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Maike Oergel (Ed.)

(RE-)WRITING THE RADICAL

**ENLIGHTENMENT, REVOLUTION AND
CULTURAL TRANSFER IN 1790s GERMANY,
BRITAIN AND FRANCE**

SPECTRUM LITERATURWISSENSCHAFT

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(Re-)Writing the Radical

Enlightenment, Revolution and
Cultural Transfer in 1790s Germany,
Britain and France

Edited by
Maike Oergel



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Foreword

Elinor Shaffer

This book represents a gathering movement to show a comparative European picture of the information and opinion-making media that linked all parts of Europe even during times of strife and war, such as the French Revolutionary period. We have all been aware of certain major journals, beginning with the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*, that is those that went out from Britain carrying the names of Addison and Dr Johnson abroad in the eighteenth century, followed by the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly Reviews* in the early nineteenth century; we may also have been aware in the Romantic period of *The Monthly Review*, that did so much to bring new German writing to Britain in the 1790s; we may even have been aware of some European journals, such as the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which was so widely read across Europe by anyone aspiring to general culture throughout the nineteenth century. But our awareness and our knowledge of the way in which ideas travel has been expanding rapidly in recent years. We now know, for example, through our Series on the *Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe* (Continuum 2004–) that journals based in Switzerland, especially Geneva, played a powerful role in making the work of British women writers known – Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice* was translated in part in *La Bibliothèque britannique* (1813), *Mansfield Park* in part in the same Genevan journal by 1815, that is, within her lifetime. Full translations followed into French and then into German.¹ As the Series Editor of *The Reception of British and Irish Authors in Europe*, now numbering over twenty volumes, I have seen much evidence of intellectual and journalistic communication across Europe. But in the volume before us we find not just the power of certain major journals emanating from dominant centres and languages, but the beginnings of the sense of a cultural and intellectual network passing significant news and cultural responses back and forth across Europe, and of the growth of a local press with international concerns. This is a genuinely comparative insight, and introduces us to the strength and variety of regional and local organs of opinion that vied with the main currents of power and

1 *The Reception of Jane Austen in Europe*, ed. by Brian Southam and Anthony Mandal (London and New York: Continuum, 2007).

influence. This insight shifts us away from the obfuscating concern shown by sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu and his followers with centres of cultural power still based on nationalist models and towards the complex reality of mutual opinion-making. The major nations or powers are not necessarily the originating centres, nor do the cultural centres necessarily follow them or their model. This book offers examples of other models, perhaps consciously extreme or fringe, or governed by new or individual ambitions, which nevertheless achieved success. For example, the journal *London und Paris* (1798–1815), bringing illustrated news and political and social caricatures from the opposed capitals, is edited from neither city. These papers were high-priced, yet achieved a good circulation; the editors, correspondents, and critics could rely both on an independent Weimar tradition for which both London and Paris were equally objects of interest but not necessarily of respect. The political caricatures by Gillray which the paper reproduced were in effect being used by third parties against both France and the England from which they emanated. The small but autonomous duchy of Weimar also serves as a testing-ground for claims for independence of individuals within it, and since it was home to both Schiller and Goethe, is often seen as less subject to the exercise of arbitrary power by its rulers; the writers may well have been less independent than they appear, but the duchy and its renowned inhabitants nevertheless represents a distinct political entity with a view of its own as against the larger warring nation-states.

Other examples given here also reveal the paradoxical power of an unusual position or sidelight on political or cultural centrality. The viewpoint and position of women is rendered in several forms: the importation of German literature of sensibility, whether Goethe's immensely popular novel, *The Sorrows of Young Werther*, or its imitators, and the drama of sensationalism, gave opportunities to women translators, writers and readers, not only practical openings in the world but new modes of feeling which were suspect but empowering. These are shown to have embraced or implied a wide swathe of society, from Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, supporter and patroness of the leading Whig politician Charles James Fox, to Mary Wollstonecraft, the author of *The Rights of Woman*, and Isabelle de Charrière, author of *Trois Femmes* and its sequel, a black slave woman's tragedy. These also serve to point up the inadequacies even of a leading philosopher of moral theory, Kant, who omitted or excluded slaves, women, children and the lower, property-less orders from the claim to freedom. These spokeswomen are themselves only very partially empowered even when well-placed socially and often work by indirection from positions very far from the centre.

