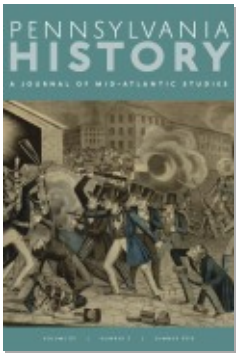
Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic ed. by Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, Andrew Shankman, David J. Silverman (review)



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Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, Andrew Shankman, and David J. Silverman, editors. *Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015). Pp. 309. Notes, index. Cloth, $55.00.

Readers familiar with Matt Groening's cartoon collection *School Is Hell* (1987) will recall "Lesson 19: The 9 Types of College Teachers." Among them was "The Single-Theory-to-Explain-Everything Maniac," whose answer to any question was "The nation that controls magnesium controls the universe!!!" I think of that cartoon whenever I read about an idea that has caught fire in academic circles. Historians of early America are as susceptible to the allure of the big idea as anyone. Since I have been in graduate school, we have cycled through town studies, republicanism, the middle ground, the Atlantic world, and now the continental approach. Anglicization is another such big idea, one that owes its origins to John Murrin, who during several decades of teaching at Princeton University mentored the students who have gathered in this volume to write about his big idea.

Simply put, the Anglicization thesis argues that as the North American colonies developed, they became more rather than less like Britain in their cultural values and political institutions. This process also made them more like each other, so much so that by 1775 they were capable of overcoming their manifold regional, ethnic, and religious differences to unite in opposition against the very nation they had emulated so well. After the United States won its independence, this process continued in the new nation as its founding generation imitated British constitutional and economic models. Like many other big ideas, the appeal of Anglicization rests in part on its counterintuitive simplicity: before they could become American, the colonists had to become British. The essays in this volume are organized into three chronological sections—Empire, Revolution, and Republic—that update and elaborate on that premise.

As Murrin first conceived it, Anglicization offered an appealing way of explaining the American Revolution without having to see it as a product of the colonial experience. The thesis rejects arguments that see colonization as a process of Americanization, a slow but steady moving away from European origins toward new American values and institutions (think, for example, of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis or Perry Miller's errand into the wilderness). Several of the essays in this volume elaborate on that theme in ways specific to particular colonies, ideas, or institutions. William Howard Carter examines how Cadwallader

Colden's *History of the Five Indian Nations* (1727) reflected an effort to Anglicize New York's Indian relations under a new British imperial regime. Geoffrey Plank addresses the Anglicization of colonial American warfare, and Nancy L. Rhoden uncovers the British roots of that most "American" of colonial values, religious toleration. Other essays use Anglicization as the jumping-off point for measuring how and when colonial ideas and institutions became Americanized. Jeremy A. Stern analyzes Election Day sermons in Massachusetts to trace the rise of a compact theory of government in that colony during the years before the Revolution. In their essays, Denver Brunsman and Anthony M. Joseph address the post-Revolutionary "de-Anglicization" (206) of the American naval establishment and tax system, respectively.

Of course, much has changed in the way historians study early America since Murrin first wrote about Anglicization in his 1966 dissertation, and his thesis would appear to have less relevance to the field's current focus on race and gender relations and on borderland regions where Native peoples encountered non-British colonizers. In this regard, two essays in this volume make game attempts to update Anglicization in a way that moves beyond the Anglo-centric societies of the Atlantic seaboard. Simon Newman finds the roots of the Caribbean's system of plantation slavery in English efforts to control the lives and labor of the poor and vagrant during the seventeenth century. David J. Silverman describes how a racist ideology emerged in post-Revolutionary America that became as powerfully binding among the nation's white citizens as the emulation of the British had been among their forbearers. None of the contributors specifically addresses sexuality and gender relations, although both topics are fertile fields for applying the Anglicization thesis, and readers interested in doing so might start by reading Murrin's "'Things Fearful to Name': Bestiality in Early America," which appeared in *Pennsylvania History* in 1998.

In sum, the essays in this volume make a convincing case for the continued relevance of the Anglicization thesis. It retains its explanatory power especially in our study of the provincial era, the period between 1689 and 1763, when the colonies had moved beyond the struggles and uncertainty of their early years to become stable, prosperous societies on the periphery of Britain's empire. As these essays show, Anglicization can also help explain the origins of ideas and institutions often described as uniquely American. How well it can help us incorporate non-British borderlands into the wider narrative of early American history remains to be seen.

Back to Matt Groening: readers of *School Is Hell* might also recall the warning attached to Professor Single-Theory-to-Explain-Everything: "Theory may be correct." Anglicization may not explain everything about early America, but after fifty years of currency, it has certainly proved its worth. That staying power is testimony to Murrin's insight and his ability to make sense of the big picture. This volume serves as a fitting tribute to the originality of his work and as an excellent introduction to it for the next generation of historians.

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Ken Miller. *Dangerous Guests: Enemy Captives and Revolutionary Communities during the War for Independence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014). Pp. 260. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth, $35.00.

Ken Miller's *Dangerous Guests: Enemy Captives and Revolutionary Communities during the War for Independence* provides a case study of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, during the American Revolution and investigates how an ethnically diverse town faced the wartime pressures of hosting British and German prisoners of war and in turn emerged with a united American identity. Utilizing local archives, military and political records, and engaging with a growing historiography in frontier Pennsylvania and prisoners of war during the War for American Independence, Miller contributes to our understanding of the conflict in the American interior and in the everyday lives of the revolutionaries. An associate professor of history at Washington College, Miller argues that while residents of Lancaster tended to local security and oversaw the detention of hundreds of prisoners, their position as a crossroads, both ethnically and spatially, resulted in a mixture and exchange of differing cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives that transcended their communal attachments. Lancaster's German, Scots-Irish, and English populations became invested in a larger, communal struggle, and residents increasingly identified with distant friends and allies in a shared sense of patriotism and as Americans.

Presenting his argument in a topical approach, Miller does well in establishing the assorted peoples and cultures making up Lancaster in order to demonstrate their changing identities during the conflict.