When Thomas Jefferson returned to the United States in late 1789, he harboured plans to renovate his mountain-top home at Monticello and his other property at Poplar Forest, Virginia. He was inspired by the classical architecture of Europe in his designs for more lavish plantation houses. Although delayed by his appointment as the first Secretary of State, Jefferson realised his architectural plans over the course of the 1790s and much of the early 1800s. Both houses at Monticello and Poplar Forest made extensive use of natural light. At Monticello, Jefferson masterfully employed architectural designs to allow for an abundance of light. Standing in the central hallway, one can view the outside in four directions thanks to Monticello’s multiple glass doors and windows. For Jefferson, the harmony of natural light satisfied not just the practical purpose of illumination but also reflected the man himself as an enlightened thinker in tune with the natural world. Throughout his renovations, Jefferson relied upon Joseph Donath to meet his construction needs. Donath, the former representative of the Weinbrenner firm in Vienna, supplied much of the glass needed for the windows of Jefferson’s estate. Jefferson used Donath’s company in Philadelphia because he preferred the quality of Bohemian glass to any other. Beginning in 1792, he made the first of several orders which continued over two decades. In total, Jefferson obtained at least 1,630 panes of Bohemian glass and paid Donath hundreds of dollars for his service. There was a certain amount of irony in this transaction as well. Jefferson, the man who viewed Habsburg trade as having little value, now imported one of the staple Habsburg products at an inflated price since Donath secured his glass orders through Hamburg rather than Trieste merchants. It was the price Jefferson paid for having subverted the commercial treaty with the Habsburg Monarchy.

Epilogue

“I Am Happy Only When I Can Find a New World for Myself”

The Residue of Revolution in the Habsburg Lands, 1787–1795
Jefferson’s subversion helped usher in a long period of malaise in US-Habsburg relations, a period which stretched deep into the nineteenth century and arguably characterised the entirety of the relationship. Jefferson’s snub of Count Mercy-d’Argenteau undoubtedly produced economic consequences. By the time the treaty negotiations between him and Mercy-d’Argenteau failed, many other European states had already or were beginning to benefit from official relations with the United States: France (1778), the Dutch Republic (1781), Sweden (1783), Prussia (1786), and Portugal (1786). As other nations also established relations with the United States in the 1790s and 1800s, such as Denmark (1796) and Russia (1803), the Habsburg Monarchy increasingly diverged from the transatlantic world. Without the advantages and protection of a treaty of commerce, Habsburg merchants found themselves unable to compete in North American markets. Styrian iron was more costly than comparable Swedish ironware; Levantine goods flowed more cheaply to the United States via ports in France and Spain which enjoyed lower tariffs; and Flemish merchants realised their textiles could not compete with the mass of other products. Bohemian glass proved the sole outlier. Besides Jefferson, Donath also supplied the architect Henry Latrobe with Bohemian glass for many new federal buildings in Washington, DC, including the White House. But Bohemian glass was not enough to sustain an entire trade route alone, especially one which now relied upon ports to the North rather than Trieste.

From 1786 onwards, direct transatlantic ventures from the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy slowly ceased operating. In Trieste, Ignaz Verpoorten’s company collapsed spectacularly with debts of over 200,000 florins in 1786. That same year, the Austrian-American Trading Company ended. Its leaders sought emergency capital from Vienna, but with profits waning and the four directors deemed too “greedy and unscrupulous” by locals in Trieste, no rescue came. The situation in Ostend fared little better. Ephrain Murdoch, a “furious partisan of the American cause” who traded from there to Philadelphia and Virginia, moved his business to Dunkirk in 1787. Francis Bowens, who had carried mail for Franklin during the war and sent ships to Philadelphia and Baltimore, declared bankruptcy at the same time. By the end of the decade, the agreement between the firm Liebaert, Baes, Derdeyn & Co in the Austrian Netherlands and their associate Mark Prager in Philadelphia had collapsed. Undermined by private representation and diminishing official belief in the benefit of American commerce, the Habsburg Monarchy’s designated representative in the United States, Baron Frederick Eugene de Beelen-Bertholff, ended his mission in 1789. Meanwhile his brother Maximilian de Beelen-Bertholff advised the minister
plenipotentiary in Brussels that the port of Ostend would be ruined imminently “if measures are not taken to prevent it.” The brief window of opportunity for Habsburg entrepreneurs in the Atlantic created by the turbulence of the American Revolution was over by the end of the 1780s.

