

Government by Dissent: Protest, Resistance, and Radical Democratic Thought in the Early American Republic. By ROBERT W. T. MARTIN. (New York: New York University Press, 2013. 272 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$49.)

If the old cliché that history is written by the winners is true, then it should be no surprise that a legacy of dissent should become buried after two centuries. In this impressive account of dissent in the early American republic, Robert W. T. Martin resurrects the ideas of those in early America who opposed the majority and fought the status quo. Dissent, for these objectors, was not merely disagreement; it was a central component of the democratic process. Martin aims to restore a lost understanding of “dissentient democracy,” a “democracy that values dissent as an essential core element” (2). This is not an argument for mere toleration of dissent; dissentient democracy embraces dissent itself as essential to the legitimacy of government.

Martin’s book is strongest in his discussion of the democratic clubs that sprang up in opposition to the policies of the Washington administration. These radical democrats not only opposed what they saw as the dangerous political trajectory of the country but also consistently argued that their opposition was both legitimate in itself and essential to the legitimacy of the government. Martin finds in these clubs a precursor to the concept of a public sphere later articulated by Jürgen Habermas; this idea, he suggests, “is the first working out of the balance between deference and dissent appropriate to a popular, representative government” (90). This public sphere would allow the political discussion among ordinary voters to continue between elections.

At times Martin overstates his case. The “regulators” in Pennsylvania and Massachusetts become philosophers of liberalism rather than mere objectors to what they saw as oppressive regulation, and the Anti-Federalists champions of dissent as a principle rather than mere opponents of ratification. James Madison becomes a consistent democrat, privileging opposition, rather than a more reluctant democrat who worried about the potential of the masses, especially when they could become organized. These assessments are not false, but they are exaggerated. This does not, however, obscure the central argument of the book. Neither the regulators nor the opponents to ratification developed a clear theory of dissent. Both, however, along with Madison, contributed to such a theory, which developed over time. Martin works hard to not only revive this theory but also to articulate it clearly.

Some of the later thinkers Martin discusses, on the other hand, did develop fuller theories of dissent. He discusses about half a dozen largely forgotten writers who made philosophical arguments for dissentient democracy; each of these sections is a fascinating essay in itself, and each writer is worth revisiting.

In the introduction, Martin situates his argument in opposition to the literature on deliberative democracy. Deliberative democrats, he suggests, are fixated

on consensus to the extent that dissent is at best inconvenient, and at worst inimical, to their understanding of the legitimate democratic process. This theme does not persist throughout the book, but the idea of democracy offered by Martin is certainly distinct from, and in some respects superior to, the deliberative model.

Although Martin does not go far in developing an understanding of dissentient democracy for the contemporary world, this book is a good beginning and well worth reading for anyone who wants to see more in democracy than simple majority rule.

Texas State University

MICHAEL J. FABER

Citizens in a Strange Land. A Study of German-American Broadsides and Their Meaning for Germans in North America, 1730–1830. By HERMANN WELLENREUTHER. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2013. 384 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index, \$94.95.)

Herman Wellenreuther and his research team have produced an interesting new book on broadsides, defined as sheets “*printed on a single sheet on either one or both sides irrespective of its contents*” (3). Most were printed in Philadelphia and the larger towns of the southeastern counties of Pennsylvania, where many German immigrants in Pennsylvania settled.

In chapter 1, readers gain an interesting perspective into the printing business in Pennsylvania, where 215, or 75 percent, of the German printing presses in North America were located. Wellenreuther covers who the main printers were, how their work was carried on by apprentices, and in what sorts of printing they specialized. Chapter 2 delves into the demand side for broadsides and the probable circumstances of their use. A common use of broadsides was the advertisement of real estate—land, houses, and farm animals and implements—usually following the death of a farm owner. Notably, such broadsides would not only describe the property but would also list the neighbors by surname, suggesting that these were notices intended for a relatively internal market of German speakers. Love poems, house blessings, heavenly letters (*Himmelsbriefe*), ads for medicines, descriptions of medical treatments, religious stories and songs, religious events (especially baptisms), ballads or stories reflecting political and current events, advice for farmers, and reflections on the twilight of life were also consumed via broadside.

Chapter 3 helps readers understand several of the changes organized religious groups underwent in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania. Many groups were defining why their particular denomination was different; their parishioners were trying