

Caught in the Webs of Empire: Benjamin Franklin's Cosmopolitan Ideas for an American Self

In the following two chapters I illustrate how cosmopolitanism allows two of the often-called founding fathers of the United States to negotiate the global as well as the local in the colonial context. For both Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, the language of cosmopolitanism works as a tool to carve out a central space in a world in which they inhabit geographical and cultural margins. Both writers were prominent figures in the intellectual, political, and scientific communities that composed the transatlantic environment of the republic of letters and both of them played a central role in the transition of the American colonies into nationhood. They lived abroad for long periods of time, were highly engaged in crossing borders, and, eventually, in imagining new borders for the nation they helped found. These shared features of their lives constitute what is cosmopolitan about Franklin and Jefferson and it is what enables them to re-center their own worlds. Their writings allow us to understand the interdependence of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism with imperial structures and national formation. These two figures are the authors of texts that contain seminal representations of a newly formed American national identity, Franklin's *Autobiography* and Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia*. In these two texts, cosmopolitanism functions as a building block for the articulation of an early notion of American national identity. And since cosmopolitanism is by definition a notion that aims at overpassing boundaries of culture, place, and politics, the fact it can offer elements with which to imagine what it is not supposed to produce may appear quite a contradiction. These two

works, however, show this contradiction is as intrinsic to the notion of eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism as it is the aspiration to cherish all mankind and its differences.

In these chapters I show how eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism in the North American transatlantic context cannot simply be seen as a force that overcomes national identification because it is produced by and responds to the socio-economic and cultural conditions that the British Empire imposes on its subjects. Rather, cosmopolitanism works as a force that allows national identities to form. Franklin and Jefferson's sense of identity is grounded in the British commonwealth. As British subjects in colonial America, their sense of identity exists in the fluid space they inhabit and in the sense of Britishness that imperial culture projects onto its members. Within this world their position is two-sided. On the one hand, their Britishness places them in the privileged position of the colonial elites. On the other hand, they live and work on the margins of a geographically extended world where they have limited access to the resources and engagement with other members of the elites with whom they identify. This dichotomy is evident in all the works by the two authors I examine in this chapter and Chap. 3, and it is the reason for many of the ambiguities we find in Franklin's and Jefferson's writings. The ambiguity is visible in Franklin's employment of cosmopolitanism as both a vehicle to represent a supranational form of local government and as a way to assert the role that Britishness (as a distinctive pseudo-ethnic and cultural characteristic) should have in the expansion of a future American nation. The tension is equally visible in Jefferson's writings. Jefferson's cosmopolitanism straddles two positions in his representation of a unique American voice that speaks to the European elites while employing a voice that replicates and appropriates the Native peoples of North America.

Franklin's cosmopolitanism permeates all aspects of his life and writings. From his childhood reading experiences that spanned historical and geographical lengths to the continuous traveling that brought him back and forth from colonial Pennsylvania to England and to continental Europe, Franklin's life and work reflect the transnationality that characterizes the Enlightenment ideal of the cosmopolitan. The transnationality of Franklin's life is also reflected in the amount of correspondences he maintained throughout his life. The many letters, essays, and other writings he composed and circulated provide testimony of this cosmopolitan character. While the cosmopolitan traits of Franklin's work and life are

manifest, his memoir, the work that represents the life and the man who lived it, portrays an individual who identifies with the local; one who is rooted in place rather than spread across many places as the man Franklin actually was. The story of “the circumstances of [Benjamin Franklin’s] Life,” in his own words, as he describes it, reflects this cosmopolitan attitude based on a sense of transnational belonging that is, at the same time, rooted in place. The genesis of the book’s publication is also a reflection (albeit posthumous) of this reality of Benjamin Franklin’s life and work.¹ The work we now know as *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* was published for the first time in France as a French translation of the original manuscript in 1791, the year that followed his death. Translations of this edition in English followed those in German and Swedish (Green and Stallybrass 2006, 152–153).² Like the life of the cosmopolitan who is, at least in theory, a polyglot of sorts and a man at home in the world, it is through a series of linguistic translations and continuous geographical movements that the story of Franklin’s manuscript memoir began.³

¹James N. Green and Peter Stallybrass have pointed out Franklin’s cosmopolitanism in one of the essays collected in the book that accompanied the catalogue of an exhibit held at the Library Company of Philadelphia in 2006, celebrating the tercentenary of Franklin’s birth. In the chapter entitled “Making and Remaking Benjamin Franklin: *The Autobiography*,” the writers discuss how the re-naming of Franklin’s last work and the genesis of its posthumous publication have affected the ways in which the work has been historically read and interpreted. Although the scholars highlight Franklin’s cosmopolitanism, they do not seem to see it reflected in the trajectory the text followed from its original manuscript form to the published work that we know today (Green and Stallybrass 2006, 145–171).

²Of the various translations and editions that followed the first ones, the authors say: “Franklin’s book was a British book before it was an American one and, more importantly, it was a foreign language book before it was an English one. Finally, the first French translation [based of one of Franklin’s manuscripts] was closer to what Franklin wrote than any of the English versions, which were drawn straight from the printed French *Memoires* and had no relation to any of the manuscripts. Here again, the history of the memoir’s reception partially replicates the history of its writing, Europe preceding America as the place of its printing as it had been of its composition” (Green and Stallybrass 2006, 156).

³Throughout this chapter I will refer to the work as either the *Autobiography* or memoir/s. Although “autobiography” is not the word that Franklin would have used to address his work, the title that Bigelow gave it in 1862 is the one with which most readers are familiar and that, to a twenty-first-century readership, defines this work’s generic realm.

1 AN AMERICAN REPUBLIC OF LETTERS

Franklin wrote the blueprint for the American Philosophical Society, entitled “A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge among the British Plantations in America,” in 1743, five years before he retired from operating his printing business. In the autobiography, he describes this period as one in which his attention turned to Pennsylvania’s lack of “Provisions for Defense” and “a complete Education of Youth. No Militia nor any College” (Franklin 1987, 1410). Although the time frame for creating both the “academy” and the American branch of the philosophical society had to be extended, both institutions eventually came to life. In his autobiographical reminiscence, Franklin misses the date of publication of the broadside that contains the proposal by one year and says it was printed in 1744 (Hindle 1974, 127–145).⁴ The proposal begins with a description of the colonial geography that emphasizes the physical extension and the natural wealth of the North American territories. The description of the large British dominions of North America, their powerful economic capacity in producing wealth that can be exported to England, and an acknowledgement of the hardship entailed in establishing successful colonial plantations open the first paragraph:

The English possess’d of a long Tract of Continent, from Nova Scotia to Georgia, extending North and South thro’ different Climates, having different Soils, producing different Plants, Mines and Minerals, and capable of different Improvements, Manufactures, &c. (Franklin 2: 380)

It is evident here that from the beginning Franklin identifies the development of an intellectual colonial elite with the economic mechanism that makes the empire flourish: the exploitation of American natural resources. The colonies’ economic power and their geographical extension are the first features employed to attest to their viability and recognition among other knowledge-producing communities. Such an opening evokes the language of the colonial tracts generally aimed at obtaining financial or political support for the provinces as well as those

⁴Friends and correspondents in both the colonies and in England warmly supported Franklin’s plan and the circulation of materials among those involved began right away, but they were not able to translate it into a material organization until 1769.

designed to invite new settlers. The description of the geographic extension of the North American territories and their productive power, especially Franklin's reference to "manufactures," also introduces a sense of completion and the implicit readiness to embark in new enterprises. Using the word "manufactures," Franklin evokes the process that transforms raw materials into finished products and the consequent potential economic independence such a process can provide. The entire productive cycle from the prime materials to their finished state is or should be in the colonies and the conditions for their economic independence are outlined in the list Franklin provides. Following the publication of the broadside of the proposal, the establishment of manufactures in the colonial territories became a major conflict between Great Britain and its North American colonies. The central government thought it an economic disadvantage and a cause of excessive emigration to establish manufactures in America and in 1750 passed the Iron Act, one of the Trade and Navigation acts that forbade American iron manufactures to expand beyond the production of basic materials (Mulford 2015, 75–182).⁵

In his proposal, Franklin does not present his comments about prime materials and manufactures as propaganda for any form of political independence from Great Britain. As this is a proposal for the establishment of an American equivalent of the Royal Philosophical Society, American material resources become what produces the knowledge for society to independently exist. The independence to which Franklin refers from the beginning of the proposal is what can allow America to be included within the international community of letters and science in which he claims an independent place. The aim of his prospective society is to claim the intellectual independence that comes from economic prosperity. Such prosperity produces a class of individuals who can access European elite communities that societies similar in structure and purpose have already established. The position for the American

⁵In these years, England was becoming more and more resistant to the idea of an industrial development of the colonies which was seen as a means of increasing emigration and creating the risk of losing its own sources of wealth. The 1750 Iron Act prohibited the exportation of any form of industry that could attract English workers. Franklin responded to such a decision with his ambivalent essay "Observation Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, & ..." See the end of this chapter. Mulford's study traces the development of the position that culminated in the writing of the 1750s essay.

Philosophical Society Franklin will articulate in the proposal depends on giving the society itself a cosmopolitan shape.

