

Propaganda, Prenational Critique, and Early American Literature

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Walter Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) hardly overflows with optimism in its exploration of the information distortions that warp democratic society. But his classic study of propaganda does turn a wistful eye on the "the pioneer democrats" of the eighteenth century who shaped national consciousness (Lippmann 165). Spared the sophistication of film, photography, and corporate journalism, revolutionary writers did not have to hustle their message at the expense of "their illimitable faith in [the people's] dignity" (Lippmann 165). The backwardness of these early agitators comprised their virtue since modern communications had not yet introduced a gap between their practices and the democratic principles that had "prevailed for two thousand years" ever since Athens (Lippmann 165). This view of propaganda as thoroughly modern intensified during the Cold War when Jacques Ellul claimed propaganda as the child of a technological society born at the start of World War I. Even more than Lippmann, Ellul argues for the distinctiveness of twentieth-century propaganda, which by the time of his *Propaganda* (1962), was battletested by two world wars and honed in the nuclear brinkmanship of the Soviet Union and the US. To understand modern propaganda as continuous with the propaganda of the nineteenth or eighteenth century "is to cling to an obsolete concept of man and of the means to influence him" (Ellul 25).¹

This essay departs from Lippmann and Ellul's assumptions by reading the newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides of early America as propaganda. Not content to trust that "a reasoned

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righteousness welled up spontaneously out of the mass of men,” as America’s “early democrats” purportedly believed (Lippmann 163), Thomas Paine and other agitators felt the necessity of using print culture to impel that mass to defy an empire. But my point is not that eighteenth-century propaganda is as modern as the creation of the Creel Commission of 1917–19 or as postmodern as the “multimillion dollar covert campaign” of 2007 to foster an independent press in Iraq by seeding it with stories paid for by the Pentagon (Gerth and Shane A1). Rather than force such a convergence, I argue that the incommensurability of early American literature and modern propaganda is productive because its asymmetries suggest the anachronistic promise of a critique, which was simultaneously prenatal and global.

The most significant propaganda is not the sort that screams for action in big red letters. Instead, Ellul prioritizes a form of mass communication that “did not exist before the twentieth century”: integration propaganda (74). The state requires this complex tool to weld individuals to the collective body of the state. Its allure is existential, proffering an end to modern alienation by incorporating isolated citizens into communities that affirm individual behaviors and attitudes. “*Propaganda is the true remedy for loneliness,*” writes Ellul to explain why individuals crave a mindset that subtly adjusts inner thoughts to social norms (148). This deep-seated desire for belonging causes propaganda to flourish in democracies. Because the states of Western Europe and North America, from Ellul’s Cold-War perspective, are buoyed by notions of implicit consent, hegemony can be secured only by presenting the state as being already in alignment with individual feelings and shared beliefs. Propaganda “makes the people demand what was decided beforehand,” consolidating social and political order (Ellul 132). For modern democratic states whose legitimacy rests on consent of the governed, popular sovereignty and propaganda go hand in hand.

National integration was not effected automatically in early America because radicals labored first to inflame the public sphere with agitation propaganda and only later took up the matter of state stability. Unlike integration propaganda, agitation propaganda “unleashes an explosive moment” that seems fissile, too ready to burn itself out, to suit the purposes of a durable nationalism (Ellul 72). Yet the unsuitability of this propaganda for promoting long-lasting nationalism should not be read as a sign that American revolutionaries had retreated to a terrain that was somehow “less” than the state. The impetus to reimagine the geopolitical landscape gave temporary access to a global sensibility more capacious than the American nationalism that eventually

took its place. Too often, Revolutionary America has been identified solely as a forerunner of the US, ignoring the extent to which colonial propagandists had in mind broader geopolitical ideas of the Caribbean, Africa, and especially East India. The predominance of the state, not only in studies of propaganda, but in narratives of American history that assume colonial resistance as a prologue to national formation, constitutes a myopia that prevents this larger sphere from coming into focus. More than 60 years ago, Philip Davidson, in what is still the most comprehensive study of American Revolutionary propaganda, took the implicit view that the rebellious tide of colonial newspapers inexorably flowed toward a democratic state. Assumptions about a national telos since then have remained largely unchallenged in the work of national historians and early Americanists who “operate within the traditional view that colonial histories are subordinate to national histories and are useful principally for the light they shed on emergent national institutions and cultures” (Greene 235).

But the gravitational suck of the nation-state upon history is offset by a postcolonial perspective, as Jack Greene and others have suggested.² To the “continuing problem” of parochial nationalism, continuity offers a solution by treating US national history as part of a longer history of settler colonialism, one that extends from British subjects living in eighteenth-century America to US citizens of the nineteenth century, who displaced native peoples and expanded across the frontier like locusts.³ Attention to settler colonialism dethrones a nation-centered history, emphasizing sub-national and local units that parallel the nation. With this lens, new states added to the Union appear “less as creatures of the United States than as settler colonies not dissimilar from the colonies that became original states” (Greene 249).⁴ Colonies are, of course, marginal units found along a periphery. But they are also part of a larger system of colonization that forces subjects to confront their location within a complex set of economic, political, and cultural relations, which, in the case of Revolutionary America, were worldwide. This geography encompasses more than the spatial dimensions suggested by Greene’s emphasis upon state formation as opposed to national history; it also occasions a temporal reordering, which positions early American literature as propaganda that is chronologically prior to the state. Such priority exceeded nationalist sentiment to broach a global sensibility.

For American colonials qua patriots, it was difficult to shake the dawn of national independence free from the mercantilist shadow of the global. Even as propagandists were gearing up for national independence, they were also living prior to the establishment of an American state. In temporal terms, early Americans, as

What happens to national history when it is seen as coincident with and even preceded by global narratives?

both colonial inhabitants and not quite independent citizens, were prenational subjects. While this identification may seem to have little more than antiquarian value today, it nonetheless bristles with critical relevance for those trying to understand their place within a system of empire. What happens to national history when it is seen as coincident with and even preceded by global narratives? An answer to this question emerges from writing that comes before the creation of an independent America without assuming nationalism as a logical or necessary endpoint. This writing is revolutionary propaganda. I turn to examples of this literature on the way to an analysis of Paine's simultaneous devotion to nationalist cheerleading and global consciousness. Instead of proceeding chronologically, my examples develop conceptually, each a stepping stone toward understanding propaganda, not as comparative literature, but as literature that compares.⁵