The stability of power claims in small states or communities is also tested by the extreme case of the absolute rule of the naval captain over his ship and his men, shown in the famous case of Captain Bligh to have been successfully challenged by mutineers, yet who in the circumstances of chal-

lenge to his authority spectacularly survived through weeks at sea in a small dinghy, though public opinion was divided in the political climate of 1794 between reasserting the traditional right of the captain and glorifying the renegade Fletcher Christian who led the mutiny against him. Here there is the further question of how far the sovereign power of any state extends overseas, which would be examined only much later, and is still far from resolved. How far did Europe extend? Other examples also reveal very special points of view: for example, the extreme Tory politics of the *Anti-Jacobin*, a journal which paradoxically succeeds in setting up the idea and the model of cosmopolitanism (a negative concept coined by Burke even before his fight against the French Revolution), in order to oppose it. Thus translation itself becomes a suspect activity, together with other forms of cultural importation, which may vitiate the native product. In fact, it is through the special interests of such journals or the personal perspectives and circumstances of individual writers, and the potentially special eccentric positions and viewpoints of either, that paradoxically they create a model of freedom from the domination of the centralizing cultural entities and their organs. If the *Anti-Jacobin* itself employed some borrowed, translated and imported models, that is only another sign of the increasing mobility and range of available models.

The same effect may be seen to characterize today's internationalism or 'globalism'. This book thus reveals the capacity of European culture to generate a variety of successful internal models from its own wide range of national, regional, and local models; the Romantic movement stressed their variety, and their potential (conflicting) claims to value and independence. Importing and exporting them sometimes enhanced their viability as independent positions. Paradoxically, this created a rich, shared culture across Europe. Only by studying these micro-cultures within the larger apparent political and national movements of the time can we achieve a just picture of cultural activity and the dissemination of ideas.

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(Re-)Writing the Radical

Enlightenment, Revolution and Cultural Transfer in 1790s
Germany, Britain and France

Introduction

Maike Oergel

It is a commonplace that the French Revolution had a stimulating impact on the development of political and cultural ideas in the 1790s. Not least, the Revolution affected the familiar paradigm shifts of the period around 1800, which transformed the notions of experience and thinking. To varying degrees, most of those shifts were rooted in the dialectic of the Enlightenment, its optimistic belief in the emancipating realization of reason coupled with a despotic blindness to the possibly unfathomable complexity of human understanding and existence, which emerged during the second half of the eighteenth century and which also found expression in the events of and following the Revolution. The first recognition of the one-sidedness of reason is evident in German *Sturm und Drang*, British pre-romanticism, and the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Here those new conceptions that saw experience and thought as fluid and contingent were prepared and began to destabilize the established concepts of universal values. These developments contributed to bringing about the unusually fertile international intersecting of different discourses – aesthetic, intellectual, and political – which characterizes the ‘revolutionary’ decade and which is the subject of this volume. Crucially, all three discourses are marked by a need to deal with the ‘radical’, an approach dedicated to seeking truth by pursuing a path, political, aesthetic or philosophical, to its extreme end, which takes its legitimacy from the Enlightenment tenets of emancipation and autonomy. The fluidity of parameters and the openness of discursive areas presented a unique intellectual context for responding to the radical, affirmatively or negatively, and created the unique cultural and political launch pad that the 1790s present.

The Enlightenment notion of reason had promised individual and communal autonomy and perfectibility, while demanding moral as well as social responsibility. Based on this notion, the eighteenth century had produced a variety of new concepts, of art, politics, education, and society, all of which paved the way for the events of 1789. However, the Revolution also brought in its wake developments that increased the already existing doubts

regarding the efficacy of reason and the reliability of individual and communal judgement. This in turn triggered a thorough-going critique of Enlightenment values, building on the earlier recognition of the Enlightenment's internal dialectic that dates back to the mid-eighteenth century. More often than not, however, this critique¹ aimed at *revising* Enlightenment values, rather than at abandoning them, as earlier scholarship has tended to claim. But even a revision had powerful intellectual effects: these efforts reinforced not just the *conditions* of fluidity in experience and thought, but also created the reflexive *understanding* of this fluidity that is commonly associated with the emerging Romanticisms of the 1790s, but which is equally pervasive in the emerging new philosophies, in Kantian and German Idealist thought.

