The picture that emerges is one of a dedicated public servant who managed to avoid the mendacity that political life so often encourages. In addition, Laine manages to pack a great deal of information into a compact text of 240 pages. If there is a problem with this book, it is that Laine is a bit too admiring of his subject. Granted, it is the rare biographer who is hostile to whoever he or she is writing about. The two most obvious examples that come to mind are Eric Eyck and A. J. P. Taylor in their respective treatments of Otto von Bismarck. Nevertheless, with the possible exception of Specter's support for Clarence Thomas's nomination to the Supreme Court, Laine consistently presents his subject as being ever correct and always on the right side of things.

This problem, however, is minor when compared with the contribution Laine makes. It is no exaggeration to say that this book is a pioneering work. Whether you agree with Laine's analysis or not, he has begun the process of assessing Specter and his influence on American politics and will be required reading for anyone interested in the subject. Laine is to be commended for what he has done and for giving that process an excellent start.

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Robert G. Parkinson. *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2021. Pp. 256. Illustrations, notes, guide to further reading, index. Paper, $20.00.

Robert G. Parkinson describes his sophomore effort as "sort of" an abridgment of his influential 2016 monograph *The Common Cause: Creating Race and Nation in the American Revolution* (vii). Indeed, *Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence* offers students a concise, readable entry into the main arguments and takeaways from Parkinson's 700-page debut. However, by reconsidering *The Common Cause*'s themes in a new chronology, Parkinson also makes a fresh contribution to the field. Homing in on the fifteen months between the "shot heard 'round the

world" and the signing of the Declaration of Independence, this book shows that, yes, ideas united the North American British colonies at that critical juncture. But those ideas, Parkinson argues, were not enlightened notions of liberty and republicanism but instead were about the exclusion of Indigenous and Black people. In the wake of the fighting at Lexington and Concord, patriot leaders used newspapers to propagate stories of British alliances with enslaved people and Native Americans to unite colonists and "hammer home the idea that the British were treacherous and dangerous enemies" (2).

A key premise of *Thirteen Clocks* is that nothing was particularly foreordained about intercolonial unity in the years and months leading up to the Declaration of Independence. The divisions that cut through the colonies were numerous. No camaraderie existed between easterners and backcountry localists, Quakers and the descendants of Puritans, "Regulators" and elites, enslavers and a growing but "largely inconsequential" cadre of antislavery dissidents, and, of course, patriots and the persistent bloc of colonists who supported the crown (52). Where historians have identified economic and cultural continuities across British North America in recent decades, Parkinson carefully demonstrates that the *perception* of difference among colonists remained present and powerful.[1] The author does not deny that patriot leaders had some success papering over these divisions with appeals to heady Enlightenment values. But those sorts of arguments—which held purchase in the 1760s and early 1770s—rang hollow when the gun smoke settled after the Lexington and Concord. Fearful stories of British-fomented slave rebellions and Native American raiders, Parkinson explains, represented a site of consensus for colonists and helped sever dearly held feelings of British national identity.

Parkinson sets out to show that these racist, exclusionary ideas did not just float organically through the colonies, but instead were the product of an intentional, carefully calculated patriot messaging campaign. A great service of this book is showing students and specialists exactly how that operation worked. Parkinson has mastered the confusing, intersected world of colonial newspapers, which included four competing titles all named *Virginia Gazette* and no fewer than eight different Pennsylvania organs. Parkinson provides an engaging tour of the colonial newspaper lifecycle from layout to printing to the critical "exchange system" through which patriot messaging was syndicated (28). The patriots became experts at selectively reprinting consensus-building materials and sometimes passing outright falsehoods

as sober news reporting through that exchange. Access to intercolonial information, experience, and drama through the exchange system shrunk the world for North American colonists and helped foster a communal identity. The specific information and drama that met the moment, patriot leaders deduced, revolved around fears that Britain would mobilize enslaved people and Native Americans for war.

The Second Continental Congress, crafting messaging to keep the public up to date, focused on Black people and Native Americans as "proxies" of the British (123). The reader is struck that many of the "conspiracies" they propagated were not exactly conspiracies. As Parkinson shows, British military officials and political leaders did see Native Americans and enslaved people as part of a coalition that could defeat the rebellion. While British officials who plotted the role these proxies could play in war did indeed "unite the American colonies," Parkinson asserts that real credit belongs to patriot leaders who proactively collected, amplified, politicized, and disseminated these stories to justify colonial unity and, eventually, revolution (99). This campaign, over the course of fifteen months, shaped American independence and the document that declared it. The Declaration's charges against the king, which Parkinson says "started slowly and gained emotional speed," culminated in an accusation that he had incited "merciless savages," "domestic insurrections," and "foreign mercenaries" (155). These groups were, according to that document and the statesmen who framed it, just as inimical to the new American national community as the king himself.

Thirteen Clocks concludes with a look at the legacy of patriot propaganda. Parkinson draws a line from the stories patriots told to the limits of northern state abolition. For example, critics of Pennsylvania's 1780 gradual abolition law invoked the king's proxies, as did New Jerseyans who defeated a Quaker push for abolition during the war. In sum, Parkinson argues, "the proxy stories foreclosed alternatives after the war was over" (178). This is perhaps an overstatement. A countervailing legacy emerged from the same revolution, one that does not fit into Parkinson's account. African American activists and their allies, in the Revolution's wake, used tools like citizenship and nationalism—fundamentally exclusionary in *Thirteen Clocks*—to stake a claim to freedom in the new United States. They faced long odds at every turn, to be sure. But the early abolition movement's embrace of the Revolution's legacy shows that while fear of British proxies may have created a moment of consensus in those liminal fifteen months, it did not last. Still, *Thirteen Clocks* proves with

verve and clarity that understanding patriot leaders as the wartime political operators that they were—rather than the ageless universalist philosophers our national myths have made them—sheds light on why the Revolution unfolded and how it set the stage for a troubled new nation.

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NOTE

1. For arguments emphasizing the colonies' common ground, Parkinson identifies Jon Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution before 1776* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000); T. H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).