feared that universities were teaching students that they were gods, confident that they could change the very nature of society. For Wilson, students were being driven by the spirit of revolution, not the wisdom of tradition (Maciag 152-153). Further, he worried, that without history, how would society develop into a "school of discipline and ordered skill" and not devolve into state of violence and tumultuousness? (*On Being* 17). In summarizing his worries, he wrote, "It will be a bad day for society when sentimentalists are encouraged to suggest all the measures that shall be taken for the betterment of the race" (*On Being* 41-42). Overall, Wilson was concerned that sentimentalists, driven by emotions to adopt untested and unproven ideas, would lead us towards violence, not answers. Thus, we needed leaders driven by tradition, with solutions rooted in the past. However, how would future leaders come to be driven by tradition if they had no interest in it?

In his lifetime, Wilson would not develop a written answer to this question. It would up to his ideological successor, F.D.R., and subsequent presidents to develop the idea that presidential museums could be sites of school field trips and tourism, inviting an interest, even if unconsciously, in history. However, while Wilson did not envision the idea of modern presidential museums, he did write about the potential affective force of history. Wilson argued that the stories of history are not studied, "they reveal themselves....They remain with you, and will not be forgotten or laid by. They cling like a personal experience and become the mind's

intimates” (*On Being* 4). He added, people do not take an interest in the stories of history “to kill time, but to lengthen time, rather, adding to it its natural usury by living the more abundantly while it lasts, joining another’s life and thought to your own” (*On Being* 4-5). Therefore, even if he never actually said it, “[l]ike writing history with lightning” would be an adequate tagline for Wilson’s political thoughts on the relationship between affect, democracy, and history. As lightning has the potential to act upon the body, Wilson argues history acts on the body. For Wilson, learning history was not an adequate safeguard against social upheaval; there needed to be another dimension—an affective one—where citizens felt history, so that they would cling to it as if it were their own personal experience. When history strikes us like lightning, we absorb another’s life and thoughts, making use of them in connection with our own. Writing history with lightning and imposing on the body history as if it is hit by a lightning bolt provided the means to not only learn, but also experience and feel history. Affect is what made history stick and breeds an investment in it. While Wilson’s ideas remained largely theoretical, I argue that presidential museums, particularly the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, are Wilson’s philosophy come manifest.

### **Affective Public Memory: A Method**

Drawing off of Wilson’s philosophy of history, we can categorize two different ways we interact with history: that which we seek out and study from the location of the present; and that which we come to feel, which becomes part of us in the present. It is the second part which Wilson understood as necessary to ground our politics in the values of the past. According to Brian Massumi, these two means of interaction operates as two distinct functions of memory. The former is a conscious memory, which is “retrospective, going from the present to reactivate the past” (*Politics* 61). As Blair, Dickinson, and Ott further note, “public memory is understood

by most, if not all, contemporary scholars as activated by concerns, issues, or anxieties of the present. That is, groups tell their pasts to themselves...as ways of understanding...conditions or beliefs of their current moment (6). This form of public memory offers instruction from the past for resolving a present problem and narrates a “common identity, a construction that forwards an at least momentarily definitive articulation of [a] group” (Blair, Dickinson, and Ott 7). Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka posit that this form of memory “compromises the body of reusable texts, images, and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose cultivation serves to stabilize and convey that society’s self-image” (132). Understood in this way, public memory provides the basis for citizens to know what sources to look towards for guidance in the present. As sites that are part of our civil religion, presidential museums are marked as important locations for learning about the past. Citizens encounter these museums in the present and their narratives are made meaningful through a connection between the past and present. This is conscious memory, the present looking back to the past and adapting its lessons to current politics.

The other form of memory is active memory, “which moves in the other direction, coming from the past to energize the present” (Masummi, *Politics* 61-62). As Masummi argues, this form of memory is “the past actively contracted into the cut of the present instance” (*Politics* 62). Active memory is:

couched in acquired or inbred inclinations and propensities that a body carries forward...[which] we have a capacity to redeploy...responding to particularities of the situation. It’s an adaptive potential unfolding for the situation. It comes into the present as an inheritance of the past, but only to the extent it is reading a future. (Masummi, *Politics* 59)

To use a disease metaphor, active memory is a germ from the past that reactivates in the present and draws us towards the future. Bodies carry with them a past, the memories and capacities that

have accumulated over time to deal with situations. When bodies encounter a present that is similar to a felt past, memory activates to motivate the body into action utilizing its acquired tendencies to move towards a desired future. In other words, when a body encounters a repetition of the past in the present moment, memory activates the body towards the future. In this instance, time collapses upon itself, as the felt past and the felt future act upon the present. This is the cumulative effect of repetition. Affect generates feelings as bodies transition between the cuts in time. These feelings leave a trace, which may lay dormant, until an affective event. However, when activated, these traces are the memories, habits, inclinations, and propensities which redouble as “a generative factor of the forming moment” (Massumi *Politics* 60). It is through repetition that certain traces activate and others become lost, not part of what the body carries forward.

It is this second form of memory which is closely related to Wilson’s idea of the past acting as an experience which becomes part of an individual’s own lived experienced, fusing the lives of the past with the present and extending its natural usury. Massumi again provides the basis for why someone like Wilson, interested in intervening and directing affect, would be concerned with this form of memory as a way to mediate affective potential. He writes, “Politics, approached affectively, is an art of emitting the interruptive signs, triggering the cues, that attune bodies while activating their capacities differently” (*Politics* 56). Affect has potential because there is no assurance that as an event will unfold in ways that lead bodies to respond in concert. As Massumi notes, “It is the sum total of different ways of being interpellated by the same event that will define what it will be politically. The event can’t be fully determined” (*Politics* 57). When our bodies encounter affective cues, different capacities are activated to attune to event. Which capacities are activated, and which lay dormant, determine the politics of the event. For

bodies to attune in concert, a politics of conformity must work to prime bodies to activate similar capacities in similar situations (Massumi, *Politics* 57). Affective public memory then works in public spaces, such as presidential museums, to prime bodies to react in predetermined directions through a logic of repetition, as the accumulation of shared past experiences are potentially carried forward outside of the museum, waiting to be reactivated in the present/future.

Thus, affective public memory is the experience of a felt public past. Scholars writing about affect widely agree that the body has a past that it carries forward with it that becomes active in affective states (e.g. Gould, Massumi). This past limits the potentiality for the body to act in the present/future, as active memory calls forth past capacities. Through repetition, some memories and their accompanying capacities become natural or, as Wilson would say, part of the mind's intimates, while others remain inactive. If repeated often enough, the traces prime bodies to respond in concert to outside stimuli, predetermining our response to the affective moment. Here is where Wilson saw the potential for history to act upon the body to predetermine political directions. If we felt history and it welded with our own bodies as our own experiences, then history itself could be an agent of redoubling and a part of the repetition of life. What Wilson's philosophy reveals—and has been understudied by scholars of affect and public memory, is that our bodies are not limited to actual lived experiences that we carry forward; we can be affectively constituted to absorb others' past experiences as our own.

David Gruber provides the foundation to explore the relationship between affect and museums. While I have made a distinction between these two types of memory, Gruber argues that they often are complementary and are intertwined with one another. He advances a concept, which he labels "affective constitutive rhetoric," which he explains how museum displays generate political affect or a disposition towards accepting the narrative of the museum. Focusing

his attention on a museum in Hong Kong, Gruber argues that the museum's displays are structured in a way that enhances "a larger narrative being delivered about the unification of China" (163). The museum, he contends, organizes visitors to "to feel similarly to how [a past group] might feel, can feel, or should feel" (163). In doing so, the museum opens up the "possibility for new feelings toward China's power and authority" (163). At this museum, visitors are constituted to feel a desire for Chinese unification and a new feeling towards China. The concept of affective public memory operates in a similar fashion; however, it works on the body to reinforce a politics of conformity and through a logic of repetition.

In recent years, a major question confronting rhetorical scholars is: how do we methodologically read for the affective and a-signifying elements of public memory sites like museums? In order to explore this question of affective history in this project, I will use my own experience at the museum to offer one potential affective reading of it. This approach is supported by Gruber, who writes, "accounting for affect as a stable and strictly definable entity, or even a pre-designed set of distinct expressions, is best abandoned. For rhetorical criticism this means considering a material organization of artifacts as becoming affective in an experienced relation..." (154). This is to say that scholars should pay attention to and analyze as meaningful their felt bodily experiences as museums. As Gruber continues, "By turning to material environments and bodily processes," we can start "to think about how those shape the beliefs of an agent in tandem with symbols" (152). From this perspective, affect and rhetoric are mingled and inseparable from the other. Museums artifacts and narratives become affective in relation to bodies.

But what it is about museums and similar memory sites that activate this affective rhetorical effectivity? I contend that public memory becomes affective through repetition. This is

how history moves from being a rearview of the past to being affective public memory. Repetition of certain rhetorical elements is how affect moves from calling us to look from the present to the past for instruction to becoming part of us as something felt. While certainly I cannot consciously determine what traces of memories and capacities I carry forward with me from my experience at the museum, reflections about repetitive rhetorical elements and what they make a visitor feel can point us toward certain potentialities. In other words, tracking the repetitive elements of the museum hones in on the potential for shared, not just personal experiences. This augments our understanding of the rhetorical elements of the museum by adding to the discussion their potential to have dimension which affectively charges the effectivity of the museum's narrative.

