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The European Revolutions of 1848 and Their Connection to the United States

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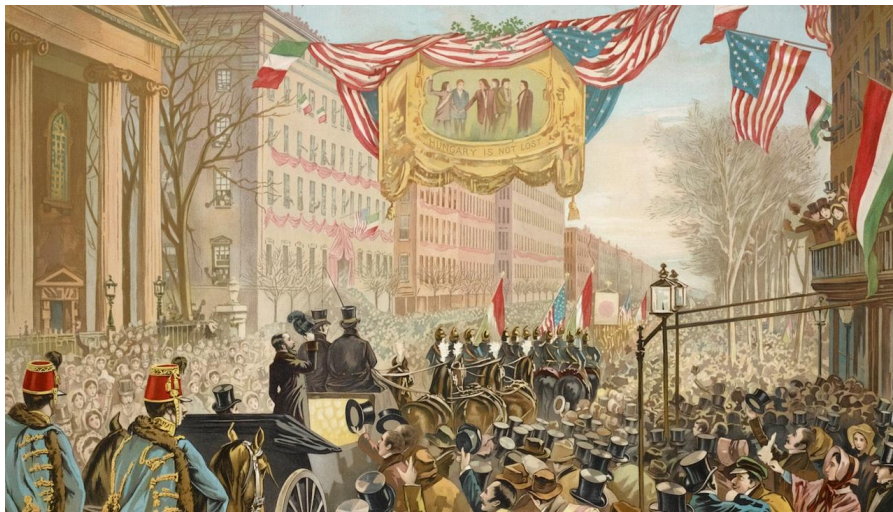
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The European Revolutions of 1848 and Their Connection to the United States:
A Historiographical and Pedagogical Analysis



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Table of Contents

I.	Synthesis Essay.....	2
II.	Synthesis Essay Bibliography.....	22
III.	Primary Documents & Headnotes.....	23
IV.	Textbook Critique.....	34
V.	New Textbook Entries.....	38

I

Synthesis Essay

While most people are aware of the famous revolutions in the history of Europe, such as the French Revolution of 1789 or the Russian Revolution of 1917, there were other political and social uprisings which occurred between these two significant events in the 19th century. These uprisings shook the continent and set the stage for other major events to occur, such as the unification of the German states into a single country by 1871. One set of these historic 19th century uprisings were the Revolutions of 1848. The Revolutions of 1848 were a series of political, economic and social upheavals which occurred in Europe in the middle of the 19th century. What made these revolutions unique was that they all occurred in the same year in several different countries and kingdoms. Unlike the French Revolution of 1789, which lasted roughly ten years, the Revolutions of 1848 were very brief. By 1851, all the revolutions which had sprung up three years earlier had ended, and most of the old governments had remained in power. The Revolutions of 1848 have been understood as an outcry from the liberal groups in Europe for reform and self-government. However, these hopes for change were quickly crushed.

When it comes to looking at the history of Europe on a broad level, the Revolutions of 1848 have mostly been regarded by historians as failures because they did not lead to any significant political or social changes. In this regard, the Revolutions of 1848 contrast to similar events, such as the Russian Revolution, which led to drastic and immediate transformations in society both in Russia and Europe. Another important detail which has only recently been discussed by historians is the connection between the Revolutions of 1848 and the United States. This essay will explain how scholars and historians have discussed what occurred during that

tumultuous year, the connection to events in America, and how scholars have approached and expanded the topic in 20th and 21st century scholarship.

Following the Napoleonic Wars of the early 19th century, a diplomatic conference known as the Congress of Vienna, hosted by Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich, was held to maintain a balance of power in Europe and prevent more revolutions from occurring. Despite Metternich's desire to prevent political and social change, the 19th century was an era of significant change in Europe nonetheless. The first Industrial Revolution had begun at the end of the 18th century, and the Napoleonic Wars had left Europe a changed continent. The Industrial Revolution, which started in Great Britain, had spread into continental Europe, as well as the United States. The Industrial Revolution led to the eventual rise of a strong middle class. These middle-class families were usually the owners of factories. The middle class challenged the social norms of the era, because in most European countries the social order consisted of the ruling nobility and the peasants and serfs working on the land. The middle class challenged the old order, as they demanded more political rights as well as a say in government policy. In addition, the use of secret police forces and the prevention of large assemblies left the people of Europe completely oppressed and living in fear.

Following Napoleon Bonaparte's defeat and abdication, the Congress of Vienna placed Louis XVIII, the younger brother of Louis XVI, on the throne of France. In the eyes of the revolutionaries, all the work which had been done to rid France of a monarchy starting in 1789 had come to nothing. For the next few years, France would go through several different monarchies, each with their own political opinions and reforms. Prior to the Revolution of 1848 in France, there had been several other political upheavals, such as the Revolution of 1830 and the Rebellion of 1832. The Revolution of 1830, otherwise known as the July Revolution, resulted

with the abdication of King Charles X, a staunch conservative who believed he was appointed by God to rule France.¹ The July Revolution ended with Louis-Philippe of Orléans becoming King. Unlike his predecessor, Louis-Philippe was more moderate, and agreed to rule by a constitution. King Louis-Philippe would become deeply unpopular with many of the people of Paris. At the time, prices for food rose, and many saw the government and the King as corrupt. In newspapers, the King was depicted as a pear:



(Figure 1), Honoré Daumier, *The Past, the Present, the Future*, 1839

King Louis-Philippe was depicted as a rounded fruit to show how he was gaining weight while in power. In the meantime, the citizens of France were suffering from growing bread prices. In addition, the King refused to allow more people to vote, angering much of Parisian society. As a result, in February 1848, students, workers, and others ran again to the barricades and government buildings, starting the revolution in France. The revolution consisted of many different social and political groups fighting for power. Many wanted France to have a system similar to Napoleon's government, while others held either more radical or conservative ideas.² At this time, liberalism was closely connected to nationalism, or love for one's country. Many

¹ Philip Mansel, *Paris Between Empires: Monarchy and Revolution, 1814-1852* (St. Martins Press), 198.

² Mike Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution* (Basic Books), 24.

revolutionaries justified the revolution as an attempt to save France. The revolution ultimately ended with the election of Louis-Napoleon, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte. In 1853, Louis-Napoléon made himself emperor and created the Second French Empire.

The revolutionary activity which occurred in France would soon spread to other parts of Europe as well. One such territory was the German States. Ever since the Napoleonic Wars, there were dreams among young liberals in the German States to create a *grossdeutschland* or “greater Germany” ruled by a parliamentary body. When revolution broke out in the German states, there was an attempt to unite them and become a single German country. The revolutionaries even offered the Prussian King, Frederick William IV, to rule as a constitutional monarch. However, the King rejected the offer and worked to prevent further revolutionary activity. During the uprising, infighting amongst the revolutionaries allowed time for King Frederick William IV to organize his troops and put down the revolutions in all the different German States. The hopes of creating a united German state ruled by a parliament - at that time - were crushed (though the dream did not die).

A similar story can be said for many of the other revolutions which occurred throughout Europe in 1848. For a while, the revolutionaries were able to gain control. However, the lack of organization among the revolutionaries resulted in the conservatives gaining the upper hand and putting down the rebellions. While some of the revolutionaries wanted democracy and wished to see an end to the era of absolutism, many were content with a constitutional monarchy like the one in Great Britain. The Revolutions of 1848 broke out because of the staunch era of conservatism, encouraged by Metternich. Since the people of Europe had become so oppressed by the monarchs, revolution had become inevitable.

