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Jack R. Censer and Lynn Hunt, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001. xiii + 212. Maps, illustrations, index, CD-ROM. \$19.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN 0-271-02088-1.

Review by Howard G. Brown, Binghamton University, SUNY.

Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven!

Wordsworth's famous lines about the French Revolution could easily be appropriated for the pedagogical revolution that technology is bringing to the study of history. Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt are among the leaders of this modern revolution. Over six years they assembled a team of historical and technological specialists to create a highly innovative and extremely attractive overview of the revolutionary and Napoleonic era. *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution* is both a textbook (copyright, Pennsylvania State University) and a CD-ROM (copyright, American Social History Productions, Inc.). Understanding the nature of this impressive achievement and making an assessment of its pedagogical potential is best done through a fulsome description of the main components and their content.

This package is clearly designed as the basis for a college undergraduate course. The textbook is about two hundred pages in length. Like any standard textbook these days, the page space is divided between a textual narrative, excerpts from primary documents, reproductions of images generated during the period, and a few maps. In this particular case, about forty percent of the limited space is used to survey France from the Enlightenment to the defeat of Napoleon; another forty percent of the space is devoted to documents grouped around nine topics (e.g. the Damiens affair of 1757, political clubs, contemporary Anglo-American responses); and the remaining twenty percent is used for maps, images, and eye-catching quotations. Three aspects of the content deserve special mention: the place of women in the Revolution is integrated throughout the narrative; one of the six chapters is devoted to the impact of revolution on France's Caribbean colonies; and the final chapter covers political legacies and scholarly interpretations of the Revolution. These three aspects of the content give the textbook its distinctiveness and stand-in for any single overarching interpretation. The last two aspects in particular distinguish this volume from other available textbooks covering the period. Together they round out the history of the Revolution, both spatially and temporally, and help to justify Hegel's claim that it was a "world-historical event."

However, including these two chapters in a short book also reduces the survey of the years 1789 to 1815 in France to less than fifty full pages of text. Such severe restraints mean that heads have to roll: gone are any mention of Mirabeau, Dumouriez, Barras, or Talleyrand. Gone too are the peace treaties of

Campo Formio, Amiens, and Tilsit, as well as the timing of the Assembly of Notables, the “national draft” (*levée en masse*), and the separation of church and state. Names and dates may be oppressive to undergraduates, but the work of generations of social history has also, almost inevitably, been severely squeezed, taking much needed life out of the past. The fault undoubtedly lies less with the authors and more with Penn State University Press and its perception of the marketability of a book more than two hundred pages in length. Here, one imagines, is where the CD-ROM saves us all from simple synopsis. The CD-ROM contains a wide variety of features. First, there are five interpretive overviews. These are short audio-visual lectures delivered jointly by Censer and Hunt. These overviews are interspersed among ten chapters of text. Together these constitute something of an alternative survey history of the period in about the same number of words. This survey differs from that of the textbook by being organized somewhat more thematically. For example, there are chapters on the social causes of the Revolution, women and the Revolution, and Paris and the politics of rebellion. Thus, the CD-ROM survey adds many details not included in the textbook survey, but equally it eliminates many details found only in the textbook. All the same, the overlap in content is considerable and, although much care was taken to avoid duplicating actual sentences, interpretations remain remarkably consistent. The survey text on the CD-ROM is complemented by a timeline and a short glossary of historical terms. These are essential features: the timeline in particular provides a number of paragraph-length descriptions of events, especially where these are missing from the chapters.

The CD-ROM also stores a veritable archive of 400 documents, 300 images, and 13 songs. It is obvious that a staggering amount of work went into selecting, editing, translating and presenting these materials—hence the team of two associate editors, Gregory Brown and Jeff Horn, a project manager, Jessica Finnefrock, three multimedia producers, Pennee Bender, Joshua Brown, and Roy Rosenzweig, and two dozen research assistants. Save for the items linked to the chapter on political legacies and historical interpretations, all of the documents date from the period. They also all come from published sources but have been chosen to provide a wide range of contemporary perspectives. The result is an impressively rich and eclectic collection. Given the sheer number of documents, it was possible to include many old chestnuts, such as Sieyès’ “What is the Third Estate?,” Robespierre’s speech of 5 February 1794 on virtue and terror, and the Napoleonic decree creating the Continental System, while still adding scores of unusual items ranging from Turgot’s 1775 memorandum on local government to the views of a colonial planter on African slaves. Many of these are several pages long and so constitute a large corpus of text exceeding the length of the survey narrative by at least five-fold.

More interesting yet are the CD-ROM’s hundreds of images. Even those who have assembled an extensive slide collection to accompany their lectures will discover a fascinating array of rare satirical cartoons, historical prints, and revolutionary propaganda, again, all contemporary to the period. Most of the best new items come from the Museum of the French Revolution at Vizille, France. There is the “Gallic Declaration of War,” an English cartoon depicting a battery of buttocks blasting excrement at the crowned heads of Europe, a sure-fire winner with undergraduates. There is also the subtly subversive “Madame Sans-Culotte,” whose only form of activism is knitting a liberty cap, as well as a unique color print showing a session of the Directorial Council of Elders with all the deputies dressed in their absurd red togas and soft blue caps. Having the privilege of reproducing so many of these marvelous images appears to be the reason for including a tedious promotional video about the museum. (Students can and will bail out of this in a hurry.) There is more to the images than pictures, however. A somewhat clunky essay on interpreting revolutionary images, written by Philippe Bordes, is rescued by a very useful iconographic lexicon which explains the revolutionaries’ penchant for a female liberty,

fascis, pyramid, and pike (not 'pick' as written and halberd as shown). Better yet are the short slide lectures: e.g. Censer on changing images of Louis XVI and Hunt on representations of the assassination of Marat, especially David's all-too famous version. These will greatly enhance students' powers of perception when viewing the other images.