The first task, then, is to suggest how colonials in one part of the British empire (such as America) were never living only locally or regionally but were instead exposed to an economic and military system that compared them to colonials in other hemispheres. Such convergence provides the context of "Asiatick'-America," as the first section of this article is titled: since neither the terms *transnational* nor *postcolonial* adequately describe this situation, American revolutionary literature can more properly be said to hinge on prenational thinking. In making comparisons between "East India and America," as the following section suggests, propagandists expanded the appeal to liberty beyond national frameworks, anticipating contemporary commentaries on globalization that reconfigure justice apart from state-centered contexts. This unconcern for the state represents an important strand—one that competes with national attachments—of early American literature. Paine reaped the conceptual possibilities of this situation, using colonial newspapers and pamphlets to locate America within a different political geography. On Paine's map, America is decidedly unexceptional, its imbrication in a colonial system of war and trade at once spelling a serious threat to independence and providing knowledge of global contexts crucial to making strategic comparisons. This section on "Tom Paine and World Literature" thus contends that what is revolutionary about revolutionary print culture is its widening of American space and time, its ability to seize past histories of the colonial system in India and elsewhere as points of comparison for projecting the future of America. A final section on "Prenational Critique Today" explores how far this future of early American literature might extend to our present moment.

1. “Asiatick”-America

In October 1773, a revolutionary broadside warned of threats against liberty and commerce by asking American subjects to compare themselves to “the helpless Asiaticks” of British India (Rush, *The Alarm. Number II, 2*).⁶ Beware the schemes of Parliament and the Crown, the author of this leaflet cautions, or colonists will soon find themselves reduced to a state of exotic vassalage. Since Americans at this moment tended to be neither Asian nor passive, but were instead outraged by news that ships carrying the trade of the East India Company were bearing down on North American ports, perhaps the danger implicit in this comparison seemed rather distant, no doubt as far away as the Indian subcontinent. For colonists bold enough to entertain ideas of independence, the prospect of forging a new nationalism was so untested an idea that thinking about oppression on the other side of the globe might seem a luxury for another time, not what was needed at a moment of crisis when stirring up partisan feelings at home remained the most pressing task. Crisis is the ideal breeding ground for agitation propaganda, but, according to Ellul, its capacity to incite action is tempered by its transitory effects. Unable to sustain anything as profound as the state, the relative “weakness” of such propaganda also determines its “strength” in encouraging nonnational connections. It is a fitting coincidence that Paine leveraged a global critique through a series of propaganda pamphlets collected as *The American Crisis*.

India as well as other conflicted zones within the imperium served as revolutionary relays, linking Americans to histories of worldwide struggle. Through the efforts of Paine and his comrades-in-print, early American propaganda outlined an experimental political geography, one that sought to pinpoint the location of the North American colonies with respect to what was at that time the most powerful and sophisticated financial empire on earth. Never merely spatial, comprehension of this location required a revolutionary understanding of what a future history might look like. In contrast to conventional assumptions that have shaped understandings of early American literature, this look did not have its sights set on a national outcome or state stability but instead coolly appraised the British coordination of mercantile and military power to imagine wider ambits of space and time. Edmund Burke echoed this appraisal of the British system by conjuring up the empire’s “mighty and strangely diversified mass,” which Parliament had bungled by assuming “that the natives of Hindostan and those of Virginia could be ordered in the same manner” (Burke 2:191). As with the revolutionary broadside

comparing Americans and “Asiaticks,” Burke’s April 1777 report to his constituents seeks to convey a lesson about comparative conditions on a global scale.

While largely metaphoric, comparisons between Americans and “Asiaticks” suggest awareness of a vast, coordinated system of military and mercantile interests that positioned American colonists within a global commercial empire. Invocations of the colonial antipodes in revolutionary print culture represent something different than an early attempt at international history or even an incipient transnational literary culture. Even though “national histories are part of global histories” (Bender ix), there remain other, alternative units of the global.⁷ These units may be “less” than the nation, but, as in the case of colonial pamphleteers and propagandists whose critical fascination with Asia, the East India Company, and tea preceded national consciousness, less can often be more. That is, less nationalism is more comparison.

Like propaganda, comparative history often presumes nation-states. This is not to imply that comparative history functions as propaganda, but only to say that just as the state seems indispensable to the functioning of modern propaganda, so too nations have remained central to the methods of comparative history. Micol Seigel has made this critique in asserting that historians frequently do not question their reliance on nations as a hermeneutic starting point. The result is that comparisons take for granted—rather than question—notions of national difference and end up reifying not just the concept of nation but the particular subjects who inhabit those entities. “Comparisons obscure the workings of power” because their effect is to place beyond analysis the prior interpretative frames that saddle subjects with national characteristics and traits (Seigel 65). Seigel suggests that the insights of postcolonial scholarship offer a corrective, making what had been a rather staid international history into a transnational practice where all sorts of frames (racial, diasporic, global), not just national ones, are brought into mutual exchange. It is important to recognize, however, that the postcolonial does not match up with the transnational since *post-* is a temporal designation while *trans-* is spatial. The *postcolonial* exposes a blind spot within a would-be *transnational* literature that never interrogates initial assumptions about how fully formed the nation is in the first place, about how much the nation governs critical possibilities, and about how thoroughly the idea of nation displaces earlier forms of critique. Repetitions of the national that accompany each iteration of the transnational are a problem for the study of early America. Equally certain are the liabilities of a critical orientation, which, because of an exclusive focus on

spatiality, ignores temporal concerns. In each case, prenational thinking is ruled out in advance, obscuring a brief but conceptually resonant moment when people thought about politics and culture in revolutionary ways that become virtually unimaginable after “1776” retroactively installs the nation-state as the governing principle of literary and historical consciousness.

While it was largely inconceivable for colonial Americans to conceive of their grievances outside the context of British nationalism, the nation often proved too narrow a conceptual entity for framing their political and economic protests. For these Americans and other eighteenth-century subjects, “empires not nation states constituted the standard global political unit” (Shammas 180). Besides, the intensification of British nationalism in the decades before the Revolution had left many Americans behind as second-class subjects in the race to assume the mantle of historic British legal protections and equity. One alternative was to fire back with the discourse of natural rights because its vague, universalizing contours gave colonial ideologists room that was no longer found in the constricted discourse of British nationalism.⁸ A significantly different alternative (and the focus of this essay) seized by agent provocateurs of revolutionary print culture lay, not in the universal, but in the global: as opposed to the philosophical abstractions of universalism, colonial discourse of the global relies on an economic and historical sensibility that clarified the thirteen colonies’ particular status within a world-system of trade and military expenditure. For revolutionaries contending with the “global expansion of the capitalist world-economy” that characterized the late eighteenth century, the plight of the thirteen colonies did not automatically flow into the tapered channels of proto-national discourse (Wallerstein 145). After all, on the eve of the Revolution, of the nearly 38 million subjects of the British empire, only 8.4% lived in all of the Americas. Even with the British Isles added to the mix, the majority of the imperial population (58.1%) lived in East and South Asia (see Shammas 181). To understand the size and scope of their enemy, to tackle the enormity of a system that encased their present desires and future aspirations, American agitators enlarged the scope of analysis, in effect, by converting patriotic zeal into an insurgent geopolitical discourse.

