Recent debates around the French Revolution have questioned the need for an overall paradigm of interpretation, as the certainties underpinning both ‘classic’ and ‘revisionist’ views have faded. In Experiencing the French Revolution authors argue against a single ‘paradigm quest’, in favour of a plurality of approaches to underscore the diverse ways in which the turbulent changes of late eighteenth-century France can be explored.

From broad cultural trends to very personal trajectories, a team of experts offers fresh perspectives on the individual and collective experience of Revolution, both within and outside France. Using a range of methodologies, including biographical studies of key individuals and groups, archival studies of structures and institutions, and new sources available from digital humanities archives, contributors provide:

- new insights into the clandestine book trade of pre-revolutionary France, and the surprising effectiveness of Louis XVI’s state control
- a reappraisal of Robespierre, whose opinions were shaped and transformed by years of upheaval
- an exploration of how revolutionary situations inspired both dissent and discipline within the new citizen armies
- an analysis of the revolutionary shockwaves felt beyond France, and how its currents were exploited for national political ends in Belgium, England and Wales.

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‘An outstanding group of scholars at the cutting edge of current work on the seminal political upheaval of modern history demonstrates that attempts to reinvent overarching orthodoxies will always falter in the face of fresh empirical research.’
[In his introduction] Andress describes the richness of this brilliantly textured volume as the product of a ‘pluralist academic culture’ (p.15). More exuberantly, one might call it fruitful anarchy: long may it continue.’

French History

‘David Andress [...] brings together several of the most creative historians currently working on the period of the French Revolution [and] is to be congratulated for assembling this useful and insightful collection of recent French Revolutionary research’.

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‘[these essays] allow us to reflect on whether we can live with a variety of historical methods and how these can reveal both individual experience and the ‘social or cultural structures’ in which such ‘experiential worlds’ existed’.