

selections, *European Romanticism* would be an ideal addition to secondary classrooms, but also introductory university offerings in Western Civilization or World History or second-year courses in post-1750 European history. Instructors could elect to use some, or all, of the documents, depending on the focus of the course and the amount of time available for the subject matter. With regards to classroom adoption and use, helpful in this respect are "Questions for Consideration," in the appendixes. Instructors have a ready set of in-class discussion topics or project assignment starters.

Drawbacks to this book are few. The artwork is reproduced in black and white only, and the quality isn't always the best. Still, through these learners can gain some appreciation of the author's main points here. Also, several sources might have been excerpted a bit more carefully, to produce selections of less than ten pages. But these shortcomings do not detract from the overall positive impression.

In sum, Breckman's *European Romanticism* is an excellent classroom volume on this significant topic. Readable, brief, and with a very good set of primary sources, instructors at various levels could adopt it with confidence. Strongly recommended.

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Michael Paterson. *A Brief History of Life in Victorian Britain: A Social History of Queen Victoria's Reign.* Philadelphia: Running Press, 2008. Pp. 358. Paper, \$13.95; ISBN 978-0-7624-3518-0.

Much has been written of Queen Victoria and British society during her lengthy reign. Much has been presented about the advancements made by the time of her passing in 1901. Notwithstanding the fact that some scholars might suggest that in light of the volume of narratives already composed on Victorian History no more are needed, *A Brief History* shows that there is still much to learn. Asserting that the Victorian Age has dominated the popular British imagination like no other, Michael Paterson affirms that the surfeit of stories and myths surrounding the Victorians have thus produced a misrepresentation of what life was truly like during the reign of Queen Victoria.

Composed of an introduction and eleven chapters, *A Brief History* opens with an appraisal of Queen Victoria, a lady described by Thomas Carlyle in 1837 as being so young and naive that she couldn't be trusted to select a hat, a lady who nevertheless in later years transformed herself into the symbol of her age. Although Paterson's tome does not necessarily introduce a range of groundbreaking data to enlighten the already deeply informed of Victorian Britain, as his biographical chapter on Queen Victoria demonstrates, what he does adroitly tender as the book unfolds is an exclusive standpoint from which to reconsider key individuals, events, laws, and cultural turning points. As chapter two, "The Masses," reveals, while the overcrowded cities, working of children, and the domestic servitude of young, working-class women are well-known images of Victorian life, the reality is not so clear cut. As a case in point, the stereotype

that has been formed of Victorian servants as repressed, obedient folk is, states Paterson, quite simply wrong. Drunkenness, clumsiness, petty thieving, and dallying would be more apt to describe the average domestic hand.

Moving through a range of topics that include diet, interior design, the presence and influence of religion, behavior and manners, leisure, the mass media, and Britain's relationship with the wider world, Paterson offers the thesis that the Victorians as the world's first modern urban citizens were, to put it bluntly, a rather odd lot, hence the mythology surrounding them! Reacting in many instances to the problems instigated by the industrial revolution, the Victorians thus created numerous rituals and codes, many of which were downright bizarre given our present-day mindset, from which they were able to cope with the wonders and problems that modern life manufactured.

Sadly lacking in visual representations, and at times shallow in intellectual rigor, Paterson nonetheless offers an interesting and insightful perspective to Victorians and their culture. Of possibly best usage with an introductory undergraduate program, and with a large number of short sub-sections, *A Brief History* is a text readily workable for instructors. Not stuffy in prose and cheap in price, *A Brief History* does though contain flaws. For example, in terms of exploring themes like transport or governance, much better works exist in the marketplace. Similarly to devise a detailed lecture from the book on a subject like architecture would be problematic unless it is given, as previously mentioned, to students of lesser historical knowledge. For higher-level classes the weaknesses in the book will become all too evident, but for tutorials with freshman students there is much to work from.

One might state that the adage "you get what you pay for" applies to *A Brief History*. Such an idiom though would downplay Paterson's work. While probably not likely to win an honorific award, praise should be heaped onto Michael Paterson for bringing a fresh interpretation to what is a complicated phase of British cultural history, and one all too often presented in a stuffy, highbrow manner that puts it out of reach of maturing intellectuals.

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Ariela J. Gross. *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008. Pp. 368. Cloth, \$19.95; ISBN 978-0-674-03130-2.

In recent decades, biological and social scientists have rejected the notion of distinct human races. Rather, they assert, race was a creation of human culture, crafted to help manufacture, sustain, and justify socio-political and economic hierarchies. In *What Blood Won't Tell: A History of Race on Trial*, Ariela Gross, professor of history and law, uses race trials from the antebellum period to the present as a window into how