2. East India and America

Even a commentator as astute as Hannah Arendt—there is to my mind no better comparative political study than her

On Revolution—could write that the American Revolution “has remained an event of little more than local importance” (49). The American Revolution did not echo with world historical significance, despite the claims made about a minor skirmish at Lexington Green between farmers and British regulars. That honor, for Arendt, instead lies with the French Revolution, which challenged the existence of social misery in ways that the thirteen colonies, financially dependent upon and morally compromised by slavery, could not. *On Revolution* is a work of political theory that examines the philosophy of James Madison, Robespierre, and other eighteenth-century statesmen, unmindful of the view from below. This below, as Peter Linebaugh and Markus Rediker specify, can be located below decks: the working-class, multiethnic world of sailors and slaves that posed a sprawling, hydra-headed threat to European and American powers engaged in global traffic. “The American Revolution,” they assert, “was neither an elite nor a national event, since its genesis, process, outcome, and influence all depended on the circulation of proletarian experience around the Atlantic” (212). This perspective suggests that the American Revolution was not merely American but rather a transatlantic phenomenon powered by the unprecedented development of commercial capital on a world scale. Following the same routes as tea and other commodities, the oceanic compass of this protest pointed to colonial enterprises from the Americas to East India.

Prenational print culture adopted a critical outlook that was as extensive as the British empire itself. In other words, the nationalist component of early American literature depended upon the contexts of imperial militarism against which patriots and revolutionaries were themselves struggling. This situation that found writers such as Paine and John Dickinson employing global insights to fuel nationalist sentiment is not so much a contradiction as a condition of simultaneity: because their propaganda did not necessarily promote state integration, more than a few pamphleteers temporarily conceived of American identity as not something separate or exceptional but as part of the same oceanic currents that made Britain’s commercial empire possible. Addressing public letters to “my dear countrymen” across the American colonies while still clinging to historic English liberties, Dickinson exemplifies the simultaneity of imperial belonging, nationalist identification, and incipient global awareness (*Letters from a Farmer* 23). It is as if Dickinson writes from several times—and places—at once.

Worried over revenue-grabbing policies in Ireland and convinced that American colonists would soon bear the brunt of

British designs on Florida and Nova Scotia, Dickinson in 1767 emphasized the importance of colonial unity in his letters to the *Pennsylvania Chronicle*, which were collected in pamphlet form the following year and published as *Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania*. Sometimes viewed as a moderate—Dickinson refused to sign the Declaration of Independence because he thought reconciliation still a possibility—he elsewhere articulated a global analysis that identifies the dangers of what from our present perspective looks like an early version of the military-industrial complex. In case this label seems anachronistic, we might more appropriately say that from an eighteenth-century perspective Dickinson is confronting the military–mercantile complex. For economic historians of empire, this connection stresses the degree to which British financial policies were organized around the production of war. Spending on military operations and the resulting debt amounted to a whopping 80–90% of the total governmental budget (Shammas 181). The immensity of this coordinated commercial and military empire comes across in a comparison to estimates from today’s liberal blogosphere that anywhere from 30% to 50% of the US national budget is earmarked for the Pentagon.⁹ Continuing war became Britain’s chief export. Most significant was not the enormity of this war machine but its creative financing that allowed Britain to “pay for large-scale war without bankrupting its citizens and, thereby, sparking the internal unrest that frequently destabilized other ancien régime monarchies” (Breen, “Ideology and Nationalism” 16).¹⁰ Colonists like Dickinson, however, doubted that Parliament saw colonials as full citizens: the pamphlets they churned out and the broadsides they printed on the cheap expressed suspicions that the transoceanic commercial interests uniting different ends of the empire directly financed a permanent state of war.

In a November 1773 broadside signed “Rusticus,” Dickinson takes aim at the government outsourcing of war that creates violence and famine in the East Indies. His concern is more partisan than cosmopolitan. He is consumed with fears that the East India Company is planning to subject the American colonies to the same “Barbarities, Extortions, and Monopolies,” not to mention the “Indigence and Ruin,” which have destabilized British India: “Are we in like Manner to be given up to the Disposal of the *East-India Company*,” part of an overall scheme for “enslaving *America*?” (Dickinson 2:459). Much more than just a private trading corporation, the East India Company profited from a symbiotic relationship to the state that invested heavily in Company shares, floated the Company’s debt, and borrowed from and lent money to the Company, all the while supporting those financial interests by

dispatching soldiers and weapons to India. The East India Company helped pioneer development of a fiscal-military state that exercised administrative sway over populations brought under the sway of its commercial empire.¹¹ Because Dickinson's perspective is not yet contracted to the national, "Rusticus" can trace the implications of global commerce, following the path from exclusive trading rights to monopoly, from total economic control to the erection of puppet governments, and from political instability to war and famine. Dickinson charges that 1.5 million people perished during the Bengal famine of 1770 (modern geographers calculate that this estimate is wildly inaccurate, as roughly one-third of the population, or ten million people, died from starvation and disease). Dickinson understands, too, that the famine was not a natural calamity (starvation did not occur "because the Earth denied its fruits") but rather the product of the East India Company's disastrous revenue practices, which held food at an inflated price while hoarding grain and other "Necessaries of Life" to heighten scarcity (Dickinson 2:459).¹² When Parliament granted the East India Company a monopoly to distribute tea in the American colonies, Dickinson worried that the same chain reaction leading from unfair trading practices to famine, a pattern he saw established by the recent history of British India, was fast unfolding in America.

