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FORUM: COMPARING REVOLUTIONS
On Arno Mayer's *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions*

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From the Editors

This forum, “Comparing Revolutions,” introduces a comparative dimension to the occasional series, “Thinking History, Doing History,” by featuring Arno Mayer’s book, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (2000). The five essays published here originated at a colloquium about Mayer’s book held at the Institute for French Studies of New York University on 1 December 2000. We would like to thank Edward Berenson, the director of the Institute, for organizing this event, and his colleague, Herrick Chapman, the editor of *French Politics, Culture and Society*, for cosponsoring it. We would also like to thank all eight of the participants who gave papers at this colloquium: David Bell, Sheila Fitzpatrick, Yanni Kotsonis, Arno Mayer, Mary Nolan, William G. Rosenberg, Timothy Tackett, and Charles Tilly.

The contributors to this forum include a German historian, Mary Nolan, and a Russian historian, Sheila Fitzpatrick, as well as two French historians, David Bell and Timothy Tackett, and a transnational historian, Arno Mayer himself. Our goal in selecting Mayer’s book for a forum that moves beyond the boundaries of French history, as traditionally defined, is not only to situate the French Revolution in comparative perspective. It is also to foster reflection and debate on continuities and discontinuities in the history of political violence in Europe between the late-eighteenth-century *age of revolution* and the early-twentieth-century *age of extremes*, to use Eric Hobsbawm’s characterizations for these historical epochs.

The forum begins with Mary Nolan’s comments, which situate *The Furies* within the historiographical and thematic context of Mayer’s earlier works. While Nolan focuses attention on Mayer’s analysis of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence in twentieth-century Europe, David Bell and Timothy Tackett address their comments primarily to Mayer’s analysis of violence and terror in the French Revolution. Sheila Fitzpatrick returns to the twentieth century in her comments on the role of vengeance and ressentiment in the Russian Revolution and suggests how this psychological dynamic of violence might be investigated in the French Revolution also. In his reply to the com-
mentators, Mayer highlights underlying methodological principles and theoretical foundations of his work as a historian, answers specific criticisms of his interpretation of violence and terror in the French Revolution, and concludes with some reflections inspired by Fitzpatrick’s analysis of vengeance and *ressentiment*.

**Jo Burr Margadant and Ted W. Margadant, Editors**