Similar to the eighteenth-century ideal of the cosmopolite who needs to disengage from a home country in order to become a free citizen of the world, Franklin posits that the American intellectual community needs to achieve independence from the colonial system (at the economic and at the intellectual level) that controls its entrance to the international community and gives its work its appropriate value. There is no revolutionary spirit in Franklin's aspiration to create an independent American Philosophical Society. This imagined American community does not reject its attachment to the imperial elements that have generated the conditions for its prosperity. In the second, longer, paragraph of the proposal, in fact, Franklin explains how the economic prosperity of the colonies is the necessary condition for America to be considered as a member of the literary and scientific international community. The outline that Franklin generates also describes the connection between economic prosperity, and scientific and literary advancement:

The first Drudgery of Settling new Colonies, which confines the Attention of People to mere Necessaries is now pretty well over; and there are many in every Province in Circumstances that set them at Ease, and afford Leisure to cultivate the finer Arts, and improve the common Stock of Knowledge. To such of these who are Men of Speculation, many Hints must from time to time arise, many Observations occur, which if well-examined, pursued and improved, might produce Discoveries to the Advantage of some or all the *British* Plantations, or to the Benefit of Mankind in general. But as from the Extent of the Country such Persons are widely separated, and seldom can see and converse or be acquainted with each other, so that many useful Particulars remain uncommunicated, die with the Discoverers, and are lost to Mankind; it is, to remedy this Inconvenience for the future, proposed. [...] (Franklin 2: 380)

Economic development and stability are essential to the development of knowledge. Economic development, the passage explains, generates the conditions (wealth and leisure time) for people to exercise their studies and "cultivate the finer arts." Now that these conditions have been achieved, the American Philosophical Society should be established and recognized. Such a trajectory replicates Franklin's own life experience, of course. His "retirement" from active participation in the printing business follows the essay by only a few years. His career as public official had

begun and he had already become involved with his scientific inquiries, which were to be soon published and circulated internationally (Lemay 2005–2008, 452ff).

In Franklin's representation, an American cosmopolitan project depends on the success of colonial ventures and the establishment of a prosperous class of colonials. The combination of pursuing and improving knowledge and economic gain is central to Franklin's cosmopolitanism. What emerges in the proposal for the establishment of the American Philosophical Society is a significant example of the way in which, for Franklin, the burgeoning notion of a philosophically independent American community, which is at the basis of what he represents in the broadside, develops out of a dialogue between the terms of the Enlightenment representation of cosmopolitanism and those of commerce and empire (Mignolo 2002, 157–159).⁶ The terms that relate to these different categories speak to each other throughout Franklin's proposal and form the basis of a vision of America as an entity that exists within the British Empire and its functional infrastructures (Shields 1990, 13–35). Franklin represents an American philosophical society that places itself simultaneously within and above the structures of the British Empire for the universal purpose of serving humankind using the universalizing terms of the cosmopolitan ideal and engaging with the ideas that the Enlightenment version of the republic of letters promoted. Franklin's view of the American branch of the society makes its independent identity more valuable at both the intellectual and economic levels.

Franklin takes colonial intellectuals away from their place and into the ephemeral and universal world of the republic of letters with this model. As historian Dena Goodman has shown, the Enlightenment republic of letters could claim independence from any state-based structures because of the way in which it imagined itself as a universal entity that could not be represented by any constituted body, be it academic or political, although it was based on a representation that replicated the modern political state, and therefore could be implicated in the actions of its power structures. This sense of independence was based on the concept

⁶Walter Mignolo retraces the history of this interdependence throughout modernity and finds the roots of modern cosmopolitan thinking within those of Western early modern colonial projects. Mignolo describes this kind of cosmopolitanism as “emancipatory,” that is, it aims at generating independence from the economic and ideological forces that make it possible.

of a republic founded on an ideal of knowledge as collaborative enterprise, correspondences, association, and exchange of ideas (Goodman 1994, 15–22). Cosmopolitan notions of universal friendship, cooperation, understanding, and exchange of ideas served the republic and its members as means to identify themselves as well as their scope. They also become the means by which the culture of imperial expansion and commerce become tangled in Franklin’s representation of an association of men of letters. The community Franklin represents in his proposal is part of such a republic of letters and thus depends on the exchange of letters and the exchange of goods, and on an open commerce of both. Franklin argues from the opening of the proposal that the imperial economy is an essential component of the future American Philosophical Society. At the same time, this economy generates the conditions for the society to nurture a community that, by principle, is not functioning for the improvement of a single nation, such as Great Britain, its colonies, or an independent America, but the community of humans it represents (Schlereth 1977, 1–24; Goodman 1994, 23–52).

Franklin makes clear from the opening paragraph of the proposal that the cosmopolitan role of the society is subordinate to the role it would have within the limits of the “*British* Plantations,” to which the most important discoveries of the society would be directed. The cosmopolitan alternative to the first possibility is introduced by the conjunction “or” in the concluding sentence of the passage cited earlier: “or to the Benefit of Mankind in general.” It is with supranational terms Franklin defines what the American society should represent as his description proceeds. In the following part of the proposal, the conjunction “or” that marks the difference between the imperial territories and human kind is removed, and the colonial space becomes a reflection of the world. Colonials, British subjects, and mankind come together in the actual proposed format of the society:

That One Society be formed of Virtuosi or ingenious Men residing in the several Colonies, to be called The American Philosophical Society. Who are to maintain a constant Correspondence.

That Philadelphia being the City nearest the Centre of the Continent-Colonies, communicating with all of them northward and southward by Post, and with all the Islands by Sea, and having the Advantage of a good growing Library, be the Centre of the Society.

That at Philadelphia there be always at least seven Members, viz. a Physician, a Botanist, a Mathematician, a Chemist, a Mechanician, a Geographer, and a general Natural Philosopher, besides a President, Treasurer and Secretary.

That these Members meet once a Month, or oftener, at their own Expence, to communicate to each other their Observations, Experiments, &c. to receive, read and consider such Letters, Communications, or Queries as shall be sent from distant Members; to direct the Dispersing of Copies of such Communications as are valuable, to other distant Members, in order to procure their Sentiments thereupon, &c. (Franklin 2: 380)

Virtuosi devoted to the improvement of mankind form the society and their “constant Correspondence” keeps it together. The colonies’ geographical extensiveness and their marginality in the metropolitan context are now reversed. Philadelphia is constructed as the center that will produce and circulate knowledge, and the philosophical society would institutionalize collaborative research, discoveries, and their powers. The American intellectual who lives and operates within this environment will be more American because he now possesses distinctive features that make him recognizable outside of his own world as an American intellectual. This intellectual, however, also becomes what Diderot called “a citizen of the great city of the world,” because the community he forms and improves is a community of humans, not of nationals (Diderot 1955, 8: 16).⁷ The colonial world and European metropolitan centers are now subordinate to the overarching republic of letters that exists within them but is located at a superior level. Franklin’s description of the scope of the American Philosophical Society in the central part of the proposal outlines this process: the colonial world and its ideas have progressed within and exceeded their imperial surroundings. Now they are beneficial to “Mankind in general.”

In the latter part of the document, Franklin describes the administrative positions the philosophical society will require and reserves the role of secretary to himself:

⁷With these words, Denis Diderot addressed David Hume in a letter written on February 22, 1768. Hume is another cosmopolitan figure whose life as well as performance within the international intellectual circle closely followed the trajectory of colonials like Franklin. Hume overcame the marginality of his being Scottish by presenting himself as a supranational figure.

The Business and Duty of the Secretary be, To receive all Letters intended for the Society, and lay them before the President and Members at their Meetings; to abstract, correct and methodize such Papers, &c. as require it, and as he shall be directed to do by the President, after they have been considered, debated and digested in the Society; to enter Copies thereof in the Society's Books, and make out Copies for distant Members; to answer their Letters by Direction of the President, and keep Records of all material Transactions of the Society, &c.

Benjamin Franklin, the Writer of this Proposal, offers himself to serve the Society as their Secretary, 'till they shall be provided with one more capable. (Franklin 2: 382–383)

As its secretary, Franklin performed fundamental editorial work while remaining at the margins of the publication process (Grabo 1993, 31–39; Thomas 2012, 103–118). The marginal position he acquires as secretary/editor of the society's papers, like the position of the American Philosophical Society on the margins of the British metropolitan space, turns into a central one when one thinks of the power such a position gives Franklin.⁸ Franklin produces the essential features of the society's

⁸The ambivalence and multiplicity of terms that Franklin employs to portray the individual and the group identity that we have seen in this text so far has been read in a variety of ways. They have often been related to the protean character of the personas and literary devices that Franklin employed and to the duplicity that they generated. Most convincingly, Michael Warner has described this literary strategy as determined by Franklin's "instrumental relation to discourse." Such a relationship generates what Warner has called a "manipulating self," whose sense of identity develops in rhetoric, and which, in order to exist, needs the printed form, the texture of the work that produces it. Instead of thinking of a self as an abstracted matter that is external to the text that produces it, Warner argues that Franklin's sense of identity exists within the printed material, the text itself. Because of these generative circumstances, Warner continues, Franklin's subjectivity "assumes this absent agent in the same way that print, so conceived, postulates a generative agent not immanent in it" (Warner 1990, 76–79). Warner's view of Franklin's subjectivity is useful to understand the narrative form that Franklin uses in "A Proposal for Promoting Useful Knowledge." Warner shows that the printed discourse of the public sphere is the principal factor in producing this type of subjectivity. However, the public sphere that Warner recognizes as determining Franklin's particular strategy of self-representation is also interconnected with the other eighteenth-century discourses that I have discussed earlier such as those of cosmopolitanism, empire, and colonial economy, as well as the networks of manuscript materials that were constantly circulating among the representatives of the republic of letters. Franklin's connections to the environment that surrounds him are, I would

papers and of the society itself as the secretary when he edits and revises for publication. These features constitute the body of knowledge that the society supplies to the public. Franklin can achieve this goal because of his ability to control both the internal and the external workings of the organization as both secretary and, one would assume, the printer of its proceedings.⁹ These movements replicate those of the society and of its materials and, ultimately, those of the colonial world and its inhabitants. Colonial networks of exchange are based on the principles that Franklin's description reflects. The "hints" that men of science and letters have accumulated over time to which Franklin refers in the opening of the proposal become the correspondence that ties the colonial space to the European centers.¹⁰

suggest, more grounded in the reality of life than hidden in the texture of the page. As I have shown, the particular context in which Franklin writes, and which is affected by his colonial intellectual position, determines the way he presents subjectivity as an entity fluid and in movement yet in conversation with the socio-historical circumstances that surround it. The rhetoric that reproduces this view on the page reflects these features as well.

