EXIT STAGE LEFT:

SENATOR JAMES M. JEFFORDS AND THE RHETORIC OF

CONGRESSIONAL PARTY SWITCHERS

by

JUSTIN LEE KILLIAN

(Under the Direction of John M. Murphy, PhD)

ABSTRACT

This project looks at the discourse surrounding Senator James M. Jeffords' decision to leave the Republican Party. Although Jeffords was not an extremely powerful member of the US Senate, his interference with President George W. Bush's legislative agenda was a landmark move in American politics. The thesis proceeds in three parts. Chapter One introduces the subject matter, provides a literature review from both political science and communication studies, and offers the critical perspective for the entire project. Chapter Two focuses on elements of American paideia and offers a critical analysis of Jeffords' "Declaration of Independence," and "First Anniversary," speeches. Chapter Three shows how Jeffords engages in agonistic rhetorical practices through a critical look at his "Second Anniversary Speech." Finally, Chapter Four provides some concluding thoughts on Jeffords, party switching rhetoric, and offers potential avenues of research for rhetorical scholars.

INDEX WORDS: James M. Jeffords, Rhetoric, US Senate, Political Party, Agon, Paideia

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BA, Wabash College, 2003

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2006

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December 2006

DEDICATION

To my mom for her endless love

To Jenny for her support

To Paul and Frank for their friendship and constant encouragement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this project was an arduous journey at best. I will forever be thankful for the many experiences I had during the two years in which I wrote this thesis. Although this project enhanced my critical skills and pushed me forward as an academic, the entire journey provided me with something more valuable that I will always cherish. My time in Athens, Georgia molded my priorities and showed me the beauty of both knowledge and experience.

Through the process of writing this thesis I had the support of some of the most magnificent and brilliant people in the world. Emerson tells us that that only way to have a friend is to be one. I hope that at some point in the near future I can be a fraction of the friend that each of the following people has been to me.

First, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. John M. Murphy for his constant support and strong guidance. I will always be thankful for his agreement to supervise a project about an "obscure Senator, from a small state." Also, it has to be mentioned that he deserves a congressional medal of honor for the level of patience he showed as I completed this project. It was an honor to work with Dr. Murphy on this project, and he will forever be a role model for my own career. He is, in short, an exceptional scholar and a wonderful person.

I would also like to extend many thanks to Dr. Bonnie J. Dow for the indispensable insights she gave me while I was in residence at the University of Georgia. As an undergraduate, Dr. Dow's article on the *Mary Tyler Moore* show was my first exposure to rhetorical criticism. From that point, she has served as one of my favorite rhetorical critics. It was more than an honor to take two courses from her at UGA, and I am extremely thankful for the insight she

offered as a member of my prospectus committee. I cannot thank Dr. Dow enough for supporting me in many different ways throughout the completion of my MA.

I would also like to thank my committee members Dr. Christine Harold and Dr. Vanessa Beasley for their helpful insights and questions. Dr. Harold's course on rhetorical theory opened my eyes to new perspectives on rhetoric that will benefit me for the remainder of my career. Dr. Beasley's knowledge of political science and party politics brought many needed questions to the final draft of this project. I am in debt to both of these tremendous scholars for their strong encouragement.

I offer the most thanks to my family for their love and support. I should also offer apologies for any duties I may have neglected while engaged in this project. My mother is my personal hero and will forever be the inspiration for my work. Kevin deserves a national holiday for putting up with us for so many years and loving us despite our many faults. Thanks for everything Kevin! My sister, Jenny Killian, is a beautiful soul that forever reminds me the importance of fun. My grandmother, Jean McWhorter, remains a rock of support, and I thank her for her love and admiration. Finally, I offer thanks and remembrance to my grandfather, M.F. McWhorter, for everything he gave me as a young child.

I would never have attempted graduate school had it not been for my experiences in Crawfordsville, Indiana. I cannot express how thankful I am to the faculty and staff of Wabash College. My experiences at Wabash changed my life and will forever shape my approach to academic work. In specific, many thanks are extended to the Rhetoric faculty of Wabash College. Dr. David Timmerman and Dr. Todd McDorman not only taught me to love rhetoric, but they challenged me to become a better scholar. Both of these remarkable people are to be credited with my desire to pursue a life in rhetorical studies and academia. I also would like to

thank Dr. Thomas Vaughn and Dr. Jennifer Young for their guidance and support. Also, I thank the faculty of the Wabash College Classics Department, Dr. Leslie Preston Day, Dr. Joseph Day, and Dr. John Fischer, for transforming me from a "feckless youth" into a young thinker. Finally, I offer thanks to the Gender Issues Committee at Wabash College for their early support of my interest in gender and feminism.

Besides my academic mentors, I must also offer thanks to the support I received from my fellow Wallies. To this day, this group remains my beacons of love and faith. Paul Stephens and Frank Kantroski have given me more knowledge than any book or lecture. They are my favorite critics, and it is to them that I dedicate this work. Anthony Gigli remains a source of inspiration for his undying belief in humanity. Keep building those bridges Tony! Trevor Fanning remains one of the brightest people I know, and I will always be thankful for his kind words and support. Finally, Sherry Ross and Nancy Kashon to this day serve as my harbor from the storm and my place of truly honest communication.

I offer thanks to Nathan Cain for his love during my time at the University of Georgia. Nathan's influence on this project, my time at UGA, and my life runs deep. Despite it all, it was Nathan's faith that gave me the memento to pursue my academic goals. It was with Nathan that I truly developed not only as an intellectual but also as a person.

As a student and teacher at UGA, I made friends that I will cherish for the rest of my life. In short, I like to refer to the following group as my "war buddies." Julie Christie is my strongest ally and the person I hope to become. She will never be "my beast or burden," and someday I hope to "rock her gypsy soul." Without her love, my time at UGA would not have resulted in a degree. Without her love, my life would be a much darker place.

Kristy Maddux is a friend, confidant, and personal role model. She is not only an inspiration to my professional life, but she is a beautiful person. I offer her many thanks for mentoring me through the MA process at UGA. Carson Martin will forever be my "spiritual and moral mentor." I thank her for the love she gave me while I cried my way through this thesis. Alison Trego represents the beauty that comes with true love and sacrifice. I thank her for the late nights in Terrell Hall, the long phone calls, and the constant encouragement to just finish this project. I thank Melanie McNaughton, the true iconoclast, for her wonderful friendship and for "surviving the rocky path" with me. Finally, I offer both admiration and thanks to Bryan Townsend. To me, Bryan is friendship and respect.

I also offer thanks to my Athens crew. Eric Taubel is one of the best friends any "flighty academic" like myself can have. I thank him for both his support and the many needed distractions he was willing to provide. I also thank Preston Meche for the mark he left on my life. All I can say to Preston is "see you in the next life."

Amanda Dehne deserves a special award for living with me through the first year I was in residence at UGA. Amanda's love and encouragement is an invaluable gift. To me, she is the ideal representation of true friendship. My only hope is that she knows how important she is to me.

Finally, I also extend many thanks to my friends and colleagues at the University of Georgia:, Dr. Tina M. Harris, John Lynch, Shannon Holland, Shanara Reid, Michael Lee, Dylan Wolfe, Jarrod Atchison, Ashley Quiesenberry, Tasha Dubriwny, Laura Keck, Jarrod Atchison, and Davi Johnson. I also owe many thanks to Dr. Kirt Wilson of the University of Minnesota for his belief and support, and Ms. Laura of Terrell Hall for her prayers and kind words.

Many thanks are also extended to the City of Athens, my favorite sleepy, southern town.

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MR. JEFFORDS GOES TO WASHINGTON:

THE TWO-PARTY SYSTEM AND THE RHETORIC OF

CONGRESSIONAL PARTY SWITCHERS

"Now, that man is more of a political animal than bees or any other gregarious animals is evident. Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And whereas mere voice is but an indication of pleasure or pain, and is therefore found in other animals…the power of speech is intended to set forth the expedient and inexpedient, and therefore likewise the just and unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the like, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state." (1129)

--Aristotle, *Politics*

"My conscience directed my actions, and it was telling me that if you know something is wrong, then you must do the right thing or live with the consequences for the rest of your life…I had to switch. If I didn't, I would have been miserable because I would have let justice get away, and I could have saved it." (161)

--Senator James M. Jeffords,
In The Right Words at the Right Time edited by Marlow Thomas

Of all the components of the American political machine, the two-party system that influences all branches of government is the most misunderstood. Political scientist J. P. Monroe laments, "Our understanding of political parties is clearly deficient" (1). When the founders of the United States set forth to design an innovative style of government for their new nation, they also created a space that allowed for the emergence of a critical by-product that has provided constraints and limitations for political leaders. Political parties guide elections, inform the electorate, control the release of information, select candidates, and influence the voting patterns of legislators. Despite the notion that the United States was founded on the values of liberty and freedom, the Democratic and Republican parties have emerged as the only two viable options for

both the American electorate and political leaders. At times it can seem that the lack of diversity in political party options might be more restraining than empowering.

The founders of the United States feared that factions and groups of powerful interests would one day control and manipulate government. President George Washington issued a stern warning in his farewell address that parties would, "serve always to distract the public counsels and enfeeble the public administration" (93). He also noted that political parties were "a spirit not to be encouraged" (Washington 93). In a letter to William Cunningham, President John Adams commented that, "it seems to be established as principle that our government is forever to be, not a national but a party government" (Cunningham). In the *Federalist Papers*, James Madison also offered biting commentary concerning the evils of political party association. For example, in Federalist X he writes:

> Among the numerous advantages promised by a well constructed Union, none deserves to be more accurately developed than its tendency to break and control the violence of faction. The friend of popular governments never finds himself so much alarmed for their character and fate as when he contemplates their propensity to this dangerous vice. He will not fail, therefore, to set a due value on any plan which, without violating the principles to which he is attached, provides a cure for it. (Madison 81)

From the earliest points of political organization in the United States, not only the role but the mere presence of political parties, has alarmed and worried politicians. Founders such as Washington and Madison felt that political parties would control and manipulate the government for unjust causes. Have the worries of the founders come to fruition? Do political parties and factions cause problems for elected officials and democratic rule? Although the "anti-party"

rhetoric of the founders is more than two hundred years old, their predictions and fears still hold relevance in today's society. At times, modern politicians may feel caught between the will of party leadership and the needs of their constituent base. This tension often forces the political leader to make difficult decisions.

In the contemporary political climate, party influence and power continues to affect governmental actions and procedures. The United States Senate of the 107th Congress initiated legislative business with the one hundred members dividing into an even split in party association. This situation gave the Republicans a slight one vote majority from the President of the Senate, Vice President Richard Cheney. After the nationally divisive presidential election of 2000, the self-proclaimed compassionate conservative candidate George W. Bush transformed into President Bush whose administration pushed for a morally conservative agenda. The tone set in the early days of the new administration placed Republican moderates in a difficult situation. Progressive Republicans in Congress could either become advocates for the Bush agenda or strike a balance between their party affiliation and the concerns of their constituent base. Vermont Senator James Jeffords broke from tradition on May 24, 2001 by formally declaring his independence from the Republican Party. A moderate to liberal Republican, Jeffords decided that his duty as a public servant no longer fit with the Republican agenda. Thus, in one simple speech, Jeffords exited the folds of the Republican leadership and started the creation of his new image as a "political independent."

In most situations, a member of Congress can switch parties without causing a large scene in the national political arena. The context surrounding the Jeffords defection however did not permit a quiet party switch. Tumulty with Time notes:

> A Senator's decision to leave his party is a small tectonic shift, but in the fragile geology of an evenly divided Senate, Jeffords' decision shook the ground, rattled the windows, wrecked the walls, and tossed the furniture. What made the shift worse was that it happened in the middle of what was supposed to have been George W. Bush's most triumphant week since the inauguration. His signature tax cut was set to clear Congress. (31)

Thus, the Jeffords' switch halted the legislative agenda of the new Bush administration for nineteen months, gave new meaning to the act of party loyalty, and issued a warning to political parties that alienate and mistreat moderate politicians.

The decision also transformed the public image of the quiet Jeffords. The Senator described his history in the public spotlight by writing, "before the switch, few people outside the insulated confines of the Senate enclave and my home state knew who I was" (Jeffords, Independent Man 278). Thus, what Senator Lott called a "coup of one" transformed the American political arena and gave new agency to Jeffords.

It is the Jeffords situation that will serve as the case study for this project. In the Politics, Aristotle argues that it is the power of speech that allows for the formation of a state. My research takes the sentiments of Aristotle to heart and tries to offer an explanation of how speech, or more specifically various types of political rhetoric, allow for the proper formation of a democratic nation. As a whole, I am particularly interested in the discursive formation of the two-party system in the United States. An interesting place to begin a rhetorical investigation of party structure in the United States exists within the discourse of public figures who decide to challenge the core of political party organization by engaging in party switching behavior. Although this phenomenon occurs within all levels of government, I have limited my research

endeavors to members of the United States Congress. Local and statewide politicians provide interesting material to bring attention to the two party system in the United States but as noted by political scientist Timothy Nokken, "The study of members of congress who switch parties provides a natural experiment for broader conclusions about party strength and individual strategic roll call voting and broader electoral calculations" (Dynamics). Since very little rhetorical scholarship discusses party association, and since there is no rhetorical scholarship on party switching discourse, this thesis will begin the discussion on these acts by looking at one branch of the federal government: the US Senate.

More specifically, this thesis will critically investigate the rhetoric of Senator Jeffords that announces, justifies, and celebrates his decision to vacate his place in the Republican Party. The writings and speeches of Senator Jeffords will serve as one case study of a successful use of party switching discourse. The thesis will make the case that Senator Jeffords confronts his rhetorical problems of ethos and audience by anchoring his arguments in notions of American paideia and by engaging in agonistic rhetorical practices. The remainder of this chapter will discuss the history and context of the Jeffords decision by offering biographical information, justifying a study of his discourse based on historical and sociopolitical reasons, looking at his specific rhetorical problems, and addressing the texts to be studied. Then a review of the academic literature will be provided that considers the guiding narrative of political science research, the treatment of political parties by rhetoricians, and the specific studies that are devoted to offering understandings of party switchers. Finally, the critical perspectives of the larger project and the outline of the subsequent chapters will be expanded.

Senator Jeffords: Why Study an Obscure Senator from a Small State?

While a member of the Republican caucus in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, Jeffords has spearheaded congressional acts that created the Congressional Solar Coalition and the Congressional Arts Caucus (Jeffords, "homepage"). He has served as chair of the Senate's powerful Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and the Committee on Environmental and Public Works. Jeffords has also become a champion for the environment by supporting and writing some of the toughest legislation that sought to preserve national parks, to improve clean air initiatives, and to sustain the natural habitats of endangered species.

Although the Senator built a strong record as a member of the Republican caucus, it was his decision to leave the GOP that placed him in a particularly fascinating role. Stolberg, a journalist with the New York Times, notes:

> "As a defector, he [Jeffords] has great propaganda value," said Ross K. Baker, a professor of political science at Rutgers University. "The Jeffords message comes through loud and clear that if you discredit, if you harass, if you marginalize moderates in your party, there is always the danger that they will walk over to the other side of the aisle." (A16)

The Jeffords' decision holds both historical and socio-political importance that encourages a rhetorical critique of the discourse that constitutes, justifies, and celebrates his defection. The remainder of this section will consider these issues, offer commentary on the rhetorical problems facing Jeffords, and identify the texts that the project will critique.

The Jeffords' decision marks an important landmark in the contemporary American political climate. Sommer writes, "It is safe to say few politicians have managed to shake up Washington D.C., the way Vermont Senator Jeffords did in May 2001." After the Jeffords

decision, the Republicans lost their absolute authority in Washington and were forced to rethink their policy positions. Historically, it might be suggested that Jeffords and his decision represents the message sent by the returns of the 2000 national election. Alter with Newsweek writes, "Independence is increasingly the American way, a growing political preference among voters weary of simple minded partisanship" (22). He writes:

> Another way to view it is that Jeffords is restoring the true message sent by the evenly divided electorate last November, which is that the parties must share the power. For the past four months George W. Bush has been acting as if he has won a Ronald Reagan style landslide—a shrewd political strategy, perhaps, but out of sync with the actual election returns. (Alter 22)

Jeffords' discourse has allowed him to break from the accepted norms of Washington politics and craft an image that may be more in line with the American electorate. Jeffords actively critiques the partisan agenda of the Republican Party in his speeches and writings with the agency of a born-again, independent politician. Historically, his discourse becomes important because it represents a public voice offering critiques and sentiments sent by the American electorate in 2000.

Also, the discourse holds historical importance because the actions of one quiet Senator halted the partisan agenda of a powerful president with a political legacy. Although a defection from a political party can be tragic or productive for a politician, the events do not usually happen in a situation that impedes the governmental progress of a major party. The Jeffords' decision differs from other party-switching discourse because it had more impact on the realignment of the U.S. federal government than all other party defections in the past. The decision angered and upset major political leaders, drastically altered political decisions, put a

barrier in the way of George W. Bush's legislative agenda, and left former "Republican friends" with a negative taste for Jeffords.

The decision was so crucial that once the GOP regained control of the US Senate in 2002, New York Times Journalist Tierney further commented on the Jeffords' decision and potential backlash he might experience by writing, "Officially the word from the Republican leadership is that there will be no retribution against Mr. Jeffords" (New York Times Online). However, Tierney goes on to argue that the GOP still has "hurt feelings," and he asks, "Would Vermont's Mount Snow be a good spot for the national depository of nuclear waste? Could that controversial bombing range in Puerto Rico be moved to Lake Champlain? Will Mr. Jeffords still have an office when he returns to Washington?" (New York Times Online). Thus, the major realignments that resulted from the Senator's decision (such as a complete stop to the legislative agenda of President Bush by giving control of the Senate to the Democrats) highlight the historical importance of this event, and it situates this moment in time as an ideal place for rhetorical criticism.

Rhetoricians should also be attracted to the socio-political importance of Jeffords' discourse. His rhetoric functions as an important marker in American public address for two reasons. First, the discourse experiments with a rarely used rhetorical place to convey political ideology and concerns. Jeffords uses an "independent" image to speak in a critical way that is free from and oppositional to party labels and stigmas. Stevens comments on the novel nature of Jeffords' speeches and public statements by writing:

> The metamorphosis has become more evident in the past month. In that time he has blasted the administration, which he said "vilified" Senators who opposed the full amount of President Bush's tax cut…"When did standing on principle,

> speaking your conscience, and representing your constituents become unacceptable in certain Republican circles?" Jeffords asked May 3 while delivering the weekly radio address for the Democrats. (1235)

Jeffords freely discusses issues without the worries of upsetting party leadership. Kelly reports that Jeffords claims to be "unleashed" and that the Senator also argues, "since becoming an independent, I've never felt more free [sic] to speak out and express myself" (as cited by Kelly). Jeffords' new independent status may not have drastic impact on legislation. However, Jeffords can make bold public statements because of his lack of loyalty to either dominant political party. His discourse often takes sharp blows at the President and the Republican Party. Jeffords also takes an equally critical stance on the Democrats. For example, Jeffords was the only member of Congress who refused to support a bill that awarded soldiers in Iraq a "War on Terrorism" medal. He took issue with the arguments of both parties in his public statement on this decision. Thus, Jeffords uses his "unleashed" mentality to criticize either party. In essence, Senator Jeffords stands as an anomaly in the Washington political arena which adds an interesting and perplexing socio-political element to his discourse.