Tea was labeled a pernicious commodity that revealed the designs of the fiscal-military state upon America's liberties. At the least this view typifies the position of the many writers who in fall 1773 issued broadsides, sent angry letters to newspapers, and spat out rebuttals denouncing tea as the material embodiment of Parliament's corrupt dealings with the East India Company. To stem the financial hemorrhaging of the East India Company, Parliament contravened the free-market faith of American merchants and consumers by granting the corporation the exclusive right to ship, sell, and distribute tea in the colonies. The import of this act was not lost upon the colonists, especially after the passage of the Regulating Act that summer giving Parliament increased control over the administrative affairs of India. In a one-page leaflet printed in Philadelphia, "A Mechanic" described this agreement as a dangerous collusion of "the Sword" and the commercial company that had decimated India ("To the Tradesmen"). So, too, another "Mechanic" in a New York broadside deplored this combination of economic and military power as "the Conduct of an Artful Assassin, who cunningly throws gold Dust into your Eyes, while he is slyly endeavouring to cut your Throat, unperceived" ("To the Worthy Inhabitants"). In this case, gold dust was the promise of East India tea at a lower price. Tea

exposed colonists' vulnerability within "an empire of goods," its daily use among consumers prompting common identifications that conferred "national consciousness" on an otherwise scattered set of people (Breen, "Baubles" 86).¹³ This argument connecting commodity exchange to political solidarity, however, assumes the nation before the fact, setting it up as a foregone conclusion, the only possible outcome of revolutionary thinking. But the "mechanics" and others who kept colonial printers busy tell a different story: for a few months in 1773, as propagandists and pamphleteers edgily watched "the most powerful Trading Company in the Universe," as patriots and consumers fretted that they were soon to be rendered "the most miserable Slaves upon the Globe," they intuited the value of universal affiliations and considered the strategic benefits of claiming global citizenship ("To the Tradesmen"; Z, "To the PEOPLE").

As the epitome of a global economy, tea cultivated in India, put into exchange with slaves from Africa, and purchased with silver mined from South America provided a prenatal lesson that exceeds the rather restricted appeal of early American nationalism. Each phase of its circulation bespoke the nightmares of exploitation, famine, and slavery; for American colonists, the unsettling recognition of their precarious place within a commercial empire transformed the category of America itself so that it hardly seemed exceptional. Indeed, the threat was that America might be part of larger pattern of rapine. This fact is frequently minimized as though the thirteen colonies in America have little to do with colonization on a worldwide scale.¹⁴ The fiery propaganda of revolutionary print culture suggests otherwise, revealing that many Americans—among them figures as famous as Dickinson and Paine as well as writers who only went by the name "A Mechanic"—briefly framed American colonization as part of a world-system of empire administered by the regnant combination of British financial markets and military force.

As Paine declared, "my country is the world" (*Rights of Man* 228). Although Paine made this pronouncement 20 years after East India was front page news in fall 1773, global thinking had only a brief political life. Even within the short space of Dickinson's letters on tea, global sympathy fades before feelings of nationalist pride. After warning that the East India Company has its "Eyes on *America*, as a new Theater" now that India has been stripped of its resources, he supplies his reader with a bit of hope by playing upon ethnic difference: "But thank GOD, we are not Sea Poys, nor Marrattas, but *British Subjects*, who are born to Liberty" (459). Retreating to narrow feelings inspired by ethnic difference, Dickinson here gives up on the conceptually adventurous and

inclusive nature of prenational critique for a couple of reasons. First, he echoes the tradition of colonial polemicists who as early as the Stamp Act crisis of 1765 had contended that their opposition to Parliamentary measures amounted to nothing other than insistence upon their rights as Englishmen. For Dickinson, this reminder could save citizens from rushing over the cliff of separation. Second, it seems safer to envision liberty from within a frame that is wholly national, making it hard to distinguish political virtues from commodities. After all, if one New York publisher could attest that it was his duty as “a lover of my country, to prefer the English” tea to Dutch imports, a devotion to liberty could appear as not altogether different from brand loyalty (Rivington).

The competing loyalties expressed in Dickinson’s letter, itself a reflection of heated attacks and counterattacks launched in colonial print culture in the waning months of 1773, emerge from a deeper uncertainty about the frame of rights and liberty. What is the proper frame for life, liberty, and property and how do understandings of these terms change in accordance with geography? Nancy Fraser has asked this question with respect to justice, arguing that the facts and forces of globalization require a seismic shift to relocate justice from the province of nations to a more porous domain that runs between and across sovereign territorial states. “It has ceased to be axiomatic that the modern territorial state is the appropriate unit for thinking about issues of justice,” she writes, describing a geopolitics that includes subjects who fall between the cracks of state sovereignty or who have affiliations that override the national imperatives. This process is already fast occurring via “global mass media and cybertechnology,” which support entities such as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and networks of transnational public opinion (Fraser 71). In talking about an eighteenth-century letter writer and a twenty-first-century political theorist in the same breath, my purpose is to wonder how far removed are broadsides from cybertechnology. The question is not an idle one: although the broadside or leafleted letter cannot be zapped from colonial coffeehouse to tavern, the circulation of these quickly printed and distributed bits of ephemera prompted American colonials to stretch the borders of political community within the limits of existing technologies. Sam Adams called upon Boston’s sister cities to feel similarly endangered by Britain’s reaction to the dumping of East India Company tea. Writers such as “Hampden” took heed from the perilous fate of colonies other than America, whose subjects saw resources and revenues “dragooned” by the fiscal-military state (Rush, *The Alarm*. Number V, 3). Finally,

propagandists zeroed in on British atrocities in India to warn how the combination of military force and commerce put entire populations at risk.

Such universal aspirations often found their limit in East India, as Mary Poovey contends in her reading of administrative reports from British colonial outposts. At the same time, however, awareness of British dealings in India enabled American subjects to connect their political struggle, even if only momentarily or through ultimately negative invocations of “helpless Asiaticks,” to events and people on the other side of the globe. Prenational critique in Revolutionary America—a much different and more short-lived political animal than the US—tweaks the frame of early American literature so that it does not exclusively orbit a future nation-state. By introducing possibilities for new and alternative trajectories, even if none of them will ever occur because history has already happened, prenational critique sets the basic units of “the people,” “subjects,” and “liberty” within the “planetary currents” of eighteenth-century insurrection and revolt (Linebaugh and Redikker 3). Globalization skews justice so entirely that the boundaries—the “meta-political foundations” (Fraser 84)—of identity demand reconceptualization. This insight about our contemporary world meshes with the prenational critique of colonial American print culture to provoke impatience with the narrow delimitations that automatically inscribe people—and thus their rights and liberties—within a national telos, especially when that nation has not yet come into existence. The point is not that the eighteenth century looks surprisingly a lot like the twenty-first or that an unchanging monolithic capitalist world-economy governs each. Rather, this historical doubling instead amplifies the conclusion that “what turns a collection of people into fellow subjects . . . is not geographical proximity, but their co-imbrication in a common structural or institutional framework” (Fraser 82). To put this ethos of expanded connection into the parlance of “Hampden” and other revolutionary American subjects, tea is a wicked commodity, “the Profit of which is to support the Tyranny of . . . the East, enslave the West, and prepare us fit Victims for the Exercise of the horrid Inhumanity,” the same as perpetrated in India (Rush, *The Alarm. Number II*, 2). Grounded in an experimental political geography, this perspective can impel subjects to far-flung political affiliations.