⁹On this point, I find my argument progressing in the same direction as scholar Ed White when he argues that Franklin's scholarship has often had too much of a tendency to separate him from the actual historical and political circumstances that surrounded the production of his writings (White 1999, 1–33).

¹⁰Franklin's narrative strategy in this part of the proposal—the ideal critical distance that derives from his positioning himself within and without both the textual space and the local context of colonial Philadelphia—is a common strategy used in works that have a cosmopolitan figure at their center. In works such as Thomas More's *Utopia*, for example, the principal character is distinguished by his ability to be both an insider and an outsider of the societies that he observes and to which he addresses his criticism and judgments. These qualities determine Raphael Hythloday's cosmopolitanism, and give this central narrative figure of More's work the ability to provide the reader with the most objective view of the two countries he observes and compares (Hallsberg 2012, 578–606). Similarly the narrator's principal task in the Baron de Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, or Oliver Goldsmith's "Citizen of the World," to cite two examples from the "foreign letter" genre that employed the figure of the cosmopolitan and were closer in time to Franklin's work, is to organize the material they have collected and the letters that they have found for their audience (Watt 2005, 56–75). These are cosmopolitan characters because their experience with other people and cultures has given them knowledge and an ability to judge that they can use in many different directions, including toward their own people, with a detached and objective point of view. Their experiences have given them knowledge, which they then share with their audiences. From these figures' perspective forms and conventions can thus be assessed and, possibly, be transformed for the better through the narrative they construct.

The colonial infrastructure that created the possibility for the philosophical society to exist is, as Franklin's opening words in the proposal suggest, also blocked in its progress because of the lack of interest in importing and exporting knowledge from the colonies. The work of the structures Franklin represents stands at the basis of the cosmopolitan community that the American Philosophical Society establishes. A member of the society needs the fluid space, the openness of borders (both geographical and intellectual) that such a space offers in order to redefine the role it plays within the British Empire. We begin to see here how cosmopolitanism's aim of overpassing various boundaries easily germinates within the colonial environment. It can be useful to a writer like Franklin to free his imagined society of its dependence from its British counterpart while at the same time asserting membership within the established imperial frame. Imagining the creation of an intellectually cosmopolitan American Philosophical Society is in fact what makes it possible for Franklin to eventually employ cosmopolitanism at the local level to create a virtual form of citizenry for the colonial subject.

2 THE WORLD MOVES WITHIN: COSMOPOLITANISM AND PLACE

The proposal for the American Philosophical Society is not the first instance in Franklin's works where we find him describing an association and how it works using a cosmopolitan model. In the queries for the members of the Junto, the society for mutual improvement he founded in the late 1720s, Franklin represented the citizen of the world as the ideal creator of local communities. Unlike the later work that presents an American cosmopolitan intellectual projected outward and thus in search of a larger community to belong to, the earlier representation illustrates how an ideal American local community can be created only by bringing the cosmopolitan within the community itself. In the series of questions known as "Standing Queries for the Junto" drafted in 1732 for the purpose of introducing the weekly meeting of the mutual improvement society, the terms of the cosmopolitan ideal become the ones to define the way a local community operates. The combination of cosmopolitan notions of friendship and exchange, of commerce, and of virtue are evident in the questions the members of the Junto were required to use in

order to prepare for their Friday meetings (Grimm 1956, 437–462).¹¹ The group's structure, as well as the questions that constitute the introductory ritual to each meeting, are based on the model of contemporary Masonry (Hans 1953, 513–524). Like a Masonic association, Franklin's mutual improvement club is an association in search of public recognition at the same time that is not open to the general public (Bullock 1996, 50–82). This society is inclusive and exclusive simultaneously; it works to create moral and intellectual opportunities for its members and it is clearly focused on individuals' economic growth.

The twenty-four questions address topics ranging from general knowledge, to manners, and sociability, from virtue and its lack, wealth, personal moral growth, financial gain or loss, and, as I mentioned earlier, the cosmopolitan. By meeting each week, asking the questions, and considering their answers, Junto members are required to employ their knowledge and expertise in an odd variety of areas in order to establish themselves in a world with no well-established intellectual and commercial centers. The questions are worth quoting in their entirety:

1. Have you met with any thing in the author you last read, remarkable, or suitable to be communicated to the Junto? particularly in history, morality, poetry, physics, travels, mechanic arts, or other parts of knowledge?
2. What new story have you lately heard agreeable for telling in conversation?
3. Has any citizen in your knowledge failed in his business lately, and what have you heard of the cause?
4. Have you lately heard of any citizen's thriving well, and by what means?

¹¹The group began to meet in 1727 and was initially also called "Leather Apron Club," a name that highlights its members' societal standing. The better-known name "Junto" derives from the Spanish "junta" or fraternity, and its structure was visibly similar to that of the contemporary speculative freemasonry whose main focus was to experiment and disseminate knowledge. The queries themselves and the rules they establish derive from a proposal for neighborhood societies in Cotton Mather's 1724 *Religious Societies* and from John Locke's 1720 essay "Rule of a Society which met once a Week for the Improvement of Useful Knowledge, and the Promoting of Truth and Charity" (Lemay and Zall 1986a, 47).

5. Have you lately heard how any present rich man, here or elsewhere, got his estate?
6. Do you know of any fellow citizen, who has lately done a worthy action, deserving praise and imitation? or who has committed an error proper for us to be warned against and avoid?
7. What unhappy effects of intemperance have you lately observed or heard? of imprudence? of passion? or of any other vice or folly?
8. What happy effects of temperance? of prudence? of moderation? or of any other virtue?
9. Have you or any of your acquaintance been lately sick or wounded? If so, what remedies were used, and what were their effects?
10. Who do you know that are shortly going [on] voyages or journeys, if one should have occasion to send by them?
11. Do you think of any thing at present, in which the Junto may be serviceable to mankind? to their country, to their friends, or to themselves?
12. Hath any deserving stranger arrived in town since last meeting, that you heard of? and what have you heard or observed of his character or merits? and whether think you, it lies in the power of the Junto to oblige him, or encourage him as he deserves?
13. Do you know of any deserving young beginner lately set up, whom it lies in the power of the Junto any way to encourage?
14. Have you lately observed any defect in the laws, of which it would be proper to move the legislature an amendment? Or do you know of any beneficial law that is wanting?
15. Have you lately observed any encroachment on the just liberties of the people?
16. Hath any body attacked your reputation lately? and what can the Junto do towards securing it?
17. Is there any man whose friendship you want, and which the Junto, or any of them, can procure for you?
18. Have you lately heard any member's character attacked, and how have you defended it?
19. Hath any man injured you, from whom it is in the power of the Junto to procure redress?
20. In what manner can the Junto, or any of them, assist you in any of your honourable designs?

21. Have you any weighty affair in hand, in which you think the advice of the Junto may be of service?
22. What benefits have you lately received from any man not present?
23. Is there any difficulty in matters of opinion, of justice, and injustice, which you would gladly have discussed at this time?
24. Do you see any thing amiss in the present customs or proceedings of the Junto, which might be amended?¹² (Franklin 1: 255)

The first two questions give the reader a sense that knowledge in all its aspects is essential to the group. Members should communicate to each other any newly acquired knowledge of history, morality, poetry, physics, mechanics, and travels. The intellectual growth of each group member is first and foremost in the list. And by the third question readers are reminded of the role financial prosperity plays in the exercise of the intellect as it will be the case in the writings about the philosophical society Franklin wrote twenty years later. What follows is a series of questions that ask to share information about manners and sociability, about business failures and successes, virtue and its lack, health, and justice.

The eleventh question on the list is the one in which the reader encounters cosmopolitanism and the role it plays in the enrichment of the society's members and in the formation of communities: "Do you think of any thing at present, in which the Junto may be serviceable to mankind? to their country, to their friends, or to themselves?" In the manuscript draft of the same query held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the language of the cosmopolitan ideal is even more striking: "Do you think of anything at present, in which the Junto may be serviceable to Mankind? to their Country consistent with their Duty to Mankind; to their Friends consistent to their Duty to Mankind and their Country; to themselves consistent with their Duty to Mankind, their Country and their Friends?" In this version, the questions the query includes almost literally replicate the terms used by Denis Diderot in the description of the notion of cosmopolitanism he will publish in

¹²This version of the queries reflects the order in the collection of Franklin's writings that Benjamin Vaughan published in London in 1779 with the title *Political, Miscellaneous, and Philosophical Pieces*. There is also a manuscript, earlier text of the queries that is held at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. The order of the queries in the manuscript draft, compared to that in Vaughan's text and in the *Autobiography*, is the following: 1, 12, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 2, 13, 11, 6, 23, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 7, 8, 22, 24.

the French *Encyclopédie* in 1751. Diderot's definition summarizes what the concept meant for the international community of men of letters of which Franklin was to become one of the most prominent members. The *Encyclopédie* described the cosmopolitan as "A man who does not have a permanent home, or rather a man who is not a stranger anywhere. It comes from ... κόσμος and πόλις ... When asked, an old philosopher since dead answered: I am cosmopolite, which means, citizen of the universe. I prefer said another, my family to myself, my country [patrie] to my family. And humankind to my country."¹³ According to this definition, the individual does not have geographical fixity and yet, as the coordinate sentence that follows the first definition shows, he is not a foreigner anywhere ("n'est étranger nulle part" the original text in French says). Despite his itinerant lifestyle, Diderot's *cosmopolite* is not homeless; his home is the entire world. And as the rest of the definition explains, the cosmopolitan man is also the man who puts his family above himself, his country above his family, and mankind above his own country. Thus, his lack of a geographical rootedness is paired to a civic involvement that translates the notion of civic involvement itself outside the contained space of a single country to the comprehensive space of the cosmopolis. In fact, Diderot's parenthetical etymological reference brings together the two concepts that conflate in the eighteenth-century definition of cosmopolitanism: the idea of polis, the metropolitan centers of Western civilization centered in cities such as Paris and London, and that of cosmos, the entire world where such a civilization should be propagated and reproduced.