Finally, the larger discourse around the Jeffords' decision is part of a growing trend among politicians. CNN reported that before the Jeffords' decision there were nine party switchers serving in congress: five in the US Senate and four in the House of Representatives (Party Switchers). The Jeffords' decision not only added another name to the list of defectors, but it is significant because he is the only congressional representative who did not ultimately assume the label of another mainstream party. Jeffords represents the only party switcher who abandoned traditional party labels and adopted an "independent" status. CNN notes that before the Jeffords' jump seventeen Senators have officially switched parties since 1893 (Party

Switchers). Also, it is important to note that an overwhelming majority of party switching is a defection from the Democratic to the Republican Party. For instance, CNN notes that the first and most recent time a Republican Senator switched to Democrat was in 1901 (Party Switchers). These switches also take place on a state and local level in large numbers. It has become a regional phenomenon in the south where conservative Democrats seek to distance themselves from the liberal policies of the national party. Thus, the Jeffords decision takes place in a long history of political transformations. However, his decision, and the rhetoric celebrating this decision, is unique and situated for critical analysis because he represents one of the few GOP defectors, and he is the only "party-switcher" who accepted an independent image rather than a dominant party label.

If the premise that political parties are the foundations of the American political system is accepted, then politicians such as Jeffords face a specific set of rhetorical problems. John Dewey claims that democracy is not solely a form of government. Instead, he asserts that democracy is "primarily a mode of associated life, or conjoint communicated experience" (Democracy and Education 101). In Dewey's view, democracy is a social agreement that is the product of discursive effort. Through this collaborative creative process, certain individuals rise to power and obtain authority over other members of society. Flathman provides a view of democracy and political philosophy by writing, "it is widely assumed that politically organized association in which some persons rule others is the divinely, naturally or ontologically ordained state of human affairs" (527). He also notes that individuals can either "obey the command or disassociate from the political association of which authority is a constitutive feature" (Flathman 527). By the nature of the United States political system, Flathman's figures chosen to rule over others are forced within the confines of particular party groups. Thus, the leaders elected by the

American people become subject to party leadership and platforms. At times, they decide the can no longer "obey" and thus they travel the risky path of dissociation, a path that requires them to manage several tensions in the carefully constructed discursive democracy that is the United States. Two primary rhetorical problems, which hinge on notions of persona and audience, face politicians such as Jeffords.

The first rhetorical problem facing politicians who party switch is primarily a crisis of persona and ethos. From the writings of Aristotle, ethos received a coveted place in the rhetorical tradition that continues to perplex students of public address. Sattler argues, "ethos may be defined as the 'totality of characteristic traits,' rather than in terms of mere custom or morally approved habits" (55). As a persuasive mode of proof, ethos speaks not simply to the authority the rhetor brings to the speaking situation nor does it solely refer to the derived credibility obtained from the creation of a text. Instead, ethos consists of both what a rhetor brings to a speech, and the credibility obtained from an audience in a specific rhetorical situation. In regard to ethos Murphy argues, "advocate and audience transform each other through the mutual cultivation of judgment as they consider the urgent, unsettled matters that are the province of rhetoric. Yes, they come to the speech with qualities of character, but those qualities are crafted anew in the texture of the discourse" (145). Murphy's arguments speak to the dilemma facing the party-switching politician. The individual comes to the specific speaking occasions with the ethos they have crafted under the label of one party. However, the subject matter of their "party switching" rhetoric asks their old audience, presumably individuals sympathetic to the politician's old political party, to support their decision to leave that party and join a new group or institution, which will be comprised mainly of individuals from the opposing political party.

In essence, party switching rhetors want to preserve both the ethos they have built through previous discursive acts while simultaneously gathering credibility for a new role in a new party. This becomes a complex problem that must be carefully managed by the words and rhetorical arguments of the politician. Once they publicly make the decision, people opposed to the move will make slanderous character claims against them. For example, after the Jeffords decision, Jeffrey writes, "Make no mistake: Jeffords sits far outside the mainstream of American politics. His vision is in deep conflict with cherished American values—including values expressly protected in the *Bill of Rights* that until recently were shared and promoted by Republicans and Democrats" (Extremist Senator). This not only makes it difficult for the politician to preserve the fragile ethos he or she has garnered through previous discursive acts, but it also becomes even harder for the rhetor to craft a new, credible public image. Thus, the specific rhetorical acts within the process of party switching requires the rhetor to constantly work with the audience to construct a "derived ethos" that speaks to their new place in the political spectrum.

The second rhetorical problem facing party switchers is primarily a crisis of audience. McGee writes, "there is an entity out there in the social world—some place where all individuals come together with a like mind, a shared subjectivity—that they can safely be designated by the collective noun that refers to them all 'the people'" (116). The problem that faces party switchers is not simply identifying their audience and producing a rhetorical text that will unify the people. Instead, these individuals are forced to provide an old audience with a new identity. They in essence must create a reformed, or "new people."

If Black's notion that the audience a text constitutes is the second persona and Wander's notion that the third persona is the group that the text leaves out is accepted, then the individual

switching parties is placed in an unfamiliar rhetorical terrain. As an elected official or public figure, they have a particular following that has been constituted by their previous texts and public statements. They have also drafted their previous discourse in a manner that has attacked and excluded the group they now wish to join. However, when an individual leaves a political party for a new political institution they must devise a plan to gain the adherence and good will of a group they formally excluded while holding on to the support of a group they helped constitute. Thus, the constitution of a new audience becomes a serious rhetorical problem for party switchers. How can the constituent base be reconstituted? Ultimately, the rhetor has to devise a strategy that will provide their constituent base with a new identity. They also have to leave "the people" feeling that showing support for the party switch decision is proper and might provide them with a greater sense of agency.

My thesis proposes to look at the party switching rhetoric of Senator James Jeffords. Although there are several texts that focus on his decision to leave the GOP, this analysis will be limited to the three speeches and the two books that constitute, justify, and celebrate his move. On May 21, 2001 Senator Jeffords offered his first public statement on his decision to leave the Republican Party. This speech was delivered in Burlington, Vermont and is commonly referred to as "The Declaration of Independence" speech. One month after this announcement, Senator Jeffords published his first New York Times bestselling book My Declaration of Independence which further comments on his decision to leave the Republican Party. He also issued a "First Anniversary Speech" of the decision on May 23, 2001. This speech was delivered on the steps of the capital building in Washington D.C. These three texts will be discussed in Chapter Two as examples of how Jeffords employs arguments rooted in elements of American paideia to justify his party switch decision.

Two years after the decision, Jeffords published his second book An Independent Man. This work also reached the New York Times bestseller list and further justifies his decision to leave the GOP. He also issued a "Second Anniversary Speech" on June 5, 2003. The "Second Anniversary Speech" was targeted at a larger audience as it was delivered to the National Press Club and aired to a national audience on National Public Radio. These final two texts will be the basis for analysis in Chapter Three that will suggest Jeffords deals with his problems of audience by engaging in agonistic rhetorical practices.

Political Parties and Party Switchers:

Literature from Political Science and Communication Studies

Scholars and theorists working within the field of political science have contributed a large amount to the academy's understanding of political parties and the two-party system in the United States. One of the most important scholars working within this tradition, Clinton Rossiter, began his influential text on political parties by writing "No America without democracy, no democracy without politics, no politics without parties, no parties without compromise and moderation" (1). E.E. Schattschneider furthers this suggesting by claiming that democracy is "unthinkable save in terms of the parties" (1). Ostrogorski, one of the first political theorists to offer a critical perspective on the origins, foundations, and purpose of political parties, argues, "The founders of the American Republic themselves, who examined the dangers and the difficulties of democratic government so closely, had not, it would appear, bestowed a moment's thought on the questions as to how the electors should be set in motion and made of one mind" (Democracy and The Organization 325). He suggests:

> The extra legal organizations which regularly undertook to ensure the co-ordination of the opinions of the citizens, with a view of the legal manifestations

> of the general will, adopted a framework of political action created before the advent of democracy—"party," which arranged opinions in fixed and rigid grooves. Those who were outside the recognized parties were looked on with the hatred and disgust which the churches, making common cause for once in a way, reserve for those who are outside the reorganized cults. (Ostrogorski, Democracy and The Organization 327)

The arguments of Rossiter and Ostrogorski provide nice samples of the primary arguments and ideas offered by the political science community. Scholars working within the confines of social science research and other political scientists who advance theories of political communities promote one common narrative. With few exceptions, most political scientists suggest that the two-party system is crucial to governmental efforts in the United States. They then provide research to show that the party system has started to lose its influence, and they suggest ways to increase the strength of this "much needed" system. They have also provided, as noted in the excerpt from Ostrogorski, some ideas about the confines and restraints of party association. Communication scholars have provided some studies of political party treatises, but the bulk of this scholarship examines the specific discourse of a single rhetor and considers party identification as a secondary element of the analysis. Finally, both fields have offered a very limited amount of research on party switching moments in the history of American politics. The remainder of this section will provide an overview of this research and provide a framework for why this scholarship needs to be pushed in different directions. First, the primary narrative of political science will be explored. Then, the rhetorical scholarship that speaks to political party identification will be highlighted. Finally, this section will discuss the brief amounts of research that specifically considers party switching.

In the 1950s, the Committee on Political Parties of the American Political Science Association assembled to discuss what they viewed as a crisis in the American political system. The impetus for the meeting was a common academic belief that, "popular government in a nation of more than 150 million people requires political parties which provide the electorate with a proper range of choice between alternative of action" (American Political 1). The committee claimed that the United States needed a party system that was "democratic, responsible, and effective" (American Political 1). In the years prior to this meeting, the American Political Science Association felt that the two-party system was growing weak which provided complications, not benefits, to the governing process in the United States. The committee writes, "The American two-party system suffers from a basic weakness, the most important thing is effective remedy" (American Political V). To respond to this problem, the committee issued a document entitled Toward a More Responsible Two Party System. The introduction to this text notes:

> The purpose of this publication is to bring about fuller public appreciation of a basic weakness in the American two-party system. In other words, this is not a research document aimed at professional readers only. It seeks the attention of every one interested in politics. (American Political V).

Thus, with this document, the American Political Science Association identifies a weakness in party organization in the United States and then provides a pragmatic approach to solve their proposed "dilemma" of party organization. This document is one clear example of the type of scholarship that appears in the journals and theoretical discussion of the political science community. Political scientists are quick to highlight and expand on the problems of the two-party system. However, instead of offering an alternative or providing a way to provide more

liberation for governing officials, the scholars offer suggestions on how to strengthen and re-establish two-party rule in the United States. Political scientists working before and after and the publication of this major document expand on this line of research.

Mosei Ostrogorski represents one of the first political theorists to comment on the state and function of the two-party system. His works also sit as the most widely cited and referenced texts by political theorists that speculate on the role of the two-party system. One of his first works published in 1974, Democracy and The Party System in the United States provides a thorough historical analysis of how the Democratic and Republican parties became the dominant structures that influence all elements of the American governing process. Ostrogorski represents the first scholar to comment on what has since become called the "cult of party." In this first text, he writes, "Party loyalty embodied in the Organization was becoming more enthusiastic and more intolerant. The party became a sort of church, which admitted no dissent" (Ostrogorski, Democracy and The Party 42). He then goes on to argue, "the spirit of party, like that of fetishistic patriotism, is made up of sectarian contempt and dislike for those who are outside the fold, and of mechanical attachment to those who are on the inside" (Ostrogorski, Democracy and The Party 409). This first text provides a nice analysis of the role of political parties in the United States. Ostrogorski acknowledges that the party system has taken on a cult-like status in the United States and this cult requires that political leaders either participate or become disciplined. It also offers examples and interpretations of the types of discipline that the parties will impose on politicians who fail to show allegiance and compliance.

Ostrogorski's other primary work Democracy and The Organization of Political Parties, published in 1964, continues his earlier line of argumentation, but it provides more analysis of the historical factors that led to party association. Although both of his works are important

markers in the study of the two-party system, Ostrogorski provides no analysis of the problems and constraints of the two-party system. He claims that the parties "fill a moral void" for citizens, and he suggests that the parties might satisfy an "emotional need" for Americans (Ostrogorski, Democracy and The Party 411). However, Ostrogorski does not offer any analysis of the dangers or limitations that the two-party system might offer, he does not provide analysis as to why the two-party system has come to dominate the American political machine, and he does not speak to the success or the opportunities for individuals who might seek to challenge this established system of political organization.

Joel H. Silbey attempts to offer a deeper understanding of Ostrogorski's comments on the cult of party. He looks specifically at party activities during the era of the American Civil War and suggests that at this point political parties were viewed as a type of "shrine."[1] Silbey comments, "the tenacity with which American congressmen clung to the national political divisions in the 1840's suggests the need for a deeper understanding of how people actually act in politics and how they react to new behavioral influences and changes in the context of political activity" (145). Although he provides a nice case study to validate Ostrogorski's comments that parties work as a type of cult in American political activity, the study still does not provide an understanding of the harms this type of influence may have on democratic governance.

Viva Belle Boothe attempts to answer some of the questions that linger after the writings of Silbey and Ostrogorski. Boothe's work, The Political Party as a Social Process, attempts to pinpoint the exact origins of the political parties. Boothe ultimately concludes that the origins of the political parties are best understood through a sociological framework. Boothe notes, "to

[1] It should be noted that Julie M. Walsh also conducted a similar case study on the place of political parties in the Jacksonian period of American politics.

study the political party as a social process is to consider the political party as the formal result of the customary political activities of a people as they are developed by a series of reactions and adaptations to environmental conditions" (7). Boothe ultimately comes to the conclusion that economic factors in competing regions of the United States led to the development of divergent political parties. While the study improves the understanding of why the parties may have originally formed, the academy is still left without knowledge of how the two-party system can restrain political action or how people might challenge this restraint.

After the work of Boothe, political scientists returned to their studies of how political parties are losing strength in the American political system and why this perceived exigence of American politics must be remedied. In his book Bringing Back the Parties, Price provides policy analysis to suggest that American political parties are in trouble. He notes:

> Despite conflicting evidence, there is ample reason to be concerned about the parties' health and viability. This book…will argue that "bringing the party back" is a worthwhile goal in light of the functions parties have played and can play in a democratic political order…While much that has befallen the parties can be attributed to social and technological changes that are unlikely to be reversed, public policy, and party rules have had and can have an independent and critically important impact. (Price 2).

Price ultimately argues that the parties may be losing strength and politicians and scholars should work to strengthen these organizations for the betterment of the nation.

John White provided a new element of plot to the traditional political party narrative espoused by political science. In the article "Intellectual Challenges to Party Government," he suggests, "Academics contend that responsible party government is possible and that it is the

ornery voter, ignorant of the benefits associated with it, who poses the principle obstacle to realization. For its part, the electorate wants a responsible government, but without the political wranglings that responsible parties entail" (White 1). White adheres to the accepted political science framework that the political parties may be losing their strength and influence, but he shifts the blame of this development away from the parties and toward the American electorate. This trend continued among a wide group of political scientists who published a series of essays in a book entitled Challenges to Party Government. The essays in this collection look at what the scholars claim is a growing discrepancy between politicians who cling to party labels and a large electorate that is starting to show dissatisfaction with party lines and platforms. Among other questions, the essays look to answer one primary question. Can the parties be strengthened in the light of voting behaviors of Americans who show less and less party loyalty? Mileur summarizes the findings of these essays by noting:

> The essays that compose this volume offer no definitive answers …Their authors are all fans of America's parties, believe in them, want them to win out, and think it important they do. They are like baseball fans, rooting for their team, down four runs in the sixth inning on the road, hoping against hope that their favorites can prevail against the odds in a hostile environment. Outside academia, America's parties have few enthusiastic fans. (212)

Thus, with the comments of individuals like White and Mileur, political scientists begin to show that the political parties may be losing strength due to popular trends and not because of their own behaviors. In essence, these political scientists are quick to suggest that the parties may not have lost actual control in the day to day activities of government. However, they suggest that the parties are losing their influence on the common American voter because Americans are

accepting a common popular belief that parties are problematic. The scholars again offer suggestions on how to improve the strength of parties, but their suggestions shift to ways the electorate can be influenced to regain its belief in parties.

Although an interesting piece of academic work, this collection of essays shows a primary problem in the prominent academic works on political parties. If political parties are a problem in the view of the electorate, then why not study ways to move with the demands of the American people? If the electorate views the parties as oppressive and limiting, then why not study politicians who follow the trends set forth by the people? If the parties are losing social influence, then why the move to strengthen, and not further deconstruct, the power of political parties?

Although political scientists began to place the blame for the decline of political parties on the people of the United States, their studies continue to push for moves that will strengthen the bonds and influence of these organization. J.P. Monroe and Green and Shea both published works that provide antidotes for the decline of political parties. Cohen, Fleishner, and Kantor try to break with the traditional themes of political science research on this issue in their work American Political Parties: Decline or Resurgence.[2] Their book looks at the downfalls and strengths of other studies that suggest a decline in the strength of political parties. However, they do not break from the idea that the mere concept of a two party-system may be problematic. Sabato and Larson follow Cohen, Fleishner and Kantor's work, but their analysis suggests that instead of a decline in the influence of parties, America is merely witnessing a downfall that will ultimately lead to the parties regaining control of the political spectrum. Grant provides analysis for the proper role of political parties in the years following the 2000 elections, but his work also

[2] McSweeney and Zvesper provide similar analysis but also offer more historical examples in their work American Political Parties.

speaks to the need for stronger parties. Finally, Stonecash, Brewer, and Mariani provide an analysis in Diverging Parties: Social Change, Realignment, and Party Polarization that suggests polarization of policy issues can be attributed to the downfall of American political parties.

In recent publications on political parties, Lowi and Romance are the only scholars who have published a study that attempts to critique the two party system. In their work, A Republic of Parties? Debating the Two Party System, Theodore J. Lowi writes:

> One of the best kept secrets of American politics is that the two-party system has long been brain dead—kept alive by support systems like state electoral laws that protect the established parties from rivals and by public subsidies and so-called campaign reform. The two-party system would collapse in an instant if the tubes were pulled and the IVs were cut. The current parties will not, and cannot, reform a system that drastically needs overhauling. (3)

Lowi and Romance appear to be lone scholars in a field that is dominated by the mindset that the two-party system is beneficial, crucial, and vital to the health of American politics. Although they offer a strong critique of the two-party system, the scholars do not give a clear example of politicians who might be looked to as examples. They also do not provide examples of how scholars might work to change the dominant mindset that the two-party system is worth preserving.