Although the Revolutions of 1848 have been seen largely as a European affair, the events were connected to the United States in many different ways. For example, the beginning of the French Revolution of 1848 started on February 22nd, during a banquet to celebrate George Washington's birthday. When the German revolutionaries were drafting their new constitution, the United States sent people to offer assistance. The Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, which was held in New York, saw the beginning of the women's suffrage movement in the United States. There were strong ties between the feminist movements in France and the United States.³ In addition, people in the United States initially supported the revolts against the monarchs. On the other hand, many of the European revolutionaries looked to the United States as the primary example of a functioning democracy. One other example was that many of the German students who were forced to flee their homelands left for the United States and moved west to settle in the newly acquired territories in North America such as California during the Gold Rush. These German refugees became known as the "Forty-Eighters." One such example of a German refugee was Carl Schurz who participated in the German revolutions and later became a general during the American Civil War.⁴

The closest example of a violent revolution occurring in the United States in the 1840s is known as the Dorr Rebellion. Similar to the French Revolution of 1848, the Dorr Rebellion came out of a desire to expand voting rights in the state of Rhode Island. Beginning in the 1830s, several U.S. states were editing and rewriting their state constitutions as they had not been modified since before the American Revolution. Many of these updated state constitutions expanded voting rights for men from different social classes. Rhode Island was one of the only

³ Bonnie S. Anderson, "The Lid Comes off: International Radical Feminism and the Revolutions of 1848," *NWSA Journal* Vol. 10, no 2 (1998): 3.

⁴ Joseph Schafer, "Carl Schurz, Immigrant Statesman," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* Vol 11, no 4 (1928): 374.

states to not rewrite its constitution. As a result, many protestors wrote their own constitution called the “People’s Constitution” which did expand voting rights. In 1842, the men who supported the People’s Constitution backed their leader, Thomas Dorr, for governor in an illegitimate election. Since this was an illegal action, the authorities stepped in to stop the voting. Dorr supporters rushed to the local state arsenal to fight back but were easily stopped and captured. The rebellion was put down rather quickly and Thomas Dorr was imprisoned.⁵ The Dorr Rebellion reveals that the sentiment for allowing more people to participate in government affairs was not exclusively occurring in Europe in the 1840s. Even the United States, which was regarded as the best example of a functioning democracy and republic in the world at the time, experienced violence, although briefly, to enact political change. It is also important to note that the Dorr Rebellion, like the revolutions in Europe was also put down. Although the Dorr Rebellion was a failure, the uprising did prompt Rhode Island state officials to draft a new constitution to expand voting rights which went into effect in 1843.

When it comes to the scholarship on the Revolutions of 1848 and its connection to the United States, there is very little. Although historians have relied on the accounts of Americans living in Europe during the 1840s to paint an accurate picture, there is little discussion on how the revolutions affected change the United States. The Revolutions of 1848 themselves have not been as studied or analyzed to the extent as other revolutions, such as the French Revolution of 1789 or the Russian Revolution of 1917. The reason as to why these events have not been as thoroughly studied is possibly due to two main reasons. First, the revolutions themselves largely ended in failure; all the uprisings were put down and the monarchs returned to power. Second, the revolutions were overshadowed by other events in the 19th century. It is important to note that

⁵ Timothy M. Roberts, Daniel W. Howe, *The Revolutions in Europe: 1848-1849* (Oxford University Press), 162-163.

these revolutions were occurring at the height of the romantic era. According to John Marriot and Peter Claus, the Romantic movement was, “The fixation of nationalism and national heroes, folklore and the effort to retrieve a world that existed before the voraciousness of industrialization...”⁶ Especially in the German territories, young German students, who later built the barricades in 1848, wandered into the woods to think about ideas of nationalism and liberalism.



(Figure 2), Caspar David Friedrich, *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, Prussia, 1819.

The Revolutions of 1848 have fallen under the umbrella of the romantic movement and have been described as a desperate attempt to enact change by idealistic students who could not connect with the peasants or other working-class groups. As the historian Jonathan Sperber notes, “Historians writing along these lines apostrophize the barricade fighting born from a combination of youthful enthusiasm and romantic poetry; they evoke a revolution reaching its climax in the brief euphoria of liberation...”⁷ In addition, the 1848 revolutions may have been overlooked due to other historic events in Europe. The fact that all the revolutions did not immediately achieve their desired results, especially compared to other revolutions, makes them

⁶ Peter Claus, John Marriot, *History: Introduction to Theory, Method and Practice* (Pearson), 60.

⁷ Jonathan Sperber, *The European Revolutions: 1848-1851* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1.

appear to be failures. When studying Europe and the United States in the 19th century, historians have looked to larger social forces which were at play like the political significance of the Napoleonic Wars, the build-up to the American Civil War, or the two Industrial Revolutions. Specifically, when looking at France in the nineteenth century, arguably the most important political uprising was the Paris Commune in 1871 during the Franco-Prussian War which led to the collapse of the Second French Empire and the abdication of Napoleon III. However, had it not been for the French 1848 Revolution, the Paris Commune uprising may have ended differently, “With the revolutionaries closing in on the palace, Thiers urged the King to withdraw from the city, bring up regular troops and smash the revolution from the outside. It was a strategy Thiers would adopt later against the Paris Commune in 1871.”⁸ Throughout the 19th century, each uprising, rebellion or revolution in France impacted the next one because both the revolutionaries and conservatives learned how to respond to each other’s moves.

1848 was a significant year because the ideas of equality and liberty, which originated in France and the United States, were some of the motivating forces in the revolutions. Historians seem to look to France as the home of revolutionary activity in the 19th century and the country which triggered the rest of Europe to fall into revolution. Although this is true, the United States was also important as well. The connection between the United States and Europe in the 1840s is a relatively new one. It seems that historians have been uninterested in how events in Europe and the United States were connected in the first half of the 19th century. When discussing the history of United States in the early 19th century, there is plenty of scholarship on how the young republic struggled to maintain order, how new territories were established, the question of

⁸ Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution*, 54.

slavery, and the roots of the Civil War.⁹ On the other hand, conflicts such as the Napoleonic Wars, the Crimean War, and the Franco-Prussian War have dominated the spotlight in the history of Europe in the 19th century. Only at the end of the 20th century have historians begun to draw connections between the powers on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean when discussing 1848. This is part of a larger form of scholarship called “transnational history.” In his book *Thinking History Globally* by Diego Olstein, he defines “transnational history:” “Transnational history focuses on either phenomena (for example, processes of cultural transfer) or entities (for example, transnational organizations) that transcend national states, that is, their boundaries and their institutions.”¹⁰ Olstein is mainly referring to systems, either manmade or natural, at play like the United Nations or climate change. In this case, the “phenomena” in question were revolutionary ideas such as nationalism, liberalism and the desire for democracy which not only transcended national borders in Europe, but also traveled to and from the United States. In addition, all the violence and changes the uprisings caused in the capitals all across Europe falls under Olstein’s concept of “historical sociology.” According to Olstein, he establishes historical sociology as the gradual change, (social, political, economic) in political states over time:

Historical sociology concentrates on the study of social and political structures—such as the modes of production, empires and states—and their transformations either by a long-lasting process—such as the rise of capitalism or democratization— or by drastic changes brought by revolutions and social movements.¹¹

Most of the Revolutions of 1848 occurred in the capitals of European countries because they were the home of ruling political structures such as the monarchs. Traditionally, historians have

⁹ Gautham Rao, “The New Historiography of the Early Federal Government: Institutions, Contexts, and the Imperial State,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 77, no 1 (2020): 2.

¹⁰ Diego Olstein, *Thinking History Globally* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 16.

¹¹ Olstein, *Thinking History Globally*, 114.

focused on the cities when writing about the revolutions in Europe as if the capital experienced major political change, so would the rest of the country.