Past research and the discussion of affective public memory reveals a method for studying the affective dimension of museums. Critics of affect and museums should analyze the narrative of the museum. After this, using their own experiences, scholars should interpret how the sights, sounds, and the positioning of bodies in relation to artifacts affectively charge the narrative. In doing so, they should pay attention to the repetition of feeling that is generated in these encounters. It is through this repetition where we can map why we become invested in certain memories over others and why certain memories are activated, while other remain dormant.

Using this method to examine the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, I first detail the narrative constructed by the museum. Next, I describe and reflect on my affective experience at the museum and the museum's elements that repetitively accent those experiences. and discuss potential implications. Finally, I tie this chapter to previous ones and provide broader implications for the study of presidential museums and public memory.

### **Affective Public Memory at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum**

The Gerald R. Ford Museum is a particularly important place to study the concept of affective history. The museum's mission website makes clear that its purpose is to "provoke emotions that stimulate learning, reflection, and a sense of democratic citizenship" ("Mission Statement"). Because the aim of the museum is dependent upon a relationship between and feelings and learning and a felt state and politics, it is a fruitful site to examine the link between presidential museums and Wilson's philosophy. In addition, the Ford Museum, because of the context of Ford's presidency, has to deal with issues of affect and the presidency. Ford assumed office without being elected during a highly charged affective period in our history. Thus, how his story is told in the museum inevitably will have to explore the function of the presidency during a sustained affective state that existed after the Vietnam War and Watergate.

#### *The Narrative Elements of the Ford Museum*

One of the first things a visitor notes on entering the museum is that its narrative is not told in a linear fashion, which will be important for when I discuss its affective dimension. Rather than beginning with Ford's childhood or early political career, the first room of the museum discusses the emotion of the people at the time of Ford's inaugurated. The sign outside of the door to the room announces that the visitors are experiencing "A Nation Divided: America in the 1970s." From this text, people learn that "The 1970s were turbulent years, stained by the scandal in Washington, racked by dissent...and roiled by demands of Black Americans, feminists, environmentalists, and others for a more responsive, inclusive society." Despite these problems and "[a]voiding clenched fists and pointed fingers, millions of ordinary citizens went about their business, pursuing their own dreams, honoring their own traditions." In other words, millions of Americans were not emotional and agitating for a more inclusive and responsive

society, but instead were going about their own daily lives, waiting for someone to heal the country.

Other parts of the museum emphasize that it was difficult for Ford to heal the country. We are told Ford could not concentrate on healing the country, because “everywhere he went, the president found reporters less interested in the problems of 200 million Americans than in the future of one American: Richard Nixon.” As long as the issues of Nixon’s crimes and Vietnam hung over the country, Ford could not end “our long national nightmare.” According to the museum, reporters’ constant questioning of Ford about these issues prolonged their ability to divide us as a nation.

In addition to the press, there was also the problem of citizens’ desire for Nixon to pay for his crimes. We are told by the museum’s narrative that while Ford was willing to forgive, citizens wanted to enact revenge. The level of their resentment towards Nixon and the institutions that they thought responsible for a broken political system caused Ford to question whether a presidential pardon for Nixon would create a backlash that would irrevocably divide the country. However, he said he had to do what was best for the country and get “back to the real business of running the country.” This meant he had to put aside emotions, including his own disappointment in Nixon, and make a rational decision that would best heal the country. We are told that Ford did not need a “public opinion poll to know what was right”; all he needed were the facts, so he could be exhaustive in exploring the benefits and costs of all his various options.

His ability to set aside emotions and focus on the facts of his various options is highlighted in an exhibit that is a replica of the Oval Office. As visitors gaze at the replica, a tape plays that informs them that the Oval Office is the “nerve center of democracy.” Outside of this

replica Oval Office, there are displays of letters from citizens who did not want him to pardon Nixon. These letters emphasize that citizens would not vote for Ford, if he granted a pardon. In addition, these letters carry a tone of resentment for what Nixon did to the country, both criminally and for his conduct with the Vietnam War. The letters are representative of an American public whose emotions would not let it accept pardoning Nixon as a viable option. Symbolically these letters are hung outside of the Oval Office. They are not present in the “nerve center of democracy.” Because Ford had to make a rational decision, he could not allow these letters to contaminate his decision. The replica Oval Office thus stands as a wall between the presidency and the emotional letters from citizens; it functions as a barrier between rationality and emotions.

If emotions were not to guide his decision, because they divide the country and prevent the healing of the nation, then what would guide Ford’s decision? The museum tells us that he was guided by the virtues he learned over his lifetime and which he embodied. His virtuous qualities came from the “Michigan of his youth.” It was there his “mother and stepmother had conducted a tutorial in hard work, personal honesty, thrift, and service to others.” In the Ford Household, “three rules were absolute. Tell the truth, work hard, and come to dinner on time.” We are told that these virtues, along with those he learned from the Boy Scouts, such as to be morally straight, provided him with “a solid base on which to build both individual and national strength.” Throughout the museum, the visitor is provided with examples of how Ford embodied these virtues.

The virtues of hard work, honesty, and integrity are exemplified in the museum through a story from his first campaign. The museum notes that Ford won his first campaign by “outworking his opponent.” Telling a voter that he would milk his cows if he won his primary,

“at 4:30am on the day following his victory, he began to fulfill his pledge. The farmer was startled, but Ford told him, I’m not going to break my campaign promises.” The embodiment of these values would carry over to his time in Congress, where “Ford earned a reputation among his peers for hard work, steadiness, and keeping his word. He was known as a work horse, not a show horse.” During his time as president, his hard work resulted in legislative accomplishments, such as brokering peace agreements, cutting bureaucratic red tape, and solving inflation. We are told, “In many ways, the Ford presidency was ahead of its time...” The virtue of hard work resulted in his ability to be knowledgeable about issues and score legislative accomplishments.

However, the museum makes clear though his accomplishments never came at the expense of his honesty and integrity. He was not willing to approve legislation just for the sake of adding to his record. He is quoted in the museum saying, “If we want to restore confidence in ourselves as working politicians, the first thing we have to do is learn to say no” and a “deep conviction that the president has to stand up and fight for what he believes is right.” As history shows us, he acted on this belief as he liberally used the veto pen. Thus, as the exhibits explain, he worked hard so that he had the knowledge necessary to do what was right, in accordance with the virtues of honesty and integrity. As a result, the museum tells us that upon assuming the presidency, “Ford impressed observers as being honest, capable, and more knowledgeable about domestic and foreign affairs than even his friends had suspected.”

In addition, he had the strength to say no when necessary, but also to say yes, especially when it was unpopular to do so. For example, he had the strength to say yes when he felt he it was necessary to preserve national unity. The museum emphasizes that while he was in congress, Ford made friends with John F. Kennedy, because “where the nation’s vital interests were concerned, politics stopped at the water’s edge.” As Republican Minority Leader, “Ford honed

his leadership skills. He was a consensus builder, someone who took time to listen and learn from others.” Thus, the exhibits tell visitors that Ford was not a partisan and would often, as was the case in 1961, break from his party and support Democratic legislation. For him, emotional attachment to his party did not supersede his evaluations of the benefits and consequences of legislation. He was willing to put aside partisanship and bridge divides if he thought it was the right thing to do. For him, he did what was right in his own mind and his own conscious. In short, the exhibits tell us that during the course of Ford’s life, the virtues of honesty, knowledge, and integrity guided his decisions, not the desire for accomplishments or loyalty to his own party.

Ultimately, the museum suggests that his embodiment of these virtues guided him to pardon Nixon. We are told he worked hard in pouring through the facts of the case and was exhaustive in exploring all possible options. His only intent in reaching a decision was to find the best course of action that would allow the country to move forward and allow him to get back to addressing the issues facing the country. He was confident that, when “given the facts,” citizens would agree he made the right decision. This notion is reinforced when visitors are informed that Ford’s advisors told him that they could find no fault in his reasoning. In a simulation, at the end of the museum, where visitors play the role of presidential advisors, they are presented with the facts of the case as known at the time by Ford. The video notes, when presented with this information, people do mostly agree with Ford. While I did not verify this claim, in stating it the museum is advancing the idea that information learned at the museum tempers the emotions of the people through a presentation of Ford’s virtues and the articulated rationality of his decision.

In short, The Ford Museum’s narrative is a story of rationality, virtue, and eventual healing. For instance, the museum notes that, upon becoming president, Ford was given a “bleak

inheritance,” as the country was being torn apart over what to do about Nixon’s crimes. By focusing on Nixon, citizens and the press would not allow Ford to do the hard work necessary to solve other issues, such as the Vietnam War. If he was not able to move on from Nixon, Ford would not begin to heal the divisions that existed in the country. Yet, as the exhibits explain, pardoning Nixon had its own risks and potentially could have further divided the nation. Ford had to rely on the virtues of hard work, honesty, integrity, and a belief in unity in order to arrive at a decision. Isolating himself from the emotions of the people, he was able to determine that pardoning Nixon was the rational decision.

This narrative articulates Ford as embodying the virtues of our republic and taming the sin of emotion in our politics. Ford, we are told, was “a president who gave the American people back their government.” By exemplifying the values discussed in this analysis, he “quietly steered a battered ship of state on a course of domestic tranquility and international peace.” In doing so, Ford “demonstrated that our democratic style of government works in times of trial, as well as triumph.” In short, as promised at the beginning of the tour, the museum’s narrative reveals to us how Ford healed a nation.