The duty of Franklin's Junto members is to overcome the insularity of local allegiances to work for the improvement of their society, which is, the queries show, both continuous with mankind and its own distinct entity. The following thirteen queries remind the Junto members of the need for mutual help by asking them for information about possible useful new friendships and if they need help to improve their standing in society or with "weighty affairs." Characteristic of the language of the queries, and the eleventh in particular, is also the gesture toward a

¹³ "Un homme qui n'a point de demeure fixe, ou bien un homme qui n'est étranger nulle part. Il vient de ... κόσμος et πόλις ... Comme on demandoit à un ancien philosophe d'où il étoit, il répondit: je suis Cosmopolite, c'est-à-dire, citoyen de l'univers. Je préfère, disoit un autre, ma famille à moi, ma patrie à ma famille, & le genre humain à ma patrie" (the English translation is mine).

disinterested form of good that addresses a large and a small community simultaneously. For these men, community does not differentiate itself from humankind. In fact, it can be imagined as both the particular locale of metropolitan Philadelphia as well as the entire world. The civic duty of these American representatives of the world community moves from the polis and its locality to embrace the universal community of mankind, the cosmopolis, yet they remain rooted in their community and the common purpose of the society they represent. Philadelphia is the center of this cosmos and each individual's task is not only to improve mankind, but also to do so by improving himself both intellectually and economically, thus enriching the communal good for which the society works. The thirteenth query addresses this in particular by saying: "Do you know of any deserving young beginner lately set up, whom it lies in the power of the Junto any way to encourage?" (Franklin 1: 255). The prospective member of this community moves from the outside in. He might bring necessary strength to the community and might profit from it himself. The cosmopolitan features of the project behind these queries consists of bringing outsiders, the men of the world, within the community in order to enrich both. And, as the opening question about intellectual improvement and wealth reveals, this enrichment is both intellectual and material (Bullock 1996, 58–59). The queries portray a cosmopolitan that transfers the transnational onto the grounds of a specific community so the citizen of the world is one who is able to positively affect the intellectual and economic welfare of those who live in a specific locale. This model of citizenry and civic engagement is still visible in the autobiographical account of this early period. However, the contingencies surrounding the later account play a role in the way Franklin presents the figure of the citizen of the world as model for a national subject. By the time the colonies have declared themselves an independent republic, the cosmopolitan citizen becomes anachronistic and a thing of a past to remember and cherish—but to also keep in the past.

3 VIRTUE REMEMBERED: COSMOPOLITANISM AND FRANKLIN'S *AUTOBIOGRAPHY*

The four parts of Franklin's autobiography, composed between 1771 and the months before he died in 1789–1790, were written in England, France, and the United States—the three geographical locations where

he spent most of his life. As his correspondence about this text attests, Franklin drafted it with a specific purpose in mind: providing his posterity with a text that could instruct young men in the skills necessary to be good workers, good citizens, and good Americans.¹⁴ The first young man he had in mind was his son William, to whom the first part of the manuscript is addressed. As we know, Franklin drafted the first part of this work in 1771 while residing in England. He was still a colonial American and still close to William, the Royal Governor of New Jersey. William and his descendants (the “dear son” and the “posterity” of the autobiography’s opening paragraph in the first part) were the direct addressees of his writing. When Franklin composed the second part of the manuscript in 1784, he was living in France, the Treaty of Paris had been signed and American independence made official. His familial situation had changed as well; William had remained loyal to the British Crown throughout the revolutionary period and Franklin had severed all his ties with him. Although Franklin was at this point raising William’s son, William Temple Franklin, he did not continue the memoir in a similar fashion as its first part by addressing it to his grandson, the representative of the younger generations of Franklins. Instead his addressee broadened into a much more generic new generation of young men. Franklin introduced the new part of the manuscript with two letters he had received in the previous months from two friends who, knowing he had drafted an initial section of a memoir, asked him for more.

As a transition to part two of the manuscript and as a directive for the reader, Franklin added a short note at the end of part one explaining the difference in addressee from the first to the second section. Here he also cites the two correspondents’ suggestions contained in the attached letters as the reason for writing the new draft and for addressing it to a general public. Franklin now gives credit to the letter writers for the inspiration to continue writing his memoirs. A final and abrupt sentence with no mention of his son charges the revolution as the reason for the thirteen-year gap between part one and part two:

Thus far written with the Intention express’d in the Beginning [of this manuscript] and therefore contains several little family Anecdotes of

¹⁴The complete correspondence is included in the Norton edition of the *Autobiography* edited by Leo J.A. Lemay.

no Importance to others. What follows was written many Years after in compliance with the Advice contain'd in these Letters, and accordingly intended for the Publick. The Affairs of the Revolution occasion'd the Interruption. (Franklin 1987, 1372)¹⁵

Franklin had begun the first part of the manuscript with a brief history of the family's British origins and a genealogy.¹⁶ Franklin dismisses any autobiographical reasons for the change in the writing style and cites the revolutionary turmoil as the cause for the interruption in his writing process. With this transformative action, from letter to his son to a more generic response to a suggestion from two friends to recount the story of his life, Franklin bestows on the letters some of the agency he had earlier bestowed on his son; the letters' requests become the reason why he writes. This change in addressee signals a series of changes that, I demonstrate, relate to the shift in Franklin's attitude that an American subjectivity based on the notion of cosmopolitanism is possible to one that only thinks of this type of subjectivity in mnemonic terms. In the autobiography, cosmopolitanism collapses if imagined as a force for nation formation when the openness of the colonial world no longer forms the underlying socio-political frame.

Part two begins with the text of the two letters Franklin mentions in his concluding note to part one. The author of the first letter, Abel

¹⁵The brief and stark reference to the revolution speaks to the complex and conflicted story of Franklin's relationship to William. As is the case with the abruptness of this sentence, so too was the way in which their final separation took place. After Franklin left England and became fully involved in revolutionary politics, he never spoke publicly about his son and their relationship.

¹⁶The more personal audience of the first part of the text should not be confused with a more intimate or personal character of the narrative. As Stephen Carl Arch has recently explained, Franklin's autobiographical style is not the confessional one with which the tradition that began with Rousseau has made us familiar. Arch argues that, in the autobiography, "Franklin had continued the classical and early modern tradition in which the individual self is de-emphasized in order to praise God (as in St. Augustine's *Confessions*) or to typify human behavior (in Franklin's case)" (Arch 2008, 166). The scope of his writing then becomes an explanation of what one can observe in one's self from a more or less objective standpoint. This note is an exemplification of this feature of the subsequent sections of the autobiography, but the first part also needs to be read in these terms. What appears as the more personal undertone of addressing the letter to his son and his direct descendants is in fact a literary convention that belongs to the earlier type of personal narrative that Franklin employs here.

James, was the person who had recovered Franklin's original manuscript in Pennsylvania after the war had ended. Abel James suggests that Franklin continue to write and then publish his memoirs. Franklin shared the copy he received in France with another friend, Benjamin Vaughan, who wrote the second of the letters included as a preface to part two. Vaughan was living between Paris and London and had been Franklin's emissary during the peace talks before the 1783 Treaty of Paris. Vaughan wrote his letter after having read both the letter Franklin had received from James and the manuscript of the autobiography. Vaughan's letter is written with a purpose similar to James's, to invite Franklin to complete and to publish the autobiography and a book entitled *The Art of Virtue*. The two works, Vaughan says, will improve "the features of private character, and consequently of aiding all happiness both public and domestic" (Franklin 1987, 1374). Vaughan cites several reasons why the books, and especially Franklin's recollections, will be important, but the main ones are the increase of good feelings toward America, the attraction of "settlers of virtuous and manly minds," and the crucial role his work will play in the formation of future generations of Americans. The focus of the first part of Vaughan's letter is on the potential of Franklin's work to produce a stronger American nation and positively influence England's perception of the ex-colonies, which at the time was still affected by the antipathy the revolution had left between the two countries. As Vaughan's letter proceeds, however, the author's aim becomes less nationally oriented and exclusive. After having discussed the memoirs' potential to produce a strong American self, Vaughan continues:

Let Englishmen be made not only to respect, but even to love you. When they think well of individuals in your native country, they will go nearer to think well of your country; and when your countrymen see themselves well thought of by Englishmen, they will go nearer to thinking well of England. Extend your views even further; do not stop at those who speak the English tongue, but after having settled so many points in nature and politics, think of bettering the whole race of men. (Franklin 1987, 1378)

Vaughan's suggestions in this passage shift the book's goal from nation-building, implied in his suggestion that the newly formed country will acquire legitimate status in the eyes of British subjects, to a universal goal, implied in the new suggestion that humanity in general will benefit from Franklin's work.