Many contemporary authors of books about the Revolutions of 1848 have referred to Priscilla Smith Robertson's *The Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* which was published in 1952.¹² Born in France to the daughter of a historian, Robertson graduated from Vassar College in 1930. Robertson was a French-American historian who studied American farmers as well as women in Europe in the 19th century. Robertson's focuses on retelling history from the perspectives of people who lived through the historical events. One of the reasons why Robertson considered history from this social perspective is because of her professional background. After graduating from Vassar College, Robertson worked as an organizer for the Southern Tenant Farmers' Association, helped to support the poor and working classes in the American south, and was an editor for the *Humanist* magazine. Her work with American farmers led her to write *Lewis Farm: A New England Saga* in 1950. In this work, Robertson writes about the Lewis family who lived in Walpole, Massachusetts since the mid-18th century, and she documents the family life experiences through the years. Robertson uses letters and other historical accounts as primary sources in order to understand and write about the family.¹³ One can infer that Robertson's work with the Southern Tenant Farmers' Association and her book on the Lewis Farm informed her popular perspective of history; her empathy and understanding of the lives of the farmers must have shaped her writing and fed her interest in depicting events in history from the point of view of non elites.

¹² Historians such as Mike Rapport, Timothy Mason Roberts and Jonathan Sperber all refer to Robertson in their own monographs.

¹³ Edith Warren, "Reviewed Work: *Lewis Farm: A New England Saga*," *The New England Quarterly, Inc.* Vol. 25, no 3 (1952): 426.

Robertson's monograph on the 1848 Revolutions is titled a "Social History" because she mainly focuses on the people living through these events in Europe and continues to explain historical events based on the people who lived through them. Explaining the Revolutions of 1848 through the eyes of the citizens of Europe makes this era feel more alive and significant, as it can be connected to other historical events and ideas later in the 19th century and beyond:

This book is called a social history because its aim is to show how men lived and felt a hundred years ago rather than to describe at length other important factors like constitutions, battles...My own purpose is to show what it was like to be a worker in Paris, or a student in Vienna, or an Italian patriot, or an aristocrat, or a king in those days. In a peculiar measure the men who were alive then had to face, in a simplified, almost laboratory form, problems which have beset their descendants during the subsequent century...¹⁴

Robertson's desire to focus on how individuals reacted and dealt with the revolutions was a modern way of recounting history. When writing *The Revolutions of 1848: A Social History*, Robertson chose to not tell the history of these uprisings through the perspectives of the monarchs of Europe, "I have not emphasized leaders. No leader was really very important in 1848..."¹⁵ Robertson makes an effort to describe how people lived before, during and after the revolutions. It is important to note that *The Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* was published in 1952. Only later did it become common in professional historical writing to consider history based on the experiences of individuals and how these experiences connected to the politics of the time. This kind of history has become known as, "new social history." As explained by George Macaulay Trevelyan in John Tosh's *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods, and New Directions*, social history was, originally in the 1940s, "defined negatively as the history of a people with the politics left out."¹⁶ This sort of social history was only expanded in the 1960s

¹⁴ Ibid, vii.

¹⁵ Ibid, vii.

¹⁶ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of History* (Routledge, 2015), 88

when former soldiers of the First World War began recounting their experiences on the battlefield. As historian Jay Winters and Antoine Prost explains: “These men were all veterans of the Great War, and not professional historians. Theirs is a history from below, as indicated in their title, *Vie et mort des français 1914-1918*. This study has its own history.”¹⁷ Tosh notes that the social history which was expanded upon in the 1960s became known as “history from below.”¹⁸ Explaining events from the people who were able to give first-person accounts provides insightful and new perspectives. The choice to provide depictions of events through the eyes of people, largely due to her previous work, shows how Robertson was ahead of her time.

Robertson’s work is considered amongst historians as one of the main sources to refer to when discussing the Revolutions of 1848 as each section is devoted to a specific region of Europe such as France, the German States, or the Austrian Empire. In his own 1994 work, *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*, historian Jonathan Sperber notes, “The oldest, Priscilla Robertson, *Revolutions of 1848: A Social History* (Princeton, 1952) is colorfully written in the explanatory tradition of the “romantic revolution...”¹⁹ Robertson takes note on how Americans living in Europe at the time of the revolutions were, “a refreshing class of their own”²⁰ because their diary entries and correspondence were most insightful in understanding what took place during that significant year. Although Robertson does rely on American primary sources, she also uses European sources as well such as memoirs from different groups of people like middle-class shopkeepers. Robertson states that many who lived through the Revolutions of 1848 kept some kind of account of their experiences.²¹ In addition, she notes how the conditions which led

¹⁷ Jay Winters, Antoine Prost, *The Great War in History: Debates and Controversies, 1914 to Present* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 18.

¹⁸ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, 89.

¹⁹ Sperber, *The European Revolutions: 1848-1851*, 289.

²⁰ Ibid, 7.

²¹ Robertson, *The Revolutions of 1848: A Social History*, 422.

Europe to rebellion were noted by Americans at the time and how the United States was a superior state because its citizens were not as desperate for reform, “With a healthy disgust, they noted that the conditions of the lower classes in European capitals were so degraded that there were none to be found like the in the United States.”²² The great irony in Americans thinking that the United States was superior to the countries in Europe is, of course, that slavery based on racial supremacy was very much alive in America. One other major source Robertson relies on is a Russian socialist and writer named Alexander Herzen. At the time, Herzen was traveling through Europe when the uprisings broke out. Robertson notes that Herzen’s accounts on the revolutions, “read as if a twentieth-century intelligence had somehow been sent back to record for us the meaning of those struggles...”²³ Her decision to record what occurred in 1848 through the eyes of people is a type of social history. Robertson’s work is considered the definitive book on the Revolutions of 1848 because many of the scholarly pieces on this topic which came after followed her example to recount history through the eyes of people who were there at the time.

Although Robertson’s book is certainly vital in understanding the Revolutions of 1848, it would take roughly half a century for more significant works to be published on this topic. As previously noted, Robertson’s work was published in 1952, at the beginning of the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States. Naturally, this conflict saw a great increase in scholarly works on Russia. The social uprisings of the mid 1800s may have begun to be forgotten during the second half of the 20th century because Russia did not have a revolution in 1848. Russia’s famous revolution occurred in 1917, many years after 1848. In the mid 19th century, Imperial Russia was one of the most oppressive regimes in Europe. Although there were some revolutionary forces in Russia at the time, no such uprising occurred purely out of fear.

²² Ibid, 7-8.

²³ Ibid, 8.

The next time the Revolutions of 1848 would be thoroughly discussed and written about would be in 1998 when Oxford University held an event to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the uprisings. At this event, a series of lectures were given on this topic. During these lectures, many ideas and concepts which Robertson discussed were also covered. However, the lectures included more perspectives which were less known. For example, historian David Saunders discusses Russia in 1848 and how it successfully prevented a revolution from occurring within its own empire. In addition, historians Timothy Mason Roberts and Daniel W. Howe discuss how America was connected to the Revolutions of 1848, such as the Dorr Rebellion and how the events in Europe affected the political landscape of the United States during that decade. Later in 1998, the lectures were compiled into a single edited volume called *The Revolutions in Europe: 1848-1849*, edited by Richard J. Evans and Hartmut Pogge von Strandmann. The 150th anniversary of the 1848 revolutions in Europe was very significant when it comes to the larger historiography of the topic since its observance offered the occasion for historians to revisit the scholarship and add to it. Although there had been essays and books written on the revolutions, many were updated and corrected which reflected new discoveries and ideas which came out of the anniversary. For example, Jonathan Sperber's *The European Revolutions: 1848-1851*, which was originally published in 1994, was updated in 1998 to include corrections and new information on the subject:

As part of the relevant revisions, the bibliography has been completely rewritten and brought up to date with the latest literature, much of it appearing in conjunction with the revolutionary sesquicentennial. The account of the 1848 revolutions has been modified as well, to take into consideration the latest scholarly findings.²⁴

²⁴ Sperber, *The European Revolutions: 1848-1851*, vii.