The Ford Museum can be squarely placed within the existing literature on presidential museums. Previous research has found that presidential museums articulate their subjects in relation to the demos. For example, at the Reagan Museum, visitors are instructed to stand in awe of the power of the presidency. At the Clinton Museum, the performance of citizenship is limited to working through the presidency to achieve legislation. In a somewhat similar theme, my analysis of the Ford Museum reveals a narrative that instructs citizens to tame their emotions, because they divide the country and muddy rational decision-making processes. Questioning presidential power risks violence and turmoil; as a result, the Ford Museum argues that we

should trust the president to resolve our problems. For instance, this is emphasized at the end of the museum when a video plays of President Ford accepting the JFK Profile in Courage Award from Ted Kennedy, who said, “time has a way of clarifying, and we see that he was right.” Further, this point is reinforced when visitors at the end of the simulation agree with Ford that he made the right decision. This narrative serves as a representative example of our Founder’s fears of emotions corrupting our political system and the need for barriers between emotional citizens and rational governmental actors and institutions. It articulates Ford’s story as a potential lesson for present day matters. The presidency is glorified as being an institution that can heal the nation while citizens are portrayed as the agents that stand in the way of healing. Similar to the Reagan Museum, the Ford Museum asks visitors to stand in awe of the presidency. However, it does not just persuade us that this is our role; instead, we come to feel it. In teasing out the elements of Ford’s narrative, it is revealed that the museum’s narrative claims are dependent upon acceptance of the presidency’s power and citizens’ limited role in the political realm.

*The Affective Functions of the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum*

Now that we understand how the museum crafts a narrative about the importance of rationale presidential decision-making in the face of a highly emotional moment, I now turn to the using affective public memory as a way to understand how this narrative becomes animated through repetition of feeling. This dynamic begins even before visitors enter the museum when they encounter a giant statue of Gerald R. Ford. The artifact is arranged so that visitors cannot enter the museum without taking notice of it. This placement is important, because, as Gruber argues, over-sized artifacts like this overtake and engage bodies (158). Gruber further contends that such artifacts “placed immediately next to a human body, magnifies scale and emphasizes in turn, the smallness of the human body” (158-159). Thus, before even encountering the narrative

of the museum, visitors are positioned as being smaller, perhaps awed by the sublime Ford statue. Larry Williamson also explains that the feeling of awe is “heart-stopping,” producing in the body “a strange feeling of fleeting contact with the eternal” (17). Beyond the sculpture of Ford itself, included on the base of the statute is the inscription of a Tip O’Neill quotation: “God has been good to America, especially during difficult times. At the time of the Civil War, he gave us Abraham Lincoln, and at the time of Watergate, he gave us Gerald Ford, the right man at the right time who was able to put our nation back together again.” Between the symbolism, rhetoric, and affective dimension of this artifact, before even entering the museum, we are affectively primed to understand Ford as being larger than ourselves, as being sent to us directly from God to heal the country, and to feel as if we are encountering a great man of history.

As previously noted, the museum is not arranged in a linear fashion. Instead, the first room of the museum is about the problems of the 1970s. In this room, visitors start an intense sensory experience, as the room is darkened except for several televisions and spotlighted memorabilia from the 1970s. Playing on the televisions are speeches from the Civil Rights Movement, several clips of the Vietnam War, student protestors, and the Watergate scandal. The images on the screen depict violence, such as rioters starting fires and deaths occurring in Vietnam. In addition, there are images that show people in despair, as they are in disbelief about Watergate. These images bring to life the Founders’ fear that absent leaders who can heal, the country will devolve into chaos and disorder. All of these rhetorical elements constitute a frame for the visitors that they are witnessing what can happen in our political culture when the volcano of emotions erupts and there is no leader to contain the disaster.

This experience can be understood through the concept of imagined-seeing. Gerald Hauser writes that sometimes:

rhetorical performances must be reenactments of actions or events that the audience did not immediately witness. In that case, rhetorical displays must marshal verbal and formal resources that induce the audience to undergo the fantasia of imagined seeing. The fantasia of screening, in which the audience is brought into the emotional ambit of eyewitness, then carries the emotional force of the self-evident, valid proving. (235)

This immersive digital environment in the first room of the museum positions the audience as ‘eyewitnesses’” of the events of the 1970s, affectively charging the museum’s narrative that it was a dark and violent time in our history. We are not only told about the 1970s; we also bear witness to it. Gruber argues that these museum elements work affectively by making internally and externally visible a recognition of the museum narrative’s validity (161). In other words, they serve as affective evidence for the museum’s narrative.

However, the confluence of affect and rhetoric in this exhibit also forms a felt affective state. As Masumi writes, “Affect for me is inseparable from shock.... [It is] a change in focus, or rustle at the periphery of vision that draws the gaze towards it” (Masumi, *Politics* 53). In the first room of the museum, a sense of shock is potentially generated when visitors come into contact with the violence and unrest of the 1970s. Affect is generated with the encounter of an environment that is out of place with ordinary life. The problems of the 1970s are presented as multiple issues. We were a nation divided in multiple ways, which we come to experience through the several televisions showing the various reactions to the political problems of the times. Visitors are overwhelmed by the experience of 1970’s life. For instance, in this room, visitors are bombarded with the images and sounds of the decade. In the period of a few minutes, they witness the totality of 1970’s politics. As Gruber writes of the Hong Kong Museum, this is an excessive experience, “which takes some time to collect and consider” (161). In short, through simultaneous repetition of the images and sounds of the 1970s, an affective state emerges; a stop in time where we have to collect ourselves from the shock of the encounter.

From this cut in time, visitors move through at least two more repetitions of feeling the awe-inspiring nature of presidential power. Most American citizens will not have the opportunity to visit the Oval Office; however, those who visit presidential museums do encounter a replica. At the Gerald R. Ford presidential museum, this replica is situated at the end of the museum's textual discussion of Ford's pardon of Nixon. The replica is a full-scale version of the actual Oval Office. As noted earlier, what is interesting about the replica is that visitors are roped off from interacting with it. The guests are limited to standing behind the rope and staring at what is described as the "nerve center of democracy." Therefore, the citizen-body is positioned as distant and excluded from the practices of democracy. Unlike the Hong Kong Museum, which Gruber argues places visitors in the center of the action, the Ford Museum displaces them outside of the action. As mentioned above, outside the Oval Office wall is displayed the citizen's thoughts and voices, in the form of letters offering advice about what to do about pardoning Nixon. This positioning of the body, literally excluded from the "nerve center of democracy," emphasizes that our voices are to remain outside of it, even in replica form.

Additionally, the replica's location in the museum directs our gaze towards the importance of the Oval Office. It is here, and not in the interaction of citizen voices outside its walls, where power resides in our politics. By being roped off, the replica dares us to encroach upon it and risk the reanimation of the past felt in the first room. As Gruber notes, "constituting subjects as subjects requires a stance and location from which to say 'hey you'" (159). The replica Oval Office projects a stance and location that says, stand over there, do not cross over, democracy works when citizens stay out of politics and give their agency over to the presidency. By positioning the body in this way in relation to the Oval Office, the museum affectively magnifies the significance of the presidency over the citizens. Returning to the concept of awe,

the museum interpellates us to feel our own smallness and gaze upon the real source of political power in political culture.

The final room in the museum, besides the changing special exhibits room, is a replica Cabinet Room. In this room, unlike the replica Oval Office, visitors are free to move around it. Once they have looked around, guests are able to choose a chair. The chairs have various cabinet-level positions on the back of them, such as Attorney General or Secretary of State. In the simulation, visitors are transposed into the role of advisor to President Ford and asked to offer advice about whether to pardon Nixon. Their subject-position is flipped from observer of history to participants in it. In addition, their position is reversed from passive observer of the Ford legacy to an active member of its creation. Previous research notes that former advisors have seats on the board of most presidential museums and take an active role in preserving the positive memory of the president they served, as, after all, their own legacy is tied to that of their president (Cox). In transposing visitors into a similar role, they are positioned as the creators and protectors of presidential memory. The visitor becomes the advisor, someone with a stake in the president's legacy.

Once again, visitors are transported back into the 1970s and overwhelmed with a sense of the gravity of its political problems. After detailing all of the problems, visitors are told that all of the problems could not be resolved until a decision was reached about Nixon. In this moment, visitors are purportedly engaging in a simulation of the cabinet-level discussions that occurred regarding the Nixon pardon. However, there is limited time for discussion amongst the participants, as the simulation moves rapidly from the need for a decision and a discussion of the rightness of Ford's ultimate decision. This rapid transition replicates the experience of Ford's advisors, who ultimately had little power over the final decision. In the end, Ford made his own

decision. The simulation of advising the president is a reproduction of an event where the final decision had little to do with him acting on said advice.

Why end the museum with such an experience? Gruber argues that recreations create a feeling of association with the object of the museum, as was the case in his example of the reunification of China (162). In the case of the Ford museum, visitors are framed into new subject positions in order to feel closer to Gerald Ford. They were let in on an intimate moment and placed at the center of presidential decision-making. Unlike earlier in the museum, here they encounter and have an active role in advising the president. They became Ford's advisors and now they too serve on the board charged with protecting his legacy. In addition, by letting visitors into the inner-circle of the presidency, they also bear witness one final time to the power of the presidency to single-handedly renovate the social order.