Most of the academic work on political parties comes from the field of political science. Rhetoricians have published only a few studies on the status and place of political parties. Communication scholars and students of public address are quick to look at types of political discourse. However, the field of communication has not offered significant critical analysis of the two-party system. Most rhetorical research on political parties highlights a significant

moment of intra-party conflict or looks at the way a specific rhetorical act might be influenced by a rhetor's Republican or Democratic identification. For example, Barefield (1970) published an article entitled "Republican Keynoters" that identifies the strategies the GOP uses to select their primary conference speaker (Republican Keynoters). Farrell (1978) followed in the tradition of Barefield and provided a more critical analysis of political party themes in his piece "Political Conventions as Legitimation Ritual." Finally, Blakenship, Fine, and Davis (1983) published research in 1983 on how a transformation from "actor to scene" allowed Ronald Reagan to rhetorically dominate the primary debates of the Republican Party in 1980 (The 1980 Republican Primary Debates).

Other rhetorical scholars followed in this style of research. Kathleen Diffey (1988) looked at a historical moment that encouraged "Independent Democrats" to take issue with their political party in her article on the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill. She discusses how the rhetoric surrounding this situation allowed the Republican Party to gain strength during the nineteenth century. Michael Pfau (1988) provides an analysis similar to Blakenship, Fine, and Davis by looking at the intra-party conflicts of the 1984 Democratic presidential primaries. Stephen Browne's (1991) article "Edmund Burke's Discontents and the Interpretations of Political Culture," discusses the relationship between audience and text and uses Burke's writings and speeches on political parties as his primary case study. Finally, Christine Harold (2001) provides an examination of third party politics and the rhetorical failures of the Nader campaign in her piece "The Green Virus: Purity and Contamination in Ralph Nader's 2000 Presidential Campaign."

John M. Murphy and Thomas Burkholder (2004) provide the community of rhetorical scholars with the most critical look at the party system in the United States with their piece, "The

Life of the Party: The Contemporary Keynote Address." In the article, they contend that, "the widely trumpeted decline of political parties and, as many argue, the so called disappearance of political community need to be interpreted in a broader context" (Murphy and Burkholder 130). With this comment, Murphy and Burkholder summarize the major critique offered by political scientists and expand its implications to the field of rhetorical studies. To study this movement, they choose to analyze the genre of keynote addresses at political conventions as moments of agency building for the collected members of the party. They write, "keynote addresses authorize political parties as agents of collective action in a democracy" (Murphy and Burkholder 132). They argue:

> In a contingent society, each election demands that parties reproduce their authority to act in the name of the people. Such functions are apparent in contemporary keynote addresses, those delivered since 1960, due not only to the growth of a posttraditional society in general but also to the forms such social action has taken in the campaign arena since that election: the rise of the primary system, the resultant change in the role of national conventions, and the influence of the mass media. (Murphy and Burkholder 132)

While they provide needed attention to the role of political conventions and the constitution of party members through discursive means, Murphy and Burkholder note that their one limited article cannot speak to all the issues surrounding the party system in the United States (130). Thus, space exists for the community of rhetoricians to continue critiquing the limitations, functions, and mere existence of a two party system in the American democracy.

More critical attention needs to be given to the rhetorical construction of the two-party system in the United States. Political parties are the product of discursive acts that give the

members of the groups a shared consciousness. Politicians that challenge these institutions offer alternative discourses that speak to the health and influence of the two-party system. Rhetorical scholars can benefit from the research of political scientists using it as a tool to build new theoretical frameworks and critical perspectives from which to view the two-party system in the United States.

Finally, it should be noted that the academic community has produced a limited amount of scholarship on the process of party switching. Communication scholars and students of political rhetoric have offered little to no theoretical and critical advancements in this area. In an article for Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly, David Niven (2002) provides a qualitative analysis of media reactions to four congressional politicians who switched parties in the previous twenty years. This study shows that, despite the direction of the switch, the politician receives a significant amount of negative coverage. He concludes that party switching is spun in a negative light by the dominant media sources in the United States. Apart from this study, there has been no communication article to date on the trends, styles, or significance of party switching. However, this is a topic in need of investigation. Party switching decisions such as Senator Gramm's in the early eighties and the controversial switch of Senator Jeffords in the first years of George W. Bush's presidential administration have altered the political landscape.

Political scientists have given a slightly larger amount of attention to this issue. Most research in the field has dealt with political realignments among the electorate. However, a few scholars have traced how these realignments can also be seen in the switches of local and statewide politicians. A few studies focus on the federal level of government, but all of this work is primarily quantitative in nature and does not pay attention to the words and symbolic messages of the public figures (Fleisher and Bond (2004), Synder and Ting (1992), Stone (1991),

Clark, Bruce, Kessel and Jacoby (1991)). Nesbit strengthened political science's understanding of personal ideology and party realignment by providing a critical look at the voting records and public statements of a politician and then relating that information to the platform of the party they joined. Kweit conducted a similar study to Nesbit but makes an argument that by studying party switchers and their views, scholars can gain a broader and more developed picture of the stances and transitions of the major political parties in the United States. Although both of these studies provide needed research into the development and trend of party switching, neither scholar provides close analysis of the speeches or public discourse of individuals who decide to switch parties.

Straus and Bow provide one of the only studies of the specific situation surrounding the decision of Senator Jeffords. Their article "James Jeffords and the Republican Party: A Study in Dealignment Sectionalism" looks at the situation through the lens of sectionalism and dealignment at both the state and federal levels. Straus and Bow spend the majority of their piece offering a rationale for the Jeffords' decision. While Straus and Bow provide significant answers to why Jeffords may have engaged in an act that contradicts the very nature of the two-party system, their research fails to speak to the larger significance of this act. In essence, they fall prey to the traditional argument of political scientists and simply suggest this case is another example of the problems facing political parties. Their arguments provide interesting background information related to the beliefs of Jeffords' immediate constituent base, but academics need to speak to the larger significance of his decision.

Finally, Rothenberg published the only qualitative analysis in political science that deals with the issue of party switching. His book offers the transcripts of interviews with over twenty elected officials who left their political party and joined the opposition. A valuable source that

provides insight into the arguments of party switchers, Rothenberg unfortunately offers no critical analysis or theoretical assumptions drawn from his data. Thus, both political science and communication can benefit from a stronger understanding of party switching. This will not only help scholars understand this specific trend, but it will also benefit the larger understanding of the role of party and the place of the two-party system in the United States.

The academic community, thanks primarily to the efforts of political scientists, has a strong understanding of the two-party system. There is also a large amount of scholarship that speaks to shifting opinions of American voters and its relation to the decline in strength of the political parties. However, most of the academic work on this subject matter argues for a move to rehabilitate the political parties to a renewed status of power in the American political arena. This study hopes to build off the scholarship of previous researchers but offer a new and different perspective. The actions of individuals such as Jeffords should be seen as a viable challenge to the oppressive two-party system in the United States. This thesis will argue that by studying acts of party switching, the academy might begin to suggest that the two-party system is limited in its ability to support the views of a wide and disparate electorate. In turn, independent politicians who challenge old practices and dogmas may be examples of how the two-party system should be further deconstructed rather than salvaged as the dominant paradigm of political science research might suggest.

Critical Perspectives

Party Switchers issue specific rhetorical acts to confront their problems of personae and ethos. The rhetoric that constitutes, justifies, and celebrates a decision to switch political parties must be crafted in a clever manner that confronts the many layers of both of these problems. My thesis proposes to look at one example of party switching discourse. Due to its significance to

the history of American politics and its temporality, the Jeffords decision will provide an interesting case study to examine the rhetoric of congressional party switchers. However, as my literature review shows, outside the field of political science very little scholarship has been advanced that speaks to the discourse of congressional party switchers. I position myself in this thesis as a critic and not a theorist. I do not plan to offer a critical framework from which all congressional party switchers can be placed. My study will not be an experiment with genre criticism. Instead, my thesis hopes to look at one example of party switching discourse and inspire a conversation by rhetorical scholars on the two-party system and the role of political parties in American political culture. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell writes, "criticism is a systematic activity whose structure is defined and derived from the qualities of communicative and rhetorical acts which are the objects it examines as well as its medium of expression" (5). John M. Murphy also offers a perspective on the study of rhetorical acts by claiming, "the discourse that we engage has its history; the 'critical spirit' that we invoke has lived before; and the work that we do can benefit from those who have come before" (13). Thus, with these arguments in mind, the remainder of this section will briefly highlight my critical perspectives. In line with Campbell's claim I plan to allow the texts and discourse I study to guide my critical interpretation. At the same time, my analysis will benefit from the theories and ideas of the scholars who came before me. My thesis will argue that to confront his problem of ethos, Senator Jeffords provides critical arguments grounded in what I term American paideia. I also propose that it is an agonistic rhetorical style that is closely tied to the redemptive process outlined by Kenneth Burke that allows the Senator to challenge his second rhetorical problem, a crisis of audience.

In order to preserve his ethos and promote support for his decision, Senator Jeffords roots his arguments in what can be termed American paideia. Paideia refers to the Greek conception of education, knowledge and culture. It is an abstract ideal that represents the cornerstone of Greek society. While rhetoric was significantly rooted in paideia throughout Greek history, it is mainly a Hellenistic ideal that is reborn during the second sophistic and spread in the Later Roman Empire by figures such as Julian and Libanius. In regards to rhetoric, paideia refers to the use of mythological and cultural images to express a sense of urgency, to supply a source of virtue, and to offer legitimacy for argumentation. This brief discussion of paideia will include a definition and historical sketch of the term and a look at the way the term applies to rhetoric with particular emphasis placed on the mythic or mythos.

It is practically impossible to explain the meaning of paideia in an English speaking context. Werner Jaegar's three-volume work on the idea helps to clarify the meaning and place of paideia in the ancient world. He writes:

> Indeed it is a difficult thing to define; like other broad comprehensive concepts (philosophy, for instance or culture) it refuses to be confined within an abstract formula…It is impossible to avoid bringing in modern expressions like civilization, culture, tradition, literature, or education. But none of them really covers what the Greeks meant by paideia. Each of them is confined to one aspect of it: they cannot take in the same field as the Greek concept unless we employ them all together. (Jaegar 1)

Jaegar goes on to explain that paideia denotes the ancient thought that education and culture were the embodiment of a nation's spiritual life, and literature served as the medium through which the real expression of virtue and higher culture are upheld (1). At the basic level the term

refers to culture and the Greek notion that humans achieve knowledge, morality, and purpose from this concept. Morgan explains a further definition of the term by commenting on the work of the Greek scholar Philo who describes paideia as "the necessary foundation of wisdom and identifies its elements as grammar, geometry, astronomy, literature, theoretical music, rhetoric and dialectic" (34). Paideia can be viewed as a simple reflection of the entirety of the Greek academic system and set of cultural beliefs. In essence, the Greeks believed it offered the basic knowledge for the above listed fields. In turn, they believed these fields exist to understand the truth and ideals that are found in paideia.

Plato's writings push the boundaries of paideia farther and show some of the early relationships between paideia and rhetoric. Welch argues that Plato's writings that attack rhetoric are actually signs of the creation of a knowledge-based rhetoric rooted in Plato's version of paideia. She writes, "When Plato appears to be ambivalent about writing and rhetoric, he was responding to his version of sophistic rhetoric…he chose to respond with his own elaborate writing, his own conception of philosophical rhetoric, and his own paideia" (109). Plato describes the role of paideia as being the opposite of power. Jaeger summarizes Plato's ideas by stating, "the two concepts of paideia and power are sharply contrasted: and with good reason…Plato takes them to be opposing conceptions of human happiness—which means, of human nature." Jaegar further comments that Plato perceives the struggle between the forces as a battle between two philosophies. He writes, "We have to choose between the philosophy of power and the philosophy of culture" (Jaeger 133). Jaeger also argues, "As he (Plato) conceives it, the real meaning of life, human nature, is not power, but culture; paideia" (133). Plato defines paideia as the goal of life and places it as the source for all inspiration.

Unmistakably, Plato's relationship between paideia and rhetoric is most notably seen in his idea of the syllogism. Plato's connection is improved and continued by his student Aristotle, who crafts the notion of the enthymeme. Societies engage in conversations in various means that result in the production of a general knowledge bank of communal beliefs. These ideals can be rhetorically employed for the benefit of persuasion by calling on mythological stories and legends. In essence, a rhetor will draw from cultural teachings as proof or evidence in a larger reasoning process. In Plato's syllogism, the major or minor premise may be drawn from culturally accepted ideals. In the enthymeme, maybe the premise that is not excluded is a an argument from paidiea that needs little explination because of its cultural relevance.

In essence, Plato's syllogism and Aristotle's enthymeme represent the link between paideia and rhetoric. A syllogism consists of a major and minor premise and a conclusion. Epic poetry often included speeches employing mythological paradeigmas that follow this syllogistic format. A character in epic using myth in a consoling or encouraging way that is meant to persuade another character is an example of paradeigma. Willcock writes, "the mythical example is commonly used in speeches in the Iliad when one character wishes to influence the actions of another. Usually it is a matter of exhortation of consolation. This is what is meant by paradeigma" (391). A literary character wanting to persuade another literary character would employ mythological tales that evoke personal or social responsibility. A character in Homer might legitimately claim precedence for a decision by citing a similar action by a god or hero in the form of a syllogism. This is the use of a syllogism with rudiments of paideia serving as the elements of proof.

Aristotle improved on his teacher's theory with the notion of enthymeme. When a communicator makes a statement in the form of an enthymeme, he or she will normally supply

the conclusion and the audience will draw on cultural knowledge (paideia) to fill in the major and minor premise. Many contemporary orators will allude to a story or legend, but they will ultimately allow the audience to interpret its role in the discourse. The enthymeme offers an allusion to a story or myth but encourages the audience to use their knowledge of paideia to fill in the larger argument.

In the Hellenistic period and the Roman Empire, paideia becomes an even more integral part of government and social behavior. As the polis system was abandoned and Greek manners began to spread, the concept of paideia grew in scope and recognition. With the conquest of Rome, Greek paideia began to influence an even larger audience. The 1st Century CE and the Roman Empire witnessed a rebirth of Greek culture known as the second sophistic. It is in this period that paideia gains its strongest link with rhetoric. Libanius, a pagan rhetorician of the fourth century CE, instructed his students to look to the myths and literature of Greece and Rome as the foundation for inspiration and truth. Rhetoricians of this time saw paideia as the ultimate source of persuasion. Orators were encouraged to use the myths of Ancient Greece and Rome to encourage adherence by the audience. If a speaker wanted to stress the bravery of a fellow citizen, he might retell a trial of Herakles. Due to its wide cultural recognition, myth and cultural legend was one rhetorical tool of inspiration derived from paideia. For rhetoric to affiliate with social truth and be able to offer a relevant message to the audience, it had to appear to the common cultural beliefs expressed in paideia.

Paideia allows a rhetor to tap in to cultural belief and custom. My thesis will make the case that just as the Greeks and Roman culture focused on paideia, American culture also shows signs of its own type of paideia. The early party switching rhetoric of Jeffords allows him to tap in to this American paideia and bolster support for his decision to leave the Republican party.

This in turn allows him to both preserve and rebuild his public credibility. Chapter two of the thesis will make the critical case for the presence of what can be called an American paideia, and it will show how Jeffords uses elements of this concept in his party switching rhetoric.

Jeffords also engages in specific rhetorical practices to deal with his problems of audience. As noted earlier, the established two-party system of the United States holds a vital place in the infrastructure of American government. Despite this reverent position, the two-party system also limits the freedom and agency of politicians. In Permanence and Change, Kenneth Burke provides his description of the hierarchies and structures that guide human social life. He suggests that hierarchies become encapsulated with dramatic acts when people ultimately decide to reject or work against the laws and guidelines of a certain infrastructure. Burke claims the rejection of a specific hierarchy leaves the individual with a sense of guilt, and he suggests that this guilt must be expunged through some form of a communicative act.

Due to the fact that their decisions normally causes a fair amount of shifting and reorganization among the political parties, party switchers find themselves trapped in Burke's guilt ridden dramatic process. Politicians who cross party lines seek a new affiliation that will provide them with a greater sense of agency, but at the same time they experience a certain amount of guilt due to the magnitude of their decision. In essence, once the politician changes party affiliations they are working against a system that they once praised and supported. Ultimately, Burke's theory of redemption and guilt purification provides a nice framework for understanding the communication acts of party switchers. However, although comprehensive and thorough, Burke's theory does not speak to the specific words and symbols individuals use in these situations. Burke provides a clever three part theoretical understanding of the public redemption process, but his theories fail to give rhetoricians a proficient understanding of the

specific communicative strategies that might be used in each step to achieve public purification. Thus, chapter three will combine Burke's theory of redemption with John Dewey's notion of agonistic rhetoric. As the party switcher moves through Burke's three redemptive phases, it is the use of an agonistic rhetorical style that allows for a successful and clean switch. A synthesis of the arguments of Burke and Dewey provide a framework to show how Jeffords successfully constitutes an audience and expunges his guilt obtained from leaving the GOP.

Burke's redemptive process hinges on the strategy of scapegoating, which he defines as "the 'curative process that comes with the ability to hand over one's ills to a scapegoat, thereby getting purification by dissociation" (Permanence and Change 202). Burke continues to argue, "Hence if one can hand over his infirmities to a vessel, or "cause," outside the self, one can battle an external enemy instead of battling an enemy within" (Permanence and Change 203). Ultimately, the redemptive cycle takes three steps. First, the individual feels guilty for ultimately abandoning a specific social hierarchy. Burke believes that humans have some larger notion of inborn dignity and that they have a natural tendency to feel guilty for bringing disruption to an established social order. Second, the individual must engage in a redemption process. This move requires the identification of a scapegoat. In this stage, Burke argues, "the individual properly realizes that he is not alone responsible for his condition. There are inimical factors in the scene itself. And he wants to have them "placed," preferably in a way that would require a minimum change in the ways of thinking to which he had been accustomed" (Permanence and Change 203). Thus, the individual places blame for the disruption on another group, institution, or person and that individual can then engage in step three which is a symbolic rebirth and a move toward redemption in the public eye.

In the hazy and treacherous world of party switching, the realties of this cycle come to life. Ultimately, the politician feels guilt for leaving an established party. They also are burdened with a fair amount of stress from the comments and attacks of the media and various political groups. Thus, they react to this by scapegoating the party they have decided to leave. The former party, not the individual or the party the politician is joining, becomes responsible for the switch. This finally allows the politician to experience a political rebirth and join the ranks of their new party.

Although Burke offers a critical look at the redemptive process, his work leaves the critic needing to continue to investigate the specific words and strategies rhetors use in various situations. In the world of party switching, engaging in normal deliberative discourse does not seem to be a viable or beneficial option. Hardt explains that in many political situations individuals seem to look for what might be called an "authentic discourse." He writes, "Authentic discourse functions in the search for individual identity, for power, and for personal security within the comforts of community" (Hardt 49). Politicians dealing with the decision to switch parties must ultimately craft this authentic type of discourse. The situation and dilemmas of party switching seem to direct a rhetor toward a style of communication that John Dewey would call *agonistic*. If Burke provides the framework for public redemption, Dewey provides the theoretical understanding for the words and messages of the party switchers. It is important to note that these two scholars have much in common and share many beliefs about the public sphere and the role of political discourse. Stob notes:

> For both Burke and Dewey, language is a tool. This does not mean that they reduce language to instrumentality alone. Indeed, the aesthetic dimension of language for Burke and Dewey is unmistakable. Language as a tool means

> language must become operative, practically and aesthetically, in a number of diverse contexts, seeking to accomplish specific tasks and imbue experience with meaning.