Some of the latest “scholarly findings” Sperber mentions is the political activity which was occurring in other parts of Europe such as Scandinavia and the Low Countries.

Jonathan Sperber asserts that the events in Europe were not influenced by the United States. However, this argument would be contested by other historians. Although bringing in other regions into the story of 1848 is important, Sperber does not discuss at length how the United States factors into this event, and focuses exclusively on Europe, which is interesting because the 150th anniversary revealed more information on that connection. Sperber writes, “Public opinion in the United States was strongly supportive of the revolutionary movement...but US influence on Europe counted for little in the middle of the 19th century.”²⁵ The idea that the United States did not hold great influence in Europe somewhat contradicts what Timothy Mason Roberts and Daniel W. Howe discussed in their lecture at Oxford. Roberts and Howe notes how the United States was one of the first countries to recognize the new provisional governments which came out of the revolutions in Europe. In addition, as previously stated, the United States sent people to help the German revolutionaries draft a constitution. Also, many of the revolutionaries from all across Europe looked to the United States as an example of a working republic with a democracy.

In 2009, Timothy Mason Roberts published his own complete monograph titled, *Distant Revolutions: 1848 and the Challenge to American Exceptionalism*. In this piece, Roberts builds on the work he contributed to the 150th anniversary held at Oxford University in 1998. What makes Roberts’s work unique is that it was one of the first books which exclusively focused on the connections between the United States and Europe in 1848. Like many modern historians who study the Revolutions of 1848, Roberts relies on Robertson’s *The Revolutions of 1848: A*

²⁵ Ibid, 266.

Social History as well as similar sources such as accounts from Americans living in Europe. Roberts mentions that other historians have written about the positive reactions in the United States to the Revolutions of 1848. However, Roberts notes how some Americans were not supportive of the revolutions in Europe and how some thought that only in America was a democracy possible. One other aspect which Roberts pushes back on is that the American Civil War was not a kind of revolution like the ones in Europe in 1848. Roberts makes the argument that the European Revolutions of 1848 simply prolonged the Civil War from occurring in the United States.

The early 2000s saw the publications of many monographs which included the new ideas which were discussed during the 150th anniversary. It seems that the early 2000s saw a revived interest in the Revolutions of 1848, largely due to the recent anniversary. These books were written to appeal to a wide audience who may not have been familiar with the history of Europe in the 19th century. One example is Mike Rapport's *1848: Year of Revolution*. Rapport continues the tradition which Robertson established in 1952 by telling the story of the revolutions through the eyes of people from different social classes in Europe. Rapport begins his book by writing about Alexander Herzen's entry into Europe. Like the other monographs previously mentioned, Rapport relies on many primary sources of Americans who were living in Europe during the time of the revolutions.

Rapport's work is unique because he claims the revolutions were not as much of a failure as previously believed. Rapport's argument is that many of the goals and aspirations the revolutionaries fought for actually came true within the century. For example, the liberal German revolutionaries wanted to unify all the German states, a wish which would come true only twenty-three years later under the conservative statesman Otto von Bismarck, "...in the Crimean

War of 1854-6 – one of the fundamental aims of the ‘forty-eighters’ – Italian, German and Romanian unification – all took place within less than two decades.”²⁶ A reason why conservatives like Bismarck decided that the old regimes should accomplish these goals was to rob the revolutionaries of their goals and influence in society. One other example which Rapport provides is when the monarchs returned to power after the revolutions, some kept the liberal ideas which had been introduced by the revolutionaries such as the abolition of serfdom in the Austrian Empire.

Rapport’s final argument was that the Revolutions of 1848 were significant because they have parallels to the fall of communism in eastern Europe at the end of the 20th century. Although Rapport makes it clear that the comparison is not an exact one, there are a few similarities. One of the major similarities was that during both sets of revolutions, the ones in 1848 and the ones beginning in 1989, they were led by students. In both eras, the students rejected the absolute authority of either the monarchs or the communists. Rapport states that one of the reasons why the Revolutions of 1848 became prevalent again was the fall of communism, “The uprisings of 1989 may have rejected the communist revolutionary tradition, but in so doing they reconnected their peoples to the liberal revolutions of 1848.”²⁷ It is ironic that the communist system was all about maintaining the revolution. (the Russian Revolution of 1917) However, in maintaining the communist system, the communists themselves became the oppressors, and another revolution would need to occur to bring political change.

Another example of a monograph from the early 2000s was Philip Mansel’s *Paris Between Empires: Monarchy and Revolution, 1814-1852*, which focused on the city of Paris during the first half of the 19th century and falls under Olstein’s concept of “historical

²⁶ Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution*, 409.

²⁷ Ibid, 415.

sociology.” Although this monograph does not specifically focus on the Revolutions of 1848, Mansel studies all the other French uprisings which occurred in Paris after the Napoleonic Wars such as the July Revolution of 1830 and the June Rebellion of 1832. Mansel looks at primary sources such as correspondences and diary entries of citizens from many different social, political and economic backgrounds. Like Rapport, Mansel’s *Paris Between Empires* was written to appeal to a broad audience of readers who may have not been familiar with the history of France in the 19th century. Another similarity to Rapport is that both authors include several images such as paintings to further support their arguments. For example, King Louis XVIII was popular with the women of Paris because Napoleon Bonaparte, a figure of the French Revolution, had waged a bloody war which took the lives of many sons and husbands. Women supported the return to monarchy because they hoped the king would maintain peace.²⁸ Mansel provides a painting of King Louis XVIII being greeted by women on his return to Paris:



(Figure 3), François-Nicolas Marinet, *Return of Louis XVIII (1755-1824) to Paris, 8th July 1815, France.*

The Revolutions of 1848 were a truly significant series of uprisings which were connected to the United States in several ways. Europe erupted into revolution because the

²⁸ Mansel, *Paris Between Empires*, 12.

monarchs, influenced by Klemens von Metternich, worked to prevent any sort of political or social change from occurring. The monarchs were worried that another revolution, like the one in France in 1789, would occur in their empires. As a result, an oppressive system run by secret police forces was put in place so that the people would live in fear and not rebel. For example, according to Rapport, there was a rumor circulating in Saint Petersburg, the capital of the Russian Empire, that a secret trap door existed:

In one office... in Saint Petersburg there was a trap door: during a seemingly innocuous conversation, a perfectly innocent individual summoned before the police officials could be lured into saying a minor discretion, where upon a lever would be pulled and the victim would fall into a dungeon below to be subjected to all sorts of unspeakable horrors.²⁹

The fact that the monarchs put such an oppressive system in place resulted in people demanding rights. In addition, the forces of nationalism fueled a desire to unite the smaller kingdoms of Europe such as the German and Italian states. The desperate need for reform, the oppressive system, the rise of a new middle-class due to industrialization, and the forces of nationalism resulted in the many of the major powers of Europe erupting in revolution. In addition, the fact that the United States existed urged revolutionaries to act and fight for a similar republic or democracy. When the revolutions were in full swing, some people in the United States encouraged them and even tried to support them by recognizing the new governments and helping to draft constitutions. Despite the sudden burst of revolutionary activity, most of the revolts were put down and the old conservative system returned to dominate Europe.

Priscilla Smith Robertson's *The Revolutions of 1848, A Social History*, published in 1952, set the standard for how to approach this topic. Robertson titled her book, "A Social History" because it specifically looks at how people were reacting to all the events during that

²⁹ Rapport, *1848: Year of Revolution*, 9.

tumultuous year. Many of the other historians who wrote about the revolutions after Robertson, such as Rapport, follow her example and references her in their bibliographies. After the 150th anniversary of the Revolutions of 1848, the scholarship on these uprisings began to finally change to include more voices and perspectives. In addition, historians have found more connections between the revolutions and the United States. Timothy Mason Roberts and Daniel W. Howe contributed to the larger history of the Revolutions of 1848 by including their lecture on the United States, fittingly titled, “The United States and the Revolutions of 1848.” Not only has the scholarship evolved to include more positions from that time, but the entire idea that the Revolutions of 1848 were a complete failure has come into question. The Revolutions of 1848 have no longer been written off as failed romantic attempts to establish republics or democracies in Europe. Recent historians, like Timothy Mason Roberts and Mike Rapport, have argued that the revolutions were not as much of a failure as previously thought, as they affected the history of Europe and the United States not only for the rest of the 19th century but into the 20th century as well.