In these three museum exhibits and artifacts, the visitor is positioned by the museum to feel the intensity of the 1970s, gaze upon Ford as larger than life divine agent, and witness the power of the presidency while sensing our distance from that power and the smallness of our ability to act politically. These rhetorical elements work in conjunction to move us from one felt state to the next, from the feelings of the 1970s to the feeling of awe in the presence of the power of the presidency. These affective dimensions supercharge the narrative theme of the museum: the president has the capability to heal a nation by alleviating a felt state, such as that of the 1970s. In addition, it affectively magnifies the idea that citizens have a limited role to play in politics by positioning bodies in ways that make them seem small in comparison to the power of the presidency. In short, time collapses upon itself at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum. Visitors are asked to feel the past as a cut in the present and to repeatedly feel the power of the presidency to restore the social order. Through repetitive encounters with the power of the

presidency, visitors' experiences accumulate in ways that potentially predetermine the traces of memories and capacities that will activate in similar circumstances. In other words, through repetition, fragments of memory build that potentially will activate a citizen whose capacities in future encounters are diminished by this felt past, through the feeling that his/her power to act politically is inseparable from presidential power.

### **Conclusion**

Presidential museums' affective force is found in its ability to generate sensations in relation to its artifacts and texts. These impressions have the potentiality to become felt states, which may linger for a short or long time outside the walls of the museum. These felt states leave traces of capacities and memories that remain with the body. Massumi argues these traces ready us for our next encounter. As he writes,

In the heat of an encounter, we are immersed in an eventful working out of affective capacities. We have no luxury of a distance from the event from which we can observe and reflect upon it. But in that immediacy of feeling absorbed in the encounter, we already understand, in the fiber of our being, what is at stake, and where things might be tending. (*Politics* 93-94)

Through repetition of events, some traces build up capital and become more likely to be activated, while others remain in the reservoir of potential. For particular traces to emerge frequently over time, there must be multiple layers of coordinated political work. As previous noted, affective public memory is bound up in a logic of repetition. For affect to be directed in predetermined ways, public memory must be felt and activated in similar ways.

The Gerald R. Ford Museum is one site of repetition of a presidential rhetoric that articulates the presidency as the epicenter of our politics. Its narrative, if we have time to reflect in the present about an event or problems, calls us to look to Ford as a model of leadership and his story acts as a lesson in proper citizenship practices. This is one way in which memory can

function, which is similar to how we think of those memories that are part of our civil religion. Texts, such as the Ford Museum, become part of the past we recollect in moments of reflection in the present. The implications of this form of public memory are well-documented. For example, Kanter argues that presidential museum narratives offer instruction in performing a form of citizenship that is dependent upon presidential power instead of our own political agency. These sites also create an unrealistic expectation for presidential power, which results in disillusionment when a president does not live up to these expectations (Burk). In examining the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, we encounter a similar narrative with similar potential implications.

However, Wilson and affect scholars point us towards understanding that this is only one way in which public memory works in the political sphere. It also has the potential to be affective. Dana Nelson writes that narratives about presidential power encourage “citizens to believe that their democratic agency depends on presidential power, instead of the other way around” (4). She continues to argue that, while on some level, we understand the limits of presidential power as articulated in narratives, such as those found in presidential museums, the rhetoric works by conditioning “how citizens unconsciously feel about both the president and democratic practice” (5). In other words, our conscious being comprehends the limits of presidential power but our unconscious feelings pull us “in powerfully antidemocratic directions” orienting us “toward the salvific and power president...” (5). Thus, she asks, why do we keep investing in presidentialism, the powerful logic of attachment to presidential power? In this chapter, I have developed one answer: through repetition of the ideology that underpins this logic and by affect or how we come to feel about presidential power and our democratic agency.

Masummi argues that “Affect is now much more important for understanding power...than concepts like ideology” (*Politics* 32). Affect is a power-to, while ideology forms a power-over. According to Masummi, power-over is understood as forcing us down certain paths. On the other hand, affect “puts the paths in us, so by the time we learn to follow its constraints, we’re following ourselves” (*Politics* 19). In other words, the power of affect is its ability to form us, to become part of our identity before we even consciously learn it. This idea is amplified if we consider that the largest groups of visitors to presidential museums are school children. Without the capacity to critically examine the ideological function of the museums, they may still absorb its affective dimensions. Thus, before they understand the constraints of the ideology, the path has affectively been formed in them through their encounter with the statue of Ford and the replica Oval Office and Cabinet Room.

The Ford Museum’s affective dimension and this notion of affective power also point us towards understanding investment as wrapped up in repetition. This is to say some memories take precedence over others not because we consciously invest in them by seeking them out from the position of the present, but, because we have encountered them so frequently, they become part of our nature. In other words, we start to follow ourselves, not history. These types of memory do not require conscious retrospect for lessons on how to act; they are felt as if they were our own. At the Ford Museum, the 1970s become a lived experience and visitors are eyewitnesses to it. They are made to feel overwhelmed by the excess of experience of the 1970s at the museum. Visitors are then positioned to feel the power of the presidency, through the juxtaposition of its power in relation to themselves, to shave off the excesses of the experience of the 1970s. In the space of roughly two hours, the visitor has three affective encounters which work on the body to emphasize the power of the presidency. The museum repeatedly reminds us

through affect and narrative that the presidency occupies an important role in our political culture that we do not occupy. This affective work supercharges the validity of the museum's narrative. However, this affective dimension, the feelings regarding the primacy of presidential power in our politics, also has the ability to linger with us and activate as a predetermined tendency to turn towards presidential power, and not ourselves, to resolve political issues.

The concept of repetition is important for understanding investment because, as Gruber notes, affective investments accumulate through experience, sensations, and movements of the body (152). In short, repetition could provide the key for why some memories reactivate, while others remain dormant. The repetition of sensing the power of the presidency and our own insignificance in relation potentially increases the likelihood that, when we encounter another event, we will unconsciously be pulled forward by our investment in presidential power. Thus, the Ford Museum is one node in a sustained twentieth century narrative about the desirability of enlarged presidential power. While it repeats a common presidential museum narrative, it more importantly makes us experience and feel it.

In conclusion, I contend that we need to understand the affective dimension of presidential museums through their sights, sounds, and the positioning of visitor bodies in relation to artifacts. At the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, the affective dimension augments the narrative by generating feelings of awe in regards to presidential power and a sense of our distance from the source of the power necessary to resolve political problems. In addition, through the repetition of this felt experience, this affect potentially accumulates as a trace of memories and capacities that we carry forward outside of its walls, which activate in the future. This is public memory not as power over, directing us where to look from in the present for advice from the past; instead, it is a power-to or public memory as forming us, creating feelings

inside of us, and acting upon the body to put the path in us. This perhaps explains why we may understand the limitations of presidential power on a conscious level; yet, during affective states, we still turn towards and become invested in this power rather than in our own capacities to act in our political culture.

At the beginning of this chapter, I argued that Woodrow Wilson saw history as a potential force because it can form inside of us, merging the lives of the past with our own. For Wilson, who was concerned with the potential of affect to disrupt the status quo, he saw the force of history as a positive affective power. Unlike the previous chapter's discussion of how presidential rhetoric captures affect, history does not capture affect; it is itself affective because it has the potential to form us and put the "correct" paths in us. When history becomes public memory, which is to say when it becomes a collective experience of the past, it becomes possible to attune and prime bodies in predetermined directions, increasing the relative success of a politics of conformity. The more this experience of a felt past is repeated, the more its particular traces accumulate. Why do we invest in the presidency? Because we have felt its power more often than we have felt our own.

**CHAPTER 5 AFFECT, DEMOCRACY, AND PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC**

During the course of completing this study, celebrity businessman Donald Trump emerged as a political force in American politics. Political professionals and pundits scoffed at his chances of becoming the nominee of the Republican Party. However, over the course of the primary calendar, Trump won 38 states and is now the presumptive nominee. The same political professionals and pundits who scoffed at his chances are now scrambling to explain his success. One answer they have arrived at is that Trump's political rise is the result of an excess of democracy.

For example, Andrew Sullivan, writer for *New York Magazine*, argues that democracy is inherently unstable. This is why, he notes, the Founders of the country guarded "democracy from the tyranny of the majority and the passions of the mob, they constructed large, hefty barriers between the popular will and the exercise of power" ("America"). Among these barriers, Sullivan lists the Electoral College, the selection process for U.S. Senators, and the Supreme Court. Further, Jonathan Rauch, writer for *The Atlantic*, adds congressional committees, congressional seniority hierarchies, and political parties to the list of barriers that have historically separated the popular will from the exercise of power ("How"). The purpose of these barriers, both writers argue, was to ensure the primacy of reason over emotion in our political system. As these barriers have eroded over time, so too has elites' ability to govern. Rauch argues that our political system has lost "its ability to channel and absorb disruptions" ("How").

According to Sullivan, the U.S. is in a stage of political development known late-stage democracy. In this stage, the authority of political elites fades and merges with the popular will. Sullivan writes, "when all the barriers to equality, formal and informal, have been removed; when everyone is equal; when elites are despised...you arrive at what might be called late-stage democracy. There is no kowtowing to authority here, let alone to political experience or

expertise” (“America”). Thus, the problem with our current democratic political culture, according to Sullivan, is that the people do not respect the position of authority. Rauch adds to this point, writing:

For decades, well-meaning political reformers have attacked intermediaries as corrupt, undemocratic, unnecessary, or (usually) all of the above. Americans have been busy demonizing and disempowering political professionals and parties, which is like spending decades abusing and attacking your own immune system. Eventually, you will get sick.