Burke and Dewey agree that language must be operative and instrumental. Language must speak to the specifics of a situation and try to help the rhetor overcome specific obstacles. Party switchers all face similar rhetorical dilemmas, and it is an agnostic style of communication that allows them to actively enact Burke's dramatic process of public purification.

John Dewey explains his theory of agonistic rhetoric in a 1931 four-part series in the New Republic. In the essays, he writes that the American political system is plagued by a rhetorical problem, not a lack of public policy (115). Dewey's four part series of critical essays highlights the problems that face the two-party system in the United States and comment on the need for a new political force within the American political landscape. According to Dewey, agonistic rhetoric consists of three elements which include: first promoting division from the main party instead of a sense of unity with the old mantras, then offering conflict not conversation in the political sphere, and finally clearly identifying a foe.

The purpose of Dewey's, New Republic series is to discuss his concern that the two-party system in the United States has encouraged a significant amount of apathy from voters. In the first essay he writes, "masses of voters have been more than apathetic; they have been jaded. They have lost all confidence that politics can accomplish anything significant. They have even accepted the cynical belief that the parties are dominated by big business" (Dewey 115). To target this problem he calls for a movement of "non-dogmatic and non-idealistic" individuals who will embrace a tone and personae of *elasticity*. Dewey writes:

> The elements of the population, which are the potential constituents of a new party, are numerous enough to justify the enterprise of launching one. The needs of these elements and their troubles call aloud for political action. The difficulty and doubt do not lie on that side. They concern the energy, the willingness of sacrifices and power of cooperation on the part of those who have vision and sympathy. (179)

Ultimately, the essays seek to accomplish two goals. First, they highlight the problem and need for a new style of political leader. Second, they offer a communicative framework for the individuals who decide to adhere to the call of Dewey.

Although these essays were written over fifty years ago, their central claim and purpose still hold relevance in the modern political spectrum. Also, these papers are obviously a call for a new party and do not represent a mandate for politicians to switch between the two competing parties. However, close analysis of these essays allows the critic to notice that it is not so much a new party that Dewey proposes; instead he is looking for individuals to challenge the two-party system in the United States. Finnegan notes, "What Dewey is calling for in the third party series, then, is not so much a specific policy agenda as the conscious construction of a social imaginary capable of promoting political solidarity" (166). In their efforts to change political ties, party switchers highlight the problems that come with the dominant parties and the limitations these systems place on government. Thus, Dewey's communicative framework for independent and third party politicians becomes useful in helping the party switcher challenge his or her rhetorical obstacles.

Elasticity and agonistic rhetoric guide the communication style highlighted by Dewey. Finnegan notes, "Dewey argues quite forcibly for an agonistic approach to communication

practice" (169). She states, "echoing Burke's tragic frame, Dewey observes that a sense of conflict and battle is a necessary part of any movement which enlists the imagination and emotion; in the current climate there is opportunity for aggressive attack" (Finnegan 169). Thus, from the New Republic essays the critic can begin to understand that challenges to the two-party system must first and foremost be rooted in emotional claims. Emotional appeals and calls to pathos become the overarching quality in all rhetorical texts that attempt to challenge the dominant system. Thus, an agonistic rhetor will be elastic, meaning they will quickly change to the growing or decreasing emotional needs and desires of the public. The politician will highlight the emotional needs of a specific group and use these to challenge and confront the party system. In order to accomplish this, Dewey provides three common tactics that should be the cornerstone of an agonistic approach to communication.

First, an agonistic political style will promote division from the main parties and mantras instead of trying to unify with old ideas and values. Thus, the individual leaving the party will make a clear distinction between their views and the views of the party being left. Second, this style of communication offers conflict and not conversation. Rhetors engaging in agonistic practices will not seek to engage the oppositional forces in dialogue. Instead, they will create as much conflict in the political sphere as possible. The rhetor rarely addresses the commentary by the mainstream parties. Instead, the politician speaks of principles, and he or she allows the parties to carry on a dialogue about the party switch decision. In many ways, they mold their conflict strategies to particular groups and target audiences and then rise above the larger social disruption. By employing the conflict not conversational model, the politicians rise above the name-calling and slum tactics of the oppositional party. Finally, an agonistic style of communication will identify a foe. This strategy becomes very important for dealing with the

rhetorical problem of constituting a clear audience. However, the rhetor has to be careful not to speak of the foe in direct terms so they do not upset the anti-dialogical element of this style. Thus, to identify a foe the rhetor will simply speak of the morals and values that have gone astray in their old party. This becomes the foe that the rhetor works against and the reason behind their decision. This in turn allows for the construction of a new constituent base. By identifying a foe the party switcher transcends the situation and focuses the audience's attention not on what they have done but on all the problems and complexities of the current political order.

As theorists, both Burke and Dewey are highly invested in the power and influence of language. Stob notes that in the writings of both individuals it is "effective, intelligently created language" that will create a "common toolkit with which the public can deal with the problems before it." Burke and Dewey's theories of public deliberation and discourse in the public sphere suggest similar understandings of how language shifts to situational settings in order to solve social crises. It is clear that Burke's redemption cycle and Dewey's notion of agonistic rhetoric provide a nice framework through which to understand the discourse of party switchers.

By traveling through Burke's redemption cycle, it is the creation of an agonistic rhetorical style that allows the party switcher to deal with the specific problems of audience. The third chapter of the thesis will illustrate how the later party switching rhetoric of Jeffords shows how a party switcher can solve their problems of audience by seeking purification through agonistic rhetorical practices.

Concluding Thoughts

This study hopes to draw critical attention to an obscure Senator from a small state. Although Jeffords is not the most developed public speaker, and his role as a representative for

the state of Vermont gives him a small amount of clout in Washington, his interference with the Bush administration was a landmark move in American politics. He is one of the few party switchers to hold high approval ratings from constituents, and he is the only self proclaimed independent who switched in office, that has not been defeated.[3] Also, his public support shows the significance of his decision. A month after his initial speech, the town of Shrewsbury, Vermont transformed their Fourth of July events into an "Independent's Day Celebration" (as cited by Jeffords, My Declaration of Independence 127). Instead of celebrating independence and freedom, the town decided to celebrate the new political status of their Junior Senator.

Jeffords speaks to the people and gives them agency while the mainstream parties work from ideologies and old mantras. Jeffords moves with the times and changes to the desires of the public. The mainstream parties remain steadfast with their support for special interest. While he has not started a revolution or organized an official new party, he speaks with a third party voice because he lacks a clear party label. He has abandoned partisan politics and constantly challenges both parties with speeches and articles. Rhetorical scholars need to begin a discussion on third party politics, the two- party system and the role of the public sphere in regards to these issues. The discourse surrounding the decision of Senator Jeffords seems to be a viable place from which to start that conversation.

Preview of Chapters

The remainder of this thesis will proceed in three parts. Chapter Two will focus on elements of American paideia and will offer a critical analysis of his first speech "The Declaration of Independence," his "First Anniversary Speech," and his first book My Declaration of Independence. Chapter Three will show how Jeffords engages in agonistic rhetorical practices

[3] A telephone and email conversation with Erik Smulson, Assistant Press Secretary to Senator Jeffords, shows that post-switch Jeffords still held a 65% approval rating in his home state of Vermont.

through a critical look at his second book An Independent Man and his "Second Anniversary Speech." Finally, Chapter Four will provide some concluding thoughts on Jeffords, party switching rhetoric, and other avenues of research for rhetorical scholars interested in political parties, party switching, and the status of the two-party system in the United States.

CHAPTER TWO:

DECLARING CREDIBILITY

MYTH AND ETHOS AS PERSUASION FOR

CONGRESSIONAL PARTY SWITCHERS

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation."

Thomas Jefferson
Declaration of Independence
July 4, 1776

"I solemnly swear by the ever living God [or affirm in the presence of Almighty God], that whenever I am called to give my vote or suffrage, touching any matter that concerns the State of Vermont, I will do it so, as in my conscience, I shall judge will most conduce to the best good of the same, as established by the constitution, without fear or favor of any man."

Vermont Freeman's Oath
July 8, 1777

The sharing of myth has long served as one of the universal cornerstones of human interaction. Individuals collectively recall mythic tales of family members and national icons, and these stories are passed from generation to generation. Although the presence of myth in human communication is indisputable, the power of myth as a persuasive tool has a longer and more complicated history. Scholars in the field of rhetorical studies took up the question of the cultural function of myth and mythology after Robert Rowland criticized the field for applying the term in a loose and "dangerous" manner. For Rowland, myths represented stories that symbolically solve a problem facing society. Thus, Rowland's minimalist and structural approach to myth specified that these rhetorical modes of communication would "provide justification for a social structure or they would help deal with a psychological crisis" (103). In

sum, in calling for a revision of the way critics approach mythic criticism, Rowland makes the strong claim that "myth has a special symbolic power not felt by other types of symbol use" (103).

Although Rowland's essay initiated a deeply needed conversation on the study of rhetorical myths, his functionalist approach to communication proves problematic for contemporary analyses of public myth creation. At the crux of his argument, Rowland speculates on the social labor myths perform. It seems that the central research question of his article is "what work do myths do?" For Rowland, the answer is purely sense making and metaphysical. He writes, "myths answer basic societal needs, because archetypes function as the most powerful symbols in a society it makes sense that they would be present in myth" (104). While it is a correct assumption that myth works to help interlocutors come to a collective understanding about their larger environment, Rowland unfairly regulates the scope and function of myth to very finite and select categories. In essence, the concept of myth must be given wider resonance to provide rhetoricians with a more thorough understanding of this cultural phenomenon.

Several rhetorical critics challenged the minimalist assumptions of Rowland and brought forth new perspectives about the role of mythic communication. Martha Solomon responded with attempts to free the critic of the categories and singular labels Rowland proposed for rhetorical scholarship. By contrast, Osborn's reaction turned the attention of critics toward the notion that most myths will include some degree of culture types that "receive their charge of special symbolic meaning through narratives that are heavily freighted with social significance" (Osborn 123). Brummett offered the strongest opposition to the Rowland piece by charging him with trying to place discourse into tight and neat categories. Finally, Janice Hocker Rushing

makes the claim that myth may not always attempt to solve the problem of a group of people, but it may actually reveal the problem that needs to be eradicated. Rushing's claim provides the necessary tool for applying the role of myth to modern societies. Although myth still serves some psychological function, it seems that these narratives do more than just sense making as Rowland's essay claims.

The remainder of this essay will pick up with the discussion of myth and mythos as it relates to the discourse issued by congressional party switchers. While I do not intend to rehash the debate about mythos that took place more than a decade ago, the above information is necessary in order to proceed with what I will call the *culturally persuasive role* myth plays in a modern political context. In essence, I intend to argue that politicians who find themselves in a credibility crisis can rely on myth as a tool to restore their individual credibility with a specific group of people. As mentioned in Chapter One, the basis for my arguments will be drawn from notions of classical paideia. In what follows, I will argue that Senator Jeffords confronts his first rhetorical problem of ethos by cleverly employing mythic examples drawn from American paideia to persuade his specific audience.

The remainder of the chapter will proceed in three parts. First, I offer a brief discussion of arguments rooted in paideia. Then, I offer a brief discussion of notions of arête and the direct audience of the Jeffords speech. In essence, I will provide contextual information that will help explain the cultural teachings of Vermont Jeffords uses in his rhetorical appeals. Finally, I provide a critical analysis of his declaration and first anniversary speeches.

Paideia, Myth, and Persuading an Audience

For purposes of criticism, Sutton asks critics to adopt the term mythos as the broader category for all communicative acts that are associated with legend, folklore, or myth. While

Sutton's overall goal is noble, it is his attempt to provide a larger overarching category for mythic discourse that starts the larger critical project of this chapter. Sutton believes that "in times of crisis people turn to their mythos for comfort and guidance" and that these narratives are as "malleable as the situation dictates" (213). He claims that the narratives that fit into the larger heading of "mythos" are like the "alchemist's crucible." In sum, for Sutton the rhetor is constantly mixing old stories with new ideas and events to yield a new method of story telling to persuade a specific audience.

Although Sutton provides the rhetorical critic with an interesting method for classifying mythic communication, it is his final claim about the rhetorical activity of the rhetor that is crucial to my analysis. In essence, the most compelling argument Sutton makes is the acknowledgment that despite specific labels, myths, folklores, and legends, all play a specific role for the audience and the communicator. Sutton then wants to lump these narratives together in a larger category called mythos. I concur with Sutton's argument that these stories are part of a broader category. Further, I am comfortable with the label mythos for this group of social narratives. However, I feel that Sutton's arguments fail to offer rhetorical scholarship with a larger understanding of where these mythic stories originate. It is my assumption that this broader category or collection of mythic stories draws both its persuasive effects and actual existence from what we might call American paideia.

In his discussion of the relationship between paideia and Greek culture, Jaeger argues that "the age of Sophocles saw the beginnings of an intellectual movement which was to have immeasurable effects on the history of mankind…it was paideia, education, or rather culture, in the narrower sense" (286). In a modern sense, the term paideia is closely related to traditional forms of education and the delineation of subject mater to certain disciplines. However, Jaegar's

work is quick to suggest that while paideia refers to education it also refers to something much deeper. In essence, it represents a cultural idea that is closely tied with the notion of arête. In sum, for the ancients the relationship between education (which was primarily rhetorical) and arête is most clearly summed up in the term paideia. This concept or ideal represents what can best be called a kalokagathia.

Jaegar reminds the modern critic that the debate between the sophists and Plato can best be summarized as a discussion of arête and paideia. The entire conversation is best summarized as a decision as to which type of education best trains a student in the concept of virtue. However, at the core of the conversation was the agreement that the schooling of students in paideia, in the rich cultural traditions and teachings, is what produced arête in an individual. While the method differed, the subject matter at its core was culturally established.

Jaegar makes the crucial claim that in Greece political education was a training that would allow the student to serve the polis. He further notes, "political arête could not be allowed to depend on the inheritance of noble blood, unless the extension of state-privileges to the mass of the population was to be stultified" (288). Thus, arête was something cultivated by training in the teachings and beliefs of culture. A student of Gorgias, Plato, Aristotle, Isocrates, or Protagoras was given different techniques and different strategies but at the core of their training was a common set of stories and myths that spoke to the welfare of the state. It is this argument that I want to extend to the previous claims of Sutton. My claim is that although the mythic narratives of a society might fit within a larger framework we call mythos, at the same time the critic must be aware that the rhetor and the specific myth or legend is a product of a specific tradition that we can call American paideia. That is, just like the students of Ancient Greece, modern Americans are inoculated with cultural stories and myths throughout their lifetimes.

These stories do not simply come into being, but they are part of a larger cultural training process. Successful political rhetors can at times call on this larger collection to move audiences towards specific understandings.

In what follows, I offer a critical read of the two speeches that served as the first stage of the rhetorical party switch of Senator James Jeffords. I claim that these two speeches allow the Senator to confront any problems of ethos he now faces. My claim is that he draws broadly on many mythic references that while they are part of the category of cultural stories Sutton calls mythos, are primarily rooted in a specific American paideia. That is, Jeffords understands that his audience comes from a similar cultural framework, and he relies on this common cultural connection to convince his audience that they should move beyond the present situation and restore their faith in his ability to lead the people of Vermont. That is, the use of arguments rooted in American paideia allows Jeffords to restore what Jaegar, following the sophists, might call his political arête.

Arete and Ethos: A Rhetorical Connection

Before conducting my critical read, it is important to theoretically explain the term arête. A word used in many contexts, the phrases has as many definitions as the phrase rhetoric. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle defines arête as a virtue. He notes, "The virtues are naturally a good; for those having them are well off in regard to them, and virtues are productive of good things and matters of action" (Aristotle 1.6.6, 63). For purposes of this critique, arête will be used as a term that speaks to the virtue of both the acts and personality of the individual. When speaking of Jeffords "political arête," I mean to refer to the credibility he holds with the people of Vermont. Following Aristotle, I hope to argue that arête is directly connected with ethos. Furthermore, my analysis hopes to posit, as first suggested by Aristotle, that rhetors can both establish and

reestablish their ethos and arête with a particular group by displaying their knowledge and respect for a groups traditions, heritage, and beliefs.

Contextual Features- The Situation in Burlington, Vermont

In terms of immediate context, it must be appreciated that the initial declaration speech is primarily directed at the people of Vermont. The Senator begins his statements on this occasion by stating, "Anyone who knows me knows I love the state of Vermont" (My Declaration). Besides this immediate call to the people of Vermont, there are several pragmatic reasons that require the Senator to "tend the home fires." First, as an elected representative of the Green Mountain state, Jeffords has a moral and political obligation to justify his decision to leave the GOP to the people who put him in office. Second, in order to remain a viable political force in future Senatorial campaigns, in other words in order to keep his job, Jeffords has to immediately begin his image restoration.

For terms of the later critical analysis, it is important to first recognize the immediate audience of the speech and to appreciate the "innovative" and "independent" nature of this group. Jeffords speaks to the people of Vermont, and thus the primary rhetorical strategies of the speech must be coded in words, stories, and language that Vermonters recognize and appreciate. To address this group, Jeffords ground his argumentative claims in the stories and traditions of Vermont. Although some of the references in the speech tap into the classic American cannon of myth and legend, for the most part Jeffords references people, places, and ideals that speak in special ways to the people who listen to the speech in Burlington, Vermont. In essence, Vermont is a special place. A state in New England that was not one of the original thirteen colonies, Vermont claims to be one of the first places to outlaw slavery and proudly boasts being one of the first states to send troops to the civil war. In sum, Vermont has a long history of innovation

in terms of politics, and it is famous for electing individual who "break the mold." Jeffords attempts to join this group in the minds of his audience. This section will briefly explore this group by speaking of Vermont's origins, its historical politicians, and finally by looking at their modern day predecessors.

From the beginning, the people of Vermont were a collective group of "rebels." Onuf writes, "Vermont was created in July 1777 when representatives of approximately twenty eight towns in the area known as the New Hampshire Grants adopted their own independence of the state of New York" (798). Originally a territory of New Hampshire, the area known as Vermont was eventually given to the state of New York in a court decision. After obtaining control of the region, the state of New York refused to grant the settlers from New Hampshire rights or ownership to their land. This inspired a group of individuals known as the Green Mountain Boys, led by Ethan Allen, to use violent and military action to claim independence for the state. Thus, the earliest Vermonters started a tradition of independence and justice, and it is this spirit that Jeffords tries to tap into with his rhetorical appeals.

Although the political legends of Vermont have primarily been socially liberal, the majority of the historical legends from the state were members of the Republican Party. In many ways, the officials Vermont sends to Washington have been known for contradictions. However, although they have always been in some form of contentious relationship with the national party, Vermont's elected officials have always remained true to the Republican roots of the state. For example, President Calvin Coolidge, a Vermont native, was famous for remarking that the "business of America is business." Silent Cal was the last president to avoid interfering with the Free Market, and he is famous for both cutting taxes and reducing the federal debt. In sum, as the President who presided over the nation during the "roaring twenties, Coolidge

represent the ideal Vermont Republican that Jeffords tries to respectfully connect with while distancing himself from the new, neo-conservative Bush administration.