II

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III

Primary Documents & Headnotes

A letter written in 1820 to Russian Tsar Alexander I by Austrian statesman Klemens von Metternich. In the early 1800s, Metternich often wrote to the leaders of Europe since he was the overseer of the conservative order throughout the continent. This conservative order rose after the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte during the Congress of Vienna, and worked to prevent any revolution from occurring in Europe. At the time, Metternich had a lot of influence over the kings of Europe. Tsar Alexander I was considering introducing a constitution which would limit his own power. Metternich was opposed to any sort of liberal reform, as that could lead to a violent revolution, and urged the Tsar not to introduce a constitution.

Metternich, Clemens Wenzel Lothar, Richard Clemens Lothar Metternich-Winneburg, and Klinkowström Alfons. 1880. *Mémoires, Documents Et Écrits Divers Laissés Par Le Prince De Metternich : Chancelier De Cour Et D'état* 2E. éd ed. Paris: E. Plon et cie.

<https://archive.org/details/mmoiresdocume03mett/page/440/mode/2up>

[Translation from French into English by Mike Rapport]

...it is in times of crisis that they [the kings and queens of Europe] are principally called upon...to show themselves for what they are: fathers invested with all the authority which belongs to heads of families; to prove that, in dark times, they know how to be just, wise and, by that alone, strong, and that they do not abandon the peoples, whom they have the duty to govern, to the play of factions, to error and its consequences, which will fatally lead to the destruction of society.

Two Men Contemplating the Moon, by Caspar David Friedrich, depicts two young men observing the moon in a forest. The man on the right is Friedrich, while the other is his friend, August Heinrich. Friedrich was a well-known Romantic painter. The Romantic Movement was significant in triggering the European Revolutions of 1848. Students were not allowed to meet in large groups due to the Carlsbad Decrees passed in 1819. As a result, they retreated into nature to discuss its beauty, as well as political ideas without fear of being spied on or arrested.

Caspar David Friedrich, *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, Prussia, 1819.
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/438417>



The Past, the Present, and the Future (Le passé – Le present – L'Avenir), was the name of a caricature of Louis-Philippe, the King of France prior to the Revolution of 1848 in France. The cartoon was made by Honoré Daumier in 1834. The illustration was published in the political paper *La Caricature* which was shut down by the government in 1835. The three faces represent how there will never be change or reform, everything will remain the same in the future, as it has in the past and present, under King Louis-Philippe.

Honoré Daumier, *The Past, the Present, and the Future (Le passé – Le present – L'Avenir)*, Paris, 1835. <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/365043>



Les Poires (The Pears) was a cartoon of King Louis-Philippe by Charles Philippon which was extremely popular in Paris. The cartoon progressively shows how the King's head looks like a pear, an example of how unpopular he was in the build-up to the Revolution of 1848. *Les Poires* was published in *La Caricature* in 1834. Cartoons like these were banned, an example of how the liberal constitutional monarchy became more oppressive in the years leading up to the revolution.

Charles Philippon *Les Poires*, Paris, 1834. <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k3058046f/f3>



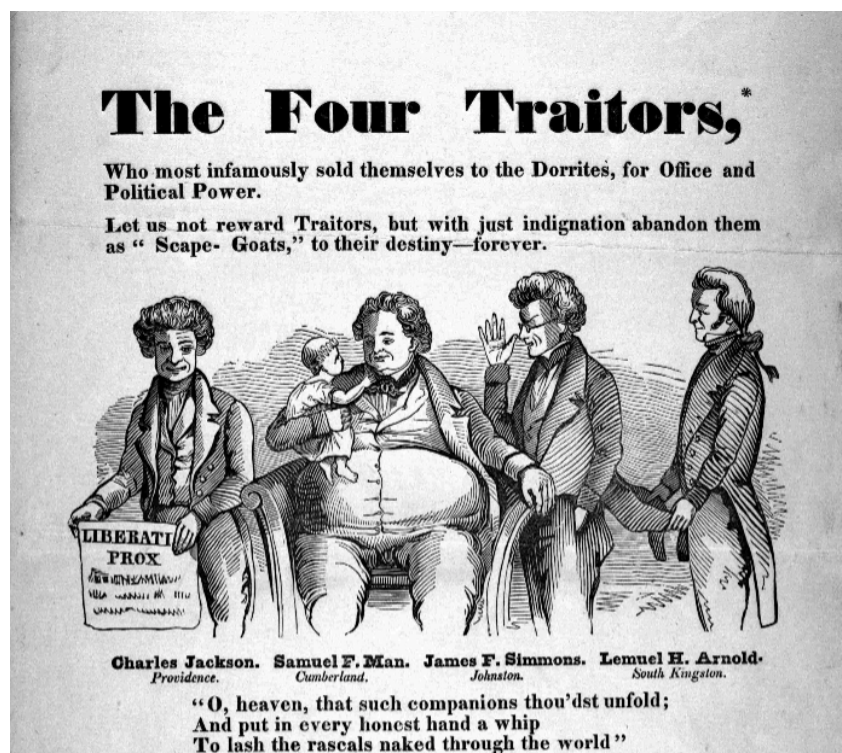
Translation:

1. Ce Croquis à Louis-Philippe, vous condamnerez donc?
~ This sketch to Louis-Philippe, you will therefore condemn? [agree]
2. Alors, il faudra condamner celui-ci, que ressemble au premier.
~ Then it will be necessary to condemn this one, which resembles the first.
3. Puis condamner cet autre, ressemble au second.
~ Then condemn the other, resemble the second.
4. Et enfin si vous êtes conséquents, vous ne sauriez absoudre cette poire, qui ressemble aux croquis précédents.
~ And finally, if you are consistent, you cannot absolve this pear, which resembles the preceding sketches.

This broadside [political poster] depicts 4 American statesmen; Charles Jackson, Samuel F. Man, James F. Simmons & Lemuel H. Arnold who supported the **Dorr Rebellion** in Providence, Rhode Island of 1841-42. At the time, more people in Rhode Island wanted to be allowed to vote. However, an old English charter stated that only men with land could vote. As a result, an unofficial constitutional convention was created and elected **Thomas Dorr** as the new governor. However, another governor had recently been elected, and the convention was violently put down. Some American politicians supported the uprising.

Below the illustration is a line from William Shakespeare's *Othello*.

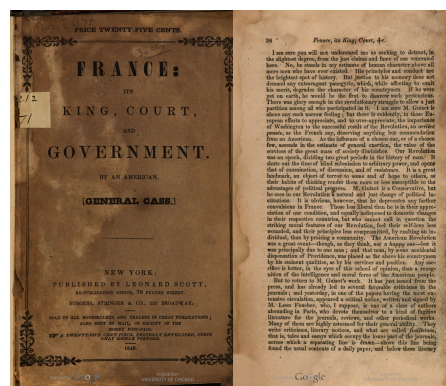
The four traitors, who most infamously sold themselves to the Dorrites, for office, and political power. ? . 1842. Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/rbpe.16902700/>.



O, heaven, that such companions thou'dst unfold;
An put in every honest hand a whip
To lash the rascals naked through the world

Lewis Cass was an American representative to France from 1836-1840. Cass's book, titled, *France: Its King, Court, and Government by an American* published in July of 1848, is about his experiences in France as the ambassador. Cass notes the different discussions in the French royal court, prior to the February Revolution in France. Cass reports how even French conservatives, such as François Guizot, understood the importance of the American Revolution and how it may affect Europe. The book was amended and published again after the Revolutions of 1848.

