This paper argues that John C. Calhoun's *Disquisition on Government*, on which much of his reputation as a political theorist rests, must be read in the context of the 1848 revolutions in Europe, which were occurring as Calhoun completed the Disquisition. Calhoun corresponded extensively with his daughter Anna, who was living in Belgium when the revolutions broke out, as well as with various other Americans in Europe, as he was completing the Disquisition. As a result, if we do not read the Disquisition with the revolutions in mind we will miss some of the vital context that influenced Calhoun as he wrote it and that its original readers would have had in mind as they read it.