Finally, the modern day political figures from Vermont illustrate the complexity of the Vermont constituency. For instance, former Vermont governor Howard Dean signed the civil union bill making the state the first place in the union to legally recognize same-sex unions. Although he was socially liberal Democrat, Dean was also endorsed by the National Riffle Association in all of his statewide campaigns. By contrast, Vermont's only representative in the House of Representatives is also the only member of congress to self identify as a socialist. Immensely popular, Sanders on average holds a ninety six percent approval rating in his home state. As a political party switcher, Jeffords invokes the myths of the past, the legends of great Vermont heroes, and the current personalities of his contemporary colleagues to walk a fine line of image restoration in his home state. In sum, Senator Jeffords tries to show how much he really "loves" his state by showing the audience in Burlington that he is a true mix of the old ideals and the new progressive politics of the state.

May 24, 2001- "My Declaration"

The initial speech that officially severs Jeffords from the GOP is properly titled "My Declaration" and was delivered in Burlington, Vermont on May 24, 2001. From the title of the speech, Jeffords tries to call on the cultural importance the *Declaration of Independence* holds in American society. As mentioned earlier, the speech begins with the announcement that Jeffords "loves" the state of Vermont. From the opening lines of the speech, Jeffords starts confronting his issues of ethos by noting that more than anything he wants the audience to know that his loyalty is always with the people of Vermont. The Senator then provides a list of reasons why he loves the state of Vermont. He notes that Vermont has always been known for its

"independence," which remains the theme he employs throughout the speech. He also claims that the state of Vermont has always been the most socially conscious state in the Union. He cited the fact that Vermont was the first to outlaw slavery and that the state felt more casualties in the Civil War than any other state as proof that the people of Vermont have a long legacy of "doing what is right." In sum, Jeffords is tapping in to a cultural list of morals and narratives that the people of Vermont associate with their state.

Jeffords directly connects himself to these ideals and topics he mentioned before by citing the work of two previous congressional representatives from the State of Vermont. First, he mentions the stories associated with Matthew Lyon. After founding the town of Fairhaven, Vermont, Lyons served as the congressional representative from Vermont from the years 1783-1796. However, Lyons is of particular importance to Vermont legend as the first person to be imprisoned for violating the Sedition Act. Lyons, a Republican[4], wrote a letter condemning the partisan acts of Federalist President John Adams, which was considered a criticism of the government. Although he was put in a federal prison, the people of Vermont kept electing him to Congress, and it is this act that Jeffords praises in his speech.

Jeffords also cites the work of Republican Senator Ralph Flanders. Although he only represented the state of Vermont for a brief period of time, Flanders is cited as the leader within the Senate who fought to censure fellow Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy. It is important to note that Jeffords begins his speech by citing the work of these two individuals that in many ways are direct reactions to partisan activities. Lyon was imprisoned for writing a letter that chastised the work of a partisan president, and Flanders fought to end what he saw as corruption within his own party. After listening the morals and ethics that are tied up with the state of

[4] Jeffords cites Lyons as a Republican. Historically, he would have been a Democcrat-Republican, and it is hard to speculate where his loyalty would lie in the modern definitions of the term. However, for purposes of his immediate audience, it is fair for Jeffords to refer to this figure as Republican.

Vermont, Jeffords links himself to those notions by citing the works of two previous congressional leaders. In the speech he calls the work of both of these men important "chapters" in the history of Vermont, and then he argues "today's chapter is of much smaller consequence, but I think it is appropriate that I share my thoughts with my fellow Vermonters" (My Declaration). Thus, in the opening lines of the speech, Jeffords taps into notions of Vermont's core beliefs, provides examples of previous leaders who have acted on those beliefs, and then in an effort to rebuild his ethos claims that what he is about to say is in the same tradition and should be viewed as a way to protect the legacy of Vermont.

In Jeffords' narrative world, the old party and its real leaders were part of the ideal Republican Party that is common to American mythic discourse. Jeffords claims these men as his ideological predecessors, and in his statement he saves face by claiming to carry on their tradition in what will be his new role as an independent. He places himself as a member of this ideological lineage, and he implies that his presence in the current "misled Republican Party" serves as a roadblock that prevents his adherence to the traditional ideals of America.

With this argument rooted in the traditions tied up in American paideia, Jeffords is able to deny any wrong or misconduct in his decision by claiming that his previous role as a Republican was based on the ideals associated with the mythic figures of the party. The speech then asks the audience to consider the fact that the party, not Jeffords, has left its traditional roots. The audience is left to believe that the Republican Party no longer supports the beliefs and traditions of Lincoln, and the only way for the teachings of this figure to survive is through an "independent Jeffords." Jeffords denies wrong by linking his beliefs to Lincoln and other mythic figures and then contrasting those views with the contemporary Republican mantra.

After this initial introduction, Jeffords then moves the audience through the personal struggles he had been facing in the previous months. In an effort to explain what led him to declare his independence from the GOP, he again decides to use examples and stories from the past. Jeffords does not cite events like the President's veto of funding for special education as a reason for his defection at this point in the speech. Instead, he mentions that he had several conversations with his family and advisors. He then mentions that he has always loved the Republican Party and that his seat has been the longest held Republican seat in congress. He notes, "The party I grew up in was the party of George Aiken, Ernest Gibson, Ralph Flanders, and Bob Stafford. These names may not mean much today outside Vermont. But each served Vermont as a Republican Senator" (My Declaration). After listing these names associated with Vermont politics, Jeffords then notes, "I became a Republican not because I was born into the party but because of the kind of fundamental principles that these and many other Republicans stood for—moderation, tolerance, and fiscal responsibility. Their party—our party—was the party of Lincoln" (My Declaration). This lineage becomes crucial to the later arguments about ethos and leaving the GOP that Jeffords makes.

First, it is important that Jeffords cites a series of Vermont Senators at this point in the speech. As mentioned before, Flanders was responsible for censuring Senator McCarthy during the red scare of the United States. However, the other Senators that are mentioned are figures like Aiken, a figure who was often labeled a communist for being too outside the ideals of Republican politics and who is famous for making the public statement that in regards to Vietnam the United States should "declare victory and get out." Jeffords also cites Gibson who held a very progressive voting record in the Senate and was a war hero. Finally, Stafford is the senator that Jeffords replaced and was known for being a progressive chair of the Environment

and Public Works committee. However, Jeffords brings these allusions to a new level by mentioning Lincoln. In the speech he claims that "their" party was the party of Lincoln and that this is the party he still hopes to represent in Congress. He praises these men for always speaking their mind and representing Vermont first. He claims that he wants to continue in this important legacy, a legacy that his direct audience would support and recognize. However, he notes that the current Republican Party represented in the works and words of President Bush prevent him from achieving this goal.

After linking himself to important mythical stories of Vermont's political past and then taking that connection to a national level with the mention of Lincoln, Jeffords temporally transitions to a discussion of the present situation for a brief moment. He claims that in the past, when the Republican Party was still pure, the various members of Congress were allowed to set the agenda for the party. He cites the election of Bush as the moment that changed this situation and then claims that he has struggled with the fact that he has to vote continually against the party's decisions and platforms because he was given no voice in the construction of these ideals.

After this brief description of the present, Jeffords then discusses problems he foresees in the future. However, this temporal shift is only momentary. After noting that he will always disagree with the President on issue of choice, taxation, and the military, he notes that the issue of education will offer the most problematic barrier to his relationship with the GOP. However, to express this difference, Jeffords returns to examples from Vermont's political past to express how this situation will be a problem for him. He notes:

> Looking ahead, I can see more and more instances where I will disagree with the President on very fundamental issues…the largest for me is education. I come from the state of Justin Smith Morrill, a U.S. Senator who gave America the land

> grant college system. His Republican Party stood for opportunity for all, for opening the doors of public school education to every American child. Now, for some, success seems to be measured by the number of students moved out of public schools. (116)

This argument immediately precedes the sentence in which Jeffords declares independence from the Republican Party. The Senator is able to legitimize his decision with the legendary story of Morrill. Jeffords states the he descends from a state devoted to education. He then offers a legendary story to support Vermont's role as the "education state." The Senator asks the listener to assume that if he is to continue to work for education and the traditional beliefs of Vermont, he can no longer associate with the GOP.

This example represents one of the clearest uses of stories and traditions from Vermont's paideia to help rebuild the ethos of Jeffords. Again, he cites himself as the person who is to continue the legacy of great men that have served Vermont in the Senate. He then notes that he will not be able to accomplish this task as a Republican, and this allows the Senator to declare his independence by saying, "In order to best represent my State of Vermont, my own conscience, and the principles I have stood for my whole life, I will leave the Republican party and become an Independent. Control of the Senate will soon be changed by my decision. I will make this change and will caucus with the Democrats for organizational purposes, once the conference report on the tax bill is sent to the President" (My Declaration). With this one section of the speech, Jeffords announces his decision and claims that he is doing it for the betterment of Vermont.

With this statement, Jeffords officially ends his association with the GOP, but he begins a public restoration process that will carry on for the next two years of his political career. From

the beginning, Jeffords evokes notions of the Declaration of Independence to announce his decision in order to begin his restoration process. This rhetorical move serves two important functions for Jeffords' political career. First, by initially linking to an important myth Jeffords sets a softer tone for his later image restoration work. That is, by starting with a discussion of the Declaration of Independence and then declaring his separation from the GOP in a similar way as the colonists when they separated from England, Jeffords sets precedent that the remainder of his arguments will be couched in elements of the mythic. However, second Jeffords sets the stage from which he can make critical arguments from American paideia.

The speech then concludes shortly after the declaration with an appeal to what has been commonly called the myth of the innocent nation. Hughes comments on this common trope by writing, "Americans are committed to creating for themselves a perfect world in a golden age that has little to do with the messy contents of human history with which so many people in so many other parts of the world must deal every day, especially the realities of tragedy, suffering, and death" (157). For Hughes, the myth of the innocent nation is a common trope that is normally employed in times of crisis. In essence, the speaker or writer will call back to a gilded age when everything was pure and remind the audience of the nation's purity. Jeffords who is in a personal crisis of ethos uses this notion that all Americans cling to this myth of innocence to move beyond his present situation of party switching. In sum, the myth of innocence allows Jeffords to move beyond the present situation and tap into the cultural reserve of American paideia to restore his public image.

The use of this innocence is employed when the Senator offers a more abstract view of the future. At the end of the speech Jeffords notes "I was not elected to this office to be something that I am not." He goes on to argue "I have changed my party label, but I have not

changed my beliefs. Indeed, my decision is about affirming the principles that have shaped my career. I hope the people of Vermont will understand it…I am confident that it is the right decision." Jeffords relies on the innocence ideals associated with American and Vermont paideia to encourage the reader down a path of what lies ahead. He claims that "independence" has always been the Vermont way. As a pure and innocent people, Vermonters have always fought for the underdog and the just cause. He goes on to argue that his decision will allow him to "affirm" these "principles" of innocence that he claims have shaped his career.

The appeal to ideals at the conclusion of the speech forges a moral high ground for Jeffords. With these arguments, he makes himself the mythological protector of American paideia, and the audience is asked to consider the benefits of his future acts. Without the restraints of the Republican Party, Jeffords has the freedom to serve as the mythological gatekeeper of American ideals. He transcends the present by asking the audience to place their thoughts on protection of paideia. He asks the listeners to look beyond any conception of wrongdoing and to realize that Jeffords' independent status is one of the few ways that the true political traditions of America can be preserved.

The May 24, 2001 declaration was the climatic end to Jeffords' role in the Republican Party. It is also the text that describes his rebirth as a political independent. Through an appeal to myth and American cultural values, Jeffords is able to restore his self-image. A month following this speech the Senator published his first New York Times best selling book My Declaration of Independence. This text follows the use of these same trends. Jeffords begins the book by quoting the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. He then organizes each section of the book around the myths of innocence or the chosen nation. The second and third chapters of the book are introduced with a section of the Vermont Constitution and the Vermont

Freeman's oath to hasten back to the idea that his home state has always been the "chosen" group fighting for the true ideals of America. The remaining chapter is introduced with a threat by a former Vermont Senator who considered leaving the GOP to call back to the notion that Vermont has always been a pure and innocent people, and to justify the notion that Jeffords must continue in this tradition. In sum, the use of the cultural myths of innocence and the idea of the chosen nation allow Jeffords to preserve his image for the constituent base in Vermont.

One-Year Anniversary

The first year of Jeffords' career as a political independent can be marked as the strongest campaign of image restoration. His discourse throughout this period always looked back to the above mentioned myths of innocence and the chosen nation. After a successful public relations campaign, Jeffords concluded this first year of ethos re-construction with a one-year anniversary speech. A short oration delivered on the steps of the capitol building in Washington DC, this speech solidifies the Senator's ethos restoration by invoking what can be called the myth of the natural nation.

Hughes argues that the "myth of the nature's nation", is at the core of the American creed. In sum, this common trope tells a story that the way things are in the present is the way they are meant to be (Hughes 63). After a long campaign of justifying his decision in the public sphere, Jeffords has now entered a world where he attempts to make his choice look natural and perfectly normal one year removed. If the previous myths helped legitimate the decision, this myth makes the actual idea seem natural and as the world should be.

The one year anniversary speech opens with a retelling of the events that lead him to his present place in the political world. In the very short speech Jeffords notes:

> Since that day, one year ago tomorrow, many people have asked me if I would do this all over again. My answer: absolutely. I have never felt more confident or secure about any decision in my life. My decision to become an independent has forced all branches of government to compromise, to seek moderation, and to find a balanced consensus. (First Anniversary)

With this short concise statement, Jeffords claims that it is his one move that has created a Washington that is closer to its normal state. Jeffords reminds the audience that the world before his switch was in disarray, but his move was a natural progression. In sum, it was the step that was needed to return Washington to a sense of balance.

Jeffords continues to remind the audience that the post-switch Washington is a more natural place, a place the closely resembles the way America is suppose to be offering a list of questions for the audience. As he continues to celebrate his decision he claims:

> What would happen with the direction of the judiciary? Would we continue to protect a woman's right to choose? Would we invest our precious resources to ensure top-quality education for all, or in tax breaks and missile defense? Which would come first, a sound energy policy and respect for the environment, or a shortsighted give-away to business interests and big oil companies? The consequences of doing nothing weighed heavily on my conscience. (First Anniversary)

The list of rhetorical questions Jeffords offers his audience taps into a larger cultural myth rooted in American paideia. Jeffords reminds the audience that the natural role of government is to protect the people's rights and to avoid the perpetuation of special interests. He then claims his decision provided for this protection. Thus, by employing the myth of the natural Jeffords is able

to make his decision appear to be the "way things should be" one year after the enormous ruckus he caused.

Finally, Jeffords makes the strongest call to the natural myth by invoking the words of the great natural poet Robert Frost. At the end of his speech Jeffords argues: I am grateful my switch has brought more balance to our national debate and that more Americans feel they have a voice in Washington, D.C. The course of this year has shown me the power one voice can have; but the beauty of our democracy is that all of us have this power. We all have the ability to make a difference. To quote poet Robert Frost, a fellow who loved Vermont as much as I do:

> Two roads diverged in a wood, and I took the one less traveled by, And that has made all the difference." Frost does not specify precisely what difference his choice made, only that he would not choose to turn back. I feel the same way. (First Anniversary)

In sum, Jeffords harks back to the natural imagery that the mention of the Frost poem brings for an American audience. In sum, he places himself on that path in the woods that requires a choice. By employing the Frost poem Jeffords makes his decision appear natural, and he taps into a cultural reserve that suggests that the current situation is the proper state of affairs. In sum, through the use of the natural myth Jeffords ethos work has come full circle and he has tapped into the cultural reserve of American paideia to make his decision legitimate, justified, and natural.

Concluding Thoughts

In his analysis of Robert Kennedy's remarks on Vietnam, John Murphy writes, "the very standards for determining the advantageous for a community may rest in its interpretations of its past experiences" (187). With two short orations and a powerful book, the self-proclaimed

rhetorical underdog of the US Senate carefully restored his public image and altered the legislative agenda of the 107th Congress by engaging in a rhetorical interpretation of the history of Vermont. In many ways, the Senator addresses his crisis of persona by trying to retell the history of Vermont in a way that casts his very being as the living embodiment of the state's traditions and narratives. In essence, Jeffords taps into what I call Vermont's padeia to suggest that he is acting the way the great figures of the past would have acted. In turn, Jeffords asks his constituents to accept his new persona and his new position as they would accept the behavior of the great figures of the past.

In other words, Jeffords repairs his image by trying to rebuild what Halloran might call a cultural ethos. In his discussion of rhetorical tropes and criticism, Halloran writes:

> The name given to the third of the traditional modes of rhetorical appeal, ethos, underlines the importance of the orator's mastery of the cultural heritage: through the power of his logical and emotional appeals, he became a kind of living embodiment of the cultural heritage, a voice of such apparent authority that the word spoken by this person was the word of communal wisdom, a word to be trusted for the weight of the person who spoke it and of the tradition he spoke for. (235-6)

Halloran's comments speak directly to the rhetorical appeals present in the work of Senator Jeffords. As a political figure in a jeopardizing situation, the Senator uses his knowledge of Vermont history to identify with the past, the audience, and to ultimately restore the faith of the people in his ability to represent their interest in Congress.

This chapter has offered a discussion of how the concept of "American paideia" influences the rhetorical style of Senator James Jeffords. Ultimately, Jeffords furthers his image

preservation by casting the Republican Party in opposition with American paideia. He mentions aspects of paideia, argues that he represents or tries to represent these ideas, and then tells the audience that his leaving the GOP is the only way these traditional ideals will be upheld in the federal government. Jeffords symbolizes the Republican Party as a threat to the "American way," and places himself as the cultural warrior who will prevent any harm to American political ideals.

This chapter suggests how the Jeffords discourse may illustrate a technique that preserves public image through audience's interaction. Paideia represents the entirety of cultural beliefs, ideals, myths, and legends that facilitate the crafting of a national or cultural identity. American paideia represents a socially constructed phenomenon with a copious amount of rhetorical possibilities. The elements of paideia construct a national conception of truth and morality that evoke passion, obligation, and reverence in the American electorate.

Jeffords' works illustrate a way orators can tap in to these beliefs with the rhetorical tools of Greece and Rome. If a politician wishes to legitimize a personal decision that might be considered "radical" or "different" from the norms of government practice, he or she can claim their actions resemble the tales of a famous American government figure. By symbolically connecting to Washington, Jefferson, or Lincoln, the Politician engages in a conversation with the American people to illustrate how their situation or decision mimics a similar move of the past. This gives politicians and public figures a strong tool for garnering the adherence of the American people. In describing his theory of identification Kenneth Burke argues, "You persuade a man only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, identifying your ways with his" (Burke 55). In many ways however, Jeffords goes beyond the theories of Burke by becoming the actual myths, stories, and words he

speaks. Jeffords not only speaks the history of Vermont, he in a strange way becomes the history of Vermont. This puts him in a new rhetorical place. By identifying with the past in such a way that he actually becomes the past, Jeffords restores his arête, his ethos with the audience, by placing the listeners in a demanding situation. In sum, he identifies so much with the past that he becomes the past, and thus prevents the audience from rejecting his decision because a rejection of Jeffords is a rejection of the past.

