

The French Revolution in Cultural History

Abstract

A cultural approach to the study of the French Revolution took off in the 1980s as a result of the coincidence of new intellectual and political currents with celebrations of the Revolution's bicentennial. By the turn of the new century, both the study of cultural phenomena (theatre, art and architecture, fashion, etc.) before, during, and after 1789 and an approach to social and political upheaval that stressed symbolism and the production of meaning had thoroughly remade mainstream understandings of this vital period in modern history. But a backlash was already underway. This article explores, first, the emergence and flourishing of the so-called cultural turn in French revolutionary studies between the 1980s and the present, including recent work on the study of race and gender, emotion, experience, violence, and conspiracy thinking. It then investigates the equally recent critiques that this approach has generated, especially among those interested in rethinking economic questions from a post- or modified Marxist perspective and/or decentering France in conceptions of modernity. The author hypothesizes that contemporary challenges to democracy in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere around the globe should, and will, lead to new questions both about what happened in France at the close of the eighteenth century and about how we should write about this moment of upheaval going forward.

Major developments in historiography, just as much as in history itself, are frequently the result of essentially random conjunctures. In the course of the 1980s, the so-called “new cultural history” took shape, at first largely in the United States, in response to Geertzian anthropology, the poststructuralism of Derrida and Foucault, feminist theory, and more indirectly, the “culture wars” over identity politics being played out in Washington and beyond. At the same time, a looming bicentennial directed renewed attention to that old chestnut of historical scholarship, the French Revolution, in the years leading up to 1989. The result was the flourishing of what we now call “the cultural history of the French Revolution.”¹

Indeed, by the end of that decade, there were actually two important versions of this trend, each associated with a distinct understanding of culture, though clearly substantial overlaps existed between them. One focused on the history of what had happened in that particular sphere of human life that has

traditionally been bracketed off as culture—as distinguished from politics, markets, or social life more generally. Scholars took up with a vengeance the project of historicizing the realm of the arts and the aesthetic but also the expanding world of entertainment, on the one hand, and pedagogy and communication, on the other, in the era of the Revolution. The result was a spate of wonderful books and shorter studies of literature, fine art, theater, dance, opera, song, architecture and design, festivals, fashion, and sometimes also the press, schooling initiatives, and even churches as they became enmeshed in the political drama of the last decade or so of the eighteenth century. Some of the first and most influential included Mona Ozouf's analysis of revolutionary festivals (1976), Thomas Crow's account of the emergence of public painting exhibitions known as salons (1985), Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche's introduction to the "revolution in print" (1989), and Emmet Kennedy's synthetic *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (1989), which had the virtue of surveying high and low (popular) culture alike with chapters on topics from theater to iconoclasm to pornography.² Many of the best studies that followed in the wake of these titles similarly analyzed not only the political content of texts and images—or "representations" in the parlance of their moment—but also the institutional reorganization, forms of audience participation, and relationship to public opinion that these cultural initiatives involved before and after 1789. That was especially the case following the belated publication of Jürgen Habermas's seminal 1962 *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* in French, then English.³ Historiography in the 1990s was chock full of books concerned variously with the "cultural politics," "cultural history," "popular culture and politics," and "political culture" of prerevolutionary and revolutionary France.⁴

At precisely the same moment, though, the new cultural history of the French Revolution took off in a second sense. This second strain was more focused on the study of mentality and meaning-making writ large, that is, on the invention, expression, dissemination, and absorption of ideas, beliefs, and attitudes not only in cultural institutions or arenas (long already the domain of the history of culture) or even in formal, systematic philosophical texts (long the domain of the history of ideas). Instead, historians' attention turned—also under the broad rubric of cultural history—to symbolic programs and forms of signification operative in political and social life more broadly. The new cultural history extended its purview to the study of the habits, rituals, and conventions of speech and behavior associated with quotidian existence in an era of revolution, as well as to the enactment of new forms of politics in streets, clubs, assembly halls, and at court.

Some of this new research put a spotlight on those newly in charge—political leaders of various kinds—and the old paradigms, as well as startlingly new ones, that these (primarily) men drew upon in an effort to impose a "revolutionary" culture on the new nation. Such studies frequently took as their subject regeneration, the great "civilizing mission" of the late eighteenth century aimed at transforming and homogenizing the daily life of French people so that they felt themselves citizens and, ultimately, republicans. Other variants focused more on ordinary people—including women, since the home was as much at stake in revolutionary culture as the public sphere—taking matters into their own hands and erasing, resisting, circumventing, reconfiguring, upholding, or repoliticizing the representations, signs, and symbols imposed upon them by,

first, the monarchy and church and, then, new municipal and national governments and local political organizations.

