

H.T. Dickinson, ed. *Britain and the American Revolution*. London & New York: Longman, 1998. Pp. xii, 284. Paper, \$29.40; ISBN 0-582-31839-4.

The summer of 2000 saw yet another movie reduce the American Revolution to a clichéd battle between virtuous Patriots and wicked Englishmen. As a Briton who teaches early American history, I have always approached the subject of the Revolution dressed in combat gear of my own. I carefully elaborate on the complexities of the imperial crisis and war, while my students listen politely, even sympathetically. They then tell me in their exams how “we” beat the evil Brits who were oppressing “our” freedoms. Sigh. It was with anticipation, then, that I opened this volume.

As the title implies, this collection of nine essays examines the American Revolution from the other side of the Atlantic. The contributions fall into three main subject areas: British attitudes (meaning, for the most part, the attitudes of the British government) toward American affairs during the imperial crisis; the institutional causes of Britain’s conduct and loss of the war; and the impact of the American Revolution on Britain. Most of the authors are British historians based in British universities, among them such giants of eighteenth-century political history as Frank O’Gorman and John Cannon.

The collection contains much that is not new, particularly for Americanists. Its strength, however, lies in its overall point of view. By systematically discussing the imperial crisis and war from a British perspective, the authors provide a more coherent discussion of the personalities and circumstances that shaped British policy than is usually the case when the subject is examined through the lens of American history. A good example is John Derry’s essay, “Government Policy and the American Crisis,” which strikes many familiar themes in its discussion of the befuddlement and miscommunication that afflicted the Anglo-American relationship after 1763. It does so, however, in a systematic fashion, making the British government’s perspective, and consequently its actions, comprehensible for students. Cannon’s essay on the impact of the American Revolution makes a good case for it having affected Britain very little at all, and is helpful for explaining to classes why the Revolution does not loom large in the British popular consciousness.

Several essays do offer refreshing new insights. The most provocative, and the most useful for early Americanists, is James Bradley’s, on the reactions of the British people to the American crisis, in which he suggests that the British public was divided over the American question, and that there might have been a greater level of public sympathy for the colonial cause than is usually assumed. While speculative, Bradley’s piece will challenge students’ monolithic conceptions of British attitudes toward the war. O’Gorman’s discussion of Parliamentary opposition to the government’s American policy hews to a traditional assumption of public support for imperial strategy, but in doing so he demonstrates the untenable position in which the colonies’ supporters in Parliament found themselves trapped between their desire to heal the

breach in the empire and the powerful opinions on both sides of the Atlantic. Stephen Conway challenges conventional wisdom about Britain's loss, taking a position that resonates with similar discussions of Vietnam: He charges that it was a failure of political will, not strategy or resources, that compelled an end to the conflict.

This slim volume contains much that could be culled for lectures in courses on Britain, the American Revolution, and the Atlantic World, as well as the U.S. survey. Its theme also makes it appealing for assignment to upper-division students, but here Americanists, especially, need to proceed carefully. The essays operate within a separate historiographical universe, in which high politics remains the principal focus of inquiry. It might not cohere well in a course emphasizing the newer American historiography that grounds the Revolution in culture and social history. Secondly, at nearly \$30, this otherwise modest paperback is no cheap buy.

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David Leviatin, ed. *How the Other Half Lives*, by Jacob A. Riis. Boston & New York: Bedford Books of St. Martin's Press, 1996. Pp. xiii, 274. Paper, \$10.95; ISBN 0-312-11700-0.

In one fell swoop, Jacob Riis's *How the Other Half Lives* introduces readers to almost all of the critical themes they will need to confront to understand the Progressive Era. Riis's evocative and disturbing language and his stark photographs grab the reader's attention and demand interrogation. With little prodding, students ask: What was city life really like in the late nineteenth century? How did immigrants react to the conditions they faced? How could Riis be "racist" and also a reformer? Did city, state, and federal governments do too much or too little? Were men and women treated differently? What about children? Do we treat new immigrants or the impoverished "better" today? Why or why not? Because of this sort of reaction, many textbooks contain excerpts from Riis's text. Now, due to the superb editing of David Leviatin and his inclusion of newly available reprints of Riis's photographs, instructors might want to assign the entire book. This edition, accompanied by Leviatin's comprehensive introduction, questions for consideration, and short bibliography, clearly meets the stated goals of the Bedford Series in History and Culture to offer readers "first hand experience of the challenge—and fun of discovering, recreating, and interpreting the past."

For instructors who want their students to both "learn" and "do" history, David Leviatin offers a well-conceived road map. In engaging prose, he first profiles the various editions of *How the Other Half Lives* and then quickly draws the reader into the history of photojournalism by reconstructing Riis's excitement upon discovering "the flash ... the weapon he needed in his 'battle with the slum.'" From there Leviatin offers