3. Tom Paine and World Literature

How long “grassroots globalization” will survive into the twenty-first century is not known, although observers such as

Fraser imply that this is a trend still on the upswing.¹⁵ In the eighteenth century, it is hard to see this thinking lasting much beyond 1773; it surely must have been dead by 1776 when the colonies declared themselves free and independent states.

But concerns over the East India Company did not wane so quickly. In spring 1777, the Continental Congress warned that the British government had plans to transport captured soldiers to Gibraltar and turn them over to the East India Company, which would then ship the prisoners to its settlements in India. In effect, American revolutionaries would be declared enemy combatants and detained in an offshore military garrison encircled by the sovereign territory of Spain. Echoes of what was Camp X-Ray and now Camp Delta at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba are hard to ignore. Whereas the US military and the White House have insisted on total control over roughly 300 detainees from the war on terror, the British government in 1777 seemed eager to unload its prisoners on a private contractor, according to East India Company documents cited by delegates to the Continental Congress.¹⁶ This coincidence between two far-flung histories and very different systems may seem quaint, tenuous, or even tendentious, but anachronism can provide the seed of a creative historical sensibility, one which enables subjects to compare and seize times that are “transchronic, heterochronic, and multichronic” (Aravamudan 349). Just as it makes little sense to critique recent events lacking an understanding of the long-evolving geopolitical conditions behind those events, it is equally dubious to investigate the past purely in pursuit of an illusory historical truth whose sole concern is the past itself. As Srinivas Aravamudan contends, “criticism without history is presentism, while history without criticism is antiquarianism” (345). For an alternative historical practice, consider revolutionary propaganda, which made its case by forecasting the past of East India as the impending present of America.

While Dickinson and other Americans forcefully asserted a historic sense of English rights to protest “the violation of the liberties of the people” (*Letters from a Farmer* 7), their simultaneous identification as colonials led to increasing anxieties about a competing manifestation of Englishness, namely, the empire’s coordination of war and commercial enterprise on a geographically vast scale. Having battled on two fronts since the Seven Years’ War when royal soldiers were sent to India, Britain sent still more troops eastward during the American Revolution. The extent of these global military operations encouraged the Continental Congress to search for cracks within the empire. Amid a report on British troop movements and reinforcements, delegate Samuel Johnston in 1781 fixed on some intercepted communiqués, which

“make it evident that the British have suffered very considerably in the East Indies under an Army of Asiaticks” (P. Smith, *Letters* 17:345–46).¹⁷ People once seen as “helpless” in 1773 now enter the conversation as something like equal partners. Officials in the British government shared the opinion that crises in India would further destabilize American affairs. Three days before colonists dumped 342 chests of tea in Boston harbor, Charles Jenkins, the first Earl of Liverpool, who at various times held the posts of Secretary of the Treasury and Secretary of War (these phases of his career exemplify the connections between state-financed capitalism and military operations), worried that open investigation into the corruption of the East India Company would have “a bad influence on our American business” (qtd in Sutherland 315). Even though the Boston ruffians who ransacked the Company’s vessels disguised themselves as North American Indians, it is tempting to wonder if any thought ran through the mob that colonists were playing Indian in more ways than one.

In England, the director of the East India Company searched for solutions by comparing East and West theaters of overseas administration. Might it prove advantageous to “fix the government of the territories in India on a plan something similar to the American colonies,” granting the population of India the protections of British subjects (N. Smith 64)? The alternative was to render Indians “mere slaves of the Company” (N. Smith 64). Even if the director took care to discriminate among different sorts of colonials, noting that “Indians are inured to oppression” (N. Smith 3), these extreme possibilities alarmed the white inhabitants of America. The potential parallel between the British colonies in America and India vexed historians of the East India Company into the twentieth century. Despite the conclusion in 1912 that the Company “will always stand out in history as a monument to British enterprise and honour” (Robinson 179), reconciling the simultaneous history of American independence and British hegemony in India has not been easy. Even if “the success” of the Company “is largely due to the pre-eminent gift for government with which the Anglo-Saxon race is endowed. . . . it will be necessary to explain away the loss of the American colonies at the very moment when the East India Company was consolidating its position in India” (Robinson 174). This conundrum, in part, contains its own answer: measures taken to subdue India, in addition to the famine and war that ensued, sent tremors of concern halfway around the world. As “Rusticus” closed his letter on the tea tax, he recommended that in American cities and towns, “Watchmen be instructed as they go their Rounds, to call out every night, *past Twelve o’Clock, beware of the East-India Company*” (Dickinson

2:463). The alarm was not just that the British were coming, as Longfellow later imagined it, but that the imperial state was rounding up troublemakers in an effort to tighten its hold upon colonial subjects.

Longfellow's schoolroom standard hardly counts as significant evidence that prenational critique outlasted its historical moment. Yet for participants in early American print culture such as "Humanus" and "Atlanticus"—two of Paine's pseudonyms—the co-imbrication of America and India remained a vital illustration of the need to keep the pressure on the military-fiscal state. Seeking to rally the flagging spirits of the Revolutionary army during the long winter, Paine laid bare America's connection not simply to the East Indies but also to the Caribbean and Africa. Although Paine's reputation largely rests on *Common Sense* (1776), a publication recently described as "an unprecedented call to nationalism," it is by no means a foregone conclusion that the entire flow of his leveling rhetoric is absorbed into nationalist currents (Loughran 3).¹⁸ Instead Paine's activities in revolutionary print culture promote world interest. In this respect, it is helpful to remember Arendt's observation that interest acts as a revolutionary faculty when it is understood as *inter-est*, that is, as a way of thinking about the world that highlights the concerns that unite people.¹⁹ As Paine considers the fate of the colonies and global trade, he suggests that Americans, Asians, and, as we will see, New World Africans share such common interests.