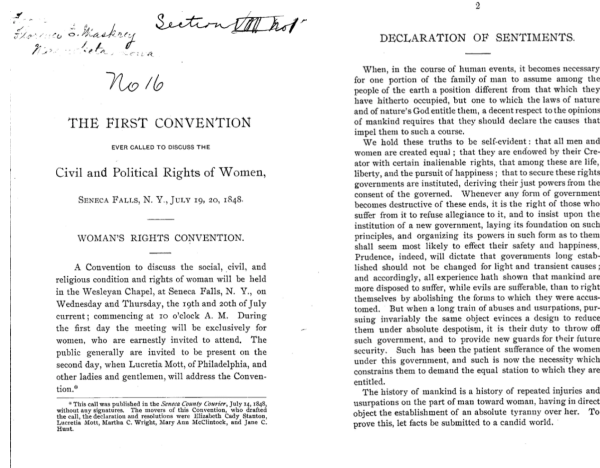
Cass, Lewis, 1782-1866. *France; Its King, Court, And Government by an American*. 3d ed. New York: Wiley & Putnam, 1848. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/chi.56965041>



...there is evidently, in these European [European] efforts to appreciate, and to over-appreciate, the importance of Washington to the successful result of the [American] Revolution, an *arrière pensée*, [ulterior motive] as the French say, deserving anything but commendation from an American...Our revolution was an epoch, dividing two great periods in the history of man. It shuts out the time of blind submission to arbitrary power, and it opens that of examination, of discussion, and of *resistance*. It is a great landmark, an object of terror to some and of hope to others, as their habits of thinking render them more or less susceptible to the advantages of political progress. M. Guizot is a Conservative, but he sees our Revolution a natural and just change of political institutions. It is obvious, however, that he deprecates any further convulsions in France. Those less liberal than he is in their appreciation of our condition, and equally indisposed to domestic changes in their respective countries, but who cannot call into question the striking, moral features of our Revolution, feel their self-love wounded, and their principles less compromised [compromised] by exalting an individual, and by praising a community.

The New York Seneca Falls Convention was an assembly held in July of 1848 which began the women's suffrage movement in the United States. Similar to the revolutions in Europe, much of the writings which came from the Seneca Falls Convention were modeled on American Revolutionary literature, like the Declaration of Independence. While there were no violent uprisings like in Europe, women in the United States were in contact with the revolutionaries in Europe. This pamphlet urges women to attend the meeting and summarizes the assembly's intentions.

Woman's Rights Convention, Lucy Stone, and National American Woman Suffrage Association Collection. *The first convention ever called to discuss the civil and political rights of women, Seneca Falls, N.Y., July 19, 20.* [S.l.: s.n., after, 1848] Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/27007548/>.



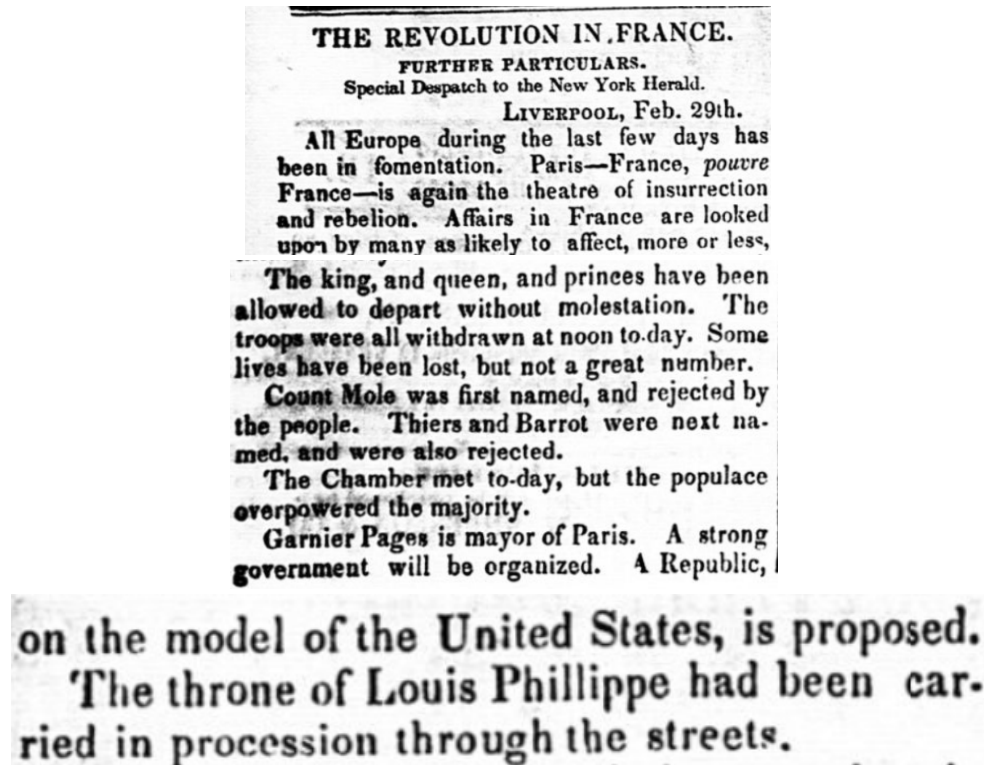
A Convention to discuss the social, civil, and religious condition and rights of woman will be held in the Wesleyan Chapel, at Seneca Falls, N. Y., on Wednesday and Thursday, the 19th and 20th of July current; commencing at 10 o'clock A. M. During the first day the meeting will be exclusively for women, who are earnestly invited to attend. The public generally are invited to be present on the second day, when Lucretia Mott, of Philadelphia, and other ladies and gentlemen, will address the Convention

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

Below are excerpts from the Camden Journal, a British-American Newspaper, which describe the sudden burst of revolutionary activity in Europe, especially in France. It is noted how the new French government was being modeled on the American one. The Newspaper is dated February 29th, 1848.

The Camden Journal. (Camden, SC), Feb. 29 1848.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042796/1848-03-29/ed-1/seq-2/>.



THE REVOLUTION IN FRANCE

All Europe during the last few days has been in fomentation. Paris—France, *pouvre France*—is again the theatre of insurrection and rebellion... The king and queen, and princes have been allowed to depart without molestation. The troops were all withdrawn at noon to day. Some lives have been lost, but not in a great number. Count Mole was first named, and rejected by the people. Thiers and Barrot were next named, but were also rejected. The Chamber met to-day, but the populace overpowered the majority. Garnier Pages is mayor of Paris. A strong government will be organized, A Republic on the model of the United States is proposed. The throne of Louis Phillippe had been carried in procession through the streets.

The hand-colored image below, made by American lithographer Nathaniel Currier, depicts French revolutionaries burning the throne of King Louis-Phillipe in 1848, the “citizen king” who gradually became more oppressive in the years leading up to 1848. The French Revolution of 1848 resulted in his abdication and exile. This image was printed by the Currier and Ives firm in New York City.

N. Currier. *Burning of the throne: Paris 25th February Le Trôné: brulé Paris 25 février, 1848.* [New York: N. Currier] Photograph. <https://www.loc.gov/item/90714140/>.



The People have been deceived by Louis Phillippe who promised them a constitutional Government when he came to the Throne in 1830, resolved to revenge themselves. Having entered the habitation of the Monarch, they took the Royal chair and bore it to the foot of the Column of July, (Place de la Bastille) so as to offer it as a burnt sacrifice to the departed Spirits of those immortal victims of Liberty, who are now replaced by new Heroes, the 25th, February, 1848. From the Fire of the Oppressor came the Republic sustained by French Patriotism.

