

Junius Unveiled

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Abstract

This article proves that Thomas Paine was the author of the Junius letters. In addition to several common factors about both authors, I have discovered that both authors used a unique spelling of a common word. Both authors spelled the word "risk" using the normal English spelling. In addition, both authors used the unique French spelling of the word risk; that is, both Junius and Paine spelled the English word risk as "risque." Junius used this French spelling three times and Paine, suspecting that his death was near, also used this French spelling four times in his "Memorial to Monroe."

Keywords: Risque, Risk, Common Sense, Hereditary Succession, Revolution

Some person wrote 69 letters to a British newspaper between 1769 and 1772. He signed his name as "Junius" and while several different people --- twenty-eight, in all --- were thought to be Junius nothing was proved with respect to these several people.¹

While three other people have argued that Junius was Thomas Paine, their arguments were never conclusive and, in addition, my arguments are different than the arguments used by these three authors. Joel Moody in his 1872 *Junius Unmasked: Or Thomas Paine the Author of the Letters of Junius and the Declaration of Independence* argued that Paine was the author of both of these works. His argument that Paine wrote the *Declaration of Independence* was much better received than that he was the author of the Junius Letters.

In 1890 William Henry Burr published his work simply entitled *Thomas Paine*. It was a short pamphlet of only 32 pages; a second and revised edition of this work was published a short time later. The date of publication is unclear but it was probably published in 1893 for it refers to Moncure Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine* which was published in 1892.

In 1917 William H. Graves published his *Junius Finally Discovered*. However, like the two previous authors his attempt to prove that Paine was the author of the letters was also deemed unsuccessful. Thus the author of the Junius letters remains unknown, until now.

First the name "Junius" is the second name of Brutus who stabbed Caesar in the heart for being a tyrant. The author of the *Junius Letters* attempted to do the same, metaphorically, to the English monarchy of the time. The letters were an attempt to dethrone the monarchy by logical argument, by attacking the notion of an hereditary ruler. Some of the words used by Junius play an important role in discovering his true identity. Thus, for example, he uses the following words a number of times.

- The word "hereditary" occurs 15 times in the letters.
- The word "America" occurs 131 times in the letters.
- The word "revolution" occurs 18 times in the letters.
- The word "viz" is an abbreviation for the Latin word "videlicet" and means "or that is to say" and it is used to "introduce examples or details." This word is used 29 times in the letters.
- The word "reason" is used 21 times in the letters.

¹ For an account of each of the persons thought to be Junius --- and why they were ultimately rejected as the author of the "Junius Letters" see Good, John Mason (Editor). *Junius: Including Letters By the Same Writer, Under Other Signatures, (Now First Collected.) To Which are Added His Confidential Correspondence with Mr. Wilkes, and His Private Letters to Mr. H. S. Woodfall. With a Preliminary Essay, Notes, Fac-Similes &c.* G. Woodfall: London 1814, Second Edition, Volume I, pp. 1 - 165.

- The word "prostitution" is used 22 times in the letters. Note that this does not refer to sexual prostitution but rather the selling of one's self to the highest bidder.
- The phrase "common sense" occurs 24 times in the letters.
- The author of the letters, in the "Preface" writes "For these reasons, [that he did not make any money for the publication of the letters] I give to Mr. Henry Sampson Woodfall, and to him alone, my right, interest, and property, in these letters, as fully and completely, to all intents and purposes, as an author can possibly convey his property in his own works to another."²
- In the "Dedication" of the letters the author writes "I Dedicate to You a collection of Letters, written by one of Yourselves for the common benefit of us all."³

While Thomas Paine left England for America in 1774, two years after the last of the Junius letters were written, we know he was in London "the entire winter of 1772-3"⁴ "endeavoring to interest members of the House in the cause of the excisemen."⁵ We also know that Paine lived in Lewes, which is only 58 miles from London. In addition, we know that Paine's formal education was terminated at the age of thirteen when his father put him to work "in his father's staymaking shop."⁶ While his formal education may have ended at the age of thirteen, Paine was known to be "a sharp boy, of unsettled application."⁷ This is evidenced by "an epitath for a crow which he buried in his garden," which he penned at the tender age of eight years.