The essays in this collection illuminate the *interdisciplinary nature* of these late eighteenth-century discourses on aesthetics, politics, and philosophy, by discussing the overlap between philosophical, aesthetic, and political concerns either in the work of individuals, or comparatively, in the transfer of contemporary cultural materials and the changes these materials undergo in the processes of reception, adaptation, and transformation. Each essay contributes to the understanding of how progressive-revolutionary and conservative-reactionary impetuses interact in the fields of literature and thought, as the latter engage with the political. What emerges is a clearer understanding of the 'fate' of the Enlightenment, its radicalization and its 'overcoming' in aesthetic and political terms, and of the way in which political 'paranoia', generated by the fear of a spreading revolutionary radicalism, facilitated and influenced the cultural transfer of the 'radical'. The comparative approach of the collection as a whole cuts across English literary and historical studies on the relation between Enlightenment thought, political and public culture,² including political and aesthetic theories,³ current German approaches which readily foreground an essential link between the Enlightenment and the Revolution, but tend to be either interested in presenting histories of the period⁴ or investigating local contexts,⁵ and recent

1 Whether by Friedrich Schiller, Friedrich Schlegel or F.W.J. Schelling, by S.T. Coleridge or Mary Wollstonecraft.

2 Such as Tim Blanning's *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture: Old Regime Europe 1660–1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) or James van Horn Melton's *Politics, Culture and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

3 Such as Kennan Ferguson, *Politics of Judgement: Aesthetics, Identity and Political Theory* (Ilanham: Lexington Books, 1999) or Robert Porter's *Deleuze and Guattari: Aesthetics and Politics* (Cardiff: Wales University Press, 2009). Also Stephen White's *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics and Aesthetics* (Thousand Oaks CA and London: Sage, 1994).

4 *Absolutismus, Aufklärung und Revolution*, ed. by Johannes Ebert, vol 11 of *Die große Chronik-Weltgeschichte* (Gütersloh, Munich: Chronik Verlag, 2008) or *Geschichtlichkeit, Aufklärung und Revolution: Literatur im Gang der Zeiten*, ed. by Roland Opitz (Leipzig: Rosa Luxemburg Verlag, 2007).

5 Such as Jörg Schweigard's work on Mainz, e.g. *Die Liebe zur Freiheit ruft uns an den Rhein: Aufklärung, Reform und Revolution in Mainz* (Gernsbach: Katz, 2005) or earlier *Aufklärung und Revolutionsbegeisterung: Die katholischen Universitäten Mainz, Heidelberg und Würzburg im Zeitalter der Fran-*

French approaches which tend to focus on the implication of (European) Enlightenment thought in modern evils, such as hegemonic approaches to culture, thought, and global politics.⁶ In its cross-cutting approach the collection presents a newly configured research field, and begins a comparative and interdisciplinary investigation that is likely to yield new insights into the origins of modern culture, politics, and aesthetics, both in terms of regional-national distinctions and common European legacies. Currently there are no comparative studies that investigate the Revolution's intellectual and aesthetic impact and influence on different countries *in conjunction* or that focus on the *reciprocity* of cultural and political transfers.⁷ Studies in the development of conservatism, of which political paranoia is one aspect, have become more numerous over the past decade and a half, and in some respects this volume is also a contribution to the existing scholarship in this area. But while existing studies tend to focus on either the *reception* in *one* national context, or one specific literary or political issue,⁸ the essays presented here combine to illuminate the international *exchange* driven by 'negative' factors, such as paranoia and xenophobia, and suggest a complex chain of reactions, triggered by receptions and adaptations of revolutionary ideas, events, or texts.