Either way, for self-described cultural historians in this vein, what was increasingly also being called the study of “political culture” demanded particular attention to the analysis of the conventions associated with political language and the business of naming. Keith Baker emerged in the 1980s as the most influential exponent in the Anglophone world of this discourse-centered approach (see Jack Censer’s essay in this forum for more on this subject).⁵ Conceptual historians in the German tradition also played an important role in drawing attention to the new vocabulary of the revolutionary moment, as did French semiotic historians like Jacques Guilhaumou interested in language and power.⁶ But this second strand of cultural history was not limited to the analysis of rhetoric. Historians of political culture, it was widely agreed, also needed to recover and pay attention to visual messages, to nonlinguistic aural signs, to bodily and physical expression, to emotional cues, even to unarticulated assumptions and expectations. All of this was premised on the idea that humans are motivated, at least in moments of profound upheaval, not just by rational calculations about their material interests but also by affective ties and sensibilities, habits, and norms, and they routinely draw on nonlinguistic signs and systems of meaning to explain themselves right along with words. As Baker himself pointed out in a memorable passage in his *Inventing the French Revolution* (1990), when a rioter picked up a rock to throw in protest, he was engaging in a symbolic act just as much as when a priest picked up a sacramental vessel or, for that matter, a philosopher picked up a pen. All history, including actions and events, is mediated through symbolic forms.

This kind of thinking had already crucially informed the path-breaking work of Robert Darnton in *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (1984), in which the coming of the Revolution of 1789 functions as the backdrop to almost all the chapters, and of Lynn Hunt, in the first half of her *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (also 1984), in which the Revolution comes to life as a struggle for control over both linguistic and nonlinguistic signs.⁷ Both texts quickly became classics, reorienting the discipline of history more broadly but especially shaping writing about late-eighteenth-century France. The impact of this redefinition of cultural history continued to be felt in Anglophone scholarship from the bicentennial to the beginning of the current century, as is evident from the scholarship of Dorinda Outram on the politics of the body, Sarah Maza and William Reddy on the rise of sentimentalism and changes in “emotional regimes,” David Bell on the emergence of the feeling of national belonging, and Colin Jones on reading, consumption, and the experience of choice, among many other examples.⁸ Continental alternatives soon included Antoine de Bacque’s discussion of corporeal metaphors in revolutionary discourse, and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt on the political uses of the image of the Bastille, as well as Alain Corbin’s studies of subjectivity, the senses, and the “social imaginary” and Roger Chartier’s synthetic but equally original *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* (1991), which suggested provocatively that the revolutionaries might well have retroactively created the idea of Enlightenment culture for their own needs.⁹

What I am sketching here, though, as something like an institutional approach to culture, in the first case, versus a largely anthropological one, in the

second, is certainly too neat.¹⁰ In fact, the two strands of the cultural history of the French Revolution that emerged in the late 1980s and soldiered on into the new century share a number of key premises, all with lasting implications for the way historians view the French Revolution and, for that matter, culture *tout court*.

First, political and social revolutions can be, and are, caused in good part by prior cultural shifts. In the case of the French Revolution, those cultural antecedents have been identified as the rise of a public sphere (and public opinion) apart from the court or state; the development of new kinds of urban consumer culture; the emergence of novel gender norms; changes in habits of listening, looking, reading, communicating, and experiencing emotions, including both pleasure and fear; and shifts in religious practice and belief—all of which require that historians explore the culture of the late Old Regime and Enlightenment within the same framework as the Revolution itself. Second, revolutions take place within and through changes in political culture. Or, to put it slightly differently, culture is a driver of sociopolitical revolution, not simply a superstructural reflection of its values. Indeed, in the stronger version, they are inseparable, as in Emmet Kennedy's statement in the opening to *A Cultural History of the Revolution*: "The French Revolution was a profound cultural event . . . a revolution in culture." This is true despite the fact that there was also much continuity in practice between the old regime and the new, and not all the changes that Kennedy documents survived past 1800 or even 1794.¹¹ According to this way of thinking, even historians focused on social conflict or political regime change cannot ignore the study of culture, either as a specific arena of human action or as the abstract realm of meaning production, except at the risk of getting history wrong. Third and finally, revolutions have long-term cultural consequences, stimulating all sorts of secondary phenomena, from the rise of new kinds of ephemeral fashions—say, for diaphanous gowns or for novels about particular kinds of heroes—to new notions of the self or even the growth of the standardized coinages, flags, and vernacular language education associated with the modern nation-state.

