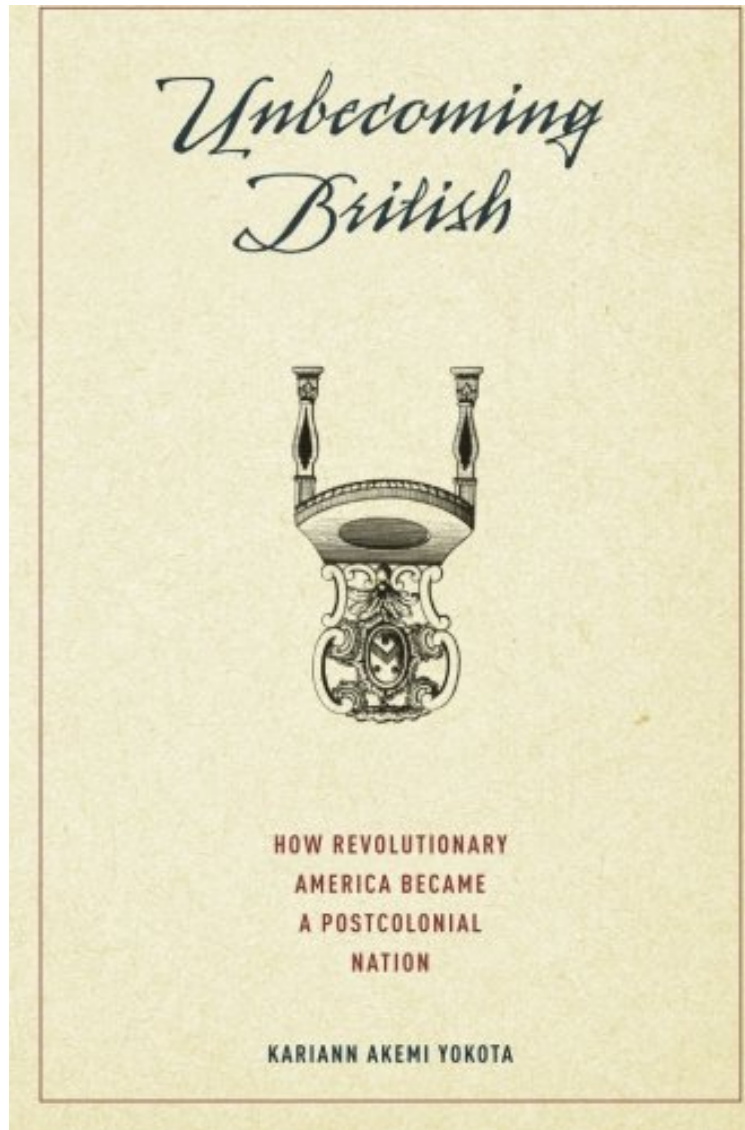


(Read ebook) Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation

Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation

Kariann Akemi Yokota

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Kariann Akemi Yokota : Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. ... of the cultural (and particularly material cultural) relationship between great Britain in America in the early post-ColoniaBy AnonymousAn astute examination of the cultural (and

particularly material cultural) relationship between Great Britain in America in the early post-Colonial era. While Yokota's findings are illuminating, they are also rather predictable. The topic might have been better served had it been broadened in chronological and contextual scope, to explore the ways in which American culture developed in relation to British culture through American nationalism and in cultural contexts beyond the materializations of tea and china. I very much enjoyed that aspect but a broader exploration of art, literature, fashion, etc could have richly strengthened the narrative argument that Yokota makes.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. **The Awkwardness of Independence** By Frank Bellizzi