At first glance the connection between the fate of the Enlightenment and the reciprocity of cultural transfer fuelled by an interest in the radical may appear tenuous. But it is the very kaleidoscopic fluidity of values – the 'fate of reason', to use Frederic Beiser's term, in an historically aware world – that makes possible the shifts in the meaning, and in the use, of ideas and storylines, which so typically occur in the transfers of cultural material at this time. The recognition of the fluidity of the meaning(s) encoded in texts opened the door to their adaptation and transformation. The collection makes clear how thinkers and artists across 1790s Europe wrestled with the

zösische Revolution (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2000). Also Hanns-Jürgen Geisinger, *Aufklärung und Revolution: Die Freiheitsbewegung in Bonn am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Hochschulverlag, 1978).

- 6 Such as Michel Foucault's and Jean-François Lyotard's work, and more recently French post-colonial studies.
- 7 One classic comparative analysis, now nearly 40 years old and specifically dealing with the run-up to the Revolution rather than its impact, is *Towards the French Revolution: Europe and America in the 18th-century world*, ed. by Louis Gottschalk and Donald Lach (New York: Scribner, 1973).
- 8 Such as Lisa Wood's *Modes of Discipline: Women, Conservatism and the Novel after the French Revolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2003), which looks at British women writers, or Matthew O. Grenby's *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). Michael Wagner's *England und die französische Gegenrevolution 1789–1802* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1994), on the other hand, focuses specifically on political culture. One exception as far as comparative approaches are concerned is Pekka Suunto's survey *Conservatism from the French revolution to the 1990s* (1st 1994, English translation: Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), which compares conservatism in Britain, Germany, France, and the United States, but is focused on political history.

new ambiguities and instability that the historically aware critique of reason was creating. It no longer allowed unquestionable absolutes or reliable realities, but instead detached existential dichotomies, such as order and chaos, freedom and necessity, (de-)construction and immutability, mind and matter, from value systems, creating multiplicity, perspectivism, and relativism.

The discussion contained in this volume contributes to highlighting the difficulties of the interpretation of 'Enlightenment'. On the one hand, there are clear international trends in this interpretation, i.e. a swing from the 'liberal' interpretation of the Enlightenment as the foundation of modern Western political and intellectual culture (Hayes) towards more dialectical approaches in the later twentieth century that highlighted the darker and intolerant sides of Enlightenment notions of reason. On the other hand, there are equally clear differences in national critical traditions, which have evolved in different contexts and focus on different issues. In German criticism, *Aufklärung*, after it had in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries frequently been identified as foreign and set in contrast to *German Romanticism*, was post-1945 reclaimed for key eighteenth-century thinkers. In more recent assessments it has been increasingly defined by a complexity of thinking that critiques its own thought pre- and post-Revolution in a way that pre-empts the twentieth-century 'discovery' of the dialectic of the Enlightenment (and of reason) by the Frankfurt School. French criticism has traditionally celebrated the efforts of the eighteenth-century *philosophes* as a French achievement closely related to French classicism and responsible for French cultural hegemony in eighteenth-century Europe, protecting it from implication in the negative aspects of the Revolution. With the advent of postmodernist critical theory, however, French criticism has come to critique Enlightenment ideas as responsible for nineteenth- and twentieth-century beliefs in and practices of domination and intolerance. In Britain attitudes to the Enlightenment are less marked by changes in appreciation, not least because seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British thought made seminal contributions to Enlightenment thinking, while eighteenth-century British intellectual activities paved the way for European Romanticism, in which British literature then fully participated. So in Britain there was little need to minimize, maximize, or reclaim the importance of this movement. In contrast, Germany's contribution to Romanticism is traditionally seen as much stronger than the involvement of German thought in the Enlightenment, while France's contribution to the Enlightenment outweighs its intellectual input certainly into early Romanticism. This collection provides material to critique and modify such national critical traditions, which contribute to national stereotyping. It places studies of revolutionary responses to new radical ideas in Germany, Britain and France, which sought to *break out* of old (Enlightened) epistemologies, philosophies, aesthetics, and political structures, side by side with investigations into conservative re-

sponses that aimed at containing the revolutionary impact in stable structures based on traditional, often Enlightened, models. Such cross-referencing brings national, political and aesthetic similarities and differences into relief. The resulting picture reveals not only the complexity and self-awareness of these contemporary responses, but also provides clear markers of the departures of a number of varied developments in nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetic, philosophical and political discourses.