"Here lies the body of John Crow,
Who once was high, but now is low;
Ye brother Crows, take warning all,
For as you rise, so must you fall."⁸

While the poem written by a boy at the age of eight may not endure, the immortal words of the first line of his "The Crisis" will never be forgotten: "These are the times that try men's souls." We must, some how, account for Paine's intellectual ability for going from an epitath for a dead crow to the immortal words of the first line of "The Crisis." Paine wrote, but never published --- an important distinction⁹ --- an article entitled "Case of the Officers of Excise." He told Dr. Rush that an essay against slavery -- which Rush tells us he [Rush] was "much pleased with" -- "was the first thing he had ever published in his life."¹⁰ The questions remains: how can a man, who left school at the age of thirteen, come to be the author of some of the most important and influential writings of his age? Will Durant titled the 7th volume of his *The Story of Civilization* "The Age of Reason Begins" in honor of Paine's *Age of Reason*. He writes about Paine the following: "Brave Tom Paine, protagonist of two revolutions, remaker of two continents; the American Voltaire, the English voice of that audacious century which won for itself the name of the Enlightenment."¹¹

The answer is, and must be, one cannot become such an author without further education and experience at writing. Paine was aware of this as he wrote in his *The Age of Reason* that

As to the learning that any person gains from school education, it serves only, like a small capital, to put him in the way of beginning learning for himself afterwards. Every person of learning is finally his own teacher; the reason of which is, that principles, being of a distinct quality to circumstances, cannot be impressed upon the memory; their place of mental residence is the understanding, and they are never so lasting as when they begin by conception.¹²

²*Ibid.*, Volume I, p. 349.

³*Ibid.*, Volume 1, p. 341.

⁴Van der Weyde, William M. "Life of Thomas Paine," *Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, Volume 1, Thomas Paine National Historical Association, New Rochelle, NY, 1925, p. 11.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 11. See also Moncure Conway's *Life of Thomas Paine*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1892, Volume 1, p. 27, where he writes that Paine "passed the whole winter of 1772-3 trying to influence members of Parliament and others in favor of his cause." p. 27.

⁶ Conway, Volume I, *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁷ Conway, Volume 1, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸ Conway, Volume 1, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹ That is, one can write something with out ever publishing it. In addition, if some one, other than the author, publishes it the author can still claim that he never published it.

¹⁰ Conway, Volume I, *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹¹ Durant, Will. *The Mansions of Philosophy*. Garden City Publishing Co., Inc. Garden City, NY: 1929, p. 412.

¹² Paine, Thomas. "The Age of Reason," in Conway, Moncure. *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York: 1896, Volume IV, p. 64.

We know Paine must have obtained further education for, as Eckler notes:

He was engaged as teacher at Mr. Noble's Academy, in Leman Street, Goodman's Fields; and afterwards at Mr. Gardner's Academy, at Kensington. During his residence in London, he attended the philosophical lectures of Martin and Ferguson, and became acquainted with Dr. Bevis, the astronomer, a member of the Royal Society. He also purchased a pair of globes, and appears to have closely studied and to have acquired great proficiency in mechanics, mathematics, and astronomy.¹³

Paine himself tells us about his own education. He writes

My father being of the Quaker profession, it was my good fortune to have an exceedingly good moral education, and a tolerable stock of useful learning. Though I went to the grammar school, I did not learn Latin, not only because I had no inclination to learn languages, but because of the objection the Quakers have against the books in which the language is taught. But this did not prevent me from being acquainted with the subjects of all the Latin books used in the school.