For Rauch and Sullivan, the weakening of our political system is the direct result of political reformers who have attacked the professional political class. Democracy in the U.S. is diseased because we have attacked our immune system, which, if properly working, absorbs or channels the excesses of democracy. According to Sullivan, we have blasted away the firewalls that were “designed precisely” to prevent “against democratic wildfires” (“America”). As a result, both writers point to the very thing that the Federalists feared: emotions and feelings now dominate our political system.

With these barriers no longer in place and our immune system weakened, Rauch and Sullivan contend we now face the consequence: the political success of Donald Trump. Rauch writes, due to political reforms, “[a]ssembling power to govern a sprawling, diverse, and increasingly divided democracy is inevitably hard” (“How”). While political actors and institutions could be and often were undemocratic, Rauch contends they had one virtue: “They brought order out of chaos” (“How”). However, with these same actors and institutions now in a weakened state, we live in perpetual chaos. Out of this bedlam, Sullivan argues it is inevitable that we get a figure like Trump, someone who promises to cut through the messiness of democracy and take on the elites, who have been despised for so long. For instance, as Sullivan writes, “The vital and valid lesson of the Trump phenomenon is that if the elites cannot govern

by compromise, someone outside will eventually try to govern by popular passion and brute force” (“America”). In short, according to these writers, the inevitable result of too much democracy is the demagogue. Trump is the newest example of an old fear: the power of the people in a democracy.

Rauch concludes his piece by writing, “Our most pressing political problem today is that the country abandoned the establishment, not the other way around” (“How”). The establishment, who Sullivan says, “we need...precisely to protect this precious democracy from its own destabilizing excesses” (“America”). In short, Trump’s success is the result of an excess of democracy, a weakening of the barriers between the governed and the governors. The cure for Trump is rebuilding the walls between the government and the governed, a return to democracy understood in Wilsonian terms as deriving from institutions, not people.

In this concluding chapter, I am offering an alternative explanation for the rise of Trump. It is my contention that Trump represents the culmination of the affective presidency; he is the figure that logically emerges from a century of presidential rhetoric that has nurtured investment in the presidency as the heart of democracy. Far from being the product of too much democracy, Trump is the consequence of attempts to tame it. In order to make this argument, I first review the rhetorical effectivity of the affective presidency. Next, I go back to the questions that animated this project and answer them. I then discuss the limitations of this project and avenues for future research. Finally, I place Donald Trump into the context of the affective presidency and discuss the current state of American Democracy.

### **Affect and Presidential Rhetoric**

The argument of this study is that Wilson developed a theory of the presidency where it would function as the institution responsible for managing the excesses of democracy, namely

human passions. This places presidential rhetoric into a historical lineage of elite efforts to tame the excesses of democracy. From the Constitution to political parties to the rhetoric of enemyship, our history has been driven by a fear of democracy and the popular will of the people. Woodrow Wilson added to these techniques an affective function. For Wilson, the the presidency could manage the abundances of democracy by educating people about the older wise ways, directing people towards an object of desire, or fostering investment in the presidency as the source of democracy. This project has focused on the last two ways, as they have been understudied by scholars of presidential rhetoric.

In focusing on these last two ways, this project adds to our understanding of presidential rhetoric and presidentialism. This dissertation contributes to our understanding of presidential rhetoric by identifying another potential function of it: the managing of the passions of citizens. In examining this function, this study reveals the affective dimensions of our politics and how presidents intervene into this process to influence our political culture.

For instance, in Chapter 3, I explored the connection between presidential rhetoric and the promise of happiness. This chapter revealed that Wilson's case for international liberalism was underpinned by a rhetoric of happiness. Wilson, in making his case for the League of Nations, connected happiness to actions to prevention of future wars, democratic institutions, efforts to tame human passions, and U.S. supremacy. His rhetoric constructed the League of Nations as an object of desire, as the institution people should be directed towards to bring about an age of happiness. This form of rhetoric intervenes into the affective process by channeling affect forward towards the promise of a better future. In other words, presidential rhetoric intervenes into the affective process by translating it into a coded emotion, such as happiness,

and directing citizens towards the object(s) of its enactment. The passions of the people are managed by directing them towards the anticipation of a better future feeling state.

While Wilson ultimately failed in his quest for the League of Nations, his rhetoric articulated a path towards happiness. His directing of passions towards the object of international liberalism eventually found its form in the United Nations. In addition, he provided the most sustained attack against human passion in government affairs since *The Federalist Papers*. In his rhetoric, not only must governments guard against passion, but the people must also do the same if they want to reach a state of happiness. What stands between us and happiness, according to Wilson, is the taming of human desire. The League of Nations was the object that would best check passions. Moreover, governments and institutions could not fully eliminate human passions, so the people also needed to discipline themselves. Thus, the taming of democracy became both an inward and outward exercise. To be American meant pledging one's self to the ideals of the U.S. and maintaining the conditions of happiness. Central to this pledge was a lack of self-interest and the discipline of passions. A real American did not act on passion or self-interest. They acted not in our own interest but the needs and happiness of the world.

In short, Wilson's rhetoric managed the excesses of democracy after World War I by directing passions towards an object of desire. While he was unsuccessful, his rhetoric also connected happiness to the taming of passions. Thus, if we wanted to be happy, we needed to keep our passions in check. We needed to help others and be dispassionate. Presidential rhetoric in this case functions as a hope technology. It provides the path towards our desires, if we choose to follow it and discipline ourselves to be happy subjects. This rhetoric encourages us to not act on our impulses or risk the future.

In regards to presidentialism, this study adds to our understanding of the concept by illustrating the affective connections that underpin it. Chapter 4 examined the relationship between affect, presidential rhetoric, and public memory. In this chapter, I explored how affect, presidential rhetoric, and public memory foster investment in the presidency as a source of democratic agency. This chapter found that investment in the presidency is bound up in a logic of repetition that articulates the presidency as the heart of democracy. At the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, citizens encounter a narrative that formulates the idea that the democratic agency of citizens is dependent upon presidential power. This narrative is charged by the affective dimensions of the museum, where the interplay between artifact, text, and visitor have the potentiality to generate felt states. In this exchange, traces of memory build and the more often it is repeated, the more likely it becomes felt as a lived experience. In other words, through the repetition of a felt affective state, the past becomes experienced as if we lived it ourselves. At presidential museums, the past becomes part of us. We feel the affective state present at the time of the specific president and the his/her power to solve problems.

Dana Nelson writes, “Living presidents unavoidably remind citizens of political conflict and partiality. But the mythology of the (dead) president promises to absorb those many conflicting desires...it substitutes a regretful patriotic nostalgia for an active resourcefulness about current conditions” (42). Chapter 4 adds to this the idea that these conflicting desires are also affectively managed through the act of memorialization at presidential museums. We not only desire the past, but bygone days become attached to us as part of our identity. We felt the potential of presidential power at the museum. It is not something of the past but part of our desired future. In the present, we desire the same form of presidential power to solve political

issues that we have felt through the affectively charged narrative at the museum. Being attuned to turn towards the power of the presidency thus curbs our democratic agency.

In both chapters, what is revealed about the relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric is that it creates pathways for citizens. Brian Masummi argues that affect is a power-to while ideology is power-over. In other words, ideology forces us down certain paths, while affect puts the path in us. Chapter 4 exposes that presidential museums, through the relationship between texts and artifacts, generate sensations or felt states that function to put the past into us, to make it become part of our identity, so that the trail it provides us to follow in the future seems as if it is natural to us. What is this trail at presidential museums? It is to turn to the power of the presidency, not our own democratic agency, to navigate the complexity of democratic politics.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that the affective function of presidential rhetoric can also function as power-over. This is to say that the force of a given ideology is aided by affect. It is what causes a constellation of ideological factors to stick in a belief system. As Ahmed notes, affect is the glue of our social imaginary. In this project, I argued that the ideology of international liberalism sticks together through an articulation of beliefs, objects, and values in relation to happiness. The promise of happiness gives force to the ideology; it is what makes the path towards it desirable. Although ideology may force us down certain paths, when it is combined with affect, we are less resistant to it or do not even notice it as force. In short, ideology is still around, but to understand its effectivity, we must also attune to what affective force becomes attached to it. For instance, you cannot fully understand why international liberalism has stuck in our social imaginary for almost one hundred years without paying attention to how happiness circulates around it. Happiness operates as the glue that holds

together international liberalism and makes it desirable. This is likely why, despite its inability to deliver happiness and prevent future wars, our politics remain tied to it.

The relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric then reveals the potency of the confluence of affect and ideology. Presidential museum narratives move from being ideological to affective through the construction of felt states. Not only do we learn the ideology of presidentialism at presidential museums, we feel it. In addition, as Chapter 3 reveals, not only does presidential rhetoric operate within an ideological economy, but also functions within an affective economy, as ideology becomes bound to the promise of a future emotion. In short, this project contributes to the field of presidential rhetoric by arguing for moving beyond ideology to study the affective dimension of politics. By doing so, we get a richer understanding of how presidents curb the excesses of democracy and direct our politics. In doing so, we come to understand more fully the potential potency of presidential rhetoric and how the office has come to occupy such a central place in our democratic political culture. Now that we know the connection between affect and presidential rhetoric, it is necessary to examine the implications of this relationship for democracy and citizenship.

