posefully renounced his birth-right expectations . . . of wealth and social status”
in order to “be free to teach, to travel on missions, to write, and, above all, to engage” the world as a reformer (vii–viii). Proud points out that Woolman was known during his lifetime for incisive writing about social, political, and ethical issues—the affairs of truth, in Proud’s title—yet modern readers know him primarily from his posthumously published Journal, in which he often appears as a pilgrim engaged in a solitary quest for salvation. To make the case for Woolman as a literary man of “wide erudition,” a “master of scripture,” and a deep thinker about the human issues involved in work, trade, and political economy (vii), Proud assembles seven major essays by Woolman on human freedom, pacifism, and what we might call the “social gospel.” To these he adds four epistles to various meetings of the Friends, a “First Book for Children,” a literary dialogue, and other fragmentary ephemera.

Proud provides a general introduction and an introduction to each text. Texts are based on Woolman’s holograph manuscripts or, when manuscripts do not exist, on the first printed edition. Proud explains fully how and why he has modernized texts with respect to capitalization, grammar, paragraphing, punctuation, and spelling (xxxvii–xxxviii).

In testing Proud’s transcriptions I have noticed few errors, only two of which affect meaning: “outward of two months” for “out upward of two months” (91) and “we treat them” for “we treat concerning them” (50). He also perpetuates a mistake made first by W. Forrest Altman in 1957 and again by Moulton in 1971 when he attributes two quotes from Considerations on Slavery, Part Second (52) to John Lockman’s edition of Travels of the Jesuits (1743 and 1762). They are actually from two Capuchin missionaries quoted in Churchill’s Collection of Voyages (1744).

But these are peccadilloes, and they pale when placed against Proud’s achievement. Every reader of Woolman will find something valuable in this edition; I am especially delighted that he has restored to the canon Woolman’s thoughtful meditations on passages from Anthony Benezet’s Caution and Warning to Great Britain and her Colonies, which are now back in print for the first time since 1837.

Alcorn State University (Emeritus) DAVID L. CROSBY


Washington Irving’s alter ego Mustapha Rub-A-Dub Keli Kahn once observed that “[American] government is pure unadulterated logocracy, or government of words.” Benjamin Ponder, who writes from a “rhetorical studies” per-
spective (xxx), illustrates Irving’s principle in a thoroughly researched, highly readable, and illuminating book that centers on an instance when the power of words radically shifted the structure of American politics.

Ponder explains that as late as December 1775, the majority of American colonists were still committed to reconciliation with Britain, yet only seven months later, public opinion had been so drastically turned on its head that the Declaration of Independence was successfully adopted by the Continental Congress. How the tides of public sentiment changed so greatly in such a short period of time is the question of this book, and Ponder’s analysis reveals the importance of Thomas Paine’s Common Sense in bringing about this transformation.

Ponder does an excellent job reproducing the late eighteenth-century backdrop. Part of his success can be attributed to his decision to divide chapters by “concepts”—each concept explaining an aspect of the collective colonial mindset (xxx). This division results in a greater understanding of the various facets of the historical period. Yet Ponder’s work is about more than just history; it is really three distinct books in one. Upon completion, readers have consumed a limited-scale biography of Thomas Paine, read a history of the colonies in the lead-up to the writing of the Declaration of Independence, and received a crash course in rhetorical criticism, with its emphasis on the definition, classification, analysis, interpretation, and evaluation of language. Ponder adeptly rises to the challenge of incorporating rhetorical criticism into the broader historical study without disrupting the flow of the work.

In an effort to weave rhetoric and history together in one study, Ponder provides a rhetorical analysis of Common Sense, putting the work in context by discussing the ways in which its language relates to the “concepts” that frame each chapter. In the chapter on “Reformation and Regicide,” for example, Ponder first provides relevant historical background about religion in 1776 (Puritan influence, threat of popery, etc.) and then explains, with specific examples from Common Sense, how Paine incorporated religious overtones into his text—by referring, for instance, to King George as a “heathen” (85) and by channeling Ecclesiastes with a brief “time for every purpose under heaven . . .” excerpt (90–91). This discursive technique, in which Ponder explains the effect of Paine’s language and his deliberate choice of terminology, makes for a highly readable work.

Also contributing to the enjoyment of reading American Independence is Ponder’s unique, welcoming writing style, which at times seems to transcend the realm of historical analysis and begins to resemble that of a political thriller. Readers may be delighted to find themselves immersed in the sometimes scandalous intrigue of colonial American politics. American Independence, while lengthy, is thoroughly absorbing and represents a shining example of what comprehensive scholarship can look like. Ponder has done his research, and with rare
exception, students of this period will be hard-pressed not to find at least a passing reference to their favorite revolutionary. As an additional benefit to the reader, Ponder includes a full text of Common Sense in the appendix.

As the lines of communication between disciplines open, expect to see a good deal of crossover melding otherwise distinct disciplines. In this regard, Ponder is ahead of his time and provides a wonderful example of how interesting and engaging good interdisciplinary scholarship can be.

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Patrick Loebs


According to Doina Pasca Harsanyi, it was not easy being a liberal French noble in the age of the French Revolution. Bred to think of themselves as the vanguard of enlightened reform, these patricians took a central role in the abolition of feudalism and the creation of the constitution of 1791. Yet as the tide of revolution moved forward, these same nobles found themselves characterized by Jacobins as neo-foreign, obstructionist “aristocrats” (15). As a result, a number of them migrated to the United States (via the United Kingdom), where they ruminated on various features of their temporary home as well as on the possibility of returning to France and redeeming the political reform they helped initiate.

Most of the liberal nobles’ meditations took place in social gatherings modeled on Parisian salons, and Harsanyi focuses on the cohort that gathered in Moreau de Saint-Méry’s Philadelphia bookstore. Unlike thousands of contemporaneous Saint Dominguan refugees, who organized themselves along the lines of previously established trade networks, this group “was formed of individuals whose principal common bond was” the fact that they “had all been part of the Patriot faction at the Constituent Assembly and all had moved from the left to the center in the face of Jacobin intransigence” (56). This particular political orientation helped shape the exiles’ response to American society. More specifically, while French liberal nobles sympathized with Americans’ tolerant attitude toward religion and speech, they feared social disorder and lamented the absence of an enlightened elite not preoccupied with money. Disdain for supposedly widespread American vulgarity endeared individuals like Talleyrand and the Duc de Liancourt to Federalists, who likewise prioritized “a self-selected elite” and polite society (85). But in the end, French liberal exiles resisted drawing close to followers of George Washington because they could not abide harsh criticism of the French Revolution; “they were too connected with the Revolution to allow it to be scorned” (85).