

government "simply ignored"). Nor does the editor use the introduction to argue that Victorian England was a turning point in world history.

The appended bibliography, described in the Foreword as "extensive," actually consists of 27 titles, the most recent of which was published in 1993, the oldest in 1900, with most between 1921 and 1979—at that, most are surveys and textbooks that are far from current.

We are told nothing about the editor beyond her name, and even that appears only on the title page and among the Library of Congress information, but not on the cover or binding. She is, however, a professional editor of a wide variety of reading collections, mostly of literature, and the author of two biographies for juvenile audiences; she is not a historian, and it shows. Long before I put this book down, I questioned the wisdom of its publication; nothing afterwards changed my mind.

California State University, San Bernardino

Robert Blackey

Moira Donald & Tim Rees, eds., *Reinterpreting Revolution in Twentieth-Century Europe*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001. Pp. vi, 242. Cloth \$69.95; ISBN 0-312-23622-0. Paper, \$21.95; ISBN 0-312-23623-9.

Understanding the recent past is often much harder for historians than seeing the far past clearly. One of the many strengths of this collection of essays is the new perspectives it opens on 1989 as well as 1789. The editors, both British academics, sought contributors who could furnish sociological as well as historical perspective on the history of revolution as a concept, and apply those views both to specific events and to the concept of revolution in general. They have succeeded admirably in putting together a book that will enrich teachers at all levels and provide a fascinating challenge to skillful post-secondary students assigned to read in it.

Eight of the nine contributors teach in British universities, and all have at least two published books on the topics they address. An opening essay by the editors sets the stage with some key definitions and questions, and a closing bravura piece appraises the legacy of revolution as idea and event.

The heart of the book is the essays discussing Russia and Germany. Essays on Russia examine the historical significance of the 1905 revolution, compare 1917 and 1991, and explore the revolutionary nature of Stalin's "Great Turn." All three mingle concept and concrete event with supple skill. In the first, Moira Donald expands our perspective by focusing on revolutionary periods as well as single revolutionary events. In the second, Edward Acton imaginatively compares the two eras, examining Kornilov's putsch, for instance, in light of the August 1991 attempt to kidnap Gorbachev. Catherine Merridale's essay on Stalin asks and answers where so-called revolutions from above fit into the revolutionary spectrum.

A look at Nazi Germany by Jeremy Noakes opens the focus on Germany, subtly dissecting the Nazis' rise to power on the basis of a crisis and—shades of Orwell's *1984*—maintaining power by maintaining a state of permanent crisis.

The two articles examining the most recent events in Europe, focusing primarily on Germany, explore a variety of similar elements, but reach different conclusions. Jonathan Osmond argues that 1989–90 was a revolutionary situation because popular discontent felled governments and fueled the following changes. Richard Sakwa looks at events with a more skeptical eye, suggesting that what we were seeing was, in fact, an anti-revolutionary uprising.

A quick summary of the main points of these essays, though, does not do justice to the careful, fair examination of issues that too often are seen through rigid ideological prisms. Each piece is rewarding on its own for how it enlarges the way readers view the specific events and revolution in general. Conclusions matter less than the reasoning behind them, and the insightful way authors sift through evidence and frame concepts can serve as a model for budding historians.

The concluding essay, by Krishan Kumar, pulls the main themes of the book together brilliantly. He examines the continuities and discontinuities between revolutions past and present and the divergences and convergences of revolution in the developed versus the developing world. Kumar concludes that while the revolutionary tradition we know from the Great French Revolution through the various revolutionary doctrines and uprisings of the twentieth century has certainly changed dramatically, the one thing we can count on about political dissent in the future is surprise.

Thayer Academy

Daniel Levinson

Link Hullar & Scott Nelson. *The United States: A Brief Narrative History*. Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2001. Pp. xii, 211. Paper, \$14.95; ISBN 0-88295-959-X.

The United States: A Brief Narrative History is accurately titled. In fifteen compact chapters and 177 pages, professors Hullar and Nelson have covered the essentials of American history from Leif Ericson through the presidential campaign (but not the result) of 2000. Unlike most texts written by scholars, Hullar and Nelson are not household names among professional historians. They are teachers first and scholars second. Their text is based upon "fifty years of combined teaching experience from middle school through graduate seminars in history."

As a community college teacher for 32 years, this reviewer agrees with the authors that traditional texts overwhelm the student by their sheer size. Even so-called "brief" texts often run over 1,000 pages. Therefore, a real short American history text is badly needed.