Thus, we might still be debating whether François Furet was correct that, by the late 1970s, the French Revolution was "over" in terms of an active political program (and as I write, in many ways that statement looks less sure than ever).¹² But it was widely agreed in the aftermath of the bicentennial that the Revolution was not only an excellent locus for a historian eager to explore the links between politics and culture. The Revolution of 1789 was *the* model in modern history for the way social and political revolution depended for their coming into being, efficacy, and effects on the rise of new symbols, social practices, and other forms of culture. Some historians pointed out that the foundations for such claims actually lay deep in the epistemology of the eighteenth century, when sensationalist thinkers had insisted that a new society, with a new kind of man and woman and a new kind of political order at its center, could only come about and be maintained through the re-education of manners and habits, starting with the senses. This recovered eighteenth-century conception of the possibility of cultural transformation was, however, reinforced in the 1980s and 90s by the considerably newer, post-World War II epistemology undergirding the rise of cultural history more broadly: a linguistic or semiotic theory of social life in which culture had causal, determinative weight in the

world.¹³ It was this convergence—of developments in theoretical and real-world politics, along with a moment of calendar-determined commemoration—that gave us the flowering of the cultural history of the French Revolution in the waning years of the twentieth century.

But what has happened since? What is the status of the cultural history of the Revolution now? In certain ways, it makes sense to speak of triumph. Together, these two closely related strands of cultural history into which I have also rolled a kind of cultural-intellectual history focused on the analysis of discourse, have been remarkably successful in replacing not just the classic social account of the French Revolution derived from the writings of Marx but most other approaches as well. Cultural analysis has gone mainstream, becoming at least a part of most discussions of the French Revolution. In fact, the early years of the twenty-first century have seen a further expansion of the cultural approach to this moment as historians have used it to tackle new areas of investigation, typically derived from the preoccupations of the present.

This trend has entailed an explosion of cultural histories of the idea and practice of racial difference, often in connection to studies of slave revolts and revolutions in Saint-Domingue and the French Caribbean in the late eighteenth century, a topic long neglected by historians and literary scholars focused too exclusively on metropolitan France (on this, see the contribution of Paul Cheney to this forum).¹⁴ It has also meant new attention to the cultural foundations and implications of the history of war, with a particular emphasis on the history of both state-sponsored and extra-state violence and the aggressions and anxieties that both engendered and were produced by it.¹⁵ Moreover, as I detailed in a 2009 article on the state of revolutionary historiography twenty years after the bicentennial, an intensified focus on “experience” in an anthropological vein has continued to generate studies of the collective emotional currents that, first, helped to produce and legitimate the Terror and, then, left a culture of trauma in the Terror’s wake in France and beyond.¹⁶ In a few such cases, the affective turn, which has meant new attention to the effects of literature, has been marshalled to reopen the history of human rights as an international discourse, including the rights of women.¹⁷ Historians have, of late, even encouraged us to think broadly of an “age of cultural revolutions” that occurred on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean as new and old states became diplomatically and financially entangled in new ways. And while some scholars have used this trans-national focus to emphasize the rise of national distinctions in the realm of culture, others now draw our attention to commonalities derived from shared cultural sources and shared circuits of cultural as well as commercial exchange before, during, and after 1789–99.¹⁸

Indeed, it can sometimes seem nowadays as if there is no topic that cannot be recovered, probed, and ultimately justified as a constituent element of a cultural account of the French Revolutionary era. Recently we have even been treated to the quite persuasive claim (on the part of the great British historian Colin Jones) that late eighteenth-century France underwent a “smile revolution” premised on period changes in notions of politeness, ideals of emotional expressivity, and the practice of dentistry alike.¹⁹ This is history that comes with an ironic subtext: that culture, in the sense of learned behavior and practices of signification, helps explain even that which would seem to be most fundamental and prior to culture (hence the “invention” of everything from the smile to

society, identity, and politics itself) and that, conversely, studies of even the most seemingly trivial aspects of a culture—such as the new taste for teeth in portraiture—can reveal profound truths about core values and meaning-making and their evolution.

