

The Good Book Guide

POLITICS AND PROPAGANDA: WEAPONS OF MASS SEDUCTION by Nicholas O'Shaughnessy. Manchester University Press, 2004. vii + 264 pp. Index. £14.99 pbk

The clue is in the subtitle. This inspired volume recommissions the old concept of propaganda, exploring the network of spin which we have understood as history and which we now inhabit. O'Shaughnessy provides explanatory depth in a cross-disciplinary way, demanding definition of 'propaganda', probing its successes (or otherwise) and teasing-out its present viral existence. We are its product and its plaything and it is centre stage in our lives, as witnessed by our blessed media (especially TV), or the videos of bin Laden or political and commercial advertising or the rhetoric of campaigns or movements. It does not lie, but it persuades, seduces.

By a series of case-studies the author explores his themes, ending with the propaganda surrounding 11 September 2001 (did you know that 911 is the emergency telephone number in the US, picked up by Al Qaeda with diabolical cunning?). He uses verse, journalism, film, books, architecture and painting on his way, building-blocks to an appreciation of the web of seduction which we inhabit.

The history student will find this a difficult book and it will not provide syllabus answers. But it will enthral, excite, upset and extend thinking. Arguably, the reader will see the world he occupies anew - and that makes it a fine book. It is one for the history shelves, certainly, for student and teacher.

Richard Miller

WORKING CLASS ORGANISATIONS AND POPULAR TOURISM 1840-1970 by Susan Barton. Manchester University Press, 2005. xii + 237 pp. Index. £55.00 hbk

Here is a breath of fresh (sea) air: a lively book which teases open an aspect of relatively overlooked social history, the working-class holiday. We take it for granted, but should not do so. Susan Barton, with elegance, reminiscence and data, explains that paid leave, and the attendant holidays away, were the victorious outcome of workers' campaigns. Popular tourism (yes, before 1851) had its origins in the collective pressure on employers and governments of savings clubs, friendly societies and union activity over nearly two centuries. Gradually the short, unpaid, often unauthorised leave from work became organised and legitimate through legislation - the 1938 Holidays



A family visit the seaside: the fish and chip stall

with Pay Act, which was fully implemented after the war. And that was not the end of the story for the working classes were yet to take to the skies for packaged sun and frolics on the costas.

On the journey, Susan Barton takes us through the contributions to her theme of Thomas Cook's 1841 excursion to Loughborough, the 1851 Great Exhibition, steamboats, charabancs, boarding houses, holiday camps for happy campers and other group pleasures (not for the middle classes who kept to individual bliss). We meet boarding house landladies, holiday camp hosts, costa reps and 'the Brit Abroad'. This is serious history as it should be written; have it on your shelf and your history will be enlivened.

Richard Miller

NATIONALISM IN EUROPE, 1890-1940 by Oliver Zimmer. Palgrave Macmillan - Studies in European History series, 2003. xiv + 146 pp. £12.99 pbk

This is not a book for the faint-hearted. The Editor's Preface describes the Studies in European History series as aiming to present a 'state of the debate' on important issues. Oliver Zimmer achieves this, but his book is not an easy read. Chapter 1 examines different theories of nationalism and the reasons why the phenomenon became so important in the period under review. Inevitably, it is highly technical, but the author's style does not help readers troubled by difficult vocabulary and sociological jargon. Also, he fails to consider what this reviewer thinks the simplest and most obvious explanation of why modern nationalism emerged in France during the Revolution: that once the King had been executed and the monarchy overthrown, the French had

lost the traditional symbol of unity in the state, and had nothing to fall back on in the face of foreign invasion other than their 'Frenchness', the things making them different from their neighbours. The central section considers how nationalism was promoted within states, how racial minorities were treated, and the links (if any) between nationalism and inter-war Fascism. This is the most readable and interesting part of the work. A final chapter looks at nationalism and its critics, before a concluding summary draws together the author's findings. The book is clearly aimed primarily at undergraduates, but good A-Level students will benefit from referring to it, as long as they have a dictionary to hand!

John Garland

TWENTIETH-CENTURY BRITISH HISTORY. A TEACHING RESOURCE BOOK by William Simpson. Routledge, 2005. vi + 355 pp. Index. £45 pbk

Teachers, *ex officio*, have had to adjust to the substantial shake-up at the AS/A2 level that dates from September 2000. Publishers have been almost as quick to respond to the specifications either by amended editions of established series or by new bespoke series created with the current requirements in mind.

William Simpson's book belongs to neither of these two categories. It was first published in 1988 and it is reissued with (only) an augmented bibliography. Following the 16-page introduction on sources, their nature, evaluation and interpretation and use by students, there are seven case studies. Each includes an introduction, discussion and historiography by the author, selected sources and questions on them. The topics are: Britain's decision to go to war in 1914; Votes for women; Britain and Ireland, 1912-22; The changing fortunes of the Liberal and Labour parties to 1935; The General Strike, 1926; Britain in the 1930s: depression and recovery and, lastly, British foreign policy in the 1930s.

It could be concluded, with the widespread availability of sources, not least because many textbook series now include them, that there is no need for this title that is priced at £45. This reviewer differs from this conclusion: it is the quality of the selections and introductions that is the strongest recommendation for its use with all but the very weakest candidates. Bearing in mind it is spiral bound, in A4 format and comes with rights to photocopy, the cost per student sheet makes it a steal. In the vocabulary of stock market analysts, buy!

Tom Wells