It is my critical belief that Senator Jeffords has left future politicians with a new manner to dispute the social conventions of American politics and authentically rationalize their choice in the light of negative press by building what may best be summarized as a process of identification through myth. Politicians wishing to alter the standard and often simple-minded approach to modern government should follow the "Jeffords plan" to increase support and preserve their image in the light of the American media and electorate. Finally, the contemporary success of Jeffords suggests the continued importance of myth and rhetorical narrative in contemporary American society.

CHAPTER THREE:

OH THE (AGON)Y!

CONGRESSIONAL PARTY SWITCHERS AND THE CONSTITUENCY QUESTION

"The people to whom you talk are not inert. They are not a mere mass. They are not all alike. Each listener is a tiny world winging through space…there are only two means by which these groups are controlled: forceful domination, or the peaceful persuasion of men's minds." (98)
William Norwood Brigance
Speech: Its Techniques and Disciplines in a Free Society

"I looked for that other organization and I found it in one word, a word that has always symbolized my state and my nation and now defines me: Independent." (276)
Senator James Jeffords
An Independent Man

In the United States, 2002 and 2003 represented two years of radical political activity by the Bush administration that created an environment of animosity in Washington. For example on January 24, 2002 President George W. Bush labeled the nations of Iran, Iraq, and North Korea the "axis of evil," and he set forth on a military campaign to rid the world of terrorist activity. The Bush administration continued its declarative, isolationist political activity by refusing to accept the United Nations ratified International Criminal Court that was passed on April 4, 2002. Finally, on June 10, 2002 the United States government under the leadership of President Bush abandoned the 31 year old antiballistic missile treaty. These and many other political moves set a new tone for diplomacy and government relations in Washington. It seems the early years of the George W. Bush administration set the stage for a climate that was not based on consensus, did not seek deliberative communication, and did not engage citizens in rational argumentation for the purpose of making the most informed political decision.

Besides complicating the lives of all Americans, the new political climate in Washington problematized the day to day activities of the nation's congressional representatives. Forced to exist in a world of polarizing decisions and threatening unilateral moves, political leaders in the House and Senate clung fervently to party lines. This forced the legislative bodies of the United States into a period of gridlock, not cooperation. As a newly declared political independent, Senator Jeffords reacted to this political environment with a novel rhetorical style. In essence, the period between 2002 and 2003 set the stage for what can be labeled Jeffords' second round of party switching discourse. In honor of the second anniversary of his decision to leave the Republican Party, Senator Jeffords issued his Second Anniversary Speech to the National Press Club. This speech given on June 5, 2003 was broadcast to a national audience on National Public Radio. This public statement both celebrated and further justified his decision to leave the Republican Party and it marks a transition to what I call his "Second stage" of party-switching rhetoric. In essence, a close read of this text shows that the *Second Anniversary* speech officially ends the Senator's efforts to rebuild his ethos, and it is this speech that works to constitute a new constituency or following for this figure. In the speech, Jeffords issues strong accusations and criticism of both the Republican and Bush agendas. If the earlier works established an independent persona for the Senator, then the *Second Anniversary* speech takes an argumentative and accusatory tone that challenges policies and government action. I contend that this final speech in a long trajectory of rhetorical discourse represents the Senator taking his new persona "out for a spin" in a deliberative community that can no longer be characterized as a place of rational reflection.

I argue that this *Second Anniversary* speech serves as an example of evolved party switching rhetoric. I further suggest that the text also presents an interesting case from which to

consider the rhetorical role of political independents in a system based on two-party deliberation. In this later stage of rhetorically challenging partisan politics, Jeffords no longer faces a crisis of ethos. He has confronted this previous dilemma with his earlier speeches, essays, and memoirs. Now he must overcome the complexities of building a constituency sensitive to his claims. Thus, Jeffords has tended the home fires and secured his local constituent base. However, his efforts to rebuild his persona are somewhat in vain for the goal of influencing the larger good if he does not take his agenda to a larger audience. In essence, without an attempt to influence politics on the national level, his whistle-blowing against the harms of partisan politics in Washington are in vain. For Jeffords to complete the project he set forth in his earlier rhetoric, he must now attempt to take his message to a larger, national audience. In this chapter, I show that Jeffords uses this later stage of discourse to both craft a larger following and continue his project of becoming a critical, independent voice of partisan politics.

To accomplish his goal of building a national audience, Jeffords must craft his rhetorical acts in a manner that will expunge his image of any improper associations. Thus, I argue that Kenneth Burke's concept of redemption provides an interesting window to view the structure and style of the *Second Anniversary* speech. However, although Burke's redemptive cycle provides a crucial framework from which the critic can see how the Senator rids himself of impious associations, it fails to speak to the actual communicative practices in which he engages. What words does Jeffords use? What tropes build connections with the audience? What rhetorical style characterizes later works of party switching? To answer these questions and to offer a more detailed framework to understand the elements of the speech, Burke's theories will be combined with what John Dewey would calls *agonistic rhetoric*.

Due to both the contextual situation of American politics during the early years of the Bush administration and his personal dilemmas as a congressional party switcher, it seems that trying to enter a world of dialogue and conversation is not the most productive mode of communication for the Senator. Thus, Jeffords reveals his message and overcomes his personal rhetorical obstacles by situating himself as another force of disturbance in a bi-furcated and unfriendly deliberative climate. In sum, the speech celebrating the second anniversary of Jeffords' decision acts as an agonistic force by structuring itself around critiques of character and critiques of policy.

The remainder of this chapter will proceed in three parts. First, I seek to provide reasons as to why the Senator makes the rhetorical moves to constitute a larger national audience. Thus, the first section of this chapter will ask: Why would a congressional party switchers desire to build a larger base of support than the members of their own constituency? Second, I provide a theoretical discussion of both Burke and Dewey and contemporary uptakes of their critical projects. I also provide a brief discussion of the classic topoi of political campaign rhetoric. Finally, I provide a close reading of the *Second Anniversary* Speech to show how the stylistic devices within the speech function to create unity for a specific group of people and provide this political group with an appropriate enemy or political foe. It is also important to note at this juncture that Senator Jeffords' second New York Times best selling book An Independent Man helps confront the same rhetorical problems that are dealt with in the *Second Anniversary* Speech. However, for purposes of this project, this text will only be used to unpack some of the elements of his speech, and it will not serve as an independent artifact for analysis.

Impetus for Forging an Independent Constituency

Before commenting on how Jeffords crafts a national audience, it is important to consider the impetus behind taking his message to the American people at large. As a United States Senator, Jeffords is a leader and respected public servant. Also, as a former member of the Republican Party who is vested in speaking of the ills of partisan politics, the critic can assume that the Senator has some aspirations of influencing the larger political system for the greater good. For instance, in the conclusion of An Independent Man, he writes, "I hope you'll see that one person can make a difference, not just on the political landscape but in the priorities I believe are essential to a democratic nation" (300). From this and many other similar comments, it is safe to assume that challenging the harms of partisan politics are part of the Senator's priorities.

Taking his message to a national stage is a justifiable and promising goal, but it is particularly problematic due to his lack of celebrity status or strong power alliances. As a freshly minted political independent he is without a core, established group of voters that are committed to his policy positions. It is a safe assumption that the Jeffords who delivers the 2003 Anniversary speech does not have the luxury of speaking to a core group of followers like Democratic Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton or Republican Senator Trent Lott. When Senator Jeffords enters a rhetorical situation as a born again political independent, he cannot be assured that there will be a portion of the audience that is devoted to his political organization and agenda since political independents are without a collectively organized voice in the public sphere. For his noble goals of transitioning national politics and influencing the common good to have a positive impact on the nature of American political organization, Jeffords will need to convince a larger group than simply the people of Vermont. I argue that in 2003, it was both viable and possible for the Senator to achieve this goal.

First, 2002 and 2003 saw more than the publication of Jeffords' second book and the delivery of his third celebration speech. It was a year of very heated midterm elections across the nation. While covering these elections, several political analysts returned to the impact of the Jeffords decision. Nather with CQ Weekly noted, "A year after Sen. James Jeffords I-Vt, defected from the GOP, the party still struggles with the question of how to accommodate its moderates" (1289). The journalist goes on to argue:

> Republican consultants are telling lawmakers that swing voters will play a more decisive role in this year's midterm elections than in most midterm elections because so few races will be competitive. That means both parties, while doing everything they can to motivate their core supporters to vote, also will be looking for ways to appeal to moderates and other swing voters. (Nather 1289)

In 2002, one year after the switch, the middle portion of the electorate dominated the minds of parties and political analysts. The focus of election strategists was not on the concerns and worries of loyal party members. Instead, politicians and consultants speculated about the needs of an ambiguous group of voters who show no strong allegiance to either political organization. Thus, this common characterization of the American electorate as containing a growing and viable middle ground set the foreground for an independent voice, a place that is easily filled by a figure such as the ex-Republican Jeffords.

Also, Chait with the New Republic solidifies Nather's arguments concerning the demographics of the 2002 electorate. Chait claims that in the 2002 elections the Democrats were targeting a group known as the "office park dads," the replacement for the once sought after group known as the "soccer moms" (Chait 12). A common electoral strategy, each political party will seek to attract the attention of a key group that shows the potential to be "persuaded."

Chait argues that "both Republicans and Democrats perennially debate the relative merits of placating the party base versus reaching out to the center" (12). He then chastises the parties for changing their views to attract that cycle's "go-to group," and he suggests that is particularly problematic to view the swing vote "as a unified bloc" (Chait 14). Chait's claim highlights two important elements for the analysis of the later party switching rhetoric of Senator Jeffords. First, it is clear that despite labels and identities, there is a large group of Americans that vote without strong allegiance to either political party. However, the more important issue that is brought forth by Chait is that this group lacks a clear identity. In essence, they have not been properly constituted and unified as a core group of voters. The Democrats and Republicans try to label and analyze independent voters with polls and analysis, but in the end the groups lack direction and purpose because of an absence of organization. Thus, the re-crafted Jeffords can use his new political persona as a tool to speak to this ambiguous group, hoping to provide these voters with some sense of purpose and meaning and allowing him to have a greater impact on the national political landscape.

In Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres, Gerarld Hauser writes, "in the face of its definition as a political entity based on shared interests, we seem compelled that "the public" is moribund" (35). While Hauser makes a compelling argument, his claim might be altered to read that "the public" is not dead but rather it is in a period of transition. To be more specific, the political public should no longer be viewed through the lens of the two parties. Instead, Americans who actively participate in the electoral process are starting to organize into multiple publics, smaller groups of individuals organized for collective interest. Although a large majority of Americans still cling to partisan politics, a growing number of voters are becoming less faithful in their political allegiances. This group may no not

be a "political entity" or unified group, but these voters are far from being a group of people who are "dead." It seems that the problem is not the lack of a cohesive group of people, but that there is a potential group without a sense of unification or a leading advocate. It seems the stage was set in 2003 for Jeffords to emerge as this advocate or critical voice that could both alter the partisan environment of Washington politics and unify the disheartened swing voters of America. In sum, the impetus for crafting a national audience lies in two simple ideas: it was possible and necessary. It was possible because of the climate in which the second anniversary speech was created. It was necessary because Jeffords must reach out to a larger national audience in order to affect the political system of the United States

The (Agon)y of the Political Independent

In Chapter One, I provided a lengthy description of some of the major theoretical work that has been done on both agonistic rhetoric and Burke's redemptive style. The remainder of this chapter will expand on these earlier comments by highlighting the specific work that will be crucial to understanding the critical read offered at the end of this chapter. To provide for this understanding, this section will briefly elaborate on the classical notions of agon and agonistic discourse and highlight how politicians such as Jeffords combine this style with the redemptive process outlined by Kenneth Burke.

In terms of classical rhetorical theory, agon speaks to a situation or struggle and competition. In classical times, an agonistic environment represented a place where "the people" would come together in the spirit of opposition to reveal different allegiances, viewpoints, and ideals. In the classical world, the notion of agon was mostly closely related with the athletic competitions of the Greek city-states. However, the term soon came to speak of the intellectual and philosophical competitions of the great minds of the ancient Hellenes. Deborah Hawhee

claims that communicating with the ultimate goal of producing alterations in the public sphere is a defining characteristic of an agonistic environment (185). Much like ancient society, modern political situations are still riddled with moments of agonism. Gathering and communicating, the interlocutors who are present in these situations exist in a discursive world ripe with persuasive potential.

Hawhee further describes these spaces of agonism by writing, "As scholars such as Walter Ong, John Poulakos, and Jeffery Walker have pointed out, agonism provided an important context for the emergence of rhetoric in antiquity" (Hawhee 185). Agon should not be viewed as a simple head to head competition for the ultimate goal of victory (Hawhee 186). Instead, agon refers to an actual meeting or gathering of individuals. Agon is more concerned with bringing people together for a certain goal rather than simply trying to inoculate an argument or idea in the public sphere. Hawhee writes, "The word agon suggests movement through struggle, a productive training practice wherein subjective production takes place through the encounter itself" (186). Thus, agon in turn refers to bringing people together to witness some form of struggle that ultimately produces a new level of selfhood or identity.

The earliest examples of agon that scholars have identified come from the poetry of both Hesiod and Homer. Although it took many forms in the ancient world, in contemporary philosophical circles agon seems to have distinct meanings and clear associations with the act of rhetorical invention and communication. For the ancients, the notion of the agon was closely tied with communal ideals of a good soul or person or strength and honor. As Hawhee argues, "at the heart of the ancient agon lies the concept of arête, for the struggling contest served as a stage of sorts. Arête was associated with the goodness, courage and prowess of a warrior" (187). In a modern context, it can be argued that agonal situations still hold their ties with notions of the

good person building up of communal support for a person. However, it is important to remember that they are still situations in which no consensus is sought. It is the act of communication and collecting that make these situations distinct from a mere deliberative organization. Simon Goi writes, "Agonal settings do not aim to produce any policy-making consensus" (56). She goes on to argue that "their value is in their potential to counteract the manipulation of issues by large-scale organization for strategic purposes, and instead to shift…the mutual perceptions of citizens concerning the very nature at hand" (Goi 56). Thus, agonal settings provide for a more direct interaction of issues and provide a setting at which to organize a large body of people.

For these ancient theoretical perspectives it is clear that an agon or an agonal space allows for the gathering of an audience, is a situation marked by struggle and competition, and is closely tied with preservation and building of arête. Lawrence J. Hatab provides a nice connection between agon and modern discourse by writing:

> Language is the weapon in democratic contests. The binding results, however, produce tangible effects of gains and losses that make political exchanges more than just talk or game…The urgency of such political contests is that losers must yield to, and live under, the policies of the winner; we notice, therefore, specific configurations of power, of domination and submission in democratic politics. (63)

In Hatab's world, language is a form of weaponry in democratic politics and an agonistic rhetorical setting becomes a clear sparing of words that does not seek consensus or organized unification. Instead it becomes a process of unifying a people through the mere act of interaction.

This lack of interaction and the death of any sphere where individuals are allowed to engage in rational, political argument have produced a growing number of apathetic voters in the United States. Goi suggests that "when citizens feel that the decision-making apparatus of the state has already chosen to exclude their perspectives, their inclination is to retreat into the private sphere of insular communities or to resort to violence to balance the power they feel they lack before the institutions of the state" (59). In the United States, it seems that as the idea of deliberation and public engagement decreases the number of apathetic voters increase. It also appears that this group reacts to the situation in one of two ways. First, many retreat further and further into either of the established political parties. Second, it seems that the less ideological committed, but no less apathetic, voters are left in the middle without any clear sense of organization. It is the death of the Habermasian public sphere, the lack of any chance of equal deliberation, that creates a place where the agonistic becomes one of the most salient and prominent persuasive tools to inspire and persuade the disaffected mass of American political voters. In essence, political change is inspired by avoiding the old strategies of the deliberative processes. Instead, a communication strategy that organizes the apathetic and inspires change by offering an oppositional and critical voice in the public sphere becomes the most productive communicative approach in the contemporary political climate.

The agonistic rhetorical setting becomes a particular fruitful environment for renegade, congressional party switchers such as Senator Jeffords. In applying the ancient notion of agon to modern political settings, Goi argues that these "discursive places" are marked by three characteristics. First, agonal settings are concerned not with agreement or consensus but they are instead marked by the ability to inspire opposition to old mantras and political styles that might be oppressive to the proper governing of the nation (Goi 60). Second, these environments avoid

the limitations of rationality and reason that are seen in models such as Habermas' deliberative democracy, and instead they stress the "performative or theatrical element of political participation" (Goi 61). Finally, as Goi notes, these settings provide "the cultivation of contestation as a means to preserve the liveliness and vibrancy of democracy" (61). These characteristics make up the agonal setting that allow political leaders to challenge the status quo and influence the political process for the common good in the face of an ever growing apathetic American constituency.

Although Goi provides an accurate description of what comprises and agonistic rhetorical setting, John Dewey outlines what comprises an agonistic communicative style. As mentioned in Chapter One, agonistic rhetoric represents a style marked by three dominant characteristics. This style of communication first promotes division from the dominant or primary political organizations and political parties, and it avoids any attempt to unify with these groups or associations. Second, this style offers conflict in the public sphere and tries to avoid any attempt at conversation on the issues being discussed. Agonistic communication is more about influencing change by promoting a personal agenda, it is not about rationally engaging the ideas and concerns of the loyal opposition. Finally, this style of discourse will identify a foe in an ambiguous manner. A foe or oppositional identity will be presented to the public, but this group or individual will not be identified by name as to avoid entering the conversational mode that is avoided in this mode of communication. It is this style of communication that allows the rhetor to create an agonal space and bring together a new group in hopes of influencing large scale change in the political arena.

In the rhetorical world of Senator Jeffords, an agonistic rhetorical setting seems to be the ideal process through which he can inspire large scale change. When he begins preparation for

the *Second Anniversary* speech he has to confront the problem of establishing a larger group of people to here his message. However, he also needs to rid himself of some final layers of social impiety. As he addresses a new national audience, he still has to be cognizant of the fact that an independent classification also brings a level of social impiety. Thus, in the speech he has to move the blame of his switch onto a scapegoat and emerge as a vindicated leader of the politically apathetic, independent voter in the United States. My critical read suggests that the *Second Anniversary* speech seems to create an agonal setting from which he can unify this block of voters. The speech travels a clear redemptive cycle and uses certain agonistic rhetorical strategies to both cure him of any social sins and to allow him to constitute a new following.

Also, my critical analysis highlights that the structure of the speech heightens the agonistic space in which Jeffords wages his attacks on President Bush and the GOP. In his discussion of President Clinton's 2004 Convention speech, John Murphy claims that Clinton makes a case against President Bush by focusing on elements of character and policy (To Form 675). Murphy argues that topics of character and topics of policy are the classic topoi of American campaign rhetoric. Although Jeffords speech does not necessarily fit within the genre of campaign discourse, as an elected representative who is trying to forge a national audience this speech is closely related. Similar to Murphy's analysis of Clinton, my read of Jeffords suggests that the Senator's rhetorical techniques create a site in which the audience, as independent interlocutors, can critique the partisan President Bush for failures in both character and policy.