Yet, that said, even way back at the time of the bicentennial in 1989, a good number of historians had a strong sense that there was also something problematic about this way of making sense of the French Revolution. A note of skepticism (“doubts and queries,” in his terms) was already evident in Chartier’s path breaking *Cultural Origins of the French Revolution* of 1991.²⁰ The real pushback began in the mid to late 1990s, led in good part by William Sewell, who was himself strongly associated with the rise of the new cultural history in the previous decade.²¹ The charge was along the lines of the baby having been thrown out with the bathwater. The new demand was for some kind of rapprochement, particularly between the structural history of the development of capitalism and related long-term social trends, on the one hand, and the history of the Revolution considered in terms of political culture, on the other.

Since the millennium, this has given rise to a new kind of cultural history that is much more deeply integrated with social, legal, and especially economic history and has much in common with what is sometimes called, in the American context, the “new history of capitalism.” One key example is Suzanne Desan’s *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (2004), in which changes in ideas and cultural norms are integrated with the study of legal changes and changes in the organization of households.²² Recent books more directly focused on economic questions as, at once, ideological and semiotic but also material, include those by Michael Kwass, Claire Crowston, and Rebecca Spang.²³ All want to restore political economy to the forefront of the Revolution but neither exclusively as a question of discourse nor with a classic Marxist focus on the means of production. Spang’s concentration on the new paper money of the Revolution, to take one example, allows her to explore what people actually *did* with an object that was at once purely symbolic and deeply physical—and the resulting disjuncture between the imagination of revolutionary policy makers and everyday economic practices. The idea behind all of this work is, as Sewell puts it, “to reintegrate the rhythms and effects of economic life back into the study of history” and to return the history of capitalism to the space that it had once occupied before cultural history, in its turn against Marxist explanatory models, effectively papered it over.²⁴

A second historiographic development comes out of a different critique, albeit an equally political one: that even though French revolutionary culture has increasingly been seen since the turn of the century as a product and effect of colonial entanglements, especially in the sugar colony of Saint-Domingue, the resulting scholarship has done too little to decenter Europe—and, specifically, France as a nation-state—from understandings of the birth of the modern age. This criticism, derived in part from classic works of postcolonial and subaltern studies, has been particularly pronounced in the work of scholars whose primary focus has been neither metropolitan nor revolutionary France. That includes Laurent Dubois, Gary Wilder, and especially the historically inclined political philosopher Susan Buck-Morss, whose influential *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (2009) has urged historians to think about what it would mean to put the emancipation and the revolution in colonial Saint-Domingue rather than

France at the center of their narratives of the origins of modernity and its human rights principles.²⁵ Buck-Morss looks to the silences in European philosophy for guidance in this project. Others look to material culture for a way in.²⁶ The shared goal, though, is to give the history of the revolutionary era back its contemporary relevance, which is to say, its (lost) political bite.

But will these scholarly shifts do the trick to, in some sense, “revive” the study of the French Revolution as a subject of contemporary significance? Or is that question itself obsolete? Recent scholarship, with few exceptions, has not had the reach beyond specialists that the work of Ozouf, Darnton, Hunt, and Chartier had in the 1980s and early 90s. Perhaps this says more about external factors than about the way that the history of the French Revolution is being written about at present; France has, after all, been largely displaced from the global popular imagination in recent years, and its history has largely followed suit. Perhaps this is because no really new paradigm or even approach has been offered since the heyday of cultural history. A recent volume called *Scripting Revolution*, assembled in the wake of the Arab Spring of 2010, promises to resuscitate the study of revolutions as a political form that moves across time rather than space, with the French Revolution as a central example of a type, but it does so largely according to a discursive model, associated primarily with the work of Keith Baker, that is now several decades old.²⁷ Have we reached a point at which neither our methods nor our claims are fresh enough to make readers with more than antiquarian interest take note?

