

The sense of alienation experienced by liberal nobles influenced their business ventures and travels in the United States. In terms of the former, the “noble ethos held sway . . . and they understood social utility not as productive work but as the duty to provide the masses with enlightened ideas and models of behavior, even at the expense of success in a new line of activity” (114). In terms of the latter, the “émigrés of Moreau’s circle took up traveling more to help pass the time than to educate themselves on the state of the republic” (68). Considering this less than fully invested approach to their activities in the United States, it is no wonder that the exiles returned to France as soon as they were “persuaded that social and political conditions had become compatible with their way of thinking” (106).

This short review fails to capture many of the nuanced insights put forth by Harsanyi. She is particularly adept at explaining the ways in which her subjects supported equality before the law, but not egalitarianism. Indeed, Harsanyi writes, members of Moreau’s coterie were liberty-loving “liberals, not democrats,” and their efforts to oppose both “popular democracy and monarchical absolutism” anticipated Tocqueville (20, 111). By providing the fullest, smartest, and most judicious account of French liberal nobles in the United States, Harsanyi has written a book that will be of keen interest to scholars of the French Revolution, the early American republic, the Atlantic world, and the development of modern political ideologies.

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Tom Paine’s America: The Rise and Fall of Transatlantic Radicalism in the Early Republic. By SETH COTLAR. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011. 264 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$35.)

How much economic inequality can a republic accommodate before turning into an oligarchy? How can the people exercise their sovereignty between elections? Should political allegiances be tied to the nation or reach beyond to all mankind? These were some of the questions raised during the 1790s by democratic printers, newspaper editors, and booksellers and their audience of poor-to-middling laborers and farmers. Inspired by the French Revolution and the English and Irish reform movements, they sought to reopen debate on basic principles of governance that many believed had been settled by the ratification of the federal Constitution. Seth Cotlar’s rich, spirited, and provocative account expands the intellectual history of the 1790s in two directions: across the Atlantic and down the socioeconomic ladder.

While several recent books have examined the international dimensions of early American politics, they have focused mainly on members of the political

and upper classes physically traversing the Atlantic world. Cotlar's approach is unique in uncovering the ideas of working-class Americans who could only visit Europe through news reports and imported texts but who were nonetheless deeply committed to applying its lessons in democratization at home. Cotlar presents the rise of democracy in America as driven not merely by ordinary citizens' economic self-interest but by their shared ideas and utopian aspirations.

Given the dearth of archival sources for a popular intellectual history, Cotlar conceives of newspapers like Philadelphia's *Aurora*, the *New-York Journal*, and Boston's *Independent Chronicle* as remnants of an "interpretative community" of editors and readers who together continually redefined the parameters of political debate (17). Cotlar cannot entirely avoid the circularity of this approach (newspapers are said to create a community, the existence of which is then proven by the newspaper) because he can only speculate about the papers' reception. But with the available evidence, Cotlar makes a strong case for these publications' community-building potential.

The first chapter is devoted to the material conditions necessary for the circulation of democratic ideas and news; here Cotlar outlines the economics of print shops, the expansion of the postal service to the frontier, and the close-knit networks of printers and booksellers. The consistency with which the three dozen democratic newspapers published between 1790 and 1798 linked American politics with foreign events and the familiar tone with which they addressed their readers represent further evidence of an ideological community. Subsequent chapters reconstruct crucial debates conducted in the pages of these publications on popular cosmopolitanism as a "language of dissent" (chapters 2 and 3), economic equality as a democratic right (chapter 4), and public opinion as an instrument of participatory democracy (chapter 5).

Tom Paine's America is an unabashedly "sympathetic" (11) account of the radical democrats, their unrealized ideas, and their unequal struggle against the Federalist elite (which is sometimes painted with too broad a brush). Printers and editors appear not as entrepreneurs or political operatives but as idealists seeking to create "an engaged, radicalized, and cosmopolitan citizenry" (33). Cotlar is careful not to exaggerate the democrats' influence and is well aware that their egalitarianism and cosmopolitanism extended in most (but not all) cases to other white men only. Nonetheless, he argues persuasively that the emerging two-party system and the Jeffersonian "Revolution of 1800" (in which the Democratic Party presented itself as a middle way between Federalist aristocracy and "Jacobin" anarchy) marked a retreat from visions of a more inclusive, participatory, and egalitarian democracy.

The Papers of Benjamin Franklin

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