The natural bent of my mind was to science. I had some turn, and I believe some talent for poetry; but this I rather repressed than encouraged, as leading too much into the field of imagination.¹⁴

Paine also tells us about his political beliefs. He continues as follows:

I had no disposition for what was called politics. It presented to my mind no other idea than is contained in the word Jockeyship. When, therefore, I turned my thoughts towards matters of government, I had to form a system for myself, that accorded with the moral and philosophic principles in which I had been educated. I saw, or at least I thought I saw, a vast scene opening itself to the world in the affairs of America; and it appeared to me, that unless the Americans changed the plan they were then pursuing, with respect to the government of England, and declared themselves independent, they would not only involve themselves in a multiplicity of new difficulties, but shut out the prospect that was then offering itself to mankind through their means. It was from these motives that I published the work known by the name of *Common Sense*, which is the first work I ever did publish,¹⁵ and so far as I can judge of myself, I believe I should never have been known in the world as an author on any subject whatever, had it not been for the affairs of America. I wrote *Common Sense* the latter end of the year 1775, and published it the first of January, 1776. Independence was declared the fourth of July following.

Before Paine left England, a Mr. Lee, a debater of the White Hart evening club where the intellectuals of the time would meet to debate political issues, wrote a poem about Paine's ability as a logician and a debater.

'Immortal PAINE, while mighty reasoners jar,
We crown thee General of the Headstrong War ;
Thy logic vanquish'd error, and thy mind
No bounds but those of right and truth confined.
Thy soul of fire must sure ascend the sky,
Immortal PAINE, thy fame can never die ;
For men like thee their names must ever save
From the black edicts of the tyrant grave.'¹⁶

In 1775, with his mind fixed on the perils of hereditary succession, the use of reason and logic, as well as the importance of appealing to people's common sense, Paine writes his *Common Sense*. This phrase, common sense, was very important to both Junius and Paine, for not only is it the title of Paine's first major "published" writing he also uses it as his signature to the sixteen articles comprising his second most important writing "The Crisis." In addition, in some of these articles, additions were appended and signed with the initials "C.S." meaning common sense.

¹³Eckler, Peter. *Life of Thomas Paine*. Peter Eckler, Publisher, New York: 1892, p. 5.

¹⁴ Conway, Moncure. *op cit.*, Volume IV, pp. 62-63.

¹⁵Note that he uses the term "published" and not "wrote." That is, one can write something with out ever publishing it. In addition, if some one, other than the author, publishes it the author can still claim that he never published it.

¹⁶ Conway, Moncure. *The Life of Thomas Paine, op cit.*, Volume I, p. 26.

In the first edition of *Common Sense*, which was published "anonymously --- by Robert Bell, a Scotchman, January 10, 1776--- the title-page bore the words "Written by an Englishman."¹⁷ In a second version of *Common Sense* it was simply "Addressed to the Inhabitants of America, On the Following Interesting Subjects, viz:" and he goes on to list the subjects. And in the "Postscript to Preface in the Third Edition" he wrote the following:

"Who the author of this production is, is wholly unnecessary to the public, as the object for attention is the *doctrine itself*, not the *man*. Yet it may not be unnecessary to say, that he is unconnected with any party, and under no sort of influence, public or private, but the influence of reason and principle."

Thus, like the anonymous Junius, Paine also did not claim authorship of "Common Sense." In addition, two of the subjects listed on the title-page of "Common Sense" are exactly what the Junius letters were about, "Of the Origin and Design of Government in General, with Concise Remarks on the English Constitution" and "Of Monarchy and Hereditary Succession."

Like Junius, Paine did not make any money for writing "Common Sense." Van der Weyde writes as follows about Paine not making any money for writing "Common Sense."

Although no announcement was made of the fact, Paine gave to the cause of independence all of his financial interest in the pamphlet, thereby depriving himself of quite a large fortune, the price of the pamphlet being two shillings. [In addition] Paine paid the publisher a bill of ¹⁸\$29 12s 1d for such copies as he obtained for himself and his friends.¹⁹

Having looked at the subject matter of both authors, their antipathy to the hereditary succession of the throne, their denial of any monetary compensation for their literary labors, and the anonymous nature of those labors, we now identify some other interesting comparisons in terms of the choice of words used by the two authors.

