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Asa Briggs, Patricia Clavin. *Modern Europe 1789-1989.* London and New York: Longman, 1997. 512 S. $50.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-49405-3; $90.33 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-582-49406-0.

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Politics and Pictures in Modern Europe

Modern Europe concentrates on politics, and it does an exceedingly fine job of giving a readable and enjoyable chronology. With other areas, especially social and cultural history, the text is less successful. In its attempt to include gender, it quite simply fails. The following paragraphs elucidate these general points and give examples.

The book is published as volume III of *A History of Europe*, edited by H. G. Koenigsberger and Asa Briggs. It covers the modern period, 1789 to 1991. Asa Briggs and coauthor Patricia Clavin offer a political narrative with social subplots. Eastern Europe is included, although fully, only in the twentieth century. Industrialization in the early nineteenth century is scarcely mentioned. Presumably, Koenigsberger covered British industrialization in the second volume (1500-1789). This is a drawback, surmountable of course, to using the text in a course on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe that does not follow a previous course; such courses often begin with a discussion of industrialization.

Apart from this, there is little to disagree with in the content, and much to be lauded. Briggs and Clavin present the political march of ministries and monarchs, wars and revolutions in a fine tone that is unlikely to bore any but the most recalcitrant undergraduate. They give us vivid glimpses of the makers of history. Kruschev provides the humorous side of economic development when he promises to "'produce panties for your wives in colours which cannot be seen anywhere else"' (p. 403). Such well-chosen quotes are evident throughout the text, adding to its humanity and its great readability.

Asa Briggs is a master of visual images of the social history of the nineteenth century.[1] In this text that mastery pays off. Every image brings the reader directly into the ideas and lives of historical subjects. Each time I open the book I am caught by a face or a moment. The subjects are not unusual, but the consistency with which these illustrations, mostly photographs complemented by editorial cartoons and some posters, capture human emotion has greatly impressed this reader. Although only black and white, these images–from the Crimean War to German women being "denazified"–are more real than many a fine color print I've seen in most textbooks.

All that credit given, there is much to complain about in what is left out of the text. In places, Clavin and Briggs have concentrated on politics almost to the point of ignoring culture, and they have often neglected to explore, except for a hasty glance, the social consequences of political and economic change. Ten full pages are dedicated to elucidating every battle of the Napoleonic wars, while a mere five are given to "Social Accounting: gains and losses." At the other end of the time span, while the text covers the dismantling of colonial administrations, it ignores the social consequences for the former colonizers. The whole movement of previous colonial subjects (not to mention Eastern European workers) to Western Europe is treated with a superb example of famed British understatement: "... there had been a threefold increase in the number of foreign residents in Europe, and with it a cross-fertilization of culture, customs and knowledge, if seldom without strain" (p. 447). Even labor history is sparse. After much searching, and with no help from the index, which doesn't even contain the entry "socialism," I was able to find a brief paragraph which mentioned the formation of the German Social Democratic party (p. 131). The lack of sustained social analysis is especially surprising given Briggs' Victorian expertise and his authorship of several works on the social history of England.

No textbook can do everything. This one, by choosing to stress the political, not only tends to ignore culture but is unable to connect it to society when it does come up. With the significant exception of nationalism, which receives a full and well-thought-out treatment throughout the text, all the "isms" of the 19th century are gath-

ered together into an appendage of a chapter that follows the "important" events of the century. By simply running through the names and well-known artists of "Classicism, Romanticism, Victorianism, Modernity" in Chapter 5, Briggs and Clavin make it almost impossible for the student to connect these movements to the politics and economics of the years in which they flourished. To be fair, the authors do bring up these bonds but the link is stilted and distant. The twentieth century, too, has "culture" all wrapped up in a neat little package after the events have passed. Thus T. S. Eliot's *Wasteland* (1922) comes after the brief mention of the "age of television," under a section titled "'Modern' and 'Postmodern"' (pp. 459-460).

The publisher's blurb on the back of the book claims that "the authors are alive throughout to the varied fortunes of Europe's diverse peoples and classes...not least, to the changing impact of gender..." Yet their "social accounting" of the French Revolution offers one paragraph on women which, instead of pointing out figures like Olympe de Gouges and her positively political *Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen*, resurrects Dickens and women "knitting and plotting while husbands and lovers killed" (p. 45). In describing the events of the Revolution, the authors mention women only in a sub-clause in connection to what is often known, at least by American historians, as "the Women's March to Versailles." To add insult to injury, Clavin and Briggs claim that more historical research is needed on gender and the Revolution (p. 46). They would have done well to consult the many works already available.[2] Full sections on "Women and War" can be found in the chapters on both World War I and World War II, but the changing position of women in the work force in the period from 1890 to the 1920s, so crucial to changing social norms and further economic opportunities, merits almost no mention.

Examples could be multiplied but the point has been made. The emphasis on politics and the clustering of culture separate from chronological events creates a view of history that remains centered on upper-class men and the national governments they serve. It is a shame, since Clavin and Briggs have introduced, in their anecdotes and images, a lovely feel for the way history is the history of all classes. The book ends with a section that seems to beg many of the questions of the twentieth century. In a section titled "Ten Discontinuities" Briggs and Clavin refer to differences between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries noted in the 1960s by social critics. These include major social developments including feminism, the global economy and the economic dependence of the "third" world on the "first," shifts in values and lifestyle of the working classes, the space race, and the shift of peoples from Eastern Europe and Northern Africa to Western Europe. Most of these topics now have an extensive bibliography. Rather than analyzing these important trends in the body of the text, Briggs and Clavin have chosen merely to summarize them in the conclusion. This ignores some of the best work recently done on race and gender politics and on the place of Europe in the global economy, among other areas. In this reviewer's view it was not a good choice, and certainly for students, it is a narrow choice. But perhaps it was not a surprising choice. Some historical questions simply cannot be covered (or answered) when one adheres to a view of history as politics above all else.

NOTES

[1]. *Social History of England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1983) and *Victorian Cities* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965). With others, Briggs has participated in several illustrated studies of nineteenth-century English society, including, with John Dekker and John Mair, *Marx in London. An Illustrated Guide* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1982). Briggs also edited a collection with John Saville, *Essays in Labour History* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1960).

[2]. Among others, see: Darlene Gay Levy and Harriet Branson Applewhite, "Women and Political Revolution in Paris," in Renate Bridenthal, Claudia Koonz, and Susan Stuard, eds. *Becoming Visible*, 2nd ed (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 279-308; Jane Abray, "Feminism in the French Revolution," *American Historical Review*, 80 (1975) pp. 43-62; and Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1988).

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