Franklin's editorial choices for parts two and three of his work reflect both Vaughan's quasi-nationalistic message in the first part of his letter to Franklin and the universalizing gesture in the last part of the passage quoted above. Vaughan's words and Franklin's interpretation of his suggestions in the formal organization of the last sections of the *Autobiography* introduced in the brief postscript to part one begin to reflect the fluid distinction Franklin made between the national and the cosmopolitan. Parts two and three of the manuscript show the important and multifaceted role the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism played in Franklin's representation of American subjectivity and it shows how cosmopolitanism's roots in the colonial environment both make it possible to imagine a cosmopolitan form of national subjectivity and make it an unsustainable one. Franklin also points out the irony of the ideal American subjectivity he represents in his memoir, namely a form of identity that immediately becomes unstable when placed within the boundaries of a socio-political structure narrower than an empire.

Vaughan's letter becomes the blueprint for part two. The addressee of this later section, and of the subsequently written parts three and four, as stated before, is a generic young American man whom Franklin addresses and instructs with the example of his own life (Breitweiser 1984, 202–230). In addition, just as Vaughan's words suggest that Franklin's work should have a nationalistic as well as a universally oriented aim, Franklin organizes his text according to principles that connect to the national as well as to the international and universal. Part two of Franklin's autobiographical account is an example of how the changing historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the autobiographical narrative also shifted in its relationships between cosmopolitanism and American nationhood. The book becomes the embodiment of the Enlightenment ideal of the man of letters as the *cosmopolite*. As Franklin in the 1780s embarks on a discussion of the period that surrounds and follows the 1720s and 1730s, the time when his role of man of letters was solidified, the narrative also demonstrates Franklin's reluctance to link the models of civic involvement he describes to an idea of the American subject as a citizen of the world—a reluctance that, we have seen, did not emerge in the writings of the period in question. This reluctance is especially evident in Franklin's references to the idea of virtue and to the societies for mutual moral and practical behavior he established, or planned to, during this time and which he discussed in the second and third parts of the manuscript.

When Vaughan refers to the drafting of a book in addition to the autobiography, the book, he says, is to be titled *The Art of Virtue*; and Vaughan attributes to it the same importance as the memoir itself. Franklin reminds readers he never wrote this book: “But it so happened that my Intention of writing and publishing this Comment was never fulfilled” (Franklin 1986, 74). This comment appears in the manuscript soon after the section in which Franklin describes his attempts at “arriving at moral perfection” with the daily practice of the now-famous thirteen virtues (Lemay and Zall 1986a, 59).¹⁷ Practice is what, in the end, transforms his experiment of internalizing the virtues into a success because it makes him “a better and happier Man.”¹⁸ This is also what

¹⁷Lemay and Zall (1986) have made a case for this in the Norton edition of the *Autobiography* and in the genetic edition of the same text.

¹⁸What Franklin wrote in a letter to Lord Kames in the 1760s is perhaps the most indicative example of how Franklin imagined virtue as a practical art. The letter to Lord Kames is dated May 3, 1760 and a part of it is dedicated to the outline of his plan to write a book that would provide young individuals with rules to follow in order to become virtuous. Here is how Franklin describes his project:

[A] little Work for the Benefit of Youth, to be call'd The Art of Virtue. From the Title I think you will hardly conjecture what the Nature of the Book may be. Most People have naturally *some* Virtues, but none have naturally *all* the Virtues. I must therefore explain ... To *acquire* those [virtues] that are wanting, and *secure* what we acquire as well as those we have naturally, is the Subject of *an Art*. It is as properly an Art, as Painting, Navigation, or Architecture. If a Man would become a Painter, Navigator, or Architect, it is not enough that he is *advised* to be one, that he is *convinc'd* by the Arguments of his Adviser that it would be for his Advantage to be one, and that he resolves to be one, but he must also be taught the Principles of the Art, be shewn all the Methods of Working, and how to acquire the *Habits* of using properly all the Instruments; and thus regularly and gradually he arrives by Practice at some Perfection in the Art. If he does not proceed thus, he is apt to meet with Difficulties that discourage him, and make him drop the Pursuit. My Art of Virtue has also its Instruments, and teaches the Manner of Using them. (Franklin 9: 103)

The virtue that Franklin describes in this section of the letter is a practical art that can be internalized through habit and repetition and that conflates the moral value of virtue with the practical value of mechanical arts. It is easy to recognize how scholars have generally agreed that this passage summarizes the overt intent of Franklin's autobiographical accounts. Franklin's description of his practice with the thirteen virtues reflects what the passage from the letter describes. Franklin, however, is not unique in portraying the works of virtue and art as interconnected. His usage reflects how contemporary encyclopedic dictionaries record the meaning of the terms. In Ephraim Chambers's dictionary of 1728

makes it possible for the story to be told and the experience turned into a model for the audience. Before returning to a description of the virtues themselves at the end of part two of the manuscript autobiography, Franklin introduces a more specific reason for not writing a book on the art of virtue.¹⁹ He explains that because of the time he has had to dedicate to business, he could not succeed in performing a larger project planned about the book—a project designed to bring the experiment from a personal to a general level:

But it so happened that my Intention of writing & publishing this Comment was never fulfilled. I did indeed, from time to time put down short Hints of the Sentiments, Reasonings, &c. to be made use of in it; some of which I have still by me: But the necessary close Attention to private Business since, have occasioned my postponing it. For it being connected in my Mind with a *great and extensive Project* that required the whole Man to execute, and which an unforeseen Succession of Employs prevented me attending to, it has hitherto remain'd unfinish'd. (Franklin 1986, 74–75)

Franklin describes the practical virtue here that would be at the center of his experiment and the subject of his manual. The virtue is not only what is at the basis of his personal experiment with the thirteen virtues, but it

(second edition 1738), for example, both virtue and art are described as activities that rely on habit and repetition. An art, Chambers describes, can be “active” or “factive;” the performance of an “active” art does not leave material effects, while “factive” arts produce an affect, such as is the case with painting. In both cases what makes an individual capable of exercising an art is his ability to assimilate it through repetitive practice. A similar involvement with the repetition of an activity is Chambers’s definition of virtue: “in a more proper and restrained sense, [virtue] signifies a habit, which improves and perfects the haver, or possessor, and his actions.” (Chambers 1738, 1: 2) The habit-forming practices that Franklin tells his reader he undertook while still a fairly young man, his insistence on the need for discipline and repetitive behavior in order to achieve virtue, and the description of the book project reflect these ideas of art and virtue.

¹⁹Douglass Anderson provides an interesting reading of Franklin’s position regarding virtue. The scholar suggests that we should interpret Franklin’s discussion of his failure to publish the book and his other comments regarding virtue throughout the memoir as an exercise in avoiding moralizing and in asserting a view of virtue and moral behavior based on the aggregate of thinking about and performing virtue itself. An internal and external reciprocity between the idea about virtue and its practice are essential for its existence and when the two cannot be achieved virtue remains ideal. Such an acknowledgement, Anderson argues is at the basis of Franklin’s fundamental disinterest in completing his book project as well as the autobiography (Anderson 2008, 24–36).

is also the foundational text for the “great and extensive Project” that never materialized.²⁰

This project, grander and farther-reaching than his individual plan to become virtuous, involves a large group of men who are first instructed to become virtuous and then, by forming a society, work together to propagate this virtue throughout the world:

In this Piece it was my Design to explain and enforce this Doctrine, that vicious Actions are not hurtful because they are forbidden, but forbidden because they are hurtful, the Nature of Man alone consider'd: That it was therefore every ones Interest to be virtuous, who wished to be happy even in this World. And I should from this Circumstance, there being always in the World a Number of rich Merchants, Nobility, States and Princes, who have need of honest Instruments for the Management of their Affairs, and such being so rare, have endeavoured to convince young Persons, that no Qualities were so likely to make a poor Man's Fortune as those of Probity & Integrity. (Franklin 1987, 1392)

This passage, as does the one cited earlier, highlights the moral and the practical/economic value of Franklin's “great and extensive Project.” The corruptible nature of man calls for the exercise of virtue. Moral integrity will make a young man profitable. The representation of these virtuous men as simultaneously morally strong and bent on making profit is based on the same idea Franklin's queries for the Junto revealed. It is only the combination of the possibly mutually exclusive features of eighteenth-century virtue and economy of profit that can bring power to a society of young men. If young men can make themselves become this particular type of virtuous young person, then “Merchants, Nobility, States and Princes” may all be their possible employers. The passage draws a link among commonly shared ideas of the corruptibility of human beings, the need to generate an elite of individuals whose special training is in exercising virtue, and an imagined colonial world in which

²⁰Colleen Terrell argues that Franklin's sense of self and of virtuous behavior depend on his perception of the imaginative arts as material arts and virtue, like any other art, is itself a mechanical skill. Throughout his writings, Terrell claims, Franklin treats virtue as a systematic body of knowledge and virtue is the means to keep his behavior in harmony with the orderliness of nature's laws. When discussing how Franklin represents the way virtue works, Terrell adds that he attempts to internalize virtuous actions so that they can be performed reflexively (Terrell 2003, 100–132).

merchants, statesmen, and even nobles and royalty join together. It is this combination that produces a representation of a society that depends on the elements identifiable as an integral part of the cosmopolitan ideal. Such an ideal is, as I have already argued, embedded in the language of imperial expansion and of colonial economies, of international exchange and communication, and virtue is the practical art its representatives employ. What makes the society Franklin represents unique, however, is that, while originating in the transatlantic environment, it is deeply rooted in and operates at the local level.²¹ The local character of this society emerges when Franklin returns to the subject in the opening of the third part of the autobiography.