### **Democracy and the Affective Presidency**

In Chapter 1, I wrote that two important questions to ask once we know the nature of the relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric are: What are the implications of an affective presidency for citizenship and our notions of democracy? How does the affective presidency implicate how we argue and debate about political issues? In the preceding chapters, I have outlined three primary implications of the affective presidency for answering these questions.

First, the affective presidency at presidential museums constructs the experience of a collectively felt past. In doing so, it becomes possible to attune and prime bodies in predetermined directions. The power of affect at presidential museums is found in its ability to constitute us and to put the path in us before we are consciously aware to question it. We are interpellated towards the power of the presidency instead of ourselves to handle the challenges of democracy. Dana Nelson notes the potential consequences of acquiescing our democratic agency to the power of the presidency in writing, “In the United States, we expect the president to do the work of democracy” (xiv). This expectation “trains people to put all their energy into electing the right president, then they can settle back into their ‘regular lives’ waiting for him to get the(ir) job done” (Nelson xiv). This creates a situation where democracy becomes something that only governments do. In other words, democracy becomes about institutional behavior like voting and electing the right president, not about the actual functioning of government. Nelson contends this puts our politics into an every-four-year cycle where citizens engage to elect a president, but do not stay engaged in the process after the election (vii). In short, if the presidency is the heart of democracy and the source of our democratic agency, then the most important role for citizens is to vote for president. For instance, how many times have you heard someone say you have no right to complain if you did not vote? Or, do not blame me, I did not vote for that president. As this question and statement demonstrates, citizenship and democracy, when bodies are attuned to turn to presidential power to do the work of democracy, boil down to voting and little else. Even when we are eventually disappointed in a president, Nelson contends we do not take it upon ourselves to engage in the practices of democracy; instead, we ready ourselves for our next dream candidate. In this process, passions become channeled into voting, as we invest in the office of the presidency and not ourselves, to do the work of democracy. This form of affective

rhetoric then channels the excesses of democracy by limiting our notion of democracy to presidential power and our role in the political system to voting for the “right” president.

Second, the affective presidency creates an investment in democratic institutions. In this way, it is a continuation of a rhetorical lineage of techniques which have attempted to channel the excesses of democracy into political institutions. As Jennifer Mercieca notes, the public sphere has always been the domain of political elites. The participation of the people in the political process has always been filtered through elite mechanisms, such as “representation and party politics” (202). In short, the Constitution and political parties function to separate the popular will from the actual functioning of government. Indeed, as noted in the preceding chapters, a feature of American political rhetoric since the nation’s founding has centered on the dangers of democracy and the need to contain the impulses of the people before they cause a wildfire of chaos and instability. Yet, this rhetoric traditionally focused on the need for structural changes to our system of government. While Wilson certainly argues for a structural change in advocating for the addition of international democratic institutions and believes they would channel passions, he also ties them to happiness. In tying institutions to happiness, the taming of passions becomes central to our notion of happiness. It is what emerges out of a selfless, dispassionate political system and citizenry.

The central question for political elites has always been how to balance stability with the illusion of citizen participation (Mercieca). For Wilson, citizens participate in politics by disciplining their passions and acting on the virtue of helpfulness. Thus, according to Wilson, the role of citizens is to maintain the conditions at home that allow for happiness and direct their energies towards exporting these conditions to other countries. Hence, democracy promotion translates into an investment in democratic institutions to help ourselves and others achieve

happiness. Not only do institutions channel the excesses of democracy, but so does our investment in them, as we first must be the right people before we can help others.

The consequence of this is that we become too invested in institutional democracy rather than self-rule or direct democracy. Jeremy Engels argues that “Americans are encouraged to think of democracy in its thinnest sense, as national, institutional governing arrangements...we are taught to conceptualize democracy as a noun, not a form (*The Politics* 7). I argue that we are not only encouraged to think in this way, but affectively acted upon to invest in democracy in this way. Democracy in its thinnest sense is what allows for happiness. In its expansive sense, it is connected to unhappiness. Even when we are unhappy, we still turn to the power of the presidency as a potential source of happiness, not towards our own democratic agency. We turn to representative institutions to sort out the messiness of democracy. Only in its thinnest sense is democracy desirable. Thus, instead of engaging in politics, citizens invest their democratic agency into the presidency and institutional democracy.

Finally, and most important for answering the question of how the affective presidency implicates how we discuss and debate political issues, the affective presidency advances a logic of futurity. In Chapter 3, Wilson channels the affective energies present at the end of World War I towards a promise of happiness. Additionally, Chapter 4 details how the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum’s narrative is charged by the affective elements at the museum. These affective elements construct felt states that act upon the visitor to attune their bodies to the power of the presidency and projects a wish fulfillment of presidential power. The implication of this is that our politics become wrapped up in the pursuit of a desired future, not the problems of the present.

This directs our politics towards hope, not action. As noted earlier, Brian Massumi argues that when our politics become future-oriented, what becomes important is not rational calculation about outcomes, but how we expect to feel. For this reason, the effectivity of presidential rhetoric depends not on arguments, but how it makes us feel. I add to this that the effectivity of presidential rhetoric becomes tied to a future feeling. It not only matters how we feel in the present, but how we could feel in the future. This decenters debates in the present, as we argue from the future backwards and not the present forward. In other words, we argue about what will bring about a utopian dream instead of about our current problems. The political uncertainty in the present is erased by the certainty of a better future. Therefore, the affective presidency implicates how we debate about political issues by centering debates in the future. In doing so, presidents participate in constructing the boundary conditions of the present. As a result, future-based politics function to discipline citizens to hope for a better future and limit their agency; if they do not, they risk the future.

The purpose of this study is to understand the relationship between affect, democracy, and presidential rhetoric. What has been revealed in the course of this analysis is that affect and presidential rhetoric together function to tame the passions of the masses. Presidential rhetoric directs citizens towards a future object of desire, therefore directing our democratic agencies out of the present and towards the future. In addition, presidential rhetoric nurtures investment in the presidency as the heart of democracy. Through the circulation of affectively charged narratives about the magical nature of presidential power, we come to feel the magnitude of presidential power and our own relative smallness in comparison in our political culture. Affective presidential rhetoric coalesces to condition citizens to hope for the enactment of presidential power to solve our problems and direct present concerns towards the promise of the future. The

passions of the people get channeled back into the office of the presidency, as the agent of democracy, or towards a future to come, one that is just around the bend if we remain the right kind of citizen.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The focus of this project has been on presidential rhetoric and its potential affective functions. This emphasis opened space to expand our understanding of presidential rhetoric. However, it is limited in understanding the relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric in our broader democratic political culture. Affect is never fully channeled or directed; there is always a remainder. In addition, as Ahmed notes, there is always a multiplicity of actors in our political environment who intervene into an affective moment (*The Promise*). Rarely, at the moment of affect, do bodies tune and respond in uniform ways. As Brian Masummi maintains, the response to affect “can’t be fully predetermined. It will be as it happens. For there to be uniformity of response, other factors must have been active to pre-channel tendencies” (*Politics* 57). I argue that presidential rhetoric functions to pre-channel tendencies towards the future or the power of the presidency. Thus, presidential rhetoric provides one direction for our politics during affective states.

In Chapter 3, Woodrow Wilson was not successful in channeling affect towards acceptance of the League of Nations. While there were still implications from his rhetoric, this finding indicates that presidents, despite their primacy in our political culture, compete with other forces for the capture of affect. As Deborah Gould writes, “A focus on affect reminds us that human action is unpredetermined. Social and cultural forces influence human behavior, but they never fully determine it. What they do is set of affects into motion...” (31). Wilson influenced the motion of our politics, but he did not fully determine them. In fact, in a pluralistic

culture, while presidents can attune bodies and set our politics in motion, they cannot fully guide us towards an outcome. This calls attention to the need to study the relationship between presidential rhetoric and other cultural forces during affective times. In the case of Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations, our understanding of presidential rhetoric and affect could be enriched by examining the rhetoric of his opponents. This would allow us to explore how oppositional rhetoric intervenes into the affective process and complicates the affective function of presidential rhetoric. It would also open space for scholars to examine how presidents respond to those subjects whose energy they cannot rhetorically capture and the implication of that rhetoric for democratic practices.

One example of what could be revealed is a better understanding of the role of social movements. Sarah Ahmed has started to map out the implications of affective rhetoric for marginalized communities. She argues that those who do not follow the flow in our politics become labeled as affect aliens. They are articulated as clinging to the past and fighting against injustices, which becomes problematized as blocking the coming future. In other words, if presidents influence our politics by making it future-focused, then those who are not following along towards the future become alienated from it. This highlights the importance of social movements as actors in our political culture. Social movements can provide the space for alternative feelings and world-making to take form. Furthermore, they give the alienated a platform to counter the force of presidential rhetoric. As Deborah Gould writes, social movements have “the potential to reinscribe [the existing] order or inspire challenges to it” (34). In other words, social movements have the capacity to channel affect into the present, blocking a president’s ability to hurry us out of it. This calls attention to the need to study the intersection of presidential rhetoric and social movements. In understanding the affective dimension of politics,

we may arrive at a better understanding of how social reform happens in our country. This is a call for future research that explores the processes of reform and the interplay between the establishment and movements as an affective exercise in world-making.