Habsburg interest in transatlantic trade waned in subsequent years. Dynastic succession changed the outlook in some ways. After Joseph II died unexpectedly in 1790, his younger brother Pietro Leopoldo (the Grand Duke of Tuscany) who had favoured American constitutional ideals succeeded him as Leopold II. However, he too died suddenly in March 1792. His son and Joseph’s nephew, Francis II, reigned during the heady years of the French Revolution and the subsequent Napoleonic Wars that briefly brought the Habsburg Monarchy to its knees with humiliating military defeats and several territorial losses including the coastline along the Adriatic. Waging war against the revolutionary turmoil in Europe defined Francis II’s early reign and sapped his attention for much else. American interests, which once commanded serious attention at the Viennese court, now took a back seat. After Beelen’s mission ended, Giuseppe Mussi, a Milan-born merchant residing in Philadelphia, petitioned the Aulic Chamber to become Beelen’s replacement, but his application was refused. In their concluding response, ministers explained the new Emperor Francis’s view that “no advantage would be gained from formally accrediting any person with the Congress which had been so favoured by his late Majesty Emperor Joseph.” Francis did not alter his view in 1794 when Mussi reapplied or in 1796 when another merchant requested the same honour. Habsburg merchants evidently remained more intrigued by North American commerce than the state did.

Across the Atlantic, the opposite was true. American officials sought to secure trade with the Habsburg port of Trieste. In 1797, Washington appointed Konrad F. Wagner as the first American consul. A few years later, the first documented American vessel arrived to unload cotton, sugar and coffee. The growth of American imports in subsequent years convinced Viennese officials of the need for an American representative. In 1804, Francis received the proposition again but declined to act. It was not until after the restoration of the Illyrian provinces and the acquisition of Venetian territory following the Congress of Vienna that ended the Napoleonic wars in 1815 that Francis decided to entertain the idea. However, the process of finding and appointing a consular representative proved difficult as the lead candidate did not wish to end up in the United States. The issue was finally resolved in 1820 with a consular officer officially named in New York but by then Habsburg representation in the Americas functioned through Count Emanuel Joseph Eltz, the first ambassador to Brazil.
By that time the Habsburgs lagged behind other European powers in establishing American representations. Helvetia (Switzerland), for example, enjoyed an official representative presence in the United States long before the Habsburgs. Much like the time of the American Revolution, Central European firms became impatient and arranged their own private representatives. The Imperial Tobacco Monopoly (Österreichische Tabakregie) named Antonio E. Perez as a representative in New Orleans after 1815. Perez was so effective that he even provided Viennese officials with reports and made suggestions for the further expansion of Habsburg diplomatic posts in the Americas.

The economic imperative to connect with the United States of America declined concurrently with the political belief in the United States as a viable sovereign nation. During the 1780s, Viennese newspapers discussed at length the poor state of the American economy and political system. The new republic seemed enfeebled and beset with political calamities. The Philadelphia mutiny of 1783, Shay’s rebellion of 1786–1787, as well as reports of paper money further compounded the image of a destitute situation. Some Hungarian and Flemish newspapers featured similar disparagements. The negative depiction of America angered John Adams who decried how “all the Gazettes of Germany teem with Lies to our Disadvantage.” Fictitious or not, the air of negativity stuck. Beelen’s reports painted a dire picture. In 1785, he commented how the president-elect of Congress was “in such tottering state of health” that it was doubtful “whether and when” he would be able to assume office. By contrast, Beelen, besotted with the idea of Habsburg-Native American commerce, forwarded laudatory descriptions of the Muscogee Creek and a portrait of their former leader Mico-Clucco whose title was “equivalent to our title of emperor.”

The impression of instability and weakness rendered through these mediums further eroded the Habsburg resolve to form any political connection with the United States. By 1787, Joseph II asked, “What has the Revolution given them?” during the height of the Constitutional Convention that summer. “Nothing,” he retorted, “but general imbecility, confusion, and misery.”