In the end, though, what happens outside the writing of history is what ends up moving historiography and historical methods in new directions—just as it did in the late 1980s when the new cultural history was getting off the ground. As I write, in Year Two of the Trump regime and Year One of the Macron moment and against a backdrop of a near-constant conversation about the fragility of republics, the threats of growing inequality and statelessness, and resurgent populism, there is the strong possibility that we will have to reconsider yet again our well-established ways of understanding transitions in and out of democracy, starting with the Revolution of 1789. And we will need to do so with the present fully in mind. It is telling, for example, that an interest in the roots and effects of conspiracy thinking in stimulating political and social revolution has recently come back to the fore.²⁸ So, too, is the renewed attention to contingency, serendipity, and accident within the larger patterns of the past. As Pierre Serna aptly points out in his late rejoinder to Furet in *Pour quoi faire la Révolution* (2012), the French Revolution continues to offer historians a “laboratory” of sorts for thinking about big political questions in the here and now.²⁹ New issues in the present stimulate new questions about the past, the better to help us ultimately think freshly about the world around us today and in the future. Such renewals should, in principle, also lead us to ask ourselves what a cultural approach reveals—and what it misses or leaves unanswered. For one hopes the French Revolution will remain a particularly productive laboratory for thinking about exactly *how* to write history going forward too.

Endnotes

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1. On emergence of the “new” cultural history in the 1980s, see the two important volumes entitled *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (Oakland, CA, 1989) and *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria Bunnell and Lynn Hunt (Oakland, CA, 1999), as well as Philippe Poirrier, ed., *L'Histoire culturelle: un tournant mondial?* (Dijon, 2008); Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge, UK, 2004); and James W. Cook, “The Kids Are All Right: On the ‘Turning’ of Cultural History,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2012): 746–71. On the bicentennial and its effects on scholarship and public perception alike in France, see the two volumes of Steven Kaplan, *Farewell Revolution* (Ithaca, NY, 1995). There have been many efforts subsequently to describe and to take stock of the new cultural history of the French Revolution specifically, from its roots to its possible future offshoots; among the more recent, see Suzanne Desan, “What’s After Political Culture? Recent French Revolutionary Historiography,” *French Historical Studies* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2000): 163–96; the essays collected in the special issue “‘89: Then and Now,” *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2009), including Sophia Rosenfeld, “Thinking about Feeling, 1789–1799” and Lynn Hunt, “The Experience of Revolution”; and David Bell and Yair Mintzker, “Introduction” to their edited volume *Rethinking the Age of Revolutions: France and the Birth of the Modern World* (New York, forthcoming 2018).

2. See Mona Ozouf, *Festivals and the French Revolution*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge, MA, 1988 [1976]); Thomas Crow, *Painters and Public Life in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (New Haven, CT, 1985); Robert Darnton and Daniel Roche, eds., *Revolution in Print: The Press in France, 1775–1800* (Oakland, CA, 1989); and Emmet Kennedy, *A Cultural History of the French Revolution* (New Haven, CT, 1989).

3. Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Life*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA, 1989 [1962 in the German original; 1978 in French]). For a summary of the impact on historical scholarship, see James Van Melton Horn, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, UK 2001).

4. For these various terms, see Carla Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary France, 1789–1810* (Oakland, CA, 1991); James Johnson, *Listening in Paris: A Cultural History* (Oakland, CA, 1995); Laura Mason, *Singing the Revolution: Popular Culture and Politics, 1787–1799* (Ithaca, NY, 1996); and Jeffrey Ravel, *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680–1791* (Ithaca, NY, 1999). For an (earlier) French equivalent, see Serge Bianchi, *La Révolution culturelle de l’an II: élites et peuple, 1789–1799* (Paris, 1982).

5. See Keith Michael Baker, *Inventing the French Revolution: Essays on French Political Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1990), as well as the slightly earlier, four-volume series based on a prebicentennial conference: *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, esp. vol. 2: *The Political Culture of the French Revolution*, eds. Keith Baker and Colin Lucas (Oxford, 1988).

6. See, for example, Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt, eds., *Handbuch politisch-sozialen Grundbegriffe in Frankreich, 1680–1820* (Oldenbourg, 1985–); and Jacques Guilhamou, *La Langue politique et la Révolution française: De l'événement à la raison linguistique* (Paris, 1989).

7. Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York, 1984); and Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture and Class in the French Revolution* (Oakland, CA, 1984).

8. Influential works in this vein, from 1989 to 2001, include: Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution* (New Haven, CT, 1989); Sarah Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Celebres of Prerevolutionary France* (Oakland, CA, 1993); Colin Jones,

“The Great Chain of Buying: Medical Advertisement, the Bourgeois Public Sphere and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *American Historical Review* 101, no. 1 (Feb. 1996): 13–40; David Bell, *The Cult of the Nation in France: Inventing Nationalism, 1680–1800* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); and William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, 2001). While beyond the scope of this article, it is important to note that literary scholars, inspired by the broader historicist turn of these same years, also contributed to this growing body of revolutionary scholarship; see, for example, Marie-Hélène Huet, *Mourning Glory: The Will of the French Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA, 1997).