The title of this book exploits the different possible meanings of "unbecoming." The word can be a gerund, suggesting a process by which, in this case, a group becomes something other than what it was or might have been. In this sense, during the years following the Revolutionary War, Americans were unbecoming British. But the word can also be an adjective suggesting impropriety. Although Americans were able to politically separate themselves from Great Britain, they were awkward and uneasy. They were, to use the word as an adjective, unbecoming British when it came to their quest for cultural respectability and economic standing. In Chapter One, Yokota points out that during the period in question, map-making and the publication of geography textbooks for Americans highlighted the tensions between dependence on, versus independence from, Europe and especially Great Britain. Americans might have been standing tall. But they were doing so along the undeveloped margin of civilization. Chapter Two reveals how it was more feasible for Americans to exploit the value of the impressive natural resources they controlled than it was for them to build factories that could produce fine manufactures. Consequently, in exchange for the bounties of their new homeland, Americans imported consumer items from Great Britain. Although the colonists had won the war, residents of the vanquished empire got a revenge of sorts when they produced and sold to Americans coveted consumer goods. In Chapter Three, Yokota tells the sometimes-funny story of trade with China initiated by America in 1784. She explains that in those early years Great Britain far outpaced and overshadowed America. Not until after the War of 1812 did the U.S. gain real momentum in international trade. In Chapter Four, the author expands on her main idea by pointing out the differences between European and American scientists and missionaries. Regarding the latter, Yokota anticipates her next chapter by showing how American missionaries to native peoples failed in their outreach partly because they wanted to maintain a cultural distance that would ensure their shaky identity. Chapter Five explains how, in relation to Indians and people of African descent, Americans of European descent claimed whiteness as the one object of refinement they did not have to purchase from abroad. In a conclusion, titled "The Long Goodbye," Yokota brings together the main ideas of her book and ends with a flourish. The outstanding feature of the entire book is that Yokota intelligently reads not only texts, but also objects like portraits, cartoons, buildings, and items made of porcelain. This is a brilliant piece of work.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. **A master-piece about how we shaped our culture** By Anders Gronstedt

This is a fascinating and entertaining must-read for anyone interested in American revolutionary history. Yokota revises the official version of the clean break with Great Britain. For all the independence fervor, Yokota argues that America remained culturally and commercially in the British backwater for decades. America imported products and art from Great Britain and any serious craftsman or doctor went to Europe for training and study. This dependence on the old mother country sparked an Anglophobic anxiety that can be evidenced to this day. The chapter about Chinese trade is not just insightful, but at times laugh-out-funny. One of the first things Americans did after winning independence was to send trade ships to China, because the British didn't allow them to trade with China during the colonial years. Yokota tells the fascinating tales of how American traders at Canton were mistaken for British, they all spoke English, had the same names, and they even smell the same! (As a Swedish immigrant to the U.S. I found myself nodding in agreement, the notion of being lumped together with Norwegians as a "Scandinavian" or, worse, with Italians and Germans as a "European" was a shocking experience, we don't realize how much we are the same until we view ourselves from an outside perspective.) This surely put a dent on the view of the American exceptionalism. Yokota even traces the white supremacism in America to the prevailing British attitudes. The entire book draws on fascinating non-textual sources, including porcelain, architecture, maps, consumer goods, cartoons and paintings to show the link between American and British culture and mindset. I would highly recommend this book to anyone interested in how we shaped our American culture.

What can homespun cloth, stuffed birds, quince jelly, and ginseng reveal about the formation of early American national identity? In this wide-ranging and bold new interpretation of American history and its Founding Fathers, Kariann Akemi Yokota shows that political independence from Britain fueled anxieties among the Americans about their cultural inferiority and continuing dependence on the mother country. Caught between their desire to emulate the mother country and an awareness that they lived an ocean away on the periphery of the known world, they went to great lengths to convince themselves and others of their refinement. Taking a transnational approach to American history, Yokota examines a wealth of evidence from geography, the decorative arts, intellectual history, science, and technology to underscore that the process of "unbecoming British" was not an easy one. Indeed, the new nation struggled to define itself economically, politically, and culturally in what could be called America's postcolonial period. Out of this confusion of hope and exploitation, insecurity and vision, a uniquely American identity emerged.