The necessity to attend to other business that had stopped him from working on his project earlier on had not decreased in the 1780s when Franklin was writing his memoirs. It took him another four years before he could return to his manuscript and write another segment. He did so by going back to his memories about the “great and extensive Project” he had brought up at the end of part two: “I am about to write at home, August 1788, but cannot have the help expected from my Papers, many of them being lost in the War. I have however found the following.” What follows is a short essay Franklin had kept as material for the book he never wrote. He introduces the piece with a reminder about the concluding comments from the previous section: “Having mentioned a great and extensive Project which I had conceiv’d, it seems proper that some Account should be here given of that Project and its Object. Its first Rise in my Mind appears in the following little Paper, accidentally preserv’d, viz.” The copy of the essay, an example of what he has just described as “Hints of the Sentiments, and Reasonings” related to his discussion of the art of virtue, is copied immediately after. The document is entitled “OBSERVATIONS on my Reading History in Library, May 9, 1731.” This essay, Franklin had explained earlier on, is one of those “Pieces of Paper” on which he put down “such Thoughts as occur’d to

²¹Scholars generally use the notion of “rooted cosmopolitanism” as a way to describe a postmodern sensitivity towards the ethnic and cultural diversity of our world and then place it in opposition to the way early modern and eighteenth-century cosmopolitanism was represented and performed, which is described as “rootless.” By using the term in the context of Franklin’s representation of the cosmopolitan, I aim to show that rootedness and cosmopolitanism precede our contemporary understanding of the Western world social and cultural make up. See introduction for bibliographical references.

[him] respecting [the project]" (Franklin 1987, 1396). This society, or "Sect" as he describes it, is deist in principle and follows the model that closely reminds readers of the Junto and of the Freemasonry, both relevant to Franklin at the time he composed this short essay. This "Society of the *Free* and *Easy*," he explains soon after the cited essay, is to propagate knowledge and moral goodness and generate a community of individuals who are interested in the welfare of human beings rather than being driven by partisan and local interests (Franklin 1987, 1395).

The essay presents readers a model of a society of virtuous men that reflects some of the ideas Franklin has outlined in the earlier section. The opening sentence is a consideration of the great powers that parties (both political parties and associations of citizens in a more general sense) have in societies: "That the great Affairs of the World, the Wars, Revolutions, etc. are carried on and effected by Parties" (Franklin, 1: 192). This statement is followed by the claim that parties are, in general, led by private interests: "That the different Views of these different Parties, occasion all Confusion. That while a Party is carrying on a general Design, each Man has a particular Private Interest." Franklin deplores the contemporary connection between parties and private interests, which he defines both in terms of personal and limited group interests. On this topic he says as follows:

That few in Public Affairs act from a meer View of the Good of their Country, whatever they may pretend; and tho' their Actings bring real Good to their Country, yet Men primarily consider'd that their own and their Country's Interest was united, and did not act from a Principle of Benevolence. That few still in Public Affairs act with a View of the Good of Mankind. (Franklin, 1: 192)

As it had been the case in the eleventh query to be answered by the Junto members, the terms and the rhetoric in this passage anticipate those Denis Diderot will use twenty years later in the *Encyclopédie* to describe cosmopolitanism. Franklin's words in the passage underscore how the men who form contemporary parties fail to apply the standards that would make them fit the ideal cosmopolitanism presented. They fail to be productive at the civic level. Diderot's definition of the cosmopolite later in the century concluded by placing the greatest emphasis on one's allegiance to mankind. Franklin calls the reader's attention to the universal aim the party should have. Only a small number of

individuals “act with a View of the Good of Mankind.” The rest of the party leaders act against the principles that would make them cosmopolitans. However, as Franklin moves on to describe his own version of an ideal party of virtuous men, a party that functions in a cosmopolitan way and that fosters cosmopolitan virtue among its members, he does so by reversing some crucial elements of the structure he just described. Franklin’s proposed revision of the way parties should be organized, although based on a cosmopolitan and universalizing model, ultimately makes the local, its features, and its improvement, the focus of the party of virtue’s actions.

In the subsequent and final section of the short essay, Franklin in fact acknowledges that, despite his dissatisfaction with parties’ structure and their employment, parties (in a general sense of the word) represent the most common way human beings associate and protect their interests.²² Thus, rather than promoting their elimination, he promotes the revision of their standards through the establishment of another structure of this kind, a “Party of Virtue,” he calls it. Such a party, Franklin says, would unite “the Virtuous and good Men of all Nations into a regular Body, to be govern’d by suitable good and wise Rules, which good and wise Men may probably be more unanimous in their Obedience to, than common People are to common Laws.” (Franklin, *Papers* 1: 193) Franklin proposes a reformation of the elements that constitute such associations rather than considering the abolition of this form of association among humans. He suggests a change in the politics of their leadership so that parties’ divisive and destructive power can be turned into a productive force—a force that unites people and engenders a sense of identity that is not national but instead human and universal. The men who compose this group are not only good and virtuous; they are selected according

²²In a reading of the same essay, Douglas Anderson describes Franklin’s attitude towards parties as ambivalent. In Anderson’s analysis, Franklin’s proposal of a party of virtuous men is seen as a model of Franklin’s career, a model that derives from the practice of Shaftesburean brotherhood and Masonic organizations to which he had been introduced during his first stay in London in 1725–1726. I agree with Anderson’s reading. The scholar, however, does not discuss the connection between the language that Franklin uses and the non-partisan and cosmopolitan ultimate goal of the party of virtue to generate a better humanity that, in my view, constitutes the most striking feature of Franklin’s discussion of parties’ reformation (Anderson 1997, 13–15).

to a standard that raises them above local environments and their particularities. They are “Men of all Nations” and are called to constitute a body of subjects who obediently follow the law by which this universal community should abide and set the example for those who might follow them. Through the form of the virtuous men’s party, the founding tenets of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism find their way in the body of the society of learned men. Simultaneously, these men reflect the model Franklin assigns to his narrative persona in the memoirs. As he says in the opening paragraph of part one, the book’s aim is to provide his own experiences as examples “fit to be imitated,” first by his own descendants and then the larger and transnational audience he projects onto the latter parts of the work (Norton, p. 1).

This new version of the Masonic and Junto models is called the “Society of the *Free and Easy*.” This group was, Franklin explains:

To be begun and spread at first among young and single Men only; that each Person to be initiated should not only declare his Assent to such Creed, but should have exercised himself with the Thirteen Weeks’ Examination and Practice of the Virtues as in the before-mention’d Model; that the Existence of such a Society should be kept a Secret till it was become considerable. To prevent Solicitations for the Admission of improper Persons; ... That for Distinction we should be call’d the Society of the *Free and Easy*. (Franklin 1986, 78)

The men Franklin envisages as the leaders of this society, a revised and improved type of party, are taken from all the nations and brought into a body that works for the universal good of humanity. It is from this universal model that such men can then have an effect on the local and on the universal. And although Franklin has admitted that time and business eventually kept him from putting this project into practice, he also adds: “And I was not discouraged by the seeming Magnitude of the Undertaking, as I have always thought that one Man of tolerable Abilities may work great Changes among Mankind” (Franklin 1987, 1307, 1397).

In an entry in his commonplace book, written in 1732 a year after the composition of the “Observations” and that the editors of Franklin papers included as a contemporary text related to the essay on reading history, readers find another set of ideas about the propagation of knowledge and virtue and a description of the society’s representative men.

This memorandum is, as the editors note, obviously linked to the essay on reading history, and introduces the notion of correspondence as an essential component to the success of Franklin's project. The memorandum says the following:

He may travel, every where endeavouring to promote Knowledge and Virtue; by erecting J[unto]s, promoting private Libr[arie]s, establishing a Society of Virtuous Men in all Parts, who shall have an universal Correspondence and unite to support and encourage Virtue and Liberty and Knowledge; [and then he adds in short hand] by all Methods. make m slf wrth 2 b mpld n s grt nd gd a Dsyn [make myself worthy to be employed in so great and good a Design]. (Franklin 1: 193)

The subject of this short passage provides another representation of the virtuous man, who has the same features as the one Franklin had described in the "Observations" written the previous year. Among the virtuous man's principal tasks are the promotion of virtue and knowledge through travel and the establishment of a universal correspondence, which will serve both as a promotion of and as a unifying structure for the society of learned men. Franklin enables the virtuous man to perform various functions by using the image of "universal Correspondence," intended as both the practical device of epistolary communication and an intellectual understanding among the members of the party.²³ Like the man described in the "Observations," this virtuous man will establish correspondences that generate a connective texture on a scale larger than country or city. Franklin stresses the transnational and trans-local role of the virtuous man in both the passage from the commonplace book and in the short essay included in the *Autobiography*. Yet, despite the universal foundations of the practice of broad generative correspondence, Franklin promotes the reproduction of the virtuous man's ideals at the local level. His final aim is similar the goal he held for the Philadelphians who joined the Junto years before.

²³Jerome Christensen gives a lucid description of the fundamental role that the concept of correspondence played during the Enlightenment. Christensen refers to the definitions for the term that the *Oxford English Dictionary* reports as being in usage during the eighteenth century and notices how the concept describes the epistemology of the period in a variety of its aspects (Christensen 1987, 11–15).