Another limitation of this study is that it focuses on particular instances of affect and presidential rhetoric. However, the relationship between the two is probably not as simple. In fact, scholars such as Gould and Massumi argue that it is hard to map a one-to-one relationship between language and the translation of affect. This is why affect theorists, such as Jenny Rice, have called our attention to the concept of circulation. They argue that beliefs, objects, and values gain affective currency through the circulation of discourses. Thus, the effectivity of presidential rhetoric may not be evident in its immediate context but, as it circulates and accumulates capital in our culture, it becomes easier to observe. For instance, I argued in Chapter 3 that Wilson's rhetoric, while it may not have captured and channeled affect into the establishment of the League of Nations, provided a way to think about the future. His rhetoric gained affective currency in the circulation of it after his presidency. Thus, to understand more fully the relationship between affect and presidential rhetoric, future scholarship should produce genealogies of affective presidential rhetoric. For instance, an in-depth study of how happiness and international liberalism circulate from Woodrow Wilson to Barack Obama could do this kind of work. In doing so, it would provide a richer understanding of how happiness underpins presidential rhetoric and our contemporary global system of governance.

The primary focus of this study was on how the intersection of affect and presidential rhetoric fits into a rhetorical lineage of techniques that attempt to tame the passions of the people. Thus, this study examined one possible role that affective presidential rhetoric plays in our political culture. Future research should examine other functions and types of affective

presidential rhetoric. For instance, Teresa Brennan in *The Transmission of Affect* argues for studying the spread “of energy between and among human subjects” (8). She contends that in shared environments, a process takes place “whereby one person’s or one’s group’s nervous and hormonal energy are brought into alignment with another’s” (9). In short, Brennan posits a social theory of affect, where bodily transmissions act upon us in social settings. As Jenny Rice also notes, as affect is “transmitted between bodies, ‘I’ am always more than one and ‘We’ are always fewer than two” (204). The implication of this is that a person’s “body imbibes contextual affects that include what [another body] give[s] off, thereby changing the...physiology” of the subject (Rice 204). In short, in shared spaces, those around us influence our bodily sensations.

This calls attention to the need to further study the presidential technique of “Going Public.” While taking policy matters to the people may not influence the passage of legislation, it potentially could serve an affective function by bringing bodies together that otherwise would not be in contact. In regards to passions, Wilson thought public speech was necessary to supply “light, not heat” (qtd. in Kraig 138). He thought the role of the orator was to bring people together in a shared space to cool the passions. In fact, this was one of the central premises of the League of Nations. For Wilson, isolationism festered passions, while sociality cooled them. Future research should explore the relationship between affect and public speech and how energies become transmitted between bodies in shared public speech environments.

Examining affect in this way also opens up possibilities to investigate other functions of affective presidential rhetoric. For instance, Campbell and Jamieson name the national eulogy as one expected function of presidential rhetoric. Citizens expect the president to make sense of tragedies and ensure us that our way of life will continue after such events. For example, after 9/11, President George W. Bush gave several speeches that functioned to reassure the nation.

However, one event after 9/11 has received considerable attention: his first pitch at game 3 of the 2001 World Series in New York City. Condoleezza Rice says of this moment that “[h]e spoke to the American people in a way that no speech could ever have done.... That pitch transcended sports, transcended politics, transcended history” (qtd. in Slane “Watch”). Bush adds, “That was all just emotion and reaction... I was surfing off the emotions of the people” (qtd. in Thomas “The Pitch”). In short, it was a pitch, not a speech, that those involved in the days after 9/11 credit for reassuring the country. I contend that the pitch functions as a national eulogy. Notice that Bush recognizes this moment as intimately tied to his connecting with the emotions of the people. It did more than a speech because it was imbued with the shared energy and emotions that were present in the stadium. Thus, affect potentially plays a role in presidents executing the expected duties of the office. Future scholars should build off the work of Campbell and Jamieson by adding an affective dimension to their understanding of presidential genres. If there is, as I have argued, an affective presidency, then the traditional forms of presidential speech should provide fruitful terrain to begin mapping its functions and allow us to trace its evolution.

This study is also limited because its scope is contained to presidential rhetoric, a one-to-one mapping between it and affect. However, as Dana Nelson notes, there is a cottage industry that surrounds the presidency. We understand the role of the presidency not only through elements under their control—e.g., speeches and presidential museums—but also through films, news, and television shows. Massumi refers to this form of circulation as an affective feedback loop (*Politics* 31). The president in this loop is not only the head of state but also a television personality; he becomes “[t]he face of mass affect” (Massumi, *Politics* 31). Thus, in order to more fully comprehend how our democratic energies are channeled into the presidency, it is

necessary to examine how cultural actors contribute to the circulation of narratives about presidential power.

Finally, this study is limited in how it addresses the question of investiture in public address research. In Chapter 1, I mentioned that public address research could be advanced by a focus on investiture instead of assent. In this project, I have argued that presidents translate affect into a coded emotion or object of desire and direct it. This does reveal how presidents participate in constructing a symbolic landscape of feeling and highlights the things that we value, such as happiness and avoiding the messiness of democracy. However, future scholarship should pay more attention to the words of citizens. What were they writing about and advocating for? What were the conditions of their lived experience? This type of research would illuminate how the intersection of affect and presidential rhetoric fulfills our own desires. This is to say that presidential rhetoric may direct affect by tapping into and fulfilling our own desires. Perhaps we are not attuned, conditioned, and primed by presidential rhetoric as much as it speaks to our own internal desires. It is probable that some combination of all the above needs to be teased out for us to fully comprehend the affective function of presidential rhetoric.

### **Donald Trump, The Affective Presidency, and Democracy: A Conclusion**

In this study, I have argued that one of function of affective presidential rhetoric is that it attempts to tame the passions of the masses. The introduction of this chapter indicates that the taming of passions is one of the primary functions of our political immune system. Rauch and Sullivan argue that Trump's success is the result of democratic wildfires that have stripped the authority of elites and given too much power to the people. In short, Trump's nomination is the result of an excess of democracy that elites can no longer control. According to this argument, the people have turned their backs on the establishment and embraced their passions. I want to

conclude this project by thinking through what the affective presidency reveals about Trump's candidacy. In doing so, I argue that Trump's rhetoric is not new; it is an extension of the affective presidency. I then conclude by examining what Trump's candidacy tells us about the current state of our democratic political culture.

Perhaps the two most frequently used words in the Trump lexicon are “again” and “back.” For instance, his campaign slogan is “Make America Great Again.” He often says, “If I'm elected president, we will win again.” Ronald Brownstein, writer for *The Atlantic*, notes, “Trump is forever promising to ‘bring back’ things that have been lost. Manufacturing jobs, steel and coal production, waterboarding of terrorists, ‘law and order’ in the cities—all of these Trump says he will ‘bring back’ to reverse what he portrays as years of American decline” (“Trump’s Rhetoric”). The logic that underpins the Trump presidency is that the U.S. used to be great and we can bring back those things that made it great. The U.S. will win again if he is elected president. As Eric Fershtman writes, Trump’s message is succinct: “Remember when things were simple and we were all happy? Well, if you elect Trump, we’ll go back to that again” (“Donald Trump”). Happiness for Trump, as with Wilson, is somewhere other than in the present. His campaign is rooted in the promise of past happiness.

Trump’s campaign rhetoric advances happiness in the form of nostalgia. Ahmed argues that nostalgia is the flip side of future-oriented happiness. As she explains, “Nostalgic and promissory forms of happiness belong under the same horizon, they imagine happiness as being somewhere other than where we are in the present” (*The Promise* 160-161). “Happiness,” she adds, “can be imagined as past, as being what we once had, as being what we have lost in arriving somewhere...” (*The Promise* 160). In this instance, Trump’s rhetoric directs us towards a nostalgic view of a past perfect social order that has been lost. According to Trump, we are no longer happy because of globalization,

immigrants, and an ineffective foreign policy. Moreover, according to Trump, “We stopped believing in what America could do, and became reliant on other countries, other people, and other institutions. We lost our sense of purpose, and daring” (“The Stakes”). However, by electing him, we can reclaim our sense of purpose and regain our happiness. For example, after winning the New Hampshire primary, Trump declared:

We are going to make our country so strong. We are going to start winning again. As a country we don't win on trade; we don't win with the military, we can't beat ISIS. We don't win with anything. We are going to start winning again and we're going to win so much, you are going to be so happy, we are going to make America so great again, maybe greater than ever before. (qtd. in Stein “Read”)

Trump’s rhetoric thus operates on the promise of going back to the past in order to get to a better future. In other words, in Trump’s discourse, the past provides the path for our future.

Trump is utilizing then the same hope technology used by Wilson, the promise of a better future feeling state. He is telling us that, as a country, we were once happy and we can be that way again. The difference, however, is he is associating the key tenant of Wilson’s happiness mission—globalism—with unhappiness. While he amplifies passions in many instances, in this example, he is channeling desires in a different direction. Trump is a threat to the status quo not because our firewalls have broken down, but because he is utilizing one of them—a hope technology—in an anti-establishment direction. However, the people did not provide him this tool; instead, the establishment did by nurturing the future as the horizon of our politics.