"Novel and engaging...It emphasizes the ambivalent relationship of Americans toward Britain and their continued dependence upon Britain. Unbecoming British is written without jargon, making it very suitable both for class adoption and interested lay readers."--Andrew Jackson O'Shaughnessy, American Historical "Yokota's far-reaching reconsideration of the raw materials Americans proffered global markets, including the knowledge economy, offers a fresh perspective that should alter the questions authors in her wake ask about transatlantic resonance and implications of objects in their own fields of vision."--Marla R. Miller, William and Mary Quarterly"Unbecoming British is an excellent addition to the important research on collective American identity. In this interdisciplinary transatlantic study, Kariann Akemi Yokota carefully examines how Americans transformed from a colonial British identity to an independent American identity."--Stephanie Kermes, Journal of American History"In her extensively researched and well-written book that will inspire, inform, and even entertain scholars across disciplines, Yokota breaks new ground by applying perspectives derived from postcolonial thought. Highly recommended."--CHOICE"An important and sensitive study of the efforts of postcolonial Americans in the decades immediately following independence to become a cultivated and respectable nation. Kariann Yokota imaginatively uses maps, geographies, botanical studies, British consumer goods, and other particulars to document the arduous struggles of a people who so recently thought of themselves as British to become truly independent. It's an extraordinary work of cultural history."--Gordon S. Wood, author of Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815"This entrancing meditation on post-Revolutionary America's pursuit of cultural independence examines the perplexities of cutting loose from the nation that for two centuries had set the standards of civilization for the colonies. Unbecoming British traces this struggle through published geographies, imports of genteel goods, the China trade, natural history and medicine, and the creation of racial identity. There is no more far-reaching or penetrating survey of post-colonial American nationalism than this."--Richard Bushman, author of The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities"Convincing, thought-provoking, and tremendously original, Unbecoming British captures exquisitely the ambivalence of the post-revolutionary United States. An exquisite book-a landmark work that defines an area of inquiry, and even a cultural formation, that was right under our noses if only we had noticed. It does what the best works of cultural history do best: suddenly so many episodes, persons, artifacts, and expressions seem more interesting, and comprehensible."--David Waldstreicher, Temple University"Remarkably learned across disciplines and continents, this boldly argued study lets us see the post-revolutionary United States anew. Struggling to make and have things the world would not ridicule, and seeking to purchase civilization even during moments of nationalist fervor, the Founding Fathers shopped for approval in China, Scotland, France, Germany, and, with considerable pathos, in London. Yokota delivers brilliantly on the promises of transnational history."--David Roediger, author of How Race Survived U.S. History"American identity took decades to form, and it was complicated and difficult...'Unbecoming British' shows how this process was brightly reflected in material and intellectual culture, rather than the traditional markers of American pride such as the flag, the veneration of George Washington and the Fourth of July."--Joseph Coohill, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette"Envisaging the history of the early American republic in terms of the problems faced by other societies emerging from imperial domination is a project that fulfills the current imperative to refute claims to American 'exceptionalism.' The new America can be shown to have been beset by the travails of an emerging postcolonial society as many others were later to be. Yet, as the rich material presented by Yokota and the probing questions that she raises abundantly demonstrate, the American case does not fit easily into such a mold."--P.J. Marshall, Common Knowledge"This epic research project is a massive overview of the cultural history of the New World, the United States. Beginning with the Enlightenment and moving through post-colonial America, Yokota brings all aspects of the infant country into play--everything from the tobacco exports to the porcelain imports has a role in this drama...A book that will appeal to students of ethnology, history, Americana, politics, and cultural studies."--Andrea Huehnerhoff, San Francisco Book "Unbecoming British offers an ambitious and interdisciplinary history of identity formation in the United States between the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812...Unbecoming British contributes significantly to the ongoing project of breaking down any belief that the nature of identity in the United States after the Revolution was monolithic, static, or inevitable...An invaluable resource to scholars of both British and American history, as well as a model of interdisciplinary scholarship of interest to scholars throughout the humanities and allied fields."--Julia A. Sienkewicz, Common-place"Kariann A. Yokota has written a first book of remarkable portent. Precociously well crafted, this study of commodity consumption among the patriotic elite in the early republic subverts professional North Americanist historiography through a stunningly simple yet major premise...In its own way, this work does revolutionary scholarly service, threatening to overturn the established 'First World' constitution of North American historiography."--Harvey R. Neptune, Journal of the Early RepublicAbout the AuthorKariann Akemi Yokota is Associate Professor of History at University of Colorado Denver.