- In the Junius letters the word "hereditary" occurs 15 times; Paine uses the same word in "Common Sense" 19 times.
- The word "viz" is used in "Common Sense" 17 times. The use of this word is important with respect to the style of the writing of the two authors.
- The word "reason" is used 14 times in "Common Sense."
- The word "prostitution" is used only 2 times in "Common Sense" but note that the Junius letters were published in 3 volumes of over 500 pages per volume. "Common Sense" is only 50 pages long but the sense of the use of the word "prostitution" is identical in both writings.
- The phrase "common sense" is used 3 times in "Common Sense."

Thus far we have only looked at the similarity between the Junius Letters and *Common Sense* in terms of the subject matter of both works, the choice of particular words used by both authors, and their remaining anonymous and their not being paid for their efforts.

In addition to both Junius and Paine being opposed to the monarchy and the hereditary succession of the crown, both disliked lawyers and the Scotch people. Junius wrote about lawyers and Scotchmen the following: "Though I use the terms of art, do not injure me so much as to suspect I am a lawyer --- I had as lief be a Scotchman."²⁰ He also gives his reason for why he does not like lawyers. He writes: "As to lawyers, their profession is supported by the indiscriminate defense of right and wrong, and I confess I have not that opinion of their knowledge or integrity, to think it necessary that they should decide for me upon a plain constitutional question."²¹

Paine has almost the same opinion of lawyers as Junius. He writes: "Some lawyers in defending their clients, (for the generality of lawyers, like Swiss soldiers, will fight on either side,) ..." ²²Paine, with respect to his view of the Scottish had written, in his Declaration of Independence,²³ the following line:

¹⁷Van der Weyde, William M., *The Life and Works of Thomas Paine*, New Rochell, NY, Thomas Paine National Historical Association, Volume 1, p. 30.

¹⁸Note that this dollar sign should actually be a pound sign but I could not find the pound sign.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

²⁰ Good, John Mason, *op cit.*, Vol. I, p. 312. The word "lief" is an archaic expression and it means "willing" or "desirous." That is, he would rather be a Scotchman than a lawyer.

²¹*Ibid.*, Volume I, p. 498.

²²Conway, *op cit.*, Vol. IV, pp. 475-476.

At this very time too they are permitting their chief to send over not only soldiers of our common blood, but Scotch and foreign mercenaries to invade and deluge us in blood.²⁴

Lewis argues that "Paine was an Englishman who looked with disdain upon the Scotch."²⁵ Paine also wrote that "As to those men, whether in England, Scotland, or Ireland, who, like Robespierre in France, are covered with crimes, they, like him, have no other resources than committing more."²⁶

In the *Junius Letters* Junius spells the word "risk" in the normal way in Letter # 77 and Letter XVIII. However, he also spells it in a unique way. He spells it "risque." The first occurrence of this unique French spelling occurs in Letter No. 24. Junius writes "I don't think you run the least risque."²⁷ The second occurrence of this unique spelling occurs in Letter No. 33 where Junius writes "I will never send you anything that *I* think dangerous, but the risque is yours, and you must determine for yourself."²⁸ The editor of the *Junius Letters*, John Mason Good, notes in a footnote that "This peculiarity of spelling the word risk, is the author's."²⁹ That is, the author of the *Junius Letters*, Junius. This unique spelling occurs a third time in Letter XLI; Junius writes as follows.

Their decision is in itself a mere nullity: the parties are not bound to submit to it; and if the jury run any risque of punishment, ...³⁰

This unique spelling, which occurs three times, thus indicating that it is not a mistake, is such an anomaly that were we to find it used by another author one would be justified in concluding that the two authors were one and the same.

The second author who used this unique French spelling of the word risk is Thomas Paine! In addition, Paine used this unique French spelling of the word risk more times than Junius did. While Junius used this spelling only three times, Paine used it four times. In addition, Paine used the correct spelling of the word risk at least twenty times. When Paine thought his life was in danger he averted to the use of the French spelling of the word risk to ensure his secret would not perish with him.

Paine was in jail in Luxembourg at this time, being confined from December 28, 1793 to November 4, 1794. This imprisonment was such that Paine thought he would actually die there. Conway tells us the following about Paine's physical health when he was released from prison.

