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Review of *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America*

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Streitmatter, Rodger. *Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. 335 pp. \$18.50.

Voices of Revolution: The Dissident Press in America is a nice corrective to traditional media histories that continue to emphasize the role of elite, mainstream publications and their powerful owners/publishers in the development of journalism in the United States.

Rodger Streitmatter offers readers a collection of fourteen case studies showcasing the social and political influences of the dissident press in American society. Differentiating between publications that merely offer alternative visions of society from those whose primary purpose is to effect social change, he maintains that it is the dissident press that has played a pivotal role in shaping American history. Disheartened with contemporary mainstream journalism, Streitmatter, a professor of journalism at American University,

offers lessons of the dissident press as potential models of how journalism should and could be practiced.

From civil rights, women's rights, and worker's rights, to gay and lesbian rights, Streitmatter showcases a variety of social and political movements, promoted through publications, during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each chapter offers context related to a movement along with a brief history of each issue, and each often showcases an individual directly connected with that movement. For example, "Awakening a Nation to the Sins of Slavery" not only introduces primary arguments used for and against slavery, but it offers a biography of William Lloyd Garrison and considerable discussion of how he used his newspaper, *The Liberator*, to change public

opinion about slavery.

Each case study is well documented with relevant primary source materials, including journalists' writings about the issue or movement. The book has a strong narrative focus, is engaging, and is extremely readable. Undergraduates should find this book accessible and relevant. Topics such as free love during the Victorian era, and the sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll counterculture, may help dispel any notion of journalism history as dull.

Streitmatter provides a good rationale for the inclusion of each case study in *Voices of Revolution*. And yet, it is the omissions that may provide the primary criticism of this text. The distinction between alternative and dissident publications is somewhat fluid in this book. While each chapter concludes with an

assessment of the actual changes affected by the publication, or journalist, few of the movements included actually fulfill his primary requirement of causing social change. Therefore, a reader might wonder, why these fourteen case studies were chosen and not, for example, commentary on the early photojournalist Jacob Riis, who not only wanted to in-

form the public about the plight of the poor but who worked directly for tenement reform. What about the omission of the great muckraking publication, *McClure's*, or the *Los Angeles Free Press*, generally considered the first underground newspaper? And yet, the omissions may ultimately be illustrations of the paucity of media histories that address alter-

native and dissident publications.

Voices of Revolution offers a history of socially progressive publications, but there is, of course, room for others.

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