The notion of the ‘radical’ inevitably provoked strong conservative reactions. In all three countries, the conservative responses frequently presented the new political ideas or literary trends as ‘foreign’ and attached blame and notions of degeneracy to revolutionary ideas or fashionable cultural products, such as the ‘Jacobin’, the ‘over’-sentimental and the ‘Gothic’. Yet at the same time these responses had to deal with the considerable popularity that appertained to these destabilizing entities, whether they were notions of social equality or of intense sentimentality. The essays show that, despite (and because of) their suggested notoriety and outlandishness, these ‘imported’ entities were not just eagerly received, but also creatively adapted.⁹ In dealing with such imports – news or texts – which were perceived on the one hand as threatening or in bad taste, yet exciting, interesting, or of popular appeal on the other, different approaches towards ‘treating’ them can be identified. One approach prefers to ‘domesticate and publish’, whereby domestication can take any form from neutralizing radical or disconcerting content (i.e. elimination by re-writing) to naturalizing it (re-interpreting it as something relating to or already existing in the native context). Another approach ‘appropriates and denigrates (as a negative other)’, which helps to establish a stable notion of the ‘home’ identity or situation, while yet another approach uses the imports to stimulate a domestic public debate after materials have undergone some sanitizing, i.e. limiting the destabilizing moment by reduction or diversion. These approaches are by no means mutually exclusive; evidently the first and third approach overlap. In this respect the collection pinpoints the elusive nuances between reception and adaptation and the dynamics of cultural transfer under ‘negative conditions’.

But beyond the field of reception the essays show, through the triangulation of the material they cover, not just transfers, but *exchanges* – e.g. how notions of the Gothic were passed back and forth – and crucially highlight the reciprocity of these transfers – e.g. how notions of the Gothic are adapted and re-interpreted dependent on local circumstances, as they move back and forth. By presenting the responses and adaptations from Germany, Britain, and France side by side, an intriguing picture of re-interpretation

9 Insights into the processes of adaptation in Britain can be gleaned from Peter Mortensen, *British Romanticism and Continental Influences: Writing in the Age of Europhobia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

tion and creative mis-representation of key elements emerges: notions of the Gothic, ideas of Jacobinism, and concepts of appropriate political culture receive different interpretations in the different national contexts, depending on where they are considered to ‘come from’ politically or aesthetically, and what status they are given. In Britain, German *Sturm und Drang* ideas are presented as over-sentimental Gothic excesses that are in league with dangerous revolutionary Jacobinism, which need defusing into safe (i.e. existing) artistic and political channels, as Imke Heuer demonstrates for the Whig-ist writings of the Duchess of Devonshire, and Susanne Kord for the English *Werther*-reception. It is evident that the materials’ popularity prohibits their outright rejection, and requires their neutralization instead. Such strategies of adaptation, rather than rejection, suggest the tacit admission of their political and aesthetic relevance, which becomes clear in Barry Murnane’s analysis of Gothic and sentimental features in the contributions to the arch-conservative *Anti-Jacobin Review*, where ‘German radicalism’ is adapted by British conservatism. In Germany radicalism tends to be identified as French in origin, and seen as mainly political in nature. Daniel Wilson’s examination of the measures taken by the aristocratic government of the Duchy of Saxe-Weimar shows to what extent the intellectual-aesthetic project of *Weimar classicism*, by which a new German high culture was to fend off political radicalism from France, was shaped by repression and intimidation. On the other hand, by examining the German current affairs periodical *Minerva*, Birgit Tautz is able to demonstrate through the example of the slavery debate to what extent liberal economic and emancipatory political concerns influenced the ‘classical’ projects of the aesthetic sublimation of the political. German periodicals culture itself affords insights into the politicizing of the aesthetic, as Renata Schellenberg’s examination of the developing bourgeois public sphere in Germany, stimulated by the proliferation of periodicals shows: among the late eighteenth-century *Bildungsmania* prevalent in much periodic print-media, which sought to elevate the individual above the mundane, two different approaches to the ‘radical’ political, which divide high and low culture publications, can be identified: the (re)direction of mental and cultural energies towards either the intellectual-aesthetic or the populist joys of consumer culture. However, the aesthetic and consumerist redirection of political energies was not thorough-going. One such periodical, *London und Paris*, while clearly belonging to the consumerist-populist end of the market, finds a way of adapting French political radicalism and the British culture of political satire to contribute to the creation of a moderate public arena in Germany. In his analysis of *London und Paris* Christian Deuling identifies political engagement, albeit without political radicalism, as the driving force behind this journal, despite its avowed apolitical intentions.