The universal features of this society are validated only by its local application. Franklin notes that if a plan focusing on the local were applied societies of virtuous men would be established “in all Parts.” The establishment of local Juntos and libraries propagates virtuous ideas and generates the correspondences necessary for such societies to flourish. Because the central task is to take care of the specific needs of each local entity, only in local embodiment can they be validated. The cosmopolitan ideals of universal dialogue and comprehension nurtured these communities and identified them, but this passage in Franklin’s commonplace book grounded the most distinctive feature of the cosmopolitan community in the establishment and prosperity of a local community. This form of cosmopolitanism describes the colonial subject as able to engage above the colonial government imposed constraints, and, simultaneously, to be civically productive at a localized level.

In the memorandum from Franklin’s commonplace book, the qualities of the local Junto club’s members combine with those of the cosmopolitan men of letters sketched in his essay on reading history (Shields 2008, 50–62). The association of Franklin’s imagined society with one of its material manifestations brings his local and universal aims together in a manner similar to that noted in “Observations” where he had stated that “Men from all Nations” were to operate “in all Parts” of the world. Associations like the Junto become connective links in the establishment of the “Society of Virtuous Men” Franklin imagines in these essays. These clubs’ principal task is still the mutual improvement of their members. The creation of new Juntos, similarly to that of new libraries, the note in the commonplace book suggests, would encourage the promotion of ideals such as “Virtue, Liberty and Knowledge.” These Enlightenment staples warrant the continuation of the process of further expansion of the virtuous society, this time from the local to the universal from where its roots have now been established.

The figure who represents this virtuous society and operates within local communities becomes what Diderot called “a citizen of the great city of the world” because the community he helps to form and improve is a community of humans, not of nationals (Roth 1955, 8:16). Yet, when embodied in entities like the Junto, Franklin’s proposed society will raise the cultural level of America, it will enlarge its members’ general knowledge, it will also legitimize the province, and finally it will make the center of imperial culture participate in the mobility of colonial America by seeing its forms reproduced. It is this multiplicity of

functions and the fluidity they assign to the group identity in Franklin's representation of community and to the America it embodies that makes his sense of national identity a combination of the elements associated with the discourses of cosmopolitanism. It is cosmopolitan because it is based on an ideal that benefits humanity, and because it exists within colonial North America and within Philadelphia's city limits. This similarity allows for a reproduction as well as a challenge of the forms that generate it, because it relies on an idea of community that exceeds the cultural and political borders that would define the empire. Yet it is dependent on the imperial economic and political structure to exist because there would not be the possibility of real exchange unless the borders were made fluid by its geopolitical existence. This community of virtuous men (dubbed in the *Junto*) produces a dialogic bridge between center and periphery without necessarily originating constraints for either space and can thus exist without apparently interfering with or contradicting each other. It can be virtuous at the same time it works at producing wealth. Franklin's description of the society of virtuous men outlines this process: the colonial world and its ideas have progressed within their imperial surroundings and can be beneficial to "Mankind in general." Yet, they could not be so, unless they were produced by the culture that generates and sustains them locally.

In this view, Franklin's imagined community does not simply contribute to the formation of the idea of nation, since Benedict Anderson's employment of the expression has been identified with these terms. The image of community these texts present is not "both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1998, 6). The ideas of geographical and cultural closure Franklin employs in the early work cited in his memoir serve the purpose of imagining a community that, in reproducing the space of the metropolitan center, opens itself to the larger space of the "world" rather than simply thinking of itself as an exclusive and closed community. In the passage describing his idea of "imagined community," Anderson states: "the nation is imagined as *limited* because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind" (Anderson 1998, 7). Franklin's description of a society of virtuous political leaders, his *Junto* members, and the idea of intellectual community behind them define an American identity based on what Anderson argues nations are not. Franklin was indeed, as Anderson claims elsewhere, one of those printer/

journalist and postmaster figures whose work put into motion the fundamental elements that generated a sense of national identity among people during the late colonial period in North America (Anderson 1998, 60–65). What is particularly interesting about the short “Observations on Reading History” and the related commonplace book entry is that they show that, for figures like Franklin, imagined communities in the early decades of the eighteenth century could be imagined both as independent, limited, and coterminous with the idea of mankind.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is an intrinsic irony in finding the outline of a cosmopolitan form of nationhood in a text that has come to be seen as one of the first representations of this kind of American national identity. Franklin himself seems to doubt the sustainability of an American national identity when he distances himself from his plan of forming the society of the “*Free and Easy*” and reminds his readers how it never materialized as: “an unforeseen Succession of Employs prevented [him] attending to [it]” (Franklin 1986, 75). While Franklin’s words are simply a reflection of how personal and historical events interfered with his well-thought-out plan, it is also important to consider the role the changes in his life and the contingencies generated by them play in forming these views. The first change I want us to consider is the shift in the political frame surrounding the account. Franklin, as we know, is writing the latter parts of the memoirs after the end of the War of Independence. The various examples of cosmopolitan subjectivity within the memoir show that a large part of the constructed identity depended on a lack of well-defined national borders. The irony here, of course, is that, although the environment Franklin inhabits while a colonial subject lends itself to this type of representation, the cosmopolitan national identity is imaginable only when Pennsylvania is part of the British Empire and makes the cosmopolis nothing more than an amplified notion of nation embodied in an abstract representation of British Empire.²⁴

²⁴The representation of a virtuous American man, who was cosmopolitan, virtuous, and intent on making money, while viable in the 1720s, becomes so only when described as part of a never finished plan by the time Franklin drafts his memoirs at the end of the century. By the time Franklin wrote the account of his life there was a much more defined sense of the disconnection between the world of labor and economic profitability and that of intellectual enlightenment and the representation of a cosmopolitan citizen he had used earlier becomes anachronistic (Brewer 1989; Langford 1989).

4 OF WEEDS AND POLYPS: A NATIONALISTIC COSMOPOLITAN?

Franklin's well-known 1751 essay entitled "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, & ..." conflates the idea of cosmopolitanism with the British nation and provides a telling example of how cosmopolitanism can be the force to define and strengthen national borders. The cosmopolitanism that emerges in the essay becomes the vehicle for developing a nationalistic and ethnocentric portrayal of a proto-American sense of nationhood. Empire-building becomes a form of border crossing and transnational growth. The essay centers on the ideas of community, population growth, and national unity. It has been known as one of the most influential of Franklin's writings with figures such as Jefferson, Adams, and Washington in the list of individuals who knew the text and publicly appreciated it (Lemay 2005–2008, 3:260–64). In 1751, Franklin was a fully recognized member of the republic of letters and his professional career had begun to move in a new direction. In 1748 he had officially retired from actively participating in the printing business and his attention was focused on the civic and political issues of his home colony and in actively cultivating his interest in science. In his biography of Benjamin Franklin, Leo Lemay has described the year 1751 as Franklin's "annus mirabilis," not only because he was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives and acquired the right to vote in it—two things he had been denied while he was the assembly's clerk—but also because Franklin wrote some of the most highly circulated and most influential essays of his career during this year (Lemay 2005–2008, XIV). In response to Great Britain's decision to transport felons to the North American colonies, Franklin first published the editorial "Jakes on our Tables" that compared the new practice of sending convicts to the colonies to dumping toilets on North American colonists' dinner tables, and then the satire "Rattlesnakes and Felons," which continued the protests against the transportation of convicts. As Franklin's writings became more engaged with current political controversies, his personal activism increased.²⁵ "Observations

²⁵Franklin was in London from 1757 until 1762, and again from 1764 until 1775 when the political divergences with the British government became intractable and he left for Paris.

Concerning the Increase of Mankind” reveals this political engagement and it also provides a significant example of the ambivalent nature of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and a sign of its interdependence on the cultural and political forces of the times. The essay shows us how the language of cosmopolitanism is inextricable from that of empire and thus blends with and sustains the rhetoric of nationalistic exclusivity and proto-ethnic superiority. In “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind,” the rhetoric of cosmopolitanism helps Franklin suggest that, within an empire, the forces that produce necessary imperial structures can also weaken and eventually destroy them.

“Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind” circulated in manuscript form until its 1755 publication in Philadelphia. Once it was published, Franklin reissued and included the essay in a number of different publications while he was in England actively working as agent for Pennsylvania.²⁶ The essay presents the North American colonies as part of a larger imperial body and Franklin describes this entity as a distinct ethno-political community that wants to establish well-defined ideological and geographical limits to the space it occupies. In order for this community to maintain its unique character, Franklin suggests, it should not be ethnically or culturally corrupted. In “Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind” the interest of mankind is to make boundaries, divisions, and hierarchies visible. Franklin begins with a detailed analysis of population growth and a comparison between the overpopulated European regions and the underpopulated colonial spaces, and it ends with a racialized argument against non-British immigration.²⁷ According to Franklin’s theorizing and calculations, the colonial population grew twice as fast as the European ones and such a growth could be easily maintained in the ever-enlarging imperial territories, if Great Britain

²⁶The essay was first published in the November 1755 issue of the *Gentlemen’s Magazine* in London and in the *Scots Magazine* in April 1756. It was often reprinted and Franklin added it as an appendix to the essay “The Interest of Great Britain Considered” that he published in 1760. He also included it in the fourth edition of his “Experiments and Observation on Electricity” in 1769 (Franklin 4: 225–234).