9. French approaches to the cultural history of the Revolution can also be traced back to the study of *mentalité* made famous by the Annales School. More recent work that builds on this tradition and, in innovative ways, introduces the problem of the relationship of culture to politics in the eighteenth century, includes Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination*, trans. Miriam Kochan (Cambridge, MA, 1986 [1982]) and Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane (Durham, NC, 1991 [1990]). See too, for subsequent approaches building on different antecedents, Antoine De Baecque, *The Body Politic: Corporeal Metaphor in Revolutionary France, 1770–1800*, trans. Charlotte Mandel (Stanford, CA, 1997 [1993]); and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink and Rolf Reichardt, *The Bastille: A History of a Symbol of Despotism*, trans. Norbert Schürer (Durham, NC, 1997 [1990]).

10. For a different attempt to lay out the various approaches to culture, see William H. Sewall, “The Concept(s) of Culture,” originally in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, republished as chapter five in his *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (Chicago, 2005).

11. Kennedy, *Cultural History*, xxi–xxii. In a new preface to the 2004 edition of her *Politics, Culture and Class*, Hunt expands this idea by identifying culture as the means through which the social and the political become linked.

12. See Part I of Francois Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution*, trans. Elborg Forster (Cambridge, 1981 [1978]).

13. On the epistemological theories of the eighteenth century and their relationship to the linguistic or semiotic turn of the late twentieth century, see esp. Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA, 2001); and David Bates, *Enlightenment Aberrations: Error and Revolution in France* (Ithaca, NY, 2002).

14. For recent efforts to uncover the cultural causes, dynamic, and consequences of the Haitian Revolution, see, for example, Laurent Dubois, “‘Our Three Colors’: The King, the Republic, and the Political Culture of Slave Revolution in Saint-Domingue,” *Historical Reflections / Réflexions historiques* 29, no. 1 (Slavery and Citizenship in the Age of the Atlantic Revolutions) (Spring 2003): 83–102; David Geggus, “Print Culture and the Haitian Revolution: The Written and Spoken Word,” in *Liberty! Égalité! Independencia! Print Culture, Enlightenment and Revolution in the Americas, 1776–1838*, eds. David S. Shields and Mariselle Meléndez (Worcester, MA, 2007), 88–92; and Doris Garraway, ed., *Tree of Liberty: Cultural Legacies of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World* (Charlottesville, VA, 2008).

15. See, for example, Jean-Clément Martin, *Violence et révolution. Essai sur la naissance d'un mythe national* (Paris, 2006); David Bell, *The First Total War; Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston, 2007); and Mary Ashburn Miller, *A Natural History of Revolution: Violence and Nature in the French Revolutionary Imagination, 1789–1794* (Ithaca, NY, 2011).

16. In addition to the works cited and discussed in Rosenfeld, “Thinking about Feeling, 1789–1799,” see such recent works as: Sophie Wahnich, *Les Émotions, la Révolution française et le présent: Exercices pratiques de conscience historique* (Paris, 2009); David Andress, ed., *Experiencing the Revolution* (Oxford, 2013), esp. the articles of Marisa Linton and Ronen Steinberg dealing with trauma; Haim Burstin, *Révolutionnaires. Pour une anthropologie politique de la Révolution française* (Paris, 2013); and Guillaume Mazeau, “Emotions politiques: La Révolution française,” in *Des Lumières à la fin du XIX siècle*, vol. 2 of *Histoire des émotions*, ed. Alain Corbin (Paris, 2016), though an interest in the collective psychology of revolutionary actors actually dates back to the work of Georges Lefebvre and, before that, Gustave LeBon, Emile Tarde and arguably Jules Michelet.

17. See, for example, Lynn Hunt, *Inventing Human Rights: A History* (New York, 2008), which draws attention to empathetic novel reading in the decades before the Revolution, and Dan Edelstein, *The Terror of Natural Right: Republicanism, the Culture of Nature, and the French Revolution* (Chicago, 2009), which, quite differently, takes seriously enduring literary myths about the Golden Age in reshaping natural rights thinking.