By the late 1780s, Habsburg ministers became increasingly weary of the negative effects of American independence. Concerns rose over emigration in the direction of the Atlantic rather than to the Habsburg provinces in the East. Throughout the eighteenth century, recruitment plans to populate the neo acquista of the eastern Habsburg territories competed against transoceanic destinations. After independence, the desire to emigrate to the new American republic increased. From his vantage point in London, Adams sincerely believed that “half of Germany,” which to Adams included the Habsburg territories, was
on “tiptoe” ready “to fly to America for relief.” The writer Dositej Obradović from the Banat of Temesvar desired to emigrate to America, as did Jan Ingenhousz from Vienna. A sovereign United States seemed a temptation even to members of the imperial court. In 1783, a member of the Imperial Aulic Council (the Reichshofrat), one of the most powerful institutions within the Holy Roman Empire, petitioned Franklin for help in retiring to the United States since he knew the new nation would need “experienced and accomplished men” such as himself. His preference was for Georgia, either of the Carolinas, or even Virginia, “if it were not too remote.”

In London, the Habsburg consul Antonio Songa sounded alarm over the siren calls of transatlantic migration. In February 1783 already, he argued how the issue of emigration was more pressing than ever as “Americans will try in every possible way to induce people from all the countries of Europe.” Songa foresaw how, post-Revolution, the United States would expand its industry and require an even greater skilled workforce. “[This] emigration, which the independence of America may cause, is perhaps the first point which Europe must endeavour to prevent,” he noted. The second point Songa observed had to do with the futility of ordinances and laws to prevent emigration. “There are always ways to escape these laws,” he reminded his superiors. Instead, Songa suggested Habsburg officials should be braced to sacrifice their “lowest inferior workers” to “American temptations.” Confirmation of Songa’s fears and predictions rang true following similar reports by Beelen. Within a year of his arrival in September 1783, Beelen observed the effects of American westward expansion into the newest counties of North Carolina annexed from Cherokee lands. The soil there was rich, the rivers plentiful, and the air clean but the land sparsely populated. The solution for the landholders, Beelen reported with alarm, rested on recruiting migrants from the Habsburg lands. “It is my knowledge,” Beelen stated, “that seven emigrant subjects of Your Majesty the Emperor—natives of the environs of Ghent, Kortrijk, Brussels and further—have already arrived at Philadelphia since my sojourn in this country.” Combined with the perceived political instability of the post-independent United States, such fears stoked the emerging negative view of America among Habsburg officials.

In the war’s aftermath it became increasingly clear that all of Europe had cause to fear the repercussions of the American Revolution. Beginning in the 1780s, successive waves of revolutionary ferment stalked the Habsburg lands. These rebellions were either reactive against the far-reaching Josephine reforms or the perceived injustices within Habsburg society. All of them were united by parallels to the American example. In 1784, an uprising broke out among
villagers in the mountains of Transylvania where tensions between the different ethnic groups in the region—Hungarian Szekels, German-speakers (known as Transylvanian Saxons), and Romanians often referred to as Wallachians—reached a tipping point. Wallachians had first appealed to the Habsburg monarch for a redress of grievances via several delegations to Vienna but when the imperially sanctioned extension of privileges proved difficult to enact back in Transylvania, the fighting started. Although Joseph had been sympathetic to their pleas, he now instructed the imperial army to restore order and end the bloodshed. In December 1784, two of the Wallachian leaders of the rebellion faced execution after they issued a proclamation demanding an end to the excessive abuses by feudal lords and the distribution of their lands to local peasants.

