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colored by a notion of original sin largely lacking in post-Romantic authors. Yet, by and large, these objections are little more than quibbles in relation to a work that—like Michelangelo's statue—embodies a beautiful, compelling, and memorable figure, destined to endure.

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HARVEY J. KAYE. *Thomas Paine and the Promise of America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2005. Pp. 326. \$25.00.

EDWARD LARKIN. *Thomas Paine and the Literature on Revolution*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. x, 205. \$65.00.

Thomas Paine has, by and large, been at least somewhat better served by historians than by his contemporaries. Nearly guillotined in France for supporting exile rather than death for Louis XVI, excoriated on his return to the United States for his deist religious opinions, he nonetheless enjoys the near-unique status of having been a central figure in both the American and French Revolutions, and of plebeian origins to boot. The existing secondary literature on Paine is now mostly dated, though there is a relatively recent larger biography (John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* [1995]) and one somewhat shorter (Jack Fruchtman, Jr., *Thomas Paine: Apostle of Freedom* [1994]), to which should be added Fruchtman's study of Paine's religious ideas, *Thomas Paine and the Religion of Nature* (1993). Yet Paine has often been under fire from conservatives for supporting parliamentary reform in Britain and revolution in France, and rarely gets anything like a balanced handling in such treatments. Nearly a century after Moncure Daniel Conway's four-volume edition of Paine's writings, and more than half a century since Philip Foner's edition thereof, there remains no remotely satisfactory scholarly edition of his work. One can but hope that the upcoming bicentenary of his death will instill sufficient enthusiasm to rectify this.

Harvey J. Kaye's study is an openly engaged attempt to relocate a seemingly marginalized figure within mainstream American political thought, indeed to claim, somewhat disingenuously, that Americans have been "radicals at heart" (p. 4) since 1776, and that the conservative reading of Paine is consequently wrong-headed. Kaye offers a survey of the impact of *Common Sense* (1776) on colonial sentiment, of Paine's subsequent *The American Crisis* (1776–1783), which aided morale greatly during the revolutionary wars, and of his return to Britain. He touches only tangentially on the subsequent controversy with Edmund Burke, however, entirely ignores the now large literature on Paine's impact in Britain in the 1790s, and has no interest in Paine's period of residence in France during the revolution. Despite the book's title, there is very little hard analysis of what Paine actually meant by his attempt, notably in *Rights of Man* (1791–1792), to interpret the American Revolution to French revolutionaries and

British radicals, and why this might have been an ill-conceived enterprise given the vastly different circumstances in which European reforms were being sought. Whether or how Paine's ideas actually evolved and altered through this period we are not told. (Indeed there is no real effort to reinterpret any of the major texts in any detail.) By page 89 we are back in the United States, and the bulk of Kaye's study is essentially a reception-history of responses to Paine's ideas in nineteenth and twentieth-century America that provides a good summary of the mostly anecdotal, unanalytical existing literature. Thomas Jefferson and his followers, of course, were friendly to Paine. Subsequent generations of republicans and freethinkers kept his memory alive, despite the deist taint, later transformed into the accusation of atheism, with birthday celebrations and constant invocations (rather than serious study) of the sacred texts. Gradually, however, interpretations of Paine began to grow apart, until conservatives hostile to "big government" could claim his inheritance, too. Just why this might be an illegitimate interpretation, however, we do not learn.

Edward Larkin has recently given us an extremely useful—indeed, now much the most useful—new edition of *Common Sense* (Broadview Editions, 2004). His study of Paine is also chiefly concerned with Paine's American readership, and in particular the impact of his forceful, direct, pungent literary style, so often commented on by contemporaries. For crucial to this style was the assumption that politics, and political theory, could be understood by the common man and woman if demystification rather than smoke and mirrors governed political discourse. Just what it was about Paine's prose that was so compelling, even irresistible, to readers, is one of Larkin's main concerns. He offers a careful account, in particular, of Paine's early journalism in Pennsylvania, of the reception of *Common Sense*, and of Paine's *Letter Addressed to Abbe Raynal* (1783), but skates relatively quickly over *Rights of Man* (pp. 106–111), Paine's most important work. Particular attention is given to Paine's use of scientific and technical metaphors. There is no attempt to position Paine within any type of intellectual history as such, however, and the one linkage of Paine to a major previous source (James Burgh's *Political Disquisitions* [1774]; p. 128) ignores very substantial differences between both writers, particularly when set in conjunction with a discussion of Paine's "faith in the influence of commerce" (p. 131), which was certainly not shared by Burgh. There is a useful account of the *The Age of Reason* (1794), however, and a brief (pp. 149–177) account of Paine's reputation in nineteenth-century America, concentrating on the obituaries and early biographies. The assertion that George Chalmers's early government-commissioned biography had little impact may be disputed, but by and large this is a solid and illuminating study which assists our understanding of Paine's achievements.

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