²⁷In this part of the essay, Franklin wrote down the basis of a theory of social reproduction that later sociologists, such as Thomas Malthus, will embrace and develop. According to Franklin’s calculations, the population grows twice as fast as in the colonies as in Europe because of the prosperity that allows for early marriages and a higher number of offspring (Lemay 2008, 3: XIV).

could establish what he calls “generative laws.” These laws would help the generation of wealth and a larger number of children by preventing the importation of “Foreign Luxuries and needless Manufactures,” and by avoiding the development of a lazy class of people who would be more interested in pleasure than in promoting the production of “manufactures.”²⁸ The ethnocentricity of the argument becomes evident when, after maintaining that natural growth should be promoted, Franklin insists that immigration should also be strictly controlled so that a nation and its people could maintain their distinctive ethnic and cultural character.²⁹

After having introduced the issue of natural population growth, in fact, Franklin says the introduction of foreigners to the colonies would not be encouraging the needed improvement. Foreigners, Franklin says, “will gradually eat the Natives out” (Franklin 4: 232). This eating metaphor that introduces Franklin’s argument about keeping a “race of people” uncontaminated becomes a central theme in the representation of nation formation that follows.³⁰ Mixing people cannot form a nation, Franklin suggests, because the ethnocultural traits of the strongest group would prevail on the other. Under these circumstances, the risk of introducing a new group would be too high and could jeopardize the Britishness of the colonial territories and that of the mother country as well. To exemplify his words, Franklin uses the first of two images derived from the natural world:

²⁸Here Franklin is also interested in promoting the production of manufactures in the colonies, which England is blocking (Franklin 4: 225).

²⁹Carla Mulford offers an extensive discussion of Franklin’s ideas as they developed out of his conversations with environmental, labor, societal, and economic theories. Mulford shows that Franklin’s discussion was designed to prove to a British audience of specialists in those fields that they were ultimately mismanaging the colonies and risking losing profit and possibly the colonies as well. The racist language that Franklin uses, Mulford argues, reflects contemporary anxieties “born of population density, land and labor problems, health concerns, and language fears” that immigrant groups’ (especially German) lack of interest in cultural and social integration in the English-speaking North American environment was causing among Franklin’s contemporaries (Mulford 2015, 152–164).

³⁰Leo Lemay and Douglass Anderson have argued that Franklin’s comments are ironic and skeptical and thus reveal his quite ambivalent position regarding the position he seems to take in the essay. Here I am interested in analyzing the way in which the language of cosmopolitanism can easily merge with the nationalistic discourse Franklin develops (Anderson 1997, 158–168; Lemay 2005–2008, 3: 256–257).

There is in short, no Bound to the prolific Nature of Plants or Animals, but what is made by their crowding and interfering with each others Means of Subsistence. Was the Face of the Earth vacant of other Plants, it might be gradually sowed and overspread with one Kind only; as for Instance, with Fennel; and were it empty of other Inhabitants, it might in a few Ages be replenish'd from one Nation only; as for Instance, with Englishmen. (Franklin 4: 233)

In this passage the natural world becomes both the model on which imperial expansion should function and an example of how necessary it is to keep natural processes under control when it comes to developing a nation. The suggestion that the world could assume an entirely British character is introduced through a metaphor that shows how nature's course cannot be stopped and how human growth and reproduction also reflect the works of the natural world. Franklin assigns to the expansion of the British Empire an inevitability like the expansion of weeds in the natural world. However, his choice of the fennel as a means of comparison, a plant that reproduces itself as a weed and drives other plants out even though it is also used for cooking, introduces the sense that any form of expansion needs to be brought under a form of control that exceeds nature's powers. Here the cosmopolitan idea of the nation of humans Franklin seemed to envision in other places comes with an addition: humankind should have British features.

Franklin pairs the idea that the British Empire needs to be cautious when choosing the best way to increase the number of its subjects and its geographical extension with the celebrative idea that its greatness can be reproduced without interruption. Franklin stresses in the rest of the paragraph the need to continue the territorial expansion necessary to grant people enough room to reproduce themselves and in the paragraph that follows he employs a new natural world metaphor to further stress the problematic process that such an expansion could entail.³¹ Franklin compares the well-functioning of nations to the hydra-like animal called "polypus." A well-regulated nation, Franklin says, is:

Like a Polypus; take away a Limb, its Place is soon supply'd; cut it in two, and each deficient Part shall speedily grow out of the Part remaining. Thus

³¹Here Franklin's description reflects the usage John Dee had done of the term in the sixteenth century. See Introduction.

if you have room and Subsistence enough, as you may by dividing, make ten Polypes out of one, you may of one make ten Nations, equally populous and powerful; or rather, increase a Nation ten fold in Numbers and Strength. (Franklin 4: 234)

Franklin's comparison between polypuses and nations offers two options: the production of other nations, potentially rival, or the extension of the original nation into a larger and stronger entity. In each case the community that would originate from Franklin's metaphorical description aims at reproducing itself politically as well as ethnically. It can become another self-sufficient nation or one that represents, like the North American colonies, the original one of which it is an extension. Ironically, the unlimited power to regenerate itself without interruption that Franklin attributes to this proto-national entity in the end produces the same image in his 1720s essays, namely one nation of humans. The peculiarity of the model that Franklin's comparisons to the fennel and the polyp produce is that these humans overtly share the cultural and racial traits of those who run the empire. The party of virtuous men offered a "revised" version of what parties had come to represent in history, and the philosophical society generated itself out of its roots in British expansion and its predecessor, the Royal Society. Yet the image Franklin's words produce here is not one of a process of communal improvement, but one of improvement that comes at the expense of the replacement of the weakest by the strongest, with the implicit sense that the strong should work to make themselves stronger and push the weak out of the picture.

As I said at the beginning of this chapter, Franklin's writings repeatedly show how complex terms that describe nationhood are, and, ultimately, how the concept of national identity and the process that defined it during the late colonial American period cannot be retraced without taking into account the inherent contradictions of the language in such a process. The language and imagery that derive from the concept of the cosmopolitan play an essential role in this construction. What the British Empire and a prospective American nation were for Benjamin Franklin is perhaps best articulated in the words of the author of the essay that might have inspired Franklin to use the image of the polypus in "Observations." This essay, which was published in the "Poor Richard Revisited" almanac of 1751, contains a description of the animal Franklin uses to represent the way an eighteenth-century nation should function.

The writer in the almanac—whom the editors of the Franklin's papers have not identified as Franklin himself but who obviously stirred in him a strong journalistic and scientific interest—says the polypus was the “most unaccountable of all Creatures,” it had a:

Manner of Production, Feeding and Digestion ... different from all other Animals. The young ones come out of the Sides of the old, like Buds and Branches from Trees, and at length drop off perfect Polypes. They do not seem to be of different Sexes. They take in Worms, and other Sustenance, by means of a Sett of long Arms or *Antennae*, which surround their Mouths, and after keeping them some Time in their Stomachs, throw them out again the same Way. The Animal's Body consists of a single Cavity, like a Tube or Gut, and what is wonderful, and almost beyond Belief, is, that it will live and feed after it is turned inside out, and even when cut into a great many Pieces, each several Piece becomes a compleat Polype. They are infested with a Kind of Vermin, as are almost all Animals from the largest down to Bees and other Insects. These Vermins sometimes in a long Time will eat up the Head and Part of the Body of the Polype, after which, if it be cleared of them, it shall have the devoured Parts grow up again, and become as compleat as ever. (Franklin 4: 93)

The detailed description of this strange animal offers another metaphor that as readers of Franklin's works we could use to describe his late eighteenth-century colonial American perspective of what national communities could be like and what role cosmopolitanism played in his views. Like the polyp, national communities and their members are the “most unaccountable of all Creatures.” They can be turned upside-down and still survive and function, be separated and regenerate themselves and see each other as part of a whole and yet distinct and separate from each other. They exist as they form themselves and their features are those of becoming.

Franklin's complex and quite contradictory projections of models for national communities reminds us of what Walter Mignolo writes about the interlocking of coloniality and cosmopolitanism and the problems that this connection produces. Citing Francisco de Vitoria as the exemplar promoter of this type of cosmopolitanism during the Atlantic colonization, the first large project of globalization that we can identify in modernity, and Immanuel Kant as the one doing the same for the late Enlightenment, Mignolo argues such projects “can be complementary or dissenting with regard to global designs” of world domination and

cultural homogeneity within the same body of thought. In this view, cosmopolitan projects “arose from within modernity, however, and, as such, they have failed to escape the ideological frame imposed by global designs themselves” (Mignolo 2002, 159–160). Though critical of the reality surrounding it, this type of cosmopolitan attitude remains connected to the world that has produced it and depends on it to exist. The cosmopolitan attitude and the language Franklin used to represent communities with national traits is similar to the one Mignolo describes when talking about cosmopolitan projects. Although in many ways Franklin’s employment of cosmopolitanism fits what Mignolo calls an “emancipatory narrative,” as was the case for the essay “On Reading History in the Library,” Franklin’s employment of the terms of the cosmopolitan ideal reminds us of the interdependence of the imperial infrastructure. This interdependence fosters both the ideas of inclusion and of a humanity that is homogeneous in both culture and ethnicity. Franklin’s final refusal in the autobiographical account to link the image of the cosmopolitan subject he had produced in the 1720s with the idea of the virtuous man he described in the memoir can be seen as a signal that the idea of cosmopolitan inclusiveness has been taken over by one about homogeneity, which, however, cosmopolitanism itself also promotes.³²

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³²Anthony Appiah first described the cosmopolitan patriot as the individual who nurtures one’s own cultural roots while also respecting those of others. With this description, Appiah replicates the same terms that the enlightenment writers used to describe the cosmopolitan. The limitation of this view is that it does not take into account the hegemonic power that certain cultural and ethnic traits have in our world and thus reflects the idealistic traits that the Enlightenment representation of cosmopolitanism has (Appiah 1998, 91–116).

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