

Starting point as well as result of this inspiring book is the abrupt beginning of modern times around 1800. In line with other narratives told since the days of Danton, the author emphasizes the great "rupture" caused by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era. But his focus is not on political and economical

do not learn about his view on the tragic nature of the civilizing process causing tremendous "losses" and that Rousseau's *oeuvre*—together with that of his opponent Voltaire—had an enormous impact on the revolutionaries. This leads to the question how a socio-political *caesura* could engender a shift in deep rooted mental structures, or to use the terms of Braudel: why should we assume that in the case of the French Revolution the "surface" formed the "longue durée"? An answer given here—and verified by numerous citations—is that the contemporaries were very aware of the fundamental break in the *conditio humana* around 1800. However, *permanent* change in combination with the perception of the present as an *incomparably* changing time is part and parcel of modernity. Already during the Reformation people felt the order was turning upside down ("the world is bottomless, money governs everything," as an Anabaptist put it). The French Revolution bore many elements of modern thinking as well as of traditional chiliasm; although certainly a watershed in history, its marked singularity is only part of the truth and so is its claimed role as a cause in history.

The book deals with "our invention and possession of the past" (p. 1). The talk of "invention" is popular with historians; an empty phrase—what has *not* been invented once?—to signal that something new has occurred. But the assertion of a fundamental novelty remains daring—at least in cultural and especially in intellectual history. From my own studies on the emergence of tourism as a time travel (which to my delight have a great deal in common with Fritzsche's findings) I learned to handle the word "new" with care. Convincingly the author shows the spread and formation of a romantic, nostalgic, melancholic mentality from 1800 onward. But he falls silent when it comes to the discourses before. That the disappointment with *la terreur* and the French occupation led to romanticism is a widely held in the histories of politics, arts, and literature. However, I would suggest regarding enlightenment and romanticism as twins rather than as sequented movements. At times one is prevalent, at times the other. Both they were embedded in the very same "modern" notion of time and history, expressing opposing intellectual and emotional attitudes toward this notion. Inspired by Freud, Norbert Elias mentions somewhere that these opposing attitudes are usually mixed in many ways; this is exactly what the deep ambiguity of modern mentality is about. The approach that emphasizes subsequent, completely different conceptions of the world, instead of two linked, simultaneous ones, cannot grasp this phenomenon. Therefore, to add a last point, Fritzsche believes that it has been only since the French Revolution that history has extended "the concept of contemporaneity across the entire globe" and so prepared the ground for providing "all people with political power" (p. 217)—as if there had been no idea of a universal "progress" aiming at a globalized "humanity" which has been challenged *after* 1800: In the wake of the romantic tide historicism—which is as far as I see not mentioned in the book—rejected the universal "philosophy of history" à la Voltaire as a mere construct, preaching the singularity and incomparability of epochs and cultures. It was historicism that separated the past from the present on theoretical grounds (since there were no inherent laws in history). Instead of making good use of this support for his arguments, Peter Fritzsche offers a rather misleading political praise of the

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romantic-historicistic conception. But whatsoever—my questions and suggestions only underline how inspiring *Stranded in the Present* is: a brilliant study on the history of the making of remembrance and of our feelings toward the past.