The CD-ROM also contains a passel of songs from the revolutionary period. This is a special treat. Laura Mason contributes a helpful essay on the place of songs in revolutionary political culture. Songs not only had great didactic potential during the Revolution, they can teach students a lot today. Nothing is better at showing the distance between elite culture and popular culture than comparing the ponderous hymns prepared for public festivals, such as the anniversary of the 9 Thermidor or the funeral of General Hoche, to the lively and addictive "Ça Ira" and "Carmagnole." Including the original lyrics (with English translations) brings the revolutionaries' (and anti-revolutionaries') rhetorical excesses to life. A theater full of factional rivals trying to best each other with the "Marseillaise" and the "Reveil du Peuple" was swimming in discursive blood well before the blows began. Including these songs makes such a scene more than imaginable; it makes it almost palpable.

Putting this wealth of material on a CD-ROM called for plenty of practical problem solving and many technological compromises. Naturally, some problems were solved better than others. Symbols running down the left hand margin of the narrative chapters (scroll = document; palette = picture; treble cleff = song) provide the links to the various components of the CD-ROM. These work well, often serving to introduce more than one item. It would have been helpful to add a fourth symbol to distinguish the few art historical slide lectures from the hundreds of images. This is mainly because the search tool, which is strictly text-based, cannot find them. Although it works only on words and phrases, the search tool gives the reader useful information about each appearance of a search item. Having selected an occurrence in a document, image description or song presentation, however, the reader cannot move directly to where the symbol that first introduced this item appears in the margin of the survey narrative. This could leave students bewildered about the wider historical context of the results of a particular search. Fortunately, the excellent textual presentations of each of the documents, images, and songs make it easier for students to find the appropriate chapter.

The format of the images has similar technological compromises. Clicking on a palette symbol opens a window which contains both the paragraph of text accompanying the image and the image itself. This window only occupies about half the screen area and cannot be enlarged. This means that the picture resolution remains pretty good, but it also leaves many details too small to discern. Fortunately, once again, some compensation for this has been incorporated: about a fifth of the images have an enlargement feature. Click on this and the image more than fills the center window, while sliding margin buttons allow one to navigate around the picture. This is a superb feature that permits careful study of dozens of highly elaborate prints. Students will surely spend more time exploring this part of the package than any other.

Problem solving and attendant compromises in the songs occurred prior to putting them on the CD-ROM. The music and singing is all original and, therefore, the prohibitive expense of hiring a large orchestra or chorus kept the performances to a modest ensemble. The performers, led by James Johnson, make a gallant effort to create historical authenticity, even though it is marred by poor recording quality. Nonetheless, the songs are made highly accessible through well-articulated lyrics and click-of-a-mouse translations.

Finally, the CD-ROM has some interesting features to facilitate study. The cursor can be turned into a highlighter pen, pages can have corners folded down, and students can take notes which are automatically indexed. Because all this interaction can be undone, the CD-ROM will be the perfect used textbook, clean and ready for resale at the end of the semester.

Having reviewed the various components of this complex package, it remains unclear quite how they are supposed to fit together for teaching purposes. The real mystery lies in the duplication (or lack of it) between the textbook and the CD-ROM. Both contain a survey narrative of about the same length (but organized differently and never precisely the same in content), a proportionately large number of documents, a small number of maps, and a range of images. All of the documents and images in the textbook are on the CD-ROM, but most of them are not connected to the survey chapters there. These items can only be discovered through word searches. Censer's short slide lecture on representations of Louis XVI is paralleled in the textbook by a glossy center insert on the same theme. Thus, these various features make it clear that the textbook and CD-ROM have been designed to be sold separately. (Apart from the preface, the textbook's only cross-references to the CD-ROM come when the survey narrative includes a brief quote from a document that appears on the CD-ROM.) Unfortunately, this marketing strategy has prevailed over pedagogical purpose. Most importantly, it makes both survey narratives too short. Having students read both helps to fill in missing details in one or the other, but at the cost of much repetition, and without the benefit of contrasting interpretations.

That *caveat emptor* aside, the CD-ROM of *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution* is hard to resist. Above all it is aptly named. The volume, range, and diversity of material it contains is intelligently chosen and eminently accessible, even to first-year undergraduates. Here the latest technology provides unprecedented opportunities for students to engage with the cultural artifacts of the period. It is hard to imagine any history student who would not want to spend some time using this product to explore the French Revolution. And to be fair, information on almost all of the leaders, treaties, and major events listed earlier in this review as missing from the textbook can, in fact, be found somewhere on the CD-ROM. What will not be found there, however, is a list of recommended secondary sources which, given the nature of the medium, could have been much fuller than the limited one included in the textbook.

Censer and Hunt have also gone beyond technology in making this package attractive to undergraduate instructors. The special attention paid to women, the colonial experience, and interpretive uncertainty resonate with the gender equity, multiculturalism and post-modern zeitgeist of American campuses. Whoever thinks that "the end of history" and "the end of ideology" have rendered study of the French Revolution obsolete needs to explore Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, even if just for the fun of it.

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