

blend of "popular and oligarchic tendencies" (p. 207), and the highly "pluralistic" northeastern cities of Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia, where, in Beeman's words, "modern America was born" (p. 247). The apparatus is so neat that sometimes it seems to dictate how behaviors are interpreted rather than vice versa; for instance, similarly low levels of legislative activity in South Carolina and Pennsylvania are read entirely differently, in the first instance as a sign of oligarchic irresponsibility and in the second instance as signs of a contented populace and of a legislature committed to not abusing its power.

The framework is also static. Although Beeman's taxonomy, moving from "traditional" oligarchic political cultures to "modern" pluralistic liberal ones, gives the illusion of chronological change, it in fact conveys primarily still images of each of these societies. Beeman's first chapter, on the traditional order of politics in England and America, and his interesting last chapter, on postrevolutionary developments in these societies, are too cursory in their analyses to correct for this problem. As a result, although Beeman's regional focus yields numerous insights into British America's political landscape, we are still left wondering how democracy grew out of prerevolutionary experiences.

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The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin. By GORDON S. WOOD. (New York: Penguin Press, 2004. xii, 299p. Illustrations, notes, index. \$25.95.)

Gordon S. Wood's *Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* is a fascinating interpretation of the reasons Franklin behaved and acted in the ways he did. The attempt to explain why is more challenging and difficult than to give biographical facts, and it is not surprising that some readers will disagree with many of Wood's interpretations. The five chapter titles indicate Wood's major theses, and each corresponds to a chronological period in Franklin's life.

Chapter 1, "Becoming a Gentleman," takes Franklin to his retirement as a printer in 1748. Chapter 2, "Becoming a British Imperialist," stresses Franklin's supposed love for England and the British Empire and covers the years from 1748 to the Stamp Act, 1765. Chapter 3, "Becoming a Patriot," argues that during 1765 to 1775 the English ministers, especially Lord Hillsborough, forced the reluctant Franklin into an Americanist position. Chapter 4, "Becoming a Diplomat," deals with Franklin's activities during the Revolution. The last chapter, "Becoming an American," investigates his final years in America (1785–90) and explores the growth and changing facets of Franklin's reputation.

I have space only to deal with a few reservations concerning Wood's first chapters. Contrary to Wood's argument that Franklin aspired to gentility and

even aristocracy, I believe that he maintained a radical egalitarianism from his first published writing at age sixteen until his death. Wood cites Franklin's early portrait by Robert Feke as a "remarkable coming-out" document painted "to mark the occasion" of his retirement (p. 57). His brother John, however, commissioned the portrait to hang beside his own picture in his Boston home. One might argue that the portraits demonstrated John Franklin's aspiration to gentility, but they hardly prove Franklin's. The exact date when Feke painted Franklin's portrait is unknown, but it was more probably 1745 or 1746 than upon the occasion of Franklin's retiring in 1748.

Retired?—as a printer, yes, but Franklin continued to collect rags for the paper makers, to serve as the postmaster of Philadelphia, the comptroller of the post office for the colonies, and the clerk of the assembly. Even if one could believe that by 1748 rag-collector Franklin had moved into the status of the Philadelphia gentry, would that prove he had aristocratic pretensions? In my opinion, he always identified "with the middling People, the Tradesmen, Shopkeepers, and Farmers" whom he praised in *Plain Truth* (published November 17, 1747) while he condemned in that same tract the "Great and Rich Men" of Pennsylvania.

Wood's second major thesis, that Franklin became an Anglophile and a devotee of the British Empire (1748–65), ignores his denunciations of Great Britain. In 1751, Franklin published an editorial savagely attacking Britain's transportation of criminals to America and heaping scorn on the Board of Trade for rejecting the colonies' repeated attempts to limit or prohibit the trade. He followed up the widely reprinted editorial with his wonderful satire, "Rattlesnakes for Felons," proposing to distribute rattlesnakes "in the Gardens of all the Nobility and Gentry throughout the Nation; but particularly in the Gardens of the Prime Ministers, the Lords of Trade, and Members of Parliament, for to them we are most particularly obliged." Even after Franklin sailed to England in 1757 and formed close friendships there, he wrote "A Defense of the Americans," May 9, 1759, the most anti-English and most fervent expression of Americanism before the Stamp Act.

Naturally Franklin praised England and King George to his English friends. Such expressions of polite cant pleased and flattered their recipients, but they should not be mistaken for Franklin's true opinions. He celebrated Scotland to his Scottish friends, France to his French friends, and always returned to America. Finally, I admire Gordon Wood's well-written and thoughtful interpretative study of Franklin—not least because it stirs me so often to disagree.

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