

science, or humanities requirement for general education. *The Renaissance* is written to apply easily to a variety of teaching situations and could be adopted as a supplement for advanced placement world history courses at the high school level.

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Clarice Swisher, ed. *Victorian England*. San Diego, CA: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 2000. Pp. 263. Cloth, \$24.96; ISBN 0-7377-0221-4. Paper, \$15.96; ISBN 0-7377-0220-6.

In the last 500 years, England has been headed by 23 monarchs, six of whom were women. Two of these women, Elizabeth I and Victoria, not only reigned longer than anyone else, but both lent their names to characterize an age, thus adding to the significance of what they represented. The book under review, part of a "Turning Points in World History" series, consists of excerpts from previously published works "chosen for their accessibility" and introduced by an editor who provides "a general overview of the principal events and figures involved, placing the topic in its historical context." Each selection is introduced with a concise summary of its theme and an identification of the author. A modest collection of 22 document fragments brings up the rear—one-third, curiously, from the newspaper *Observer*. But this is the least of my concerns.

Victorian England as a turning point in world history is problematic at best, lacking analytical bite. Imperialism as a theme is not the subject of any of the essays, while those addressing the Industrial Revolution and some of the key ideas of the period (e.g., those espoused by Darwin) are focused parochially on Britain alone.

The selections are short and often enjoyable to read, but because so much of what they say has been superseded and expanded upon by recent scholarship, much of the book would have been out of date decades ago. Many of the authors are, or, more often, were prominent (e.g., G.M. Trevelyan and Charles Petrie), and some are known for their contributions to literature (e.g., Margaret Drabble and J.B. Priestly), but collectively the essays do not effectively represent contemporary Victorian studies. More than half were published before 1973, and several were extracted from textbooks, other general surveys, and non-scholarly writings. Even when a selection from someone of the caliber of Asia Briggs is included, it is from a book published in 1959.

The editor's nineteen-page introduction to Victorian England consists of familiar generalizations, simple statistics, unexciting facts, and a few useful primary source quotations, but the endnotes indicate that it is based heavily on secondary works published between 1949 and 1974, and it does nothing to draw attention to the selections themselves or to the appendix documents. There are also some errors (e.g., the six demands of the Chartists became "government passed acts" before 1848 that the

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.

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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.