In what follows, I answer the second question posed at the beginning of this section of the project. How does Senator Jeffords rid himself of impious associations and allow for the construction of a new core group of supporters? The answer seems to be that he creates an

agonistic environment and engages in communication acts that break from old traditions of deliberative democracy.

Constituting a New Constituency: Experimentation with a Redemptive Agonistic Style

The ***Second Anniversary Speech*** of Senator Jeffords represents an interesting place in the rhetorical trajectory surrounding the party switch decision. In An Independent Man, the Senator writes, "But the best of life, I learned at an early age, is being part of something larger than yourself. My decision to become an independent was prompted by that sense of public responsibility, something I've been trying to explain to folks ever since I made it" (Jeffords 1). It is clear that at the core of his political activity, Jeffords desires to inspire change at the national level. Although he has been featured in the national news, the Senator is still solely an elected representative from the state of Vermont. The remainder of this chapter will illustrate the elements in the *Second Anniversary Speech* that allow the senator to unify a national following to adequately fulfill his "sense of public responsibility."

In the textual analysis that follows, I argue that this anniversary speech serves as a rhetorical tool that constitutes a larger group of followers for Jeffords. His efforts to bring his message to a national public can be seen most clearly by looking at the historically recorded audience of the speech. The actual location illustrates the first elements of Jeffords' agonistic style. Jeffords gave the address before the National Press Club in Washington D.C. This immediate audience gives him access to a wide variety of people. First, due to the location of the delivery, the speech was broadcast over National Public Radio. Second, the room in which the speech took place was filled with reporters and journalists working for the national press corp. Thus, Jeffords realized that his text would reach a wide variety of people. The first two speeches that celebrated his decision to leave the Republican Party were directed to the people of

Vermont. The first speech occurred within the State of Vermont and the first anniversary speech took place on the steps of the capitol building in Washington D.C. However, by taking the national stage for the first time as a political independent, Jeffords seems to be taking the first steps necessary to promote a personal division from partisan politics for a national audience.

The actual location of the speech illustrates that he is no longer only speaking to the people who put him in office. With this speech, Jeffords now assumes a larger public stage. While speaking in Vermont, Jeffords' celebration of his decision was not as problematic for the mainstream parties. However, with the onset of the second anniversary, Jeffords makes his remembrance a national event. Thus, in a symbolic way Jeffords has followed the agonistic approach suggested by John Dewey. He does not engage the other parties in conversation, but instead uses a platform reserved for normal, party identified politicians to challenge the status-quo. It seems this national audience allows for his first move toward constituting a new group of people, and it is the first illustration of how this speech offers a sense of distraction and challenge to the two-party system.

With a strong base of voters in Vermont, Jeffords uses this speech as his first opportunity to take his message to a national audience. As both a party switcher and a political independent, Jeffords can make bold claims about party politics and strong criticisms of the Republican agenda as a political insider. However, he has to remain conscious of the notion that he is trying to build a base of support from an American people that has been socialized to believe in the faith and purpose of political parties. Jeffords represents an anomaly in Washington politics. He is a member of arguably the most powerful legislative body in the world, yet he does not answer to party leaders or platforms. He has committed a large social impiety by breaking from the social norm of party association, but his earlier rhetoric has displayed that he has the ability to

keep the support of the people in Vermont. Thus, the Second Anniversary speech allows Jeffords to attempt to rid himself of a larger social impiety and try to constitute a larger audience through the use of an agonistic rhetorical style. He primarily accomplishes this in the speech through the use of rhetorical questions and ambiguous pronoun use.

Seeking Redemption and Building a National Audience

A look at the actual outline of the speech provides the best indication of the new communication style that emerges in the Jeffords' speech. The following list shows the topics discussed in the address. It also shows where the phrases "saying one thing and doing another" and "does he think we don't notice?" are placed. Jeffords uses these two statements as hinge points throughout the speech to transition from one topic to the next. The speech is organized as follows:

--War in Iraq and Weapons of Mass Destruction
Does he think we don't notice?
--United Nations and weapons inspectors ignored
Does he think we don't notice?
--Unemployment and the federal deficit
Does he think we don't notice?
--Tax cuts for the top income brackets
Does he think we don't notice?
--More discussion of federal deficit as it relates to education (specifically special education)
Does he think we don't notice?
--problems with budgets at the state level
Saying one thing and doing another
--Education
Saying one thing and doing another
--Discussion of Environmental policies
Does he think we don't notice?
--More discussion of other environmental issues (economic arguments)
Saying one thing and doing another
--Clean Air Act an HW Bush Administration
Does he think we don't notice?
Well we do notice. We do care. And it does matter.

Ultimately this structure and style does three things for Jeffords. The repeated use of the word we in the rhetorical question that is used as a transition phrases provides his target audience with some form of identity. As Jeffords moves from one topic to the next, he acknowledges that this group of followers is aware of the political situation they face. He also creates a sense of urgency by providing this group in conflict with an oppositional force. Thus, the structure of the speech allows Jeffords to enter the sphere of public communication without engaging in direct conversation with the audience. This type of dialogue allows the Senator to pass his guilt off onto a third party and emerge as the vindicated leader of this new group of political independents.

However, the most powerful element of the speech's structure can be located in the fact that the two recurring phrases in the Jeffords speech represent two classic campaign attack strategies. As mentioned earlier, the speech in many ways centers around arguments about policy and arguments about character. The first group of criticisms offered by Jeffords lays out serious policy claims against the president. All of the information organized around the question, "does he think we don't notice" are direct attacks on Republican political polices. By organizing these arguments around a biting rhetorical question, the Senator casts the audience as rational and logical. Rhetorical questions imply that the answer already exists in the minds of the audience. Thus, with this clever organizational pattern, he makes the people his political equal.

However, the second half of the speech continues to organize around the classical tropes of political argument by focusing on the character of the president. When Jeffords switches to instances in which the President has "said one thing" and "done another," he is clearly attacking the personal credentials of President Bush. This hammers the message home for his new

audience by casting enormous amounts of sin on Bush. In sum, the second half of the speech becomes a rhetorical well from which the audience can choose their method of redemption. In other words, Jeffords attacks the character of the Republican president and emerges as a model for the audience to follow. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note, "A model shows us what behavior to follow and also serves as a guarantee for an adopted behavior" (364). In many ways, the president becomes a bad example or the antithesis of what the now new and credible Jeffords represents. In sum, Jeffords has already identified with the audience in the policy claims. In the first half of the speech he marks himself as one of the people he addresses. Then, the second half of the speech witnesses Jeffords marking himself a model of what the audience already represents. It also shows the Senator making the President the antithesis of proper political action by issuing direct attacks on his Bush's character.

Ultimately, as my analysis will show, the structure and style of the speech accomplish two tasks for the Senator. First, they allow him to overcome feelings of impiety by seeking redemption for his switch from the national public. Second, the persuasive strategies of his words and claims not only show the Senator moving through the process of public redemption, but they highlight the use of an agonistic style to help constitute a larger national following. This construction happens most clearly with the use of the term "we" in a common repeated phrase that allows the people in the audience to realize they are part of a larger disgruntled group and allows Jeffords to emerge as a vindicated and socially pious public figure.

The use of policy claims to help forge a national audience happens clearly in the initial sections of the speech. For example, the attacks on the policies of the president are clearly seen in the first few critiques of the speech. First, Jeffords constitutes political independents as a viable audience and group by discussing the Bush tax cuts. In this section of the speech he opens

with, “we will be paying for his tax cuts with borrowed funds, money borrowed from our children and grandchildren who will be forced to foot the bill. And, according to reports, the Bush administration intends to as ask for more tax cuts next year” (*Second Anniversary* Speech). Jeffords then discusses the facts and figures associated with these tax cuts. He then offers criticism of why these moves are problematic for the American economy. After the informative remarks Jeffords asks his ongoing question, “does he think we don’t notice?” (*Second Anniversary*). This is a classic example of how the audience is constituted throughout the speech. Jeffords opens with a topic that is controversial in the public arena. He then reminds the audience of what has happened around this issue and then offers some quick analysis from his position as a Washington insider. He then offers the recurring rhetorical question.

It is important to note that the use of the term “we” includes Jeffords in the audience. This speech does not create an identity for Republicans or Democrats. These groups already have positions and leaders in the public realm. Instead, this speech serves to give voice to the political independents. Jeffords realizes that the 2000 and the 2002 elections both were decided by the independent, swing voters. Jeffords is a new member of this caucus since he is free of a party label. However, this group lacks any type of cohesive unity. The rhetorical question allows Jeffords to emerge as both a public member and a leader of this group. He mentions that the “we,” are group that includes him and all other independent people, has noticed the actions of a partisan president. Jeffords suggests that this group realizes that neither party is working to eradicate these problems. In his speech he attempts to show that this group is becoming weary of these moves. Thus, the speech centers on this stylistic device to provide a voice and place for the independent. Jeffords want the independent voter to realize that they are not alone in their critique, that their critique matters, and that he will fight for this group’s cause. Thus, the

rhetorical question provides for the construction of another constituent base that is often overlooked but immensely important to mainstream politicians.

This construction of an independent audience continues with Jeffords discussion of *Operation Iraqi Freedom*. He opens this section of the speech by stating, "In Iraq, we have seen the inexcusable results of what happens when the Bush Administration says one thing and does another. Last fall, the President said UN weapons inspectors would be allowed to do their job, but in reality, he didn't give them the time they needed" (*Second Anniversary*). This opening is then followed with Jeffords making remarks as a political insider about the current investigation of the President's actions. Jeffords end this section with a series of rhetorical questions like "Why the hurry to invade a country and use military force in such an unprecedented manner?" and "Where was the immanent threat to the United States? and "Where are the weapons of mass destruction?" (*Second Anniversary*). Then the speech asks the recurring question, "Does he think we don't notice" (*Second Anniversary*). The use of rhetorical question is the tool that allows for the construction of an implied audience.

Like in other examples the independent voter is asked to contemplate the situation in Iraq. Hard-line Republicans are completely supportive of the President's international efforts. In contrast, the opposition party is leading the task forces and investigations that Jeffords cites as evidence against the President's acts. It is the use of "we" and rhetorical questions that allows the independent voter to gain a sense of agency from the speech. As a political independent Jeffords employs the pronoun "we" like in the other examples. The use of "we" requires the recognition of a group of people with a similar mindset as the speaker. The rhetorical question not only points the text towards sharp criticism of the Bush administration, but it gives voice to political independents because it allow for the recognition of a collective conscience among

these voters. Jeffords rhetorical "we" has both witnessed the war in Iraq, questioned the war in Iraq, and has noticed what the partisan, Republican administration has accomplished with its international policies. Jeffords' critique is not conversational, but it instead spurs conflict and controversy. It is an agonistic approach that creates a sense of unity for independents at the same time. The rhetorical questions and the recurring question solidify the ideology of this group, and Jeffords becomes the public representation of this group's critique. Thus, independent voters receive their identity from Jeffords who uses the celebration of his decision to remind them that they are not in a state of solitude. In sum, the use of this rhetorical question allows the text to provide an opportunity for the independent voter to feel empowered and energized for political action.

Dewey claims that the problem with the political system is the lack of public engagement. For any counter-party movement to have success, it must first provide voters with a sense of urgency and unity. By using the term "we" Jeffords has indicated his belief that there are others who share his independent ideology. He then provides a series of critiques that are not conversational and open for debate. His remarks are swift, accusatory, and spur division from mainstream actions. With these remarks and the recurring rhetorical question, Jeffords is able to complete two tasks. First, he uses his new persona that is free of party labels and invites the others with similar mindset to join his cause. He has actively engaged a specific audience and solved the rhetorical problem or exigence highlighted by Dewey. Second, he not only engages this audience but constitutes them with his rhetorical style. Before the *Second Anniversary* speech and the action of Jeffords political independents did not have a powerful leader with the position of Jeffords. With this speech, Jeffords uses his role as a Senator and the celebration of his earlier decision to become a leader of a group he both creates and provides with agency.

Thus, he has become an agonistic force in the public sphere and has used an argumentative style to provide a previously ambiguous group with some form of unity, a voice, and an explicit role in American politics.

Republicans and Bush: The "He" in Jeffords Remarks

Although this speech goes to great lengths to constitute a group of national independent citizens, it also provides this group with an oppositional force. Further textual analysis will show that the Republican Party and the Bush administration are rhetorically cast as a threat to the audience in the speech. While it is clear that these two groups are independent political actors, Jeffords' independent status leans him towards not only a critique of Bush but also the president's political affiliations. However, it is not my intention to make the claim that this speech is not specifically directed at the Bush administration. As the President of the United States, Bush has become the symbolic leader of the GOP. It should also be mentioned that it was the specific actions of President Bush that pushed Jeffords out of the folds of the Republican leadership. The textual claim I make is that the use of an ambiguous he allows the President to become a synecdoche for the party as a whole. In essence, the use of an ambiguous pronoun allows Jeffords to wage a specific attack at Bush, but in doing this he also is able to attack all Republican politicians. Thus, in an agonistic style Jeffords sets up the Bush administration as the foe, but he uses the generic pronoun "he" to refer to this group so as not to enter into direct conversation with this oppositional force.

Ultimately, Jeffords approaches these groups in the same interrogating style that he constitutes his independent audience. Instead of asking questions to Bush and the GOP, Jeffords offers critique and accusations. This speech is not an attempt to engage his former party in a dialogical conversation. This section will offer an analysis of another element of the same

rhetorical question that constituted the second persona, and it will look at the conclusion of the speech. Both of these elements speak to how an agonistic style allows for the specific exclusion of a certain group of people and the actual formation of a political enemy for his constituted second persona.

The Republican Party is crafted as the third persona for the Jeffords' text with the same stylistic device that constitutes the second persona. In the rhetorical question "Does he think we don't notice?" the second person plural pronoun relies on the realization of a wrongdoing by a third person singular man (*Second Anniversary*). This man is obviously George W. Bush, but the speech is not a personal attack on the character and personality of the President. Instead, the speech is a critique of what Bush represents. The ambiguous "he" in the repeated question nods to the subject on which the second persona contemplates. The Bush administration and the Republican Party is not constituted and not refereed to by this discourse.

They both exist outside the purpose of this speech, and they are excluded for two particular reasons. First, the exclusion allows Jeffords to focus his attention on building an identity for independents. He no longer concerns himself with simply attacking and justifying, but he instead wants to spend the majority of his speech discussing the role of the independent voter. Jeffords does not care for the GOP's opinion and no longer needs to justify why he left the party. Second, the Republicans represent the excluded audience because they are the focus of the nation's problem. He does not speak to the group that is actually causing the situation. Instead, Jeffords wants to raise the consciousness level of the people who can actually change the course of the nation. Jeffords knows he will never persuade the hard-line Republicans. Thus, they become the outside figure that are not constituted but instead critiqued and excluded by the discourse. This ultimately allows for a stronger unification among the audience that the Jeffords'

text constitutes. It is easier to rally an undefined group, when the speaker can identify a common enemy.

It is also important to note the particularly agonistic move that comes from the unification of many people into one pronoun. By conflating President Bush, his administration, and the Republican agenda into one pronoun in his recurring critical question, Jeffords has made a move that speaks to the end of the political conversation. Jeffords does not want to converse about this matter. There is no conversation or discussion to rectify this situation. The "he" has been identified as a particular evil, and Jeffords offers this conflation as an agonistic move. He has not only marked a political enemy, but he has noted the cause of his new audience's problems. The problem is a lot of groups that are so oppressive they do not even receive personal naming. The use of "he" symbolically conflates the problematic groups in a manner that allows the actual audience to realize who is the problem. However, by not referring to them by name in his rhetorical question Jeffords has ended all chances of discussion and adopted a particularly agonistic style. He is not looking for a response from his identified enemy. Instead, he has identified this group, provided a rallying point for the second persona, and in turn silenced his opposition and excluded them from the conversation. This is a particularly agonistic move that allows Jeffords to be a voice where the other parties have failed the American electorate.

For example in the section of the speech devoted to Bush's environmental agenda Jeffords makes strong use of ambiguous phrasing to create an oppositional force. He states, "The President says one thing, but does another. Perhaps this is most apparent when it comes to the environment. With a straight face he talks about protecting resources for our children -- even as he abandons the federal protection of land and air and water as fast as he can" (Jeffords, Second Anniversary). After this direct attack on the President's policies, Jeffords offers his

pivotal rhetorical question, "does he think we don't notice?" In this section of the speech, Jeffords serves as an advocate for the environment. He points out the harms that the present administration is not working to ratify. The audience of the speech can clearly associate the pronoun "he" and the term president with George W. Bush. However, by using these pronouns and generic terms Jeffords accomplishes two tasks. First, after constituting his national audience as a "we" he then gives them a force to fight against with the use of "he." However, to remain truly agonistic, Jeffords does not refer to this oppositional force by name. He does not enter in to any direct conversation with the Bush administration. He merely offers his criticism, mentions to his newly constituted audience that there is an oppositional force in the world, and then he moves forward with other charges and criticisms. In essence, the ambiguous he allows Jeffords to give his new following a foe, but it also allows to him to remain an agonistic force by not entering into any direct conversation with this opposition.

This use of the ambiguous "he" paired with general references to George W. Bush continues throughout other sections of the speech. The most salient example of this rhetorical style occurs when the Senator discusses the President's record on special education. An issue that is close to Senator Jeffords, special education served as one of the catalytic events that encouraged the Jeffords' switch. President Bush and the Republican leadership in Congress failed to support a congressional bill sponsored by Jeffords that would increase funding for special education in public schools, and he then failed to invite Senator Jeffords to a public ceremony honoring an elementary school teacher from Vermont. In this second anniversary speech Jeffords makes notes of the President's shaky education record by stating, "As the President pushes tax cut after tax cut, his Administration still can not find the funding to fulfill the federal government's commitment to special education" (Jeffords, Second Anniversary).

After these opening criticisms, Jeffords launches into a series of pointed attacks. He notes, "While pretending to have compassion for our schoolchildren, the approach of No Child Left Behind is heartless. It chronically under-funds our schools, it sets unattainable goals for our teachers and it steals from schoolchildren the quality education they deserve" (Jeffords, Second Anniversary). This section then concludes with the familiar "does he think we don't notice?"

This section provides the clearest evidence for Jeffords continued use of an agonistic style throughout the speech. Special education is the one issue that has been at the top of Jeffords agenda for his entire career. In his first book he lists the fight over IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) as one of the core reasons he left the Republican Party. In this situation, Jeffords is attempting to bring the issues that are closest to his plan for America to a national audience. This is an ideal opportunity for Jeffords to attempt to engage the Bush administration in direct conflict. He could remind the audience of the bills the administration has rejected. He could show figures that prove the President is not committed to funding special education. However, instead Senator Jeffords offers a list of complaints that uses a generic "he" and a reference to "it" as the cause of the nation's education problems. These rhetorical moves set up a clear opposition for his national audience, and allow Jeffords to serve as an agonistic rhetoric by not offering direct conflict in the public sphere.

