

sophical emphases of other books and articles. Larkin reconstructs the significance of Paine's editorship of the *Pennsylvania Magazine* as a touchstone for the idea of an inclusive American public. Elucidating Paine's critique of the circumscribed American public sphere, Larkin addresses Paine's penchant for ad hominem attacks through an explication of the Silas Deane Affair and the excoriating "Letter to George Washington." Paine's "Letter to the Abbé Raynal" is treated convincingly as both literary criticism and the surprise fruition of Paine's scheme to publish a history of the American Revolution. Larkin is wide-ranging in his reading and analysis; he weaves his argument from most of Paine's major works and a delightful number of lesser-known pieces. This is a complete treatment of Paine that deftly handles the career of a revolutionary author from its nascence through the vicissitudes of partisan history.

My only reservation about Larkin's text comes in my favorite chapter, "The Science of Revolution." I am grateful to Larkin for being one of the first scholars to point out the deep significance of science as a mode of thinking and of figural representation in Paine's writing. Larkin is correct to focus on the abundance of evidence for his thesis in *The Rights of Man* and *The Age of Reason*, but his account leads one to believe that Paine "got science" only during his iron bridge escapades of the 1780s. In fact, Paine first developed an interest in politics as a result of the popular Newtonianism he imbibed in London prior to arriving in America. Paine's first letter from America, written to Benjamin Franklin in London in early 1775, is one example among many. In the letter Paine neglected political matters in favor of an analysis of the quality of air and the causes of disease aboard sailing vessels, as well as a self-conscious commentary on a scientific dialogue between Franklin and Joseph Priestley. Larkin's argument in this chapter would have been even more convincing if he had incorporated scientific material from the ample storehouse in earlier works such as *Common Sense* and *The American Crisis* papers. This is surely a minor point of contention given the broad scope of Larkin's book. In sum, *Thomas Paine and the Literature of Revolution* is a stellar contribution to our understanding of Paine's career as a master craftsman of words.

Northwestern University

BEN PONDER

*British Supporters of the American Revolution, 1775–1783: The Role of the "Middling-level" Activists.* By SHELDON S. COHEN. (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2004. xvi, 181 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$75.)

At the outbreak of the American Revolution, individuals throughout the British Empire were faced with an important, and often complicated, decision: what side would they take in that conflict and how would they act on that stance.

Inspired by work such as Alfred Young's study of George Robert Twelve Hewes, Cohen profiles five middling British men who chose to overtly support the American cause during the war. In doing so he pays a long-overdue debt to his subjects: William Hodgson, a merchant; Thomas Wren, a Presbyterian minister; Reuben Harvey, an Irish, Quaker merchant; Robert Heath, an evangelical deacon and silversmith; and Griffith Williams, a Welsh apothecary.

One thread connecting these men is the fact that they all gave assistance to American sailors and soldiers imprisoned in Hampshire's Forton Gaol, Ireland's French Prison, and Devon's Mill Gaol during the war. In this regard, the book builds on Cohen's earlier work. However Cohen has chosen to examine these men not for the similarities in their actions, but in order to demonstrate that significant British support for the American Revolution came from the middle class and that not all of it came from London. This support proved invaluable. In the eyes of the British government, those held in prisons were colonial rebels, not American citizens, and thus until 1782 were treated as treasonous subjects rather than as prisoners of war. The imprisoned Americans, and those concerned about them, depended upon the efforts of Britons as intermediaries with the government, outspoken critics of the prisons' deplorable conditions, and friends who delivered money, supplies, and spiritual comfort.

The focus on individuals is fruitful. Particularly nuanced and engaging is the multileveled essay on Reuben Harvey. Cohen describes his political views, religious community, and economic standing to help the reader understand Harvey's motivations for publicly advocating the American cause. He details the specific nature of the Quaker's humanitarian aid during the war. Finally, he examines how the Revolution fed into Harvey's idealistic views of government. This adroit and even-handed treatment characterizes the other essays as well. Most admirably, while Cohen is notably careful in his use of sources and does not overstate his findings, he manages to demonstrate that even the more mysterious aspects of these men's lives merit consideration. For instance, while he provides much information about Hodgson's liberal tendencies and his efforts toward initiating prisoner exchange, he admits that we may never fully understand Hodgson's reasons for assisting the Americans or the post-Revolution disappointment that led to his suicide in 1784. And while he demonstrates that religious faith clearly moved both Heath and Wren to action, Cohen also reveals that Heath, who was viewed as a father figure by the rowdy prisoners he visited, never openly advocated the Revolution.

The end result easily satisfies Cohen's goals. Admittedly, the format of the slim book is somewhat problematic; readers are introduced to persons, places, and events multiple times. (Including, tantalizingly, the nefarious American-born Thomas Digges who initially provided aid to the prisoners and then squandered funds raised for their support. Were he not such a misfit for the book's purposes, he might merit his own essay.) However this is an appealing and deeply human

effort that expands our understanding of the complicated ways in which the American Revolution touched the lives of individuals throughout the British world.

*Rutgers University*

LESLEY DOIG

*A Portrait of Elizabeth Willing Powel, 1743–1830.* By DAVID W. MAXEY. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2006. xii, 91 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$24.)

In the zeitgeist of early American memory, Elizabeth Willing Powel is recalled for moments she shared with two of the nation's founding fathers. First, she stood at the front of the crowd facing the Constitutional Convention delegates as they left Independence Hall on the last day of the convention and—after asking Benjamin Franklin what the fate of the nation's government would be—garnered the reply “You have a republic, if you can keep it.” And she wrote George Washington the famous 1792 letter rebuking him for thinking of retiring from the presidency, guilting the first chief executive into agreeing to a second term. Both stories appear and reappear in popular histories and textbooks. Most often, they still seem to hold a smirking “women-say-the-darnedest-thing” tone. Thus, this well-written, thoroughly researched, beautifully produced volume on Elizabeth Willing Powel's life is especially welcome.

Willing Powel was one of the most famous women in colonial and early national Philadelphia. Known for her intelligence, wit, style, and occasionally sharp tongue, she played hostess to the country's founding fathers and mothers, presided over a home that has survived as one of the most impressive architectural treasures of the late colonial period, and, as David W. Maxey has revealed, sat for a series of portraits that offer revealing clues into the life of one woman, and indeed the lives of many women, in that critical era.

Maxey takes an intriguing approach to his book on Willing Powel. A woman who was so famous in her own day perhaps shows the fleeting nature of the spoken word and brilliant conversation: while many contemporaries—including Thomas Jefferson, Abigail Adams, the Marquis of Chastellux, George and Martha Washington—wrote about her, she left no revealing diary like Elizabeth Sandwith Drinker or Hannah Callender. The lack of a paper trail on her life connects to one of the ironies of her legacy. The house that she occupied from just after her marriage in 1769 until her widowhood in the 1790s was the first successful preservation in Philadelphia's Society Hill section. The realities of her life and thoughts have often been obscured by the interpretation of that house, just as that interpretation has led to some recollections of her. Maxey has built upon this story to unpack a complicated life as reflected in both surviving docu-