Although the Principality of Transylvania had suffered several spikes of social unrest in the eighteenth century, observers in and outside the Habsburg Monarchy regarded Horea’s rebellion, as it became known, as something different. In 1784, the sensationalist writer Jacques-Pierre Brissot drew the most obvious parallels between the Transylvanian situation and the American Revolution. He penned an imputation against Joseph II, alleging the emperor had denied the right of protest to the Wallachians by crushing the rebellion. In Brissot’s eyes, the revolt was a “beautiful monument erected to liberty” which followed the American example before them. “They [the Wallachians] must say,” he argued “if the American has been able, why not I?” If the propositions of the Wallachians were unjust, Brissot further explained, “it must also be said that the declarations of the United States of America were equally unjust for they are exactly the same.” Brissot’s comparison of the two rebellions in defence of peoples’ rights echoed louder in Europe than the actual uprising itself. German and Italian translations quickly followed, bringing the criticism of the emperor’s policy more directly to his subjects. In doing so, Brissot not only made Habsburg inhabitants aware of the parallels between their situation and the successful American Revolution, but he also made clear the rights Americans now enjoyed as a result of their independence. Article IV of the Maryland constitution of 1776 adorned the frontispiece of his pamphlet. Purposefully selected by Brissot, it spoke directly to the Wallachian struggle: “Whenever the ends of government are perverted and public liberty manifestly endangered, and all other means of redress are ineffectual, the people may and, of right, ought to reform the old or establish a new government.”

Inspiration from the American Revolution existed across the Habsburg lands. The War of American Independence, in the eyes of many Habsburg inhabitants, had not been a bloody conflict or civil war but rather the just defence of liberty
against tyranny and a virtuous struggle to protect the inherent rights of the governed. Nowhere was this impression of the American Revolution stronger than in the Austrian Netherlands, where the inherent rights of subject became a flashpoint in the late 1780s. At the beginning of that decade, Joseph had endeavoured to reform the ancient customs and archaic privileges of the various estates under his dominion in order to create “just one body, uniformly governed.” In the Austrian Netherlands this entailed sweeping reforms aiming to rid the region of, as one historian has candidly phrased it, the “museum of late-medieval corporate liberties.” Joseph’s centralising crusade overhauled judicial, political, and religious apparatuses, provoking severe discontent at first and then open disagreement with the provincial estates. Aware of the mounting resistance to his plans, Joseph consoled his ministerial representative in Brussels by saying “do not be discouraged, dear Count, we will struggle together for the good of the state.” The people of the Duchy of Brabant within the Austrian Netherlands, however, saw to it that they were discouraged. Students’ protests erupted over the proposed changes to the seminary in Louvain/Leuven and they were joined before long by the estates themselves who issued a defiant proclamation against the continual abrogation of their endowed rights.

Amid the growing furour in Brabant, many leaders of the resistance drew parallels to their situation with the American Revolution. Information coming to subjects in the Austrian Netherlands via newspapers had been more pro-American in tone than elsewhere in the Monarchy. American constitutionalism seemed a realistic model based on coverage in the pages of the Courrier de l’Escaut, among others. Those opposed to the Josephinian reforms emphasised the favourable results of the American Revolution, an event which had enriched the Austrian Netherlands, after all. At the outbreak of unrest in early 1787, Charles Lambert d’Outrepont, a member of the provincial council of Brabant, gave a rousing speech which later reached the populace in print. In his view, the eighteenth century was one of revolution. Liberty had shone in Corsica and Poland before being extinguished; only America had been successful and now it was the time for the inhabitants of Brabant to decide whether or not to lift the torch. D’Outrepont expounded the opportunities awaiting the people of the Austrian Netherlands if they would only follow the “American example” and embrace a “government which approaches republicanism rather than despotism.”

D’Outrepont was the first among a chorus of resisters who lauded the American cause as their rightful counterpart. A flood of lyrical verses hit the streets which Habsburg officials collected assiduously before forwarding them to ministers’ desks in Vienna. “Be born free, fear the shackle, imitate America!”
“I Am Happy Only When I Can Find a New World for Myself” 221

instructed one placard; “I invite you without mercy, Poor Belgians, [and] Tyrannical Emperor, follow America,” demanded one more; and “Poor Belgian people,” announced another, “do as in America: shake off the yoke of your emperor!” 47 In Vienna, Kaunitz fretted they would actually succeed in imitating the Americans. If such a situation were to pass, he worried, then the people of the Austrian Netherlands who, he thought, enjoyed “so many attractive prospects for independence,” could join the Americans as “the happiest peoples in the universe.” 48