Before the publication of *Common Sense*, Paine wrote several pieces for Pennsylvania newspapers condemning British rule in the East Indies. Perhaps his most creative is "Reflections on the Life and Death of Lord Clive," largely an interior monologue attributed to the British general who administered colonial policy in India in the 1750s and 1760s. Paine represents Clive as suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder, his enjoyment of an elaborate London dinner pierced by flashbacks to the battlefields of Bengal. In Clive's traumatic consciousness, metropole and colonial outpost, two spatially distant sites, become temporally coincident. "Loud laughs" transmogrify into "groans of dying men," "the joyous toast" seems like "the sound of murder," and the "crimson colored port" resembles nothing so much as "blood" ("Reflections" 2:27). Elsewhere Paine charges that Clive oversaw a campaign of terror whose cruelties involved strapping Indians to the front of loaded cannons and blowing them to bits, an accusation confirmed by subsequent commentators. As Clive relives his actions in this mini-drama, he mourns that "the scenes of India are all rehearsed, and no one sees the tragedy but myself" ("Reflections" 2:27). Unable to escape the past, Clive endures an

isolation that makes him an object of pity in the eyes of poor and working-class observers. The former commander-in-chief of India experiences a sharp pang on overhearing a “ragged wretch” say, “Ah, poor Lord Clive!” while he considers somewhat more humane (“more mercifully cruel,” in Paine’s words) the chimney-sweep who curses him directly (“Reflections” 2:26). Of the mass of humanity that Paine depicts reflecting on Clive’s ignominy—orphans, widows, beggars, and nabobs—only this “sooty sweep” (“Reflections” 2:26) condescends to interact with the disgraced hero who, courtesy of the Battle of Plassey in 1757, secured Bengal for the East India Company. The chimneysweep represents the sole human contact for Clive now that he has returned from India with his bribe-taking exposed and his stake in world interest (or *inter-est* in Arendt’s sense) retracted to working-class scorn. For the man whose influence once took a global dimension and whose actions determined the fate of thousands, severe isolation eventuates in suicide. In light of this irony, Paine wonders about a fitting memorial for this tragic figure: “let his monument be a globe.” But this nod to global significance quickly fades, as it becomes clear that Paine cleverly insists not on *the* globe but on *a* globe, that is, “a bubble” in which fame and renown are only temporary illusions (“Reflections” 2:23).²⁰

Paine sharpened the edge of colonial critique by explicitly connecting it to American contexts a few months later. This meditation on America’s interpolation within a spider’s web of commercial and military expansion segues from an examination of the “horrid cruelties exercised by Britain in the East Indies” into a consideration of the “most horrid of all traffics, that of human flesh” (“A Serious Thought” 2:20). The juxtaposition of these two crimes—the “artificial famine” created in Bengal and the transatlantic slave trade (“A Serious Thought” 2:20)—impel Paine to look for ways of extricating geographically disparate peoples from a global empire. A nation-state seems too puny an entity for this task. By confronting America’s place in a world system governed by the coordination of commerce and might, prenatal critique instead stresses the urgency of a colonial separation in which independence will not automatically require the scaled-back perspective known as nationalism. Paine hopes that the first act of this new sovereign entity will be hemispheric in scope, namely, a ban on the slave trade and eventual emancipation for Africans in the New World. The subsequent decoupling of these contexts and the ascension of national interest is, of course, a familiar story, but Paine’s devotion to prenatal thinking reveals a possible alternative trajectory for critique before it hardened into national narrative.

Even as the Boston Tea Party was eclipsed by more momentous events and disappearing into lore, Paine's zeal for pamphlet culture ensured that the context of East India kept its prominent place in revolutionary print culture. In the series of 16 pamphlets written from 1776 to 1783 that comprise *The American Crisis*, he repeatedly accused Britain of worldwide barbarism, trapping Americans in a world system of injustice that included India, Africa, and the Caribbean. The stirring rhetoric of these essays, as scholars have noted, served to stoke the patriotic fires, a purpose dramatically realized with General Washington's order that the first issue ("These are the times that try men's souls") be read to troops preparing to cross the Delaware. But global sensibility was also simultaneous with nationalist sentiment: *The American Crisis* refuses to relinquish the excessive geography of anti-imperial critique. Construed as propaganda, this exemplar of revolutionary literature lacks an element deemed essential to twentieth-century propaganda: a thoroughgoing commitment to the state. The flipside of this lack is a temporary fullness, a cosmopolitan flicker that frees perspective from a national lens so that a comparative vantage becomes possible. But because readers of Paine have concentrated on "the book" to the exclusion of pamphlet culture, an emphasis on national narrative has obscured the extent to which early American literature qua propaganda does not orbit the state. Focusing on *Common Sense* as a book rather than as one item of propaganda among the many of its day, scholars have heralded Paine as the "first to recognize the absolute priority of a national argument in revolutionary America" (Ferguson 115). This assessment amounts to a dubious honor: the canonicity of one "stand-alone" book should not determine the critical horizon for a range of pamphleteering and other propaganda activities that intermittently placed critique on a global track. Even as Paine proclaimed that the US soon "will sound as pompously in the world" as Britain (*American Crisis* 1:59), he also worries about the place of this sovereign state in the world and whether such pomposity need also sound the death-knell of prenational critique.

Thus in the same issue of *The American Crisis* that touts the nation's budding status, Paine reserves highest grandeur for the republic of letters, specifically because this literary terrain exceeds national jurisdiction. "Universal empire is the prerogative of a writer," boasts Paine, absorbing "all mankind" into his audience and concern (*American Crisis* 1:58). Pitting the republic of letters against monarchy, he shifts "empire" from geopolitical to ethical ground, claiming that the universal domain of literature—as opposed to the global designs of the fiscal-military state—embodies a "far higher character in the world" than the questionable integrity

of lords and kings (*American Crisis* 1:58). Paine's "prerogative" includes subjecting imperial actors to the domain of print culture. Clive, in Paine's mock-soliloquy, blames "the newspapers, fatal enemies to ill-gotten wealth" for his tumble down the ladder of respectability and virtue ("Reflections" 2:26). His undoing comes at the hands of fortune, which "publish[es] me in folio to the world." Clive, in effect, becomes a text, bandied about in public discourse by an audience whose interests dwarf those of state-run commerce. He reflects, "Lord Clive is himself a treatise upon vanity, printed in golden type" ("Reflections" 2:27). His conversion into print is total; he has become the embodiment of propaganda. Paine had no problem enacting a similar transformation upon his own person, making himself into a text, giving his identity over to print culture so completely that he signed issues of *The American Crisis* with the pseudonym "Common Sense." As a reflection of "universalizing norms of public print discourse" associated with the republic of letters (Warner, *Letters* 56), Paine's tactics resonate with far more than either state sovereignty or the realm of an abstract public sphere; "universal empire" also evokes the precise coordinates of the eighteenth-century world system.²¹

When it comes to the military-mercantile complex that unites Britain and the East India Company, Paine speaks of several worlds, distinguishing geopolitical events from spiritual affairs. He cuts this distinction with a vengeance, stating that while sin and retribution are "reserved to *another* world," Britain's sins of ravaging other lands invite a "punishment" that "can only be inflicted in *this* world" (*American Crisis* 1:66). For Paine, the geography of this world requires gruesome specificity, as he accuses Britain, via the East India Company in particular and its commercial empire in general, as having "the blood of India," "the wretchedness of Africa," and the "butcherly destruction of the Caribbs of St. Vincent's" on her hands (*American Crisis* 1:66). Published in January 1777 as a letter to Lord Howe, who had been charged with the mission of pardoning rebels who laid down their arms and reaffirmed support of the monarchy, this installment of *The American Crisis* asks colonists to consider Britain's history on three continents before seeking the Crown's mercy. The colonial revolution in America, he argues, cannot be conceptualized apart from other workings of the empire.