The changing reception of French political radicalism and the gradual adaptation of (German) over-excited sentimentalism in Britain is demonstrated by Maike Oergel in her examination of the contemporary treatment of the story of HMS *Bounty*: the changing public images of William Bligh and Fletcher Christian reflect the rejection of French radicalism as well as the gradual acceptance of the radical individual in the shape of the emerging Romantic hero. On the other hand, French criticism of radical (Kantian) German philosophy and French revolutionary politics with their focus on male-dominated autonomy and moral self-reliance as intolerant and repressive against other groups (women and slaves) is presented in Judith Still's analysis of Isabelle de Charrière's sequel to her novel *Trois Femmes*.

Explicit links between the political and the aesthetic in literary works are investigated by Melissa Deininger in her essay on the Marquis de Sade's *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* and presented by Jakob Ladegaard in his new interpretation of Friedrich Hölderlin's novel *Hyperion*. While de Sade uses revolutionary political language for a complex aesthetic critique of the yet to be overcome failings of the Revolution in his novella, Ladegaard demonstrates how Hölderlin's contradictory concerns regarding political and aesthetic reform (and revolution) interlink closely in his novel and pinpoint the problems of modern aesthetics and modern democracy, thus questioning the notion of the German priority of aesthetics over politics from a new perspective. Like many contemporary writers, Hölderlin elected to discuss the political and aesthetic revolution through the medium of classical materials. The fundamental importance of the classical tradition, both in aesthetic and political terms, for legitimizing both conservative and revolutionary aims, and in different (inter)national contexts, is discussed by Ian Macgregor Morris and Uta Degner.

Finally, the impact of political and intellectual instability and openness – the new presence of the radical, which results from (radically) questioning reason and traditional authorities – is also discussed in relation to encoding meaning in text. The German Romantic thinker Novalis, the German Romantic writer and critic Jean Paul, the French counter-revolutionary Xavier de Maistre, and the English poet-artist William Blake all engage differently with this instability and openness, created by the radical. Peter Krilles delineates the complex interactions of Novalis's project of a new historically dynamic epistemology, which is based on a synthetic inclusion of the aesthetic in conceptions of knowledge, with Enlightened concepts of encyclopaedic and scientific knowledge, while Dirk Götsche highlights, through examining Jean Paul's poetic approach to the temporality and historicity of human existence and understanding, the intersections of his complex critical handling of *both* the Enlightenment and the Revolution in his satirical novel *Quintus Fixlein*, which critiques the time-driven revolutionary impetus alongside notions of historical stability. David McCallam outlines the challenges

the newly fluid dichotomies present to the politically reactionary writer by analyzing the literary devices used in Xavier de Maistre's novel *Voyage autour de ma chambre*, which seem to turn the novel's (radical) counter-revolutionary sentiments towards undermining its conservative message, making the radical explicitly and subliminally present in opposing guises. And finally, Sibylle Erle shows how Blake's groundbreaking text-image compositions are crucially influenced by a secularizing shift of the inspirational source from divine to human, radicalizing the Enlightenment belief in limitless human potential, while promoting the non-rational, soon to be Romantic, force of inspiration.

Many of the points made in the individual essays about the intellectual, creative, and political developments, about the receptions and adaptations of cultural imports during the Revolutionary decade in the individual countries build on and confirm existing research. The innovative impetus of this collection, however, derives from its comparative approach – *within* individual essays and *between* the essays – which makes visible previously overlooked common ground and the diverse multiplicity of interpretations of the paradigm shifts experienced in the 1790s. At the same time the volume highlights the – often highly contingent – shifting of meaning in these processes of interpreting. In particular, the volume demonstrates the intellectual and political malleability of notions of radicalism and provides new insights into the emerging link between the political and the aesthetic – in its very different manifestations – during the 1790s. In this it hopes to stimulate more comparative and interdisciplinary research in this area, which will go on to highlight the influence of national demarcations *and* make the case for transnational viewpoints.

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