Two major anti-reformist groups emerged in the spring of 1787: the “traditionalists” and the “democrats.” 49 Common to both parties was a consensus on the relevance of the American example. 50 The first group called for the defence of the ancient privileges against Joseph’s modernising reforms and coalesced around the Estate of Brabant member Hendrik van der Noot, whose nickname—perhaps derogatorily—in Vienna was “the Franklin of the Austrian Netherlands.” 51 The second group centred on the more radical jurist Jan-Frans Vonck who argued in favour of reform but not without the democratic consent of those he governed. The “Vonckist” or “Democrats,” as this group became known, clung more tightly to the American model. 52 Some within this circle had either attempted to fight for the Revolution or had seen action in the War of American Independence. 53 Leading pamphleteers advocated emulation of the United States as resistance turned towards revolt and open rebellion throughout 1788 and 1789. 54 When the Vandernootists and Vonckists merged to form a revolutionary committee in 1789, they issued a manifesto on behalf of Brabanders in October 1789 “written in the spirit of the American Declaration of Independence.” 55 The declaration led to the short-lived United Belgian States (Verenigde Nederlandse Staten/États-Belgiqes-Unis) a few months later. Both the name and the resulting constitution directly referenced the American beacon across the Atlantic. 56

Revolution in the Austrian Netherlands helped the American Revolution to resonate even more loudly through the Habsburg lands. Although ultimately crushed by Habsburg forces within a year of existence, the road to the United Belgian States had created a lasting impression on Habsburg inhabitants. A young Hungarian noble named Gergely Berzeviczy passed through Brussels during the first stirrings of rebellion in 1787 and remarked how “uplifting” it was to witness the “courage and resolve” among the people “for the sake of freedom.” 57 The scenes in Brussels only served to strengthen the democratic convictions of Berzeviczy, who was returning to Hungary after a sojourn to the British Isles. “England,” he noted at the same time as he watched with interest the “ferment” in Brussels, had “shaped my political understanding and opinions,
which had previously been unclear." Upon arrival in Buda, Berzeviczy became an ardent advocate of consensual governance at a time when Hungarians defended their relationship and rights under Habsburg rule.

Like many of his fellow Hungarian noblemen, Berzeviczy believed in purported parallels between Hungary under the Habsburgs and the Americans formerly under British rule. The idea was so widespread that one Göttingen professor, who had taught many Hungarians, bemoaned how much he had suffered from hearing about this “pet idea of the Hungarian aristocracy.” Hungarian nobles clung to the persistent fiction that Hungary was an independent kingdom ruled only via a personal union with a member of the House of Habsburg. Rulership existed only with consent of the ruled in this train of thinking. When abuses by the ruler forced the ruled to break that contract, then any dissent was lawful and even necessary, as the Americans had shown. Joseph’s imposition of reforms prejudicial to the Hungarian people constituted, so the logic ran, a rejectable abuse of power.

In the summer of 1789, Berzeviczy gave a speech in which he advanced the notion that Joseph had repeatedly infringed upon the rights of Hungarians; his list of grievances was a clear imitation of the Declaration of American Independence, of which he had obtained a handwritten copy during his travels. He elaborated on these charges after Joseph’s death in early 1790 when effective change in Hungary seemed possible. His pamphlet De dominio Austriae in Hungaria (On the rule of Austria in Hungary) specifically referenced the United States and United Belgian States as examples of people “blessed by freedom” after years of subjugation. When rule turned to tyranny, their rebellions seemed “natural” and righteous in Berzeviczy’s eyes.

By the time Berzeviczy’s De dominio Austriae passed privately among liberal circles in Hungary, the revolutionary scene in Europe had changed, however. The French Revolution in July 1789 captivated many Hungarians much like the American Revolution had previously done. One Hungarian poet, János Nagyváthy, considered the present moment in 1790 as the beginning of a future utopia for Hungarians. Imagining himself as an observer in the year 1900 and looking back on history, he saw how freedom had begun first with the English, then the Americans, followed by the French, and finally the “noble-hearted” Hungarians. There were those who were determined to bring the example of the American Revolution to Hungary sooner than Nagyváthy envisioned.