Paine sought to prove that the public had gotten this message about the importance of translating the abstractions of liberal universalism into the specifics of geopolitical critique. Quoting a petition drafted by a revolutionary citizens' committee, he argues that pleas for peace and reconciliation are too localized and short-sighted for a people caught within a vast commercial and military

system. As the committee charged, British policy “has filled India with carnage and famine, Africa with slavery, and tampered with Indians and negroes to cut the throats of the freemen of America” (*American Crisis* 1:93). While Paine expressed more nuanced views, especially on the issue of slavery, the citizens’ petition echoes his conviction that war is not altogether distasteful to those who profit from the operations of the military-mercantile complex. Far from it: Tories are “happy” to live under a government, which is “never better pleased” than when violence flares up in Asia or Africa (*American Crisis* 1:93). In this light, hopes for reconciliation are nothing other than a devious plot orchestrated by Parliament to encourage rebellion so that private holdings in America can be seized and confiscated, the spoils of war flowing into the coffers of the fiscal-military state. The trajectory of this critique explains why Paine persists in labeling destabilization around the world a set of “national cruelties” (*American Crisis* 1:66). Even though these atrocities take place within a global theater, they remain motivated by interests, which, in comparison to the “universal empire” of republican letters, appear self-serving and constricted.

The expanse of the eighteenth-century world-system—its reliance on the fiscal-military state, its detention of enemy combatants via a network of extranational jurisdiction, its commercial traffic in war and slavery—makes it difficult to conceptualize, let alone critique, a geopolitical apparatus whose intricacy and seeming totality defy comprehension. To expose the immensity of this system and, particularly, America’s place within it, Paine enlists irony, a trope whose penchant for exposing systemic inconsistencies and overall contradictions provides a global reach.²² Tea, once a sure sign of British hegemony, now signifies less securely, connecting America to East India in ways that spell the unraveling of that hegemony. “It is remarkable that the produce of that ruined country [India], transported to America, should there kindle up a war to punish the destroyer,” Paine writes. His amazement at this improbable linkage is exceeded only by his sense of poetic justice that colonial oppression perpetrated in the antipodes reappears as colonial insurgency on the other side of the globe. This irony both pinpoints and simplifies the conjunction of East and West under commercial empire: with the resources of East India depleted through government corruption, America appears as the next tantalizing “market for plunder” (*American Crisis* 1:142–44). It is a threat whose magnitude dwarfs more local—that is, national—identifications to reveal America’s imbrication in an immense geography of trade and war.

4. Prenational Critique Today

Paine tried to dispel notions that national interest motivated his partisan pamphleteering. "Perhaps it may be said that I live in America," he began in defense against those who might pigeon-hole his propaganda as merely national. In an issue of *The American Crisis* addressed "to the People of England," he explains that "my attachment is to all the world, and not to any particular part" (1:146). This declaration asserts that critique must do more than focus on any one part of empire by remaining vigilant about the transit of commodities, people, and power across the entirety of the world-system. American revolutionary propaganda, because it had not fully aligned itself with local passions that would soon congeal into state nationalism, offers a comparative perspective that challenges the provincialism of our historical and literary critical narratives.²³ Ultimately, though, interest in global portraits of the fiscal-military state could not keep pace with an enthusiasm for commerce and world trade. To take one prominent example, *Common Sense* peddles corn and other American commodities as the relays of a new-world culture ushered in by independence. Paine, it seems, believed that corn was an ideologically different species of commodity from tea. As Wallerstein reminds us, though, the Revolution conformed to the general pattern of settler decolonization in the Americas by having no "revolutionary effects" upon the world-capitalist system (228). The eclipse of pre-national critique is unavoidable and today its traces exist largely in items of revolutionary print culture that the Library of Congress catalogues as "ephemera," hardly the stuff of a lasting critical tradition.

No doubt objections about claims for prenational critique have been piling up long before this concluding juncture in my essay's argument. Aside perhaps from some antiquarian interest, it may be charged, prenational critique makes little sense in a moment when literary history is so thoroughly suffused by the postnational. To adapt the rhetoric of *Common Sense* in which Paine bitterly asked those urging reconciliation, "can ye restore to us the time that is past" (93), we might well ask those experimenting with prenational critique at this belated date, can you pretend to turn back the clock to a moment when the nation-form is in such doubt that alternative modes of thinking and feeling once seemed viable? For all its unanswerability, this question neatly expresses the problem: so familiar is the nation that its default status is rarely interrogated in fields driven by a hermeneutic predestination that locks interpretation into patterns and chronologies leading up to national formation. As Michael Warner argues, a

“nationalist impulse is an almost preinterpretative commitment for the discipline” of early Anglo-American literature (“What’s Colonial” 50). In this cockeyed temporality, the coming future of 1776 sets the meaning—and, in this case, such meaning is ordained by the singularity of the nation—of a print culture past whose activities once exceeded, if only for a few fleeting historical moments, the creation of a sovereign entity separate from England. This essay represents an attempt at temporal re-adjustment to discern the flashes of critique that emerge from American colonial print culture when nationalism is not an assumed endpoint.

Such prenational results may seem preposterous. Indeed, *pre*-national critique in an era of *post*national literary and cultural history would seem to capture perfectly the definition of *preposterousness*. The temporal antagonism endemic to this formulation enlivens a critical sensibility attuned to coincidences that make the history of one colonial space appear as the future of another. From the Latin meaning “placed in the wrong order” or “inverted” (OED), the sense of *pre*- (before) combines with *postero*- (later, future, next) to suggest an orientation that is not bound to sequence or teleology. When the *pre*- and the *post*- coincide, an expanded comparative history becomes possible, bringing together once disjointed times. In this delayed simultaneity, the operations of the British empire in India in the 1760s to 1770s prefigure the peril thought to be facing American cities along the Atlantic seaboard circa fall 1773. Such simultaneity might even be drawn out still further to the point where that conjunction recalls the military–industrial complex of today.