He was found by Monroe more dead than alive from semi-starvation, cold, and an abscess contracted in prison, and taken to the Minister's own residence. It was not supposed that he could survive, and he owed his life to the tender care of Mr. and Mrs. Monroe. It was while thus a prisoner in his room, with death still hovering over him, that Paine wrote Part Second of "The Age of Reason."³¹

Not only did Paine write the second part of "The Age of Reason" he also wrote the words that conclusively prove that he was the author of the *Junius Letters*. Junius told his readers "I am the sole depository of my own secret, and it shall perish with me."³² Paine --- feeling the injustice of being wrongfully imprisoned, and, to quote Conway's words, "with death still hovering over him" --- decided that his own secret would not perish with him. All four uses of this spelling occurs in Paine's "The Memorial to Monroe," Paine writes as follows:

²³ That Paine wrote the Declaration of Independence was proved by Joseph Lewis in his *Thomas Paine Author of the Declaration of Independence*, Freethought Press Assn., New York: 1947.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

²⁶ Paine, Thomas. "To the People of England on the Invasion of England," in *Life and Writings of Thomas Paine*, Vincent Parke and Company, New York: 1908, Volume X, p. 249. See footnote.

²⁷ Good, John Mason. *op cit.*, Volume I, p. 214.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 222-223. Italics in the original.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 176. This French spelling of the word "risque" is also found in the 1813 American edition of the *Letters of Junius*. See Good, John Mason (Editor). *Junius: Including Letters By the Same Writer, Under Other Signatures, (Now First Collected.) To Which are Added His Confidential Correspondence with Mr. Wilkes, and His Private Letters to Mr. H. S. Woodfall. With a Preliminary Essay, Notes, Fac-Similes &c.*, Bradford and Inskeep, Philadelphia, 2 Volumes in 1, 1813, Volume 1, p. 134, p. 139, and Volume 2, p. 261, respectively.

³¹ Conway, Moncure. *The Writings of Thomas Paine, op cit.*, Volume 4, p. 13.

³² Good, John Mason, *op cit.*, Second edition, Volume 1, p. 342.

After the two preceding paragraphs you ask --- "If it be my wish that you should embark on this controversy (meaning that of reclaiming me) and risque the consequences with respect to myself and the good understanding subsisting between the two countries, or without relinquishing any point of right, and which might be insisted on in case of extremities, pursue according to your best judgment and with the light before you, the object of my liberation?"³³

If they had not some ideas of this kind would they resist so long the civil efforts you make for my liberation, or would they attach so much importance to the imprisonment of an Individual as *to risque*(as you say to me) *the good understanding that exists between the two Countries?*³⁴

But as you inform me that you know what the wishes of the President are, you will see also that his reputation is exposed to some risque, admitting there to be ground for the supposition I have made.³⁵

But as you ask me if it be my wish that you should embark in this controversy and risque the consequences with respect to myself, I will answer this part of the question by marking out precisely the part I wish you to take.³⁶

Not only did none of the writers who argued that Paine was Junius notice this unique French spelling of the word risk, I would have missed it as well for it does not appear in the 1908 edition of Paine's works --- edited by Wheeler --- and the 1925 edition --- edited by Van der Weyde; both editors modernized the spelling of this so very important word. Conway, in his "Editor's Historical Introduction" informs us that "The Memorial is here printed from the manuscript of Paine now among the Morrison Papers, in the British Museum, --- no doubt the identical document penned in Luxembourg prison."³⁷

Finally, and none of the authors writing about Paine being Junius, have noticed this, both the second and third edition of the Junius Letters, published in 1812 and 1814, respectively, have on the title-page of each of the three volumes near the bottom of the page below the words "Printed by G. Woodfall," a list of names that the volumes were printed for. The names listed are as follows. "F. C. and J. Rivington; T. Payne; Wilkie and Robinson; Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown; Cadell and Davies; J. Murray; J. Mawman; and R. Baldwin."