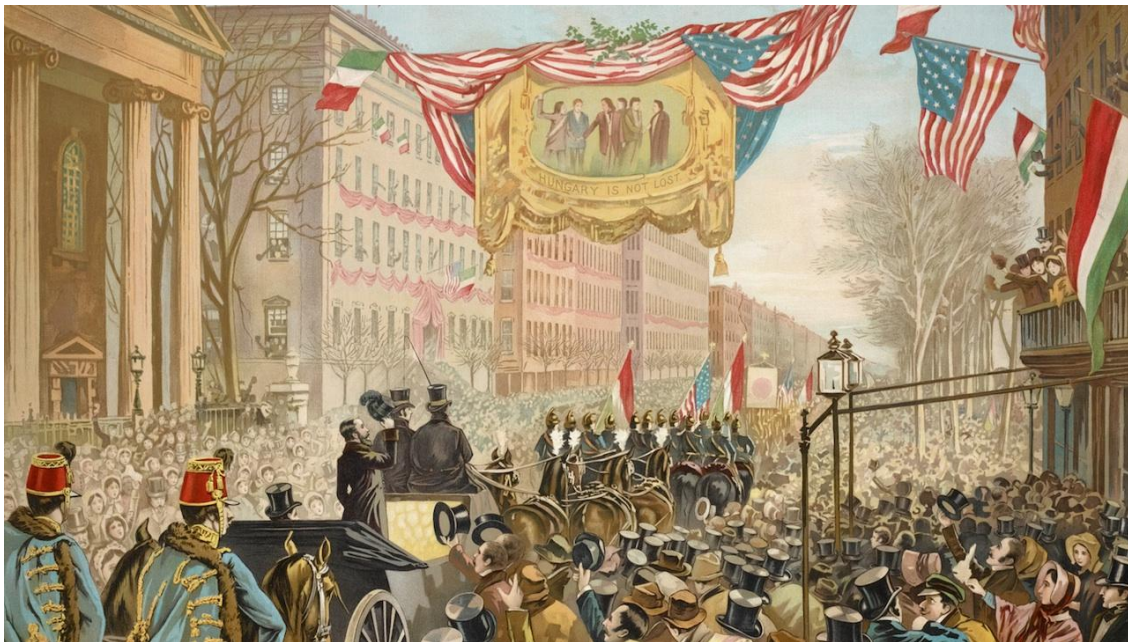
The sketch below, drawn by Englishman John Everett Millais, depicts French soldiers under King Louis-Phillipe attacking a barricade erected in Paris. Barricades were built mostly by merchants and students during the February Revolution. Millais captures the utter chaos which erupted during the French Revolution of 1848.

Millais, John Everett, Artist. *Attack on a Barricade in Paris*. Paris Île-De-France France, 1848.
[Place of Publication Not Identified: Publisher Not Identified] Photograph.
<https://www.loc.gov/item/2021669862/>.



This painting, titled, *When Kossuth Rode up Broadway* depicts the famous Hungarian revolutionary, Lajos Kossuth, in New York City on December 6, 1851. Kossuth led the Hungarian struggle for independence from Austria during the Revolutions of 1848. At the time, Hungary was part of the Austrian Empire. When the revolution was squashed by the Austrian and Russian forces, Kossuth fled with his family. Following the revolutions, the Hungarian leader toured both England and the United States and was widely received. Kossuth's dramatic speeches and dedication to Hungarian independence made him a popular figure in the United States.

The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Division of Art, Prints and Photographs: Print Collection, The New York Public Library. "When Kossuth rode up Broadway. Below, left: Louis Kossuth, the great Hungarian patriot, received with cheers by 100,000 Americans upon his arrival in New York on December 6th, 1851" New York Public Library Digital Collections. Accessed May 17, 2022. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/5e66b3e8-6d64-d471-e040-e00a180654d7>



IV

Textbook Critique

McDougal Littell's 9th and 10th grade history textbook titled, *World History: Patterns of Interaction* has several chapters in a single unit which discuss the revolutions occurring in the 19th century. The unit is titled, "Nationalist Revolutions Sweep the West." The first chapter, "Latin American Peoples Win Independence," begins with the Latin American struggles for freedom from Europe at the very beginning of the 19th century. It is interesting that the Latin American revolutions are in the same unit as the European revolutions, as the textbook seems to hint at some sort of connection between the two, as if one affected the other. Traditionally in the New York State Common Curriculum, one teaches the French Revolution of 1789, then the Haitian Revolution and the Latin American revolutions. The United States is often ignored in these lessons as there are other classes devoted only to American History. In the following chapter, titled, "Revolutions Disrupt Europe," there is only one line which seems to connect Latin America with Europe, "As revolutions shook the colonies in Latin America, Europe was also undergoing dramatic changes" (p. 609). The connection between Latin America and Europe is an interesting one, and it may have been beneficial to include more on this connection. History is often taught in a way which completely separates historical events. It is important to discuss how the revolutions in Latin America and Europe were connected, even if they were separated by the Atlantic Ocean.

The chapter, "Revolutions Disrupt Europe" does a very good job defining the terms which drove Europe towards revolution in the middle of the 19th century. Terms such as "liberals," "radicals" and "nationalism" were important forces at the time and are clearly defined. It is important to note that these terms had very different definitions compared to today. For

example, liberalism and nationalism were closely linked in 1848, as ethnic groups were fighting for independence or recognition by the European empires: “Nationalism is the belief that one’s greatest loyalty should not be to a king or an empire but to a nation of people who share a common culture and history” (p. 609). It would have been helpful to note how the terms have different definitions in the 21st century, as nationalism today is less associated with kings and empires, and more connected with extreme love for a country, putting one country’s interests over others.

After introducing the terms which defined the era, the chapter discusses the Greek struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1821. This section includes a painting of the famous English Romantic poet, Lord Byron, in the uniform of a Greek revolutionary. Next to the painting, there is an excerpt from Byron’s poem, “On this day I complete my thirty-sixth year:”

The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around us see!
The Spartan, home upon his shield,
Was not more free.

It is important to include an example of a poet expressing their political thoughts, as the Romantic Movement was a significant aspect of the revolutions in the first half of the 19th century. One of the subsequent chapters explains the Romantic Movement and its impact on the political situations at the time.

Following the section on the Greek struggle for independence, the chapter notes how the “return of the old order—carefully arranged at the Congress of Vienna—was breaking down” (p. 610). Klemens von Metternich, the architect of the “return of the old order” as well as the Congress of Vienna is mentioned in the previous unit. The chapter spends over a page discussing several other European upheavals in the 1830s, before finally getting to France, the country

which triggered the Revolutions of 1848. While the textbook briefly mentions the other revolts which took place in France such as the July Revolution of 1830, it makes no mention of the June Rebellion of 1832 and immediately jumps to 1848. Although the June Rebellion of 1832 is not as significant as the 1848 Revolution, it is a good example of how uprisings were staged in the 1800s, and was the event Victor Hugo based his novel, *Les Misérables*, on. Many students love the musical which was based on the book, and looking at the June Rebellion of 1832 may be a useful way to add student interest in the subject. The textbook gives a brief summary about what led to the dethronement of King Louis-Philippe and how the revolutionaries began to fight among themselves, along with Louis-Napoleon's (Napoleon III) rise to power.

In the next chapter titled, "Nationalism: Case Studies: Italy and Germany," the textbook discusses most of the major players of the Revolutions of 1848, such as the Italian states, Russia and Prussia. Although the textbook spends significant time discussing the revolutions in France and Italy, it barely mentions the German revolutions and jumps to the Prussian statesman, Otto von Bismarck, and his attempts to unite Prussia with the German states in the second half of the 19th century. It would have been worth mentioning that Bismarck himself was one of these young students, although he was a conservative and royalist, as well as the connection between German revolutionary struggles and the Romantic movement. There could have been much more information on the German Revolutions of 1848.