Finally, the conclusion of the speech also offers a critical element that further alienates the third persona of the speech. Jeffords states, "Some people might not have agreed with my decision to leave the GOP two years ago, but at least I did it for the reasons I said I did. I was honest about what brought me to that decision" (Second Anniversary). This statement draws a controversial and not conversational compare and contrast scenario with the excluded group. Jeffords acknowledged that many might have felt his decision was wrong. However, he

highlights a problem that exists in the poetical sphere. This problem is a lack of honesty, and the above statement seems to claim that the Bush administration and the partisan politics it represents has failed to honestly speak to the American public. Jeffords' discourse then steps in as the solution. He first identifies how the excluded group has the problem of lying. He then shows how he was honest in the past. Finally, his remarks provide the new constituted second persona with an enemy and a leader to help conquer this problem. Jeffords conclusion allows his discourse to end conversation and become an agonistic force that excludes a specific group while providing agency for the American electorate.

While discourse can constitute, it can also exclude. The *Second Anniversary* speech strategically excludes a conflated Bush administrated and the Republican party with the generic pronoun he, and with comments that allude to indiscretion on the parts of others. This results in two functions for the discourse. First, by excluding these groups Jeffords has established a clear foe for his second persona and offered a rallying point for the agency the speech provides this group. Second, it illustrates Jeffords agonistic style through his refusal to engage the enemy in conversation. Jeffords accuses and suggests but he does not ask questions or offer comments that are up for debate. Instead he gives the "we" of his recurrent question a clear sense of the harms of "he" and how these issues have not been addressed by either dominant party.

Concluding Thoughts

In the opening of this chapter, I made the critical claim that the contextual situation surrounding the second anniversary speech set the stage for Jeffords to rhetorical transform himself into an agonistic public figure. In essence, at this point in his career Jeffords seeks to create a national audience in order to inspire change with his rhetorical acts. The remainder of this chapter will answer how this agonistic style solidifies a national audience for Jeffords. In

essence, in what way does the use of this particular argument strategy allow the Senator to create a new national following? If Jeffords marks a new rhetorical style in the tradition of American political discourse, then how does his new "he vs. we" strategy alter critical understandings of the relationship between rhetorical activity and public participation? In sum, it is important to consider how Jeffords constitutes a national audience, how Jeffords achieved public redemption, and how he challenged the two party system.

First, the discourse surrounding the Jeffords situation provides vibrant examples of how politicians who decide to change their political allegiance might structure their arguments to achieve public acceptance and rebuild their public identities. Individuals like Jeffords who leave their political parties experience a fair amount of public guilt for their move not solely because of the allegations that are waged against them by the media and other political leaders, but also due to the fact that political parties are an established social order and a vibrant part of the American governing process. Thus, these individuals are forced to engage in some form of public redemption with a language style that solves the exigencies of their particular situation. Party switchers engage in Burke's process of scapegoating to free themselves of public sin and blame, but they do this with a style of language that Dewey would call agonistic. The politicians first offer a clean break, which shows their admission of the sin. Second, they identify the foe or place the blame on the actions and misguided moves of their former colleagues. Finally, they offer conflict in the public sphere and allow the parties to discuss the allegations and legitimacy of the decision. By remaining vague and transferring the guilt, the political figure is able to use their past deeds to (re)build their public ethos. They also can hope to keep followers from the old party and gather new support through their refusal to attack and condemn.

Although this speech shows the Senator traveling what Kenneth Burke would call a public redemption cycle, the situation around the second anniversary speech also shows the purging of impiety by the audience. As citizens of the United States, the audience of the Jeffords speech are guilty of both participating in partisan politics and in some ways supporting the President's actions. Jeffords does not simply target liberals with this speech, but he uses this platform to address all Americans. Thus, not only does the Senator have to achieve public redemption in the eye of the audience, but after listening to the critiques Jeffords offers the audience has to seek redemption in light of their knew found knowledge. In a way, Jeffords has led the people to the light and the people must become worthy of the benefits the light may bring. Thus, like Jeffords the "notice" the actions of the President, act as rational beings, place the blame for their current situation on the Bush administration, and then they move forward as renewed and better American citizens.

Second, this speech shows one of the many ways Jeffords serves as a critique to the two party system. It is a safe assumption to say that there is nothing within the text of the Jeffords address that would upset a traditional Democrat. In many ways, the theme of the speech is clearly in line with the traditional platform of the DNC. However, the speech serves as a critique in three important ways. First, the speech casts the activities of the President as too partisan. Throughout the speech, Jeffords talks about the president's transition to the right, and he cites partisan activity as a virus spreading throughout Washington. Second, the speech never mentions the activities of the DNC or the many efforts by the other party that have been implemented to stop the President's activities. In true agonistic form, the Senator does not engage either party in any direct conversation, but he simply serves as a whistleblower. He points out the evils and distances himself from the "scene of the crime." Finally, Jeffords

persona as an independent and the situation that the speech celebrates allows the entire address to metaphorically criticize the current system of political organization. Although Jeffords holds many of the same beliefs as the people within the DNC, he did not officially join this party. Instead, the Senator publicly identifies as an independent and he celebrates this decision with public spectacles and speeches. In sum, the very act of commemorating his declaration of independence serves as a critique of the two party system.

Finally, it should be mentioned that this speech critiques the two party system because at the time of its deliverance Jeffords was speaking a very different language than his Democratic colleagues. While the speech is clearly critical of the President in many ways, the lack of public statements by the DNC speak just as loudly to the situation the Senator addresses. In fact, many Democrats supported the war effort and were reluctant to speak out against the actions of the Bush administration in preparations for a potential presidential run. Thus, the unleashed Jeffords represents a clear criticism of two party politics. He is a renegade politician with the freedom to speak out against what he sees as injustice.

If political parties are to be the guiding forces behind American government, and if these institutions continue to shift and change, then more moments of party switching are sure to affect the American political arena. Thus, scholars need to pay careful attention to the strategies and tactics of the people who fight convention and in many ways offer strong challenges to the two-party system in America. The agonistic practices of party switchers allows them to actively engage in a public redemption process that preserves their ethos and helps build a constituent base that will hopefully support their future place in the political spectrum.

CHAPTER FOUR:

LEAVING THE PARTY FOR GOOD:

LEGENDS, MODELS, AND PARTISAN POLITICS

"I am here to tell you that, despite the obstacles that are inherent in our system, despite the polarization that too often infects the White House and Congress, and despite the shenanigans and gamesmanship of Beltway politics, I have faith. I still believe that one person can make a difference. My life proves that." (292)

Senator James Jeffords

An Independent Man

In an effort to regain his popularity in Vermont and to establish a place for his message on the national stage, Senator James Jeffords of Vermont in many ways relies on what might best be called the narrative of his life. In various stages of his switch, he tells the story of his childhood, his role in the Republican Party, and his new role as a political independent. In other parts of the political party transition, the Senator tells the story of his relationship with President Bush, with the Democrats, and with the two party system. Finally, in very powerful moments of his party switching rhetoric, the Senator makes many references to the narratives of the past. In their discussion of rhetorical narratives, Celeste Condit and John Lucaites suggest that "a rhetorical narrative is a story that serves as an interpretive lens through which the audience is asked to view and understand the verisimilitude of the propositions and proof before it" (94). In many ways, Jeffords lays out many rhetorical narratives over the course of three years that push his national and local Vermont audiences to accept his decision to leave the GOP. By retelling the story of his public service, the story of Vermont, and the story of America Jeffords creates an

interpretative lens for his audiences. In sum, the soft spoken, simple Senator from Vermont took his rhetorical narratives to the people and asked for forgiveness, acceptance, and understanding.

The previous chapters of this thesis argued that the congressional party switching Jeffords was faced with a crisis of ethos and audience. My critical analysis in chapter two pointed to the use of myth to enhance the troubled credibility of the Senator. In chapter three, I suggest that it is through the process of public redemption and agonistic rhetoric that Senator Jeffords is able to create a large national audience. This chapter will expand on my analysis in the previous chapters by offering some final considerations in regards to the rhetoric of Senator Jeffords

In what follows, I offer three final arguments. First, I will reconsider the importance of paideia, myth, and image restoration to suggest that this rhetorical move is crucial to image restoration strategies for congressional party switchers. For a switch to be a success, the switcher must convince the audience that there is a larger good in the world that must be supported over simple loyalty to a political organization. Second, I revisit the notion of modeling and the rhetorical importance of this strategy in terms of party switching discourse. An individual who is attempting to challenge the foundational organizational pattern of the system of government in the United States has to position themselves as a clear model of justice. In short, their decisions needs to be one that is worthy of mimicry. Finally, I conclude with thoughts on the two party system and how the Jeffords decision ironically simultaneously suggests both the fragility and the never ending power of the GOP and the DNC.

Myth, Switching, and Image Restoration

In attempts to justify his decision to leave the Republican Party, Senator Jeffords roots his arguments in the narratives and myths of the past. Although he referenced both the present and the future, it was the "stories" of a hallowed past that served as the main source of

evidentiary support for the switching Senator. In his discussion of narrative, Roland Barthes argues that:

> All classes, all human groups, have their narratives, enjoyment of which is very often shared by men with different, even opposing cultural backgrounds. Caring nothing for the division between good and bad literature, narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself. (79)

Although I do not mean to suggest that myth and cultural legend are an a priori or natural phenomenon, I do offer the argument that each culture has a collection of traditional stories that are more than simply entertaining lessons. Although they are rhetorically constructed, the legends and myths become a canonical group of narratives with extraordinary persuasive power. Following Barthes, these stories and myths are the cornerstone of all societies that speak to all classes and groups. As the Jeffords' situation shows, these communicated narratives hold special meaning with untold rhetorical importance.

The rhetoric that comprises Jeffords transition shows the rhetorical significance of rooting ethos appeals in what I call American paideia. The passing of mythic lessons offers more than simple ethical codes and moral guidelines for future generations. When older generations retell the story of Abraham Lincoln, they are not simply instilling notions of honesty in their children but are suggesting a world where things were better. In essence, by retelling myths and stories Americans create the sense that there was once a "greater good." That although times might be different in the present, in the distant past a world existed where people were honest and fought for justice. In the Jeffords' situation, the Senator found himself in a compromising situation that caused his constituents to question his character and motives. However, the Senator invoked the stories of the past to build a rhetorical identification with the

great figures of both national and state wide political legends. Thus, my first concluding argument is that the Jeffords situation shows that in times of extreme personal crisis, references to the mythic represent a powerful persuasive means to rebuild ethos. By connecting to the figures of the past, a rhetor can become part of that great tradition and rebuild their credibility by the simple process of association.

Model Yourself After my Words

In a recent statement concerning the announcement that Senator Jeffords would not seek reelection in 2006, Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada claimed that Jeffords "has shown that character does not have to be compromised in Washington." Reed went on to argue that "He [Jeffords] has consistently displayed the courage to put what is right ahead of partisan politics, and in doing so, has set a high standard every one of us should strive to meet," (as cited by Graff). Following Reid, I would like to suggest that the Jeffords situation shows the importance of modeling in situation of party switching rhetoric. Reid's comments praise Jeffords as an ideal example for proper political behavior. In sum, the comments by the Senator from Nevada can be extended as proof to suggest that in situations that challenge ethos, and in moments of party switching, the rhetor does not need to simple make references to ideals and moral, they must actually become the model to be followed.

My claim in regards to modeling is that the successful party switcher must encourage action on the part of others to achieve true success. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca note that, "the speaker who asserts his belief in something does not support it merely with his authority. His behavior toward the thing, if he enjoys prestige, can also serve as a model, and prompt others to behave as he does" (368). I would extend this argument to say that in moments of extreme scrutiny, the speaker must actually become the living embodiment of the beliefs they espouse. In

every act, in every speech, in every moment of political activity the party switcher must embody their decision. To put it another way, acts of party switching challenge the very institution of American political organization. Thus, to be justified in such an act, the rhetor must act as a model for the audience. The party switcher must create a situation in which others view them as someone to be followed, as someone who upholds the true message of American democracy. The commentary by Reid suggest that Jeffords may have achieved this task.

American Political Organization and The Specter of Jeffords

Senator James Jeffords' decision to leave the Republican party represents one of the most successful attempts at party switching in the history of the United States. It also represents one of the most eventful. Thus, it serves as an ideal case study to theorize the role of rhetorical discourse in the creation of the two party system. Ironically, the Jeffords situation symbolizes both the fragility and the stability of the American mainstream parties. To conclude my commentary on Senator Jeffords, I would like to posit how his actions provide an interesting window into the world of American politics.

In the Summer of 2005, Senator Jeffords announces that he would not seek reelection in 2006. Citing the health of his spouse as the main reason for retirement, this decision halts much of the speculation of this entire critical project. Yes, we will never know whether or not the rhetorical strategies of the Senator would have ensured him another seat in the US Senate, but is safe to assume that Jeffords would have easily achieved reelection based on his extremely high approval rating and his two million dollars in campaign funding (and unprecedented amount for a statewide campaign in Vermont). However, the decision to retire issued a number of responses that illustrate some of the ironic tensions Jeffords highlights about American politics.

First, immediately upon his announcement, rumors again started to fly that the Senator was losing his sanity. Senator Kennedy, although not meaning to demean the Senator from Vermont, made comments about how Jeffords always appeared tired in committee meetings. Other reporters in various Vermont newspapers cited the health of Jeffords as proof that he is no longer in sound mind. However, many publications made comments that were of a more laudatory nature. For example, Milligan with the Boston Globe mentioned that "CNN reported yesterday that Jeffords showed up on the House side of the Capitol apparently confused and unaware that the Senate chamber was on the other end of the building." (A2). The same article also cited commentary by professors at the University of Vermont who suggest that Jeffords was "distracted" in his recent public discourse. While all completely factual, this commentary was then co-opted by the various groups who tried to oust him from office to suggest that Jeffords may not have been in sound mind when he made his decision to leave the GOP.

This is just one example of how the Senator continues to show the stronghold two party politics holds on American Democracy. Yes, the Senator is aging. Yes, he accidentally walked into the wrong chamber of congress. However, the opposition facing the Senator tried several means to discipline his acts for four years. In many ways, Jeffords represents a virus in American Democracy. Thus the commentary about his state of mind and the legitimacy of his action speak to the idea that acts of aggression to the two party system are continuously scrutinized and disciplined in the media.

However, other political activities of Senator Jeffords further illustrate the power the two party system still holds on American politics. Commenting on the retirement of Jeffords, Graff writes, "In the four years since, Jeffords has become a folk hero for Democrats: He has been one of the party's biggest fundraisers, attracting huge crowds as he traveled the country helping to

raise millions in 2002 and 2004 for Democratic candidates." It is also important to note that while raising money for a party he refused to join, the Senator also accumulated two million dollars for his potential campaign in 2006. Oddly enough, although the Senator represents "independence" to the people of Vermont, and although he appears as a thorn in the side of both the GOP and the DNC at times, he still participates in two party politics for pragmatic reasons. Thus, no matter how hard he preaches that he is free of party lines, in the end he works to support candidates that are deeply entrenched within the party system.

However, although Jeffords shows that the two party system does have a stronghold on American politics his story does still have an ironic twist. Yes, he works to support Democratic candidates, but in the end his success as a party switcher and a political independent show that there is room for challenges within the status quo. Consider the following blurb printed by the Frontrunner upon the announcement that the Senator would retire. The publication notes:

> The action that endeared Jeffords to Vermonters more than any other may have been his decision four years ago to leave the Republican Party. Unhappy with the direction charted by President Bush, Jeffords declared himself an independent and threw control of the Senate to the Democrats. The bumper stickers proliferated: 'Thank you, Jim.' For all these years, he has been the real thing. He will be missed. (VT)

In sum, the success of this quiet Senator cannot be overshadowed. He inspired a state to embrace his new label, he inspired a bumper sticker campaign in his honor, he raised two million dollars in campaign money, and he even inspired Sharon Stone to fly to Washington D.C. and have a nervous breakdown in his office.

To put the ironic twist in more concrete words, I would like to again cite the commentary of Graff. The commentator on Vermont political events makes a specific cases for the success of Jeffords by writing, “Jeffords' 2006 re-election seemed all but assured: He had $2 million in the bank, had hired a campaign staff.” Graff continues by noting:

> Jeffords was said to be eager to run for re-election to show Republicans that Vermonters would elect him as an independent. The chairman of the state Republican Party recently sent out a national fundraising letter that labeled Jeffords a "turncoat" and called his 2001 decision "despicable." "He betrayed President Bush and ALL Republicans," wrote Jim Barnett. "Now it is time for payback." (US Senator)

Thus, as mentioned before all signs pointed to a Jeffords victory in 2006. The ironic twist in the situation is that although in many ways the Senator is still tied up with the two party system, his large amount of success and his rhetorical triumphs represents the possibility of a small crack in traditional Washington politics. Thus, the actions of party switchers, such as Jeffords, represents a place where both the strength and weakness of the two party system can be seen.

Concluding Thoughts

The story of the “quiet Senator from an obscure state” is an interesting rhetorical situation that speaks to the complexities of party politics in the United States. However, the narrative of Jeffords also forces the critic to again reconsider the importance of myth, legend, and belief in American political discourse. In his discussion of the upcoming retirement of Senator Jeffords, Graff writes:

> Now, though, with Jeffords' announcement that he will retire at the end of his term it is time to note that his story is much more than just about his decision to

> become an independent. It is a story than spans 40 years and includes accomplishments as a state senator and attorney general, member of the U.S. House and member of the U.S. Senate. His imprint is on many of the state's and the nation's environmental and education initiatives. It is, most of all, a story of a seventh-generation Vermonter who never lost touch with his roots and who will retire from the Senate still believing "that one person can make a difference." (US Senator).

The words of Graff provide an accurate summary of this entire critical project. Rooted in tradition, focused on change, and inspired by the past, Senator Jeffords shook American politics by attempting to stay true to the narrative of his public life.

In the opening chapter of this thesis, I cited the work of Lowi and Romance who claimed that the two party system is a dead organizational pattern of American democracy that has been kept alive by various means of "life support" like state laws, public subsidies, and campaign reform. In the grand history of American democracy, the Jeffords situation was a mere bleep on the radar screen. However, in an ironic manner his actions show that maybe the political behavior of modern politicians work in much the same way regulatory diets work for diabetics. In that sense, Jeffords actions show that while the two party system may be on the path of destruction, the words and messages of political leaders work to keep things in balance. In sum, there may be trouble with the system but rather than proposing new organizational patterns the old system is maintained. The irony of the Jeffords discourse lies in the fact that he is not a life support mechanism but a form of insulin. This small Senator simultaneously showed a crack in the system and then provided the necessary materials to cover the whole. By looking at the

contradiction of the Jeffords situation, rhetorical critics can begin to test both the strength of the two party system and the various discursive acts used to keep this system alive and functioning.

It would be wrong to call Senator Jeffords a national leader. The majority of the American public in 2006 probably could not recognize him in a line-up. In many ways, he has returned to his silent status in the US Senate. However, his decision and his words provide an interesting place from which to theorize about the relationship between rhetoric, discourse, and the basic organizational structure of American democracy.

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