The name T. Payne stands out conspicuously for a number of reasons. First, and most importantly, Paine died in 1809. That is, Paine was dead for four years yet the son of Woodfall felt obligated to include Paine's name in the list of who the volumes were printed for. Second, the percentage of people who were literate in England at this time in history was very small. Third, in *The Biographical Treasury: A Dictionary of Universal Biography*³⁸ there are only two people listed with the name Paine under any spelling, Thomas Paine and a John Howard Payne. The latter was an American actor born in 1792 and he never went to England until 1812. Since it is very unlikely that a 20 year old American actor, coming to England for the first time, would pay for a copy of a three volume work about some anonymously written letters written before he was even born, the T. Payne on the title-page would not be him. The only likely candidate for the T. Payne referred to is Thomas Paine. The only real issue worthy of argument is did Thomas Paine every use the spelling of Payne for his last name? The answer is an unequivocal yes.

I have found four books written by Thomas Paine where his last name is spelled Payne. Since this is easily verifiable by a library search I will give only one example: There is a French work entitled "Opinion de Thomas Payne, surl'affaire de Louis Capet: adressée au Président de la Convention nationale." This work was published in Paris in 1792. That people changed the spelling of their name was a common occurrence in those times.³⁹

A more interesting issue to be addressed is why would Thomas Paine's name be on a list for whom the volumes were printed for when Paine died in 1809? I have seen the title page of the 1772 first edition of *the Junius Letters* and there is no list of names on the title-page. The list of names appears only in the second and third editions, printed in 1812 and 1814, respectively.

³³ Paine, Thomas. "The Memorial to Monroe," in *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, op cit., Volume III, pp. 203-204.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206. Italics in the original.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 206-207.

³⁷ Conway, Moncure. *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, op cit., Volume III, p. 150.

³⁸ Maunder, Samuel, *The Biographical Treasury: A Dictionary of Universal Biography*, London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1882, pp. 461 and 470, respectively

³⁹ Paine also used "Pain" as the spelling of his surname. See Conway's *The Life of Thomas Paine*, op cit., Volume 1, p.32.

The only plausible explanation was that Paine made arrangements with the publisher prior to his leaving England for America. It should be noted that Henry Sampson Woodfall was a co-owner of the newspaper in which the Junius letters were first published and he was the publisher of the first edition of the *Junius Letters*. His son, G. Woodfall, published the second and third editions of this work.

In 1965 Gilbert Harman, a philosopher, published a paper entitled "The Inference to the Best Explanation."⁴⁰ Harman argued that an inference to the best explanation was a legitimate form of argument. The best explanation to explain the appearance of Payne's name in the second and third editions of the works in question, is that the author of the letters made arrangements with the publisher, before leaving for America, that should additional editions of the letters be published that he would want a copy. This information was passed on to Woodfall's son and the son carried out the agreement which his father had made with the author of the *Junius Letters*. That Junius thought well of Henry Sampson Woodfall is found in one of his letters. Junius writes "I am persuaded you are too honest a man to contribute in any way to my destruction. Act honorably by me, and at a proper time you shall know me."⁴¹ Junius even promised that should Woodfall be put on trial for publishing the letters and be found guilty, "you will then let me know what expense particularly on yourself: for I understand you are engaged with other proprietors. Some way or other *you* shall be reimbursed."⁴²

Finally, while Paine said that *Common Sense* was his first publication, he, nonetheless, had a seal while he was still in England. This seal,⁴³ when compared to the seals used by Junius, bears a close resemblance to the seals used by Junius.⁴⁴

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⁴⁰ Harman, Gilbert, "The Inference to the Best Explanation," *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 74, No. 1, January, 1965, pp. 88-95.

⁴¹ Good, John Mason, *op cit.*, Second edition, Volume 1, p. 40.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34. Italics in the original.

⁴³ Conway, Moncure, *The Life of Thomas Paine, op cit.*, Volume 2, Frontispiece.

⁴⁴ Good, John Mason, *op cit.*, Second edition, Volume 3, Plate Vi.

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