Radical elements within Hungarian society were labelled “Jacobin” at the time for their inspiration by the French Jacobin faction of anti-royalists. This group, however, also took considerable inspiration from the Americans. Among
them was the legal theorist József Hajnóczy, whose pamphlets urged liberal civic and juridical reform in the Hungarian lands. His ties to American revolutionary thought stretched back earlier than his political writings. During the War of American Independence, Hajnóczy had received a commission from the Hungarian magnate Ferenc Széchényi to assemble a library for his county seat. Today it forms the core of the Hungarian National Library and contains some of the rarest Americana from this period, which means that Hajnóczy took an avid interest in obtaining American works. Hajnóczy also utilised his employer’s assembled materials for his own personal systematic study. His fascination with American political principals continued up to the French Revolution, when he supplied material and articles to the periodical Hadi és Más Nevezetes Történetek (Military and other notable stories), which had looked favourably on the new American republic throughout the 1780s. Hajnóczy supplied the editors with his personal copy of the French translation of Thomas Paine’s The Rights of Man for reprinting in 1791. Reflecting his legal background, Hajnóczy also published his own works extolling the wisdom and virtue of the American laws. In one, he recommended introducing a Hungarian version of the Virginia statute for religious freedom. “There is no doubt,” he declared, “that this law, breathing with humanity, could take root here just the same as there.”

Hajnóczy’s admiration for American laws and his desire to implement them in Hungary brought him into contact with the future “Jacobin” circles. Central to this group was Ignác Martinovics, who, while less intellectual than Hajnóczy, was just as passionate about the American example. Historians generally identify Martinovics as the first embodiment of the Age of Revolutions in the Habsburg Monarchy, without realising his proper motivations or his alleged “conspiracy” movement. Descended from a Habsburg-Serbian family, Martinovics taught natural sciences at the University of Lemberg (Lviv) where he was admitted as a Freemason in the “Honest Man” lodge. He became engrossed in masonic mythology and helped propagate the proliferation of lodges across Hungary in the 1780s. Martinovics led a double life, however. He had been recruited by the court intelligence service in Vienna to infiltrate and report on the masonic movement. In 1792, Martinovics filed a report with the director of court intelligence, alleging a list of names of the Viennese Illuminati who swore oaths to defend “in writing, in speech and with arms the current situation of France and America against all despots.” In other reports, he warned of a growing “French-American fever” in the Habsburg lands.

Although Martinovics worked as an informer for the Habsburg court, he remained loyal to revolutionary ideas, explicitly referring to the United States
as the “immortal American Republic” and ranking foreign rulers against Washington or Paine. In one of his most incendiary pamphlets, Martinovics encouraged aristocrats to introduce changes “in the Pennsylvanian way,” and lauded the results of the American constitution. “I adore the Philadelphia Convention,” he stated openly. The boldness of his prose had alienated Martinovics from the court and cost him his position as an informer, but it did not matter much. In 1794, he began actively recruiting members for his own societies, modelled after the Jacobin clubs in France. He named Hajnóczy as one of four directors and co-authored pamphlets calling for the overthrow of monarchism. According to the radicals, sovereignty rested entirely within the people, who were responsible to exercise it themselves, and not the monarchy. Habsburg authorities might have tolerated allusions to American constitutionalism and the defence of rights but emulating the seditious extremism of the French Jacobins triggered a crackdown. Faced with arrest and certain death, Martinovics surrendered himself and betrayed his accomplices who were subsequently located and arrested. In May 1795, he and six others—including Hajnóczy—were publicly executed in Buda.
The execution of the Hungarian Jacobins marked a point when the American Revolution could no longer serve as an open ambition. Works by the most prominent American revolutionaries that had been permitted during the 1770s and 1780s now entered censorship lists for the first time. Franklin’s novel *The Speech of Polly Baker* from 1747 received a retroactive ban in 1794, followed by a French translation of his autobiography.\(^{75}\) Books published as late as 1827 on American themes showed evidence of censorship.\(^{76}\) Following the executions, the Bishop of Agram (Zagreb) Miska Verhovacz, a councillor named Jakob Szecsenacz, and the jurist Paul Lukács were all arrested for their ownership of texts by Thomas Paine or for publishing works related to Franklin.\(^{77}\) The poet, Mihály Vitéz Csokonai, expressed his despair at the changing freedom in 1795. In a letter to a friend following his expulsion from the Reformed College of Debrecen on account of his liberal ideas, he wrote:

> I, an exile in my own country, carry on my days in boredom. I am happy only when I can find a New World for myself, and build there a Republic, a Philadelphia. At least there, like Franklin, I can snatch lightning from heaven and the sceptres from tyrants.\(^{78}\)