18. Dror Wahrman and Colin Jones, eds., *The Age of Cultural Revolutions: Britain and France, 1750–1820* (Oakland, CA, 2002); Leora Auslander, *Cultural Revolutions: Everyday Life in Britain, North America and France* (Oakland, CA, 2008); Janet Polasky, *Revolutions without Borders: The Call to Liberty in the Atlantic World* (New Haven, CT, 2015); and Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, “Atlantic Cultures and the Age of Revolution,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 74, no. 4 (October 2017): 667–96. Similar kinds of cultural history have, by now, long made their mark in the writing of the histories of the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century revolutions of North and South America as well; for examples, see the notes to Perl-Rosenthal, “Atlantic Cultures.”

19. Colin Jones, *The Smile Revolution in Eighteenth-Century France* (Oxford, 2014).

20. Chartier, *The Cultural Origins of the French Revolution*, 2.

21. Sewell, *Logics of History*. The book that originally made Sewell so central to the development of a cultural history of the French Revolution—in this case, out of social and labor history—was his *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980).

22. Suzanne Desan, *The Family on Trial in Revolutionary France* (Oakland, CA, 2004).

23. Claire Haru Crowston, *Credit, Fashion, Sex: Economies of Regard in Old Regime France* (Durham, NC, 2013); Michael Kwass, *Contraband: Louis Mandrin and the Making of a Global Underground* (Cambridge, MA, 2014) and earlier articles on consumer revolution; and Rebecca Spang, *Stuff and Money in the Time of the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

24. William Sewell, “The Empire of Fashion and the Rise of Capitalism in Eighteenth-Century France,” *Past and Present* 206, no. 1 (2010): 46.

25. Laurent Dubois, “An Atlantic Revolution,” *French Historical Studies* 32, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 655–61; Gary Wilder, “Unthinking French History: Colonial Studies Beyond National Identity,” in *After the Imperial Turn: Thinking with and through the Nation*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), 125–43 and “From Optic to Topic: The Foreclosure Effect in Historiographic Turns,” *American Historical Review* 117, no. 3 (June 2010): 723–45; and Susan Buck-Morss, *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2009). This is a decidedly different project from attempting to place the French Revolution in a world history context, i.e., Alan Forrest and Matthias Middell, eds., *The Routledge Companion to the French Revolution in World History* (New York and London, 2015) or Lynn Hunt, Suzanne Desan, and William Nelson, eds., *The French Revolution in Global Perspective* (Ithaca, NY, 2013). Inspiration for the former derives from such classics

of postcolonial thought as C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (London, 1938); Aimé Césaire, *Toussaint L'Ouverture: La Révolution française et le problème colonial* (Paris, 1960); and Louis Sala-Molins, *The Dark Side of the Light: Slavery and the French Enlightenment*, trans. John Conteh-Morgan (Minneapolis, MN, 2006 [1992]).

26. Ian Coller, Natacha Coquery, and Richard Flamein, "Ce que les cultures matérielles peuvent apporter à l'historiographie de la Révolution française," *Annales historiques de la Révolution française* 383 (2016): 1–20.

27. Keith Michael Baker and Dan Edelstein, eds., *Scripting the Revolution: A Historical Approach to the Comparative Study of Revolutions* (Stanford, CA, 2015).

28. See, in particular, Timothy Tackett, *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2015) in which the spread of both conspiracy thinking and false news are central concerns. Slightly earlier work on this topic includes Peter R. Campbell, Thomas Kaiser, and Marisa Lindon, eds., *Conspiracy in the French Revolution* (Manchester, UK, 2007) and Philippe Münch, "La Foule révolutionnaire, l'imaginaire du complot et la violence fondatrice: aux origines de la nation française (1789)," *Conserveries mémorielles* 8 (2010), <http://journals.openedition.org/cm/725>. It is worth noting too the publication in 2012 in French of Richard Hofstadter's classic on the subject of the sources of American conspiracy thinking as *Le style paranoïaque. Théories du complot et droite radicale en Amérique*, with an excerpt appearing in *Le Monde diplomatique* (September 2012). The current moment is likely to produce more in this vein; see too Sophia Rosenfeld, *Democracy and Truth: A Short History* (Philadelphia, PA, forthcoming 2018).

29. Jean-Luc Chappey, Bernard Gainot, et al., *Pour quoi faire la révolution?* (Marseille, 2012).