Although McDougal Littell's *World History: Patterns of Interaction* does a very good job explaining forces which drove Europe to a turning point, as well as the revolutions themselves, there is no mention at all to the connection with the United States. Although the textbook does mention the Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, when women drafted a declaration of their rights,

it does not mention the significance of this event happening in that tumultuous year, and if there was any connection with the revolutions in Europe at the time.

With the unit beginning with the Latin American revolutions, one would think that the United States may have been mentioned when discussing European Revolutions of 1848. Since American history is largely left to grades 11 and 12, it is hardly mentioned in grades 9 and 10. Since the Latin American revolutions are included, the revolutions feel like transnational events as they were occurring on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. After all, many of the revolutionaries both in Latin America and Europe looked to the United States as the model of democracy, a fact which is left out when describing the Revolutions of 1848. In fact, the French Revolution of 1848 began when an event celebrating George Washington's birthday was banned by the government.

Since the unit is titled, "Nationalist Revolutions Sweep the West," it would also have been important to include the Dorr Rebellion, which erupted in Providence, Rhode Island in 1832 and was a struggle for better voting rights. The Dorr Rebellion and the Seneca Falls Convention show how revolutions were not simply occurring in Europe, but across the Western world. Although the textbook hints at this by including the Latin American Revolutions, it could have expanded on this more.

V

New Textbook Entries

[The chapter titled, “Revolutions Disrupt Europe” should be retitled “Revolutions Shake the Western World,” and would include the United States. The first change would be under the paragraph titled, “The Tide of Reform in Western Europe.” New title: “The Tide of Reform on Both Sides of the Atlantic”]

Although young, idealistic students and members of the middle class led revolutions that shook Europe, this was not the only area which began to see political change through violence. As we have previously seen, there were revolutions in Latin America. However, the desire for reform eventually found its way to the United States as well. The **Dorr Rebellion** which occurred in 1841 was one of America’s most significant revolts before the Civil War. The rebellion began over disputes with Rhode Island’s constitution. At the time, the Rhode Island constitution stated that only men who owned land were allowed to vote. This rule was written in 1663 as part of the royal charter drafted by England. However, much had changed in Rhode Island since the 1600s, and many men did not own land. In 1841, **suffragists**, those who wished to grant the right to vote to more people, held a convention to write a new state constitution. At this convention, reformists and suffragists, led by **Thomas Wilson Dorr**, drafted the **People’s Constitution** to allow any white man over the age of 21 to vote. At this time, the state was holding an election for a new governor. Those who wrote The People’s Constitution elected Dorr himself. Suddenly, Rhode Island found itself with two governors, with Samuel Ward King as the other. In response, the state government ordered troops to shut down the convention, and Dorr rallied his supporters to take up arms. The rebellion was eventually put down, and Dorr was arrested but eventually exonerated due to his popularity. Although the rebellion was a failure, the

Dorr Rebellion is an example of how revolutionary activity was not just in Latin America and Europe.

[The following excerpt would be titled, “The Struggle for Gender Equality” and would follow the section on the French Revolution of 1848. The excerpt would be taken from Chapter 6 titled, *Age of Democracy and Progress, 1815-1914*]

The fight for freedom and representation was not only occurring in the palaces or streets of Paris. “**Organization and Resistance:** During the 1800s, women in both Great Britain and the United States worked to gain the right to vote. In the United States, women such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized a campaign for women’s rights as early as 1848.” (p. 662) In the years prior, women in the United States were in contact with revolutionaries in Europe. “From a convention in Seneca Falls, New York, they issued a declaration of women’s rights modeled on the Declaration of Independence. “We hold these truths to be self-evident,” the declaration stated, “that all men and women are created equal.””

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

“The history of mankind is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her. To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.

He has never permitted her to exercise her inalienable right to the elective franchise.

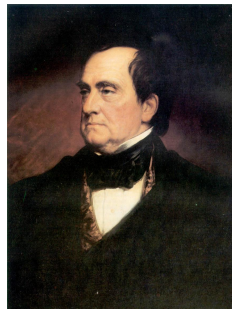
He has compelled her to submit to laws in the formation of which she has no voice.”

~ The Seneca Falls Convention, “Declaration of Sentiments” (p. 662)

[The following excerpt would modify parts of the chapter titled, “Revolutions Disrupt Europe” and would discuss how the United States influenced the French Revolution of 1848.]

Ever since the first French Revolution in 1789, the revolutionaries in Paris had looked to the United States for inspiration and guidance on how to model their new governments. Such was the case when the Revolution of 1848 occurred. In the weeks building up to the revolution members of the middle class, intellectuals, and students held banquets and lavish dinners, known as **Campagne des Banquets**, (Banquet campaign) in opposition to a law passed in 1835 which prohibited public meetings. One of these banquets was to commemorate George Washington’s birthday on February 22nd. At the time, George Washington was a symbol of American democracy. However, King Louis-Philippe’s government shut down the banquet, which triggered the revolution. The French Revolution of 1848 began on George Washington’s birthday.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST: Lewis Cass was the American ambassador to France from 1836-1840. Cass notes how George Washington was highly regarded in Paris:



“...there is evidently, in these [European] efforts to appreciate, and to over-appreciate, the importance of Washington to the successful result of the [American] Revolution.”

[The following excerpt adds to the chapter, “Nationalism: Case Studies: Italy and Germany.” This section would begin under the paragraph titled, “The Rise of Prussia.”]

Before the Napoleonic Wars, the Holy Roman Empire had unified all the German speaking territories, including Prussia and Austria. However, Napoleon Bonaparte abolished the one-thousand year empire in 1806. During the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the kings of Europe created the **German Confederation** to replace the Holy Roman Empire. The German Confederation was an alliance which brought together the German states, Prussia and Austria. Although the alliance was created mainly for military and economic security, it inspired young German students, many who had fought in the Napoleonic Wars, that a unified German was possible. In 1819, the German princes passed a set of laws throughout the Confederation called the **Carlsbad Decrees**. The Carlsbad Decrees disbanded student groups and increased censorship in newspapers and universities. These harsh laws only aggravated German liberals and students who were in favor of reform and German unification. As a result, many students would retreat into nature or go underground to discuss political ideas.



Caspar David Friedrich, *Two Men Contemplating the Moon*, Prussia, 1819.

THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT AND GERMAN NATIONALISM: In order to avoid persecution due to the Carlsbad Decrees, some German students met in forests to discuss political ideas.

The French Revolutions of 1789 and 1848 reconfigured the state to be organized around the idea of the French nation, rather around the body of the king. In many smaller German speaking states to the east of France, the idea that there could be one state for all German speakers grew. This vision animating these German nationalists was that there could be a nation-state for Germans called ***Grossdeutschland***. (greater Germany) When the Revolutions of 1848 removed the French king - again- and the French state focused on “Frenchness” - not royalty - this was yet more inspiring to the German nationalists.

The uprisings in France quickly spread to the rest of Europe and the German territories. On February 27, 1848 an assembly of students, members of the middle class, and others met in the city Mannheim to demand a new bill of rights. Known as the **March Demands**, this bill of rights called for a freedom of the press and a government which united all the German states. In May, a pan-German parliament was created and held in the city of Frankfurt. This parliament, known as the **Frankfurt Parliament**, wrote a constitution based on the American model, and asked **Frederick William IV**, the Prussian emperor, to serve as a constitutional monarch. Frederick William IV denied this request, and sent troops to Frankfurt to put an end to the liberal activities. The German revolutionaries were not well prepared to counter the Prussian army, and the Revolution of 1848 in the German states was crushed. Many German students and liberals fled to the United States, where they participated in American abolitionist movements, as well as the 1849 California Gold Rush.