The conservatism of the 1790s and 1800s could not completely eradicate the legacy of the American Revolution in the Habsburg Monarchy, however. “I still hold to the great American sage, Franklin,” Csokonai admitted privately to a liberal friend in 1803.\(^{79}\) And adherents of American ideals discovered new ways of conveying its ideas. Berzeviczy, who had narrowly avoided the fate of Hainóczy and Martinovics, focused instead on the economic power of the United States and frequently used it as validation for his free-trade plans for the Hungarian lands.\(^{80}\) Praise of American military figures such as George Washington became the new focal point as he embodied the more positive virtue and patriotic good of the Revolution. When Hungarian-Americans later chose to erect a monument to a prominent American in Budapest, they chose Washington who best represented “the embodiment of both American ideals, and of the ideal of Hungarians on both sides of the Atlantic.”\(^{81}\) Franklin, who throughout this period was the paragon of the Revolution, underwent a sanitised retelling during the early years of the post-Napoleonic order. A biographical account by Ferenc Szilágyi, published in Transylvania in 1818, presented Franklin first and foremost as a scientist and publicist who happened to play some role in the Revolution’s course.\(^{82}\) For a generation of later Hungarian nationalists and revolutionaries such as Count István Széchenyi and Lajos Kossuth, Franklin represented only
a moral figure through his writings and sayings. His revolutionary activity no longer mattered in the way it once had.

Residents in the Habsburg Monarchy never lost sight of the American Revolution. Its flame smouldered but was not extinguished. The dilution of the explosiveness of the first revolutionary experience in Central Europe during the early nineteenth century ultimately gave way to a period of greater unrest. In the revolutions of 1848–1849, the United States again became a symbol of a utopia created out of courageous adherence to righteous, unalienable principles. Kossuth, the new “Washington of Hungary,” solicited American support by nurturing a Hungarian martyrology in which the Emperor Francis Joseph I became George III and the Hungarians were either the Puritans seeking freedom and liberty or republicans in search of their independence. In Habsburg Lombardy, protagonists agitating for reform and Italian nationalists aiming for independence both drew inspiration from the American example. They aimed to break the lucrative state monopolies in order to gain political leverage. The tobacco boycott, begun on New Year’s Day in 1848, allowed an easy parallel to the infamous Boston Tea Party. “Franklin’s fellow citizens abstained from tea; as of today you ought to refuse tobacco,” ran the refrain. For moderates like Carlo Cattaneo, who initially resisted Italian unification in favour of greater autonomy for Lombardy within the Habsburg system, American federal government served a possible blueprint for the future. Like many Milanese publicists and jurists, Cattaneo interpreted the American Revolution as a useful justification for federalisation and as a balm against the more fervent calls for secession and unification with the Italian peninsula. Cattaneo and his companions were not alone in finding an American model. In 1849 and in 1906, two separate plans would have reformulated the Habsburg Monarchy towards a federalised American structure. From the immediate post-Napoleonic aftermath known as the Vormärz to the twilight decades of Habsburg rule in Central Europe, the American political example and its republican style of government continually beckoned.

The American experiment shone gradually brighter as the antithesis to the old regime in Europe. At his nadir after successive defeats by Napoleon, Emperor Francis reportedly said that he should emigrate to America to atone for his political failings. If true, the emperor was implying that the United States was a suitable punishment for his inability to defend the principles of monarchy and his imperial power. Many of his subjects were inclined to disagree. Travellers and migrants from the Habsburg Monarchy in the United States recognised it as a land entirely different to their own. Some, like Joseph Donath, began to question...
their former homeland. People there, in his estimation, were “deprived of civil liberty” and “vassals” who required “the flame of liberty” to spread among them. Writing from Philadelphia in his “happy hemisphere,” he looked upon the scene of Europe and Francis’s coronation in July 1792 with great haughtiness. “What animal is the emperor?” Donath asked his friend in Prague before concluding that the emperor was, “in plain English, a butcher of men.” Being in America confirmed or awoke such bias in Habsburg migrants looking back on their land of origin. Maria von Born, daughter of the celebrated Transylvanian mineralogist Ignaz von Born, spent twenty years in the United States. She returned to Vienna in 1815 and disapproved of its poor education system, its lack of public welfare, and the insufficient intelligence of its inhabitants. “How has Vienna fallen behind,” she exclaimed, “because young America is growing up fast!”

