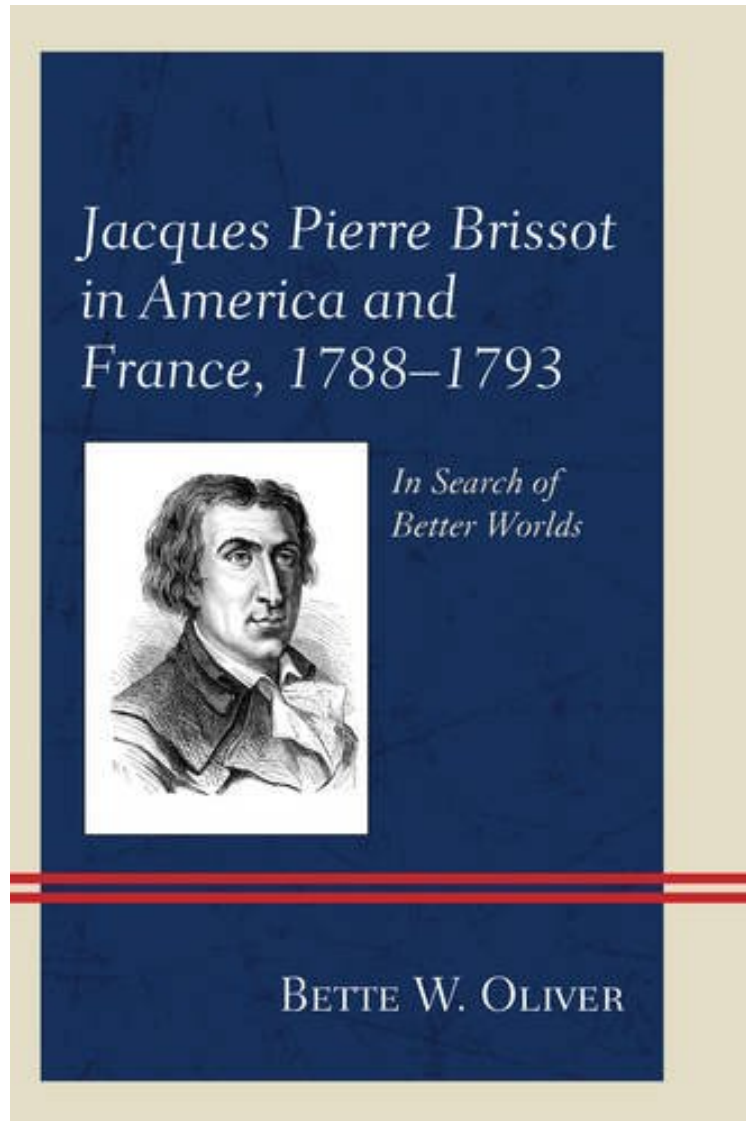


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## Jacques Pierre Brissot in America and France, 1788-1793: In Search of Better Worlds

*Bette W. Oliver*

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**Bette W. Oliver : Jacques Pierre Brissot in America and France, 1788-1793: In Search of Better Worlds** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jacques Pierre Brissot in America and France, 1788-1793: In Search of Better Worlds:

This book examines a decisive five-year period in the life of Jacques Pierre Brissot, one of the influential leaders of the French Revolution. An idealistic, somewhat naive journalist who became a member of the national assembly, Brissot championed the new American republic as an example for the French revolutionary government to follow. This book is not intended to serve as a biography of the Girondin leader, but rather to present an examination of his life between 1788, when he visited the United States, and 1793, when he was executed. As such, the narrative necessarily focuses on the events of the revolution as the ever-present background to Brissot's thoughts and actions. Both as a journalist and as a legislator, Brissot was consumed by the tumultuous events of the period under review. The book is based primarily on the publications, correspondence, and memoirs of Brissot, as well as materials from the Bibliotheque Nationale, the Archives Nationales, and relevant secondary sources. It also includes comparisons between Brissot's observations of America in 1788, published in 1791 as "Nouveau Voyage dans les Etats-Unis de l'Amerique Septentrionale, 1788," and those of his countryman Alexis de Tocqueville in his widely read "Democracy in America," which described his visit in 1831 and was published in 1835.

The life of Jacques Pierre Brissot deserves to be much better known. As leader of the French Revolutionary group the Girondins, he played a central role in the early years of the Revolution, above all in the fatal decision for France to go to war in 1792. That war dragged on for twenty-three years, far outlasting Brissot himself, who perished in the Revolutionary Terror in 1793. In this engaging and sympathetic study, Oliver focuses on the key years of his lifetime he spent in America and his subsequent role as a leader of the French Revolution. Oliver portrays Brissot as an idealistic man, out of his depth in the labyrinthine drama of revolutionary politics. Brissot appears as a tragic figure, fated to be consumed by the Revolution to which he had devoted his life. (Marisa Linton, Kingston University) This lively narrative not only provides a political biography of an important French revolutionary leader, but also explores the intellectual, political, and personal links between the French and American Revolutions. Bette W. Oliver argues that Jacques Pierre Brissot associated key democratic ideals with the United States and that these ideals shaped his career as a revolutionary journalist and politician. (William S. Cormack, University of Guelph) This timely book joins renewed interest in the Atlantic dimensions of the revolutionary period, particularly the connections between the American Revolution and the French Revolution. Bette W. Oliver provides a splendid portrait of a coterie of itinerant revolutionaries, who travelled back and forth between the old world and the North American colonies, exchanging ideas, goods, and good times, and, more generally, causing endless trouble. Oliver focuses on Jacques Pierre Brissot, a key revolutionary figure who has been relatively neglected on this side of the Atlantic and provides a glimpse into the lived experience of a revolutionary movement that, quite literally, crossed the ocean. (Ronen Steinberg, Michigan State University) This is a much-needed study that focuses on Brissot's American sojourn and its relationship to his influential political philosophy and leadership during the French Revolution. It is a careful and thoughtful analysis that should persuade scholars to re-examine Brissot's book on the new republic and place it deservedly on par with Crèvecoeur and a number of other French commentators. (Thomas C. Sosnowski, Kent State University) About the Author Bette W. Oliver is an independent scholar with a PhD in modern European history from the University of Texas at Austin.