The establishment also has nurtured an investment in the office of the presidency. As Dana Nelson notes, with the presidency seen as both American democracy’s “heart” and its “avenging sword,” people have been conditioned to accept the expansion of presidential power (1-3). For instance, people are lead to believe that expansive executive authority is necessary to keep us safe and protect the country. In addition, the presidency needs all the resources possible

to solve political problems. The result of this, Nelson adds, we believe “the president stands for democratic power...that democratic power is for the president to yield, we succumb to the lethargy of people waiting to be led...” (4-5). In short, if our democratic agency is tied to executive power, then we are trained to give more of it to the president to do the work of democracy on our behalf. As such we are attuned, as Nelson contends, to desire a powerful president, one capable of cutting through the messiness of democracy and making the “right” decisions (1-15).

Donald Trump taps into the rhetoric about presidential power that has circulated for at least the last century. He argues that the reason we have problems in this country is because our leaders do not have the courage to act or the strength to do what is necessary to keep us safe. For Trump, this strength is translated into overly broad measures such as killing terrorists’ family members, waterboarding terrorists, and actions even more extreme than torture. He does not renounce the expansion of presidential power in the Bush and Obama years, but promises to further broaden them. However, Trump contends that he will use executive authority “much better and they’re going to serve a much better purpose than Obama’s done” (qtd. in Blackman “Donald Trump’s”). How will he be different? He will have the courage to act. According to Trump, past presidents were weak, but he is strong. The problem for him is not presidential power, but who yields it. Furthermore, Trump suggests that American citizens do not need to question their investment in the presidency, they just need to elect Trump. For Trump, democratic power does not rest in the people, but, instead, in him. He, and he alone, can fix our country. On this point, he is explicit, saying, “I know these problems can all be fixed, but not by Hillary Clinton – only by me” (“The Stakes”). Once again, this rhetoric is not new. It is the continuation of a century of rhetoric that has nurtured investment in presidential power. Trump is

channeling the passions of the people into the office of the presidency and exploiting patterns of affective presidential rhetoric towards anti-establishment ends.

In short, I have argued that the tools of the affective presidency over time have been developed and utilized to curb the excesses of democracy. However, Donald Trump, who has been accused of fanning the flames of democratic passions, employs a discourse that utilizes the tools of the affective presidency. In other words, Trump's campaign rhetoric is centered around the efficacy of presidential power and the hopeful politics of futurity. The difference is that he is using these tools to stoke and channel passions in ways that are in opposition to establishment sensibilities. What this reveals is that the tools of the affective presidency that have been developed and utilized to curb the excesses of democracy may also provide the basis for demagoguery through the stoking of passions. At this point, we do not know if this will lead to his electoral success. Perhaps, as Wilson argued, the American people will serve as a check on demagoguery by not voting for a person of that kind of character. In addition, the fueling rather than taming of passions may reveal simply the difference between campaign and governing presidential rhetoric. If Donald Trump becomes president, it will be interesting to see how he builds governing coalitions and manages expectations, both of which may require a more traditional use of the tools of the affective presidency. What Trump's campaign reveals for now is the importance of understanding the role affect plays in our political culture and the thin line between presidential rhetoric that stokes passions and that which aims to dampen them.

In understanding the rise of Trump through the lens of the affectivity presidency, it becomes clear that the problem is not too much democracy, but too little. Citizens have become conditioned over the years to turn to presidential power to do the work of democracy and provide a path to happiness. As Dana Nelson writes, the "once-every-four-years hope for the lever pull

sensation of democratic power blinds people to the opportunities for democratic representation, deliberation, activism, and change that surrounds us...in our daily lives” (4-5). She further adds, “By keeping our democratic hopes oriented toward the salvific and powerful president,” the nurtured feelings we invest into the presidency “keep us from remembering, imagining, and exercising the democratic work we can do ourselves” (5). When citizens do not know how to engage in democracy and democratic habits are not developed, our focus turns to the president.

Yet, despite all of its promises, a presidential rhetoric of hope sets us up for disappointment. As Ahmed argues, hope creates the conditions for disappointment when the future never arrives or it is not what we expected (*The Promise* 7). Further, she contends, “Disappointment can be experienced as a gap between an ideal and an experience that demands action” (41). This dismay turns into rage at the objects and persons who failed to deliver on a promise. The affective presidency then can be understood as creating the conditions for disappointment. With limited outlet for their democratic agency, citizens turn towards Trump to channel their rage, still invested in the presidency as the source of their popular power. Regret is inevitable when happiness and hope become tied to future outcomes. Thus, Trump is the inevitable product of the affective presidency and too little democracy.

Thus, the problem with our current democratic political culture is its focus on hope understood through the lens of future happiness and the power of the presidency. The connection between these concepts limits democratic agency and creates the conditions for disappointment. As Masummi illustrates, “the way that a concept like hope can be made useful is when it is not connected to an expected success—when it starts to be something different from optimism....” (*Politics* 1). He also adds, “if hope is separated from concepts of optimism and pessimism, from a wishful projection of success...then I think it becomes interesting” (“Interview”). While

Masummi does not write in the language of democracy, he connects hope to the ability of citizens to experiment and maneuver in the present. Hope becomes a faith in our ability to have the freedom to experiment in our politics. This is what the Federalists and Woodrow Wilson feared because it is democracy without certain direction for passions. Instead of fearing this uncertainty, we should embrace it as empowering, because it allows us to try and see, absent the boundary conditions articulated by presidential rhetoric. This form of politics goes step-by-step without the horizon of a utopian dream. As Masummi explains, “The question of which next step to take is a lot less intimidating than how to reach a far-off goal in a distant future where all our problems will finally be solved” (*Politics* 3). I understand this form of politics as democracy. learning to work together, cultivating relationships, becoming involved in local affairs, and working step-by-step through the conditions of their everyday lives. People coming together in living rooms, street corners, and town halls or joining social movements to discuss the news of the day, express themselves, and learn from difference. Where everyone has an equal opportunity to share their capacities in pointing us towards new experiences. Rather than a politics of certainty, this is a faith in people to work through the reservations that animate our politics.

In 1939, after witnessing almost 80 years of American political development, John Dewey observed that there was a crisis in American politics. He laid the blame for this predicament on the fact, that for too long, we have not recognized democracy as a way of life. As he notes:

...the depth of the present crisis is due in considerable part to the fact that for a long period we acted as if democracy were something that perpetuated itself...were something that took place mainly at Washington...what happened when men and women went to the polls...which is a somewhat extreme way of saying that we have had the habit of thinking of democracy as a king of political mechanism that will work as long as citizens were reasonably faithful in performing political duties. (241)

For Dewey, the problems facing the country in 1939 were a result of a lack of a performed democracy or faith in common people to develop their individual attitudes and gifts to cooperate in the conduct of their daily lives, generate politics, and solve conflicts. The affective presidency was born out of a similar lack of faith. Hence, we now find our democratic energies constrained by the boundary conditions constructed by the affective presidency. However, Dewey did not fear the passions of the people. Instead, his belief in democracy rested on his commitment to the idea that it is “the sole way of living,” which could “further experience and... [release] emotions, needs, and desires so as to call into being the things that have not existed in the past” (244-245). Instead of observing it as a negative force, Dewey understand passions as being the animating force of democracy that brought new things into being.

The “task of democracy” according to Dewey was not to tame passions, but for citizens to commit themselves to the “creation of a freer and more humane experience in which all share and to which all contribute” (245). Today, this work must begin with us delinking our concept of hope to the presidency and reinvesting in our own abilities to (re)make the world. It starts with a faith in democracy in its most expansive sense. Hope not in a future outcome, but our ability to experiment and work step-by-step to improve the conditions of our everyday lives. It also requires abandoning utopian dreams in favor of dealing with present concerns. Lastly, it creates the conditions for a multiplicity of experiments, a space for our passions to give direction to our politics that are not channeled into the presidency or towards the future. We will make mistakes, but there will always be a next step. This is democratic hope: a faith in the people, not presidents, to be the source of democratic power.

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**ABSTRACT****THE AFFECTIVE PRESIDENCY**

by

**JOHN PATRICK KOCH****December 2016****Advisor:** Dr. Kelly M. Young**Major:** Communication**Degree:** Doctor of Philosophy

This dissertation explores the relationship between affect, political emotions, and presidential rhetoric. In examining the political philosophy and presidency of Woodrow Wilson, this dissertation explores how presidential rhetoric captures, channels, and/or directs the passions of the people. Drawing on research by Sarah Ahmed and Brian Masummi, this dissertation argues that presidential rhetoric intervenes into the affective process by directing the passions of citizens towards promises of happiness and investment in presidential power. Two case studies, one focusing on Wilson's tour in support of the League of Nations and the other on presidential museums, highlight the affective function of presidential rhetoric. The dissertation concludes with an examination of how Donald Trump's campaign can be understood through the lens of the affective presidency and the state of American Democracy in 2016.

**AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT**

John Patrick Koch currently resides in Nashville, Tennessee and is a Lecturer of Communication Studies at Vanderbilt University. He also serves as the Associate Director of Vanderbilt's debate team. Born and raised in Beach City, OH, he is a proud product of the Midwest. In 2004, he earned his B.A. in Communication, with a minor in Political Science, at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio. After a brief career working on political campaigns, in 2009 he began graduate studies at Wayne State University in Detroit, MI. He earned an M.A. in Communication Studies in 2011 and will complete his doctoral degree in 2016.