The lure of America as a promised land, a free land, became increasingly stronger throughout the nineteenth century. The Austrian poet Nicholas Lenau characterised his emigration to the United States as a journey “towards freedom.” István Széchenyi extolled America as “the country where the Rights of Mankind are most equal and where the constitution is best.” He desired most of all to travel to the United States in the 1830s but like many compatriots, he faced discouragement and prevention from Viennese authorities who distrusted the influence of the American republic in an era after the French Revolution. The Austrian Chancellor Prince Klemens von Metternich thought Széchenyi bizarre for wanting to visit America and viewed his travel plans with suspicion. In his personal diary, Széchenyi decried such derision. “By heaven, there are people who do not understand that some want to visit a free country!” Though Metternich and his colleagues could dissuade Széchenyi from his American travels, subsequent generations of Habsburg minsters could not prevent the ever-rising tide of movement between the Habsburg lands and the United States. Széchenyi’s oldest son, Béla Széchenyi, realised his father’s dream by touring the northern United States during the American Civil War and publishing an instructive account of his journey in Hungarian, which extolled the marvels of American progress. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the trickle of migration turned into a flood. By the outbreak of World War I in 1914, nearly four million Habsburg subjects had crossed the Atlantic for a new life in the nation forged by the American Revolution. Few were aware, however, that tens of thousands of them migrated along the Adriatic-Atlantic route first established during the selfsame revolutionary period.

Like them, we too may have lost sight of the Habsburg moment in the American Revolution, but simply because it is forgotten does not reduce its
importance. If we are to understand the Age of Revolutions, we must appreciate the areas where revolutionary sentiments smouldered for longer rather than erupted on short fuses. The American Revolution exerted a profound influence on the eighteenth-century Habsburg Monarchy. Lives were shaped by its war, fortunes were made in its shadow, and policies altered in its wake. The Revolution was a difficult opportunity, a challenge of adaptation for the Habsburgs as much as it was an invitation to emulate the Atlantic powers of Europe. The American Revolution and its influence in the Habsburg lands did not come out of nowhere, but rather through a sustained and intensive interest by people made curious by the events and rhetoric from across the ocean. The impulse to chase economic gains cemented the Monarchy’s interests further into the Atlantic, but this imperial outreach was short-lived. The Habsburg exigency of securing new relations with a sovereign United States faltered at the hands of Thomas Jefferson, who, unlike some of his contemporaries, viewed the monarchy with a critical eye. Nevertheless, in the later decades of the eighteenth century, the embers of revolutionary zeal smouldered on to flare up on distinct occasions throughout the Monarchy’s existence. Infused with the radicalism of the French revolutionary movement, the original American imprint within the Habsburg mentality could no longer continue unchallenged. The once revolutionary pull, which had animated so many individuals across the Habsburg lands during the 1770s and 1780s, succumbed to the ideological pressure of the 1790s and emergence of a new reactionary conservatism at the dawn of a new century.

When young Benjamin Silas Arthur Schuster came of age during this period, his world was fundamentally different from the one of his parents. In theirs, the American example shone like a beacon, and they were unafraid to declare openly their enthusiasm for its cause, bold enough to name their “petit Américain” after its illustrious leaders and daring enough to inform Franklin of their prayers for him and his fellow revolutionaries. In place of their world was a new regime, tighter and more reactionary to the revolutionary murmurings such actions could divulge. It was a stark cry from the Habsburg Monarchy of the 1770s and 1780s which harboured interested enthusiasts such as the Schusters and where even the rulers themselves read the latest thoughts of American leaders. We may never know whether Benjamin S. A. Schuster lived on with pride in his name, becoming a “grand Américain,” or whether he chose to conceal it, shunning his godfathers in absentia. But we do know the reality of an expansive revolutionary movement which affected greatly the inhabitants of the Habsburg lands and, for a time, compelled many of them towards a more open, oceanic, and expansive interaction with the world. Though the Habsburg moment in the American Revolution was brief, it was intense and influential.