Notes

1. This comparison should not obscure the pronounced differences between Lippmann and Ellul. Propaganda, Ellul asserted, “is not simply a matter of public opinion” because of its capacity to impel action (26). For an even more specific endowment of propaganda with a modern birth date, see Wollaeger, who supplies 22 September 1914, the day when a host of writers, including Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, H.G. Wells, and Thomas Hardy were recruited to lend their talents to British propaganda efforts (14).

2. For conjunctions of the US and the postcolonial, see Buell as well as Hulme. Brown refers to early American novels as postcolonial literature (13). On the difficulty of incorporating postcolonial perspectives into American Studies, see Edwards.

3. As Greene argues, settlement does not so much proceed from “nation-building impulses” as from other motives typically associated with land, profit, and exploitation (247). Yokota suggests that such a postcolonial perspective, unlike a national focus, results in sharper attention to the history of racial oppression (264–65).

4. In addition to the continuity that Greene discerns running from British colonial America to the postcolonial US, Dimock's emphasis on continuity decenters the nation from pride of place in literary history (5–6).

5. Cooper offers a similar distinction in calling for "a history that compares" rather than "Comparative History" (1135). For Cooper, Comparative History (his example is George Fredrickson's *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*) results in static explanations that cannot take account of transatlantic or global situations. Much as Cooper questions the category of history, it is important to remember that *literature* is an anachronistic designation when applied to eighteenth-century pamphlets, broadsides, and other propaganda. In his response to a conference version of this paper, Gregory Jay wondered about the slippage between literature and propaganda. Do literature and propaganda have different productive conditions and outcomes? When does propaganda become literature and what allows some literature to be labeled as propagandistic? I am working on these questions as part of a larger project.

6. Davidson identifies "Hampden" as Rush in (242n34). Rush's choice of pseudonym refers to a "popular hero in Cromwellian England" (Hawke 109), indicating how early American nationalism still relied on English Revolutionary history. The example of Benjamin Franklin provides further evidence of Americans' imperial identifications. Throughout the 1750s and 1760s, Franklin so heartily identified with the British empire as to "become a thoroughgoing imperialist and royalist" (Wood, *Americanization* 91). Wood follows up with a caution against proto-nationalist readings: because we know that by 1776 Franklin becomes an American patriot, we construct him as having been an American patriot (and not a British imperialist) all along. Nationalist history occludes the past: "Knowing what happened in 1776 as we do makes it difficult for us to interpret American thinking in 1760" (Wood, *Americanization* 93).

7. Discussing revolts in Peru and elsewhere in Latin America that were contemporaneous with the American Revolution, Bender writes American history in the context of world history, but national metrics remain indispensable in the overall economy of his account. While his focus on the thirteen colonies and then the US as one nation among European powers repositions American history along an international axis, it is also the case that an international perspective still presumes a strong sense of nation. When it comes to writing colonial history, Bender highlights the importance of international diplomacy but that emphasis is too official and state-centered to express the global sensibilities articulated in revolutionary print culture. Still, for Bender, there is good reason for using national units since human rights, in his view, are best secured by nation-states (8, 298).

8. See Breen 31–38. Morgan notes the propensity of Americans, along with whites in Florida, Canada, and the East and West Indies, to identify as British subjects (8).

9. For estimates of Department of Defense spending, see www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/ArmsTrade/Spending.asp#USMilitarySpending and www.warresisters.org/piechart.htm (both accessed 21 March 2007).

10. On Britain's unprecedented and intense mobilization for war, an operation aided by the fiscal-military state, see the figures and conclusions supplied by Brewer 57–61.

11. See Bowen 22 plus Carruthers 5–6. Marshall describes the British fiscal-military state as a study in contradictions, its enormous power amassing territories that it did not have the complete control to administer (“Britain and the World”).

12. On the famine see Arnold 85–86; Festa 225.

13. But see Festa on the ability of eighteenth-century commodities and other objects to personalize (and misrepresent) not just national but global connections (114–21).

14. This is not to say that historians have pushed an exceptionalist narrative uninterrupted for the last 60 years. Yet when historians of early America have stressed wider contexts, the results often stick close to the smaller theaters of European republicanism and British Enlightenment thinking. For Kammen, the “meaning of colonization” remains tied to North American locales. See also Bailyn, who depicts the Revolution as the result of Enlightenment ideas that “had long existed” in the Anglo-American world, which did not necessarily “create new social and political forces in America” (351). Wood revises this characterization of the Revolution by emphasizing its social radicalism but principally with respect to British monarchical and patriarchal values (*Radicalism* 169–83). Wooten sketches the development of republican ideology in Anglo-American thinking up to the publication of *Common Sense*.

15. Appadurai explores the connections, facilitated by phone, email, and fax among anti-poverty activists worldwide.

16. See James Lovell to James Bowdoin, 16 April 1777 (P. Smith 6:596) and Oliver Wolcott to George Wylllys, 17 April 1777 (P. Smith 6:609); A. Lee to Committee of Secret Correspondence, 14 February 1777 (Wharton 2:271). The status of Guantánamo Bay has changed after President Barack Obama issued an executive order in January 2009 to close the detention camp within one year. The fate of the detainees remains in question.

17. On British military operations in India and America, see Marshall (*Trade and Conquest* 25).

18. The nationalist work of Paine’s pamphlet, Loughran points out, is always connected to myths of its incredible popularity. In contradistinction to effusive estimates that *Common Sense* “roused the entire continent” (Foner 1:49), Loughran argues that the popularity of *Common Sense* was more an idea than an established fact. She suggests that the pamphlet’s wide diffusion is “an essentially postcolonial fantasy,” which “worked from the outset to naturalize the not-yet realized nation” (20). I question whether Paine seeks to realize a nation and promote state integration at the expense of the wider critique found in agitation propaganda.

19. See Arendt 81–82.

20. “Reflections on the Life and Death of Lord Clive” first appeared in *Pennsylvania Magazine* (March 1775). For further treatment of Clive by Paine, see his 21 March 1778 installment of *The American Crisis* (1:118). Paine might also be playing on the financial sense of “bubble” as a type of unrestrained economic speculation that eventually bursts. The South Sea Bubble was still relatively recent history.

21. For Paine's efforts to literalize an abstract public sphere in the space of colonial American print culture, see Larkin 24–50.
22. On irony as a global trope, see Castronovo.
23. Even efforts to situate the American Revolution within the context of larger upheavals of Enlightenment reason remain dogged by traces of parochialism. Thus when Wood sets the historical backdrop for the Revolution by observing that all over “the Western world people were making tiny, piecemeal assaults on the ignorance and barbarism of the past” (192), the effect is to retract the world-system to Europe.

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