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## Learning from France: Ludwig Börne in the 1830s

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In memory of Timothy McFarland<sup>1</sup>

### <L1>Abstract

This chapter considers Ludwig Börne's key contribution to political and literary debates about German national identity in the 1830s. In a similar way to Heinrich Heine, his intellectual colleague and rival, Börne sets out a cosmopolitan agenda for German liberals, calling on them to learn from the progressive politics of the French. He therefore represents a German patriotism that rejects nationalism, seeing France as an example for Germany to follow. Through a close reading of Börne's two masterworks *Briefe aus Paris* (1832–1834, Letters from Paris) and *Menzel der Franzosenfresser* (1837; Menzel: He Eats French People), this chapter shows how Börne advocates an enlightened form of patriotism that emphasizes political rights and reasoned debate, in contrast to Wolfgang Menzel's Romantic, organic conception of German nationhood.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy McFarland taught medieval German literature at University College London (UCL) from 1965–2000. He died in 2013 at the age of 76; his obituary is on the Guardian website. In 2011, when I was a Teaching Fellow at UCL, he told me: "If you're interested in Heine, then you have to read Börne." This essay is dedicated to his memory, in gratitude for his collegiality and for his generosity in insisting that I inherit his Ludwig Börne books.

## <L1>Key Words

Ludwig Börne, Heinrich Heine, Wolfgang Menzel, nationalism, patriotism, cosmopolitanism, France, French Revolution, July Revolution

## <L1>Introduction

The journalist Ludwig Börne (1786–1837) is a key witness in debates about German nationhood in the 1830s. He was born Juda Löw Baruch in the Jewish ghetto in Frankfurt am Main. As a young man, he witnessed the German “wars of liberation” against Napoleon, and soon discovered that the so-called “liberation” of 1815 meant increased political repression. The German Confederation (Deutscher Bund) created by the Congress of Vienna to replace Napoleonic rule was described by the liberal politician Hans Victor von Unruh (1806–86) as “eine allgemeine Polizei- und Versicherungsanstalt gegen die eigenen Völker” [a police and insurance institution directed against its own people; Wehler 2: 367].<sup>2</sup> Metternich’s Europe was an institution designed to guard against democracy; as such it was the principal target of Börne’s political activism. The Karlsbad decrees of 1819 set up a system of political repression and censorship in order to combat the spread of democratic ideas in the German Confederation. Having converted to Protestantism in 1817, Börne worked as a radical liberal journalist from 1818 onwards, arguing that German unification and a truly democratic constitution could only be achieved by the overthrow of the existing political order. Börne’s first journal, *Die Wage. Eine Zeitschrift für Bürgerleben, Wissenschaft und Kunst* [The

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<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all English translations in this chapter are by myself.

Scales: A Newspaper for Civic Life, Science and Art], was suppressed in 1821. Börne moved to Paris after the July Revolution of 1830, and remained there until his death in 1837.<sup>3</sup> Living in Paris gave Börne a frame of reference from which to judge the political backwardness of German lands, and in the early 1830s he was the leading voice of German republicanism in exile.

Börne's political radicalism and his public attacks on Goethe and Heine have always polarised critical opinion, with the result that his contribution to German political culture has often been sidelined.<sup>4</sup> Heine's polemic against Börne in *Ludwig Börne. Eine Denkschrift* (1840) [*Ludwig Börne: A Memorial*] has distorted much of Börne's subsequent reception, and obscured the close affinities between the two authors. Indeed, much literary criticism simply rehearses Heine's presentation of himself as a sensualist and Börne as spiritualist. It is undeniable that the two men had profoundly different outlooks on life. In 1835 Börne reviewed Heine's *De l'Allemagne*, objecting to Heine's diatribe against Christianity and his aristocratic airs (2: 885–903). While Börne disliked Heine's provocative inconsistency, Heine disliked Börne's remorseless ideological consistency. While Börne was drawn to practical political commitment, Heine's highest loyalties were to art and freedom of thought. Their dispositions were also reflected in their literary tastes: Heine preferred Goethe, Börne favoured Jean Paul. These viewpoints could perhaps be traced to their formative years: as Markus Joch points out, Heine was raised in Düsseldorf, which had no Jewish ghetto, while Börne spent his childhood confined in the Frankfurt ghetto, where he experienced anti-Semitism first hand (Joch 28). Nevertheless, Heine's literary memorial "has tended to obscure Börne's achievements as a stylist and to let us forget the great influence he enjoyed in his lifetime" (Sagarra 133).

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<sup>3</sup> Biographies of Börne began to appear soon after his death: the first was Eduard Beurmann's (1837), followed by Karl Gutzkow's biography (1840) and Heine's memorial (1840). These were followed by Conrad Alberti (1886), Michael Holzmann (1888), Ludwig Marcuse (1929), Helmut Bock (1962), and Willi Jasper (2003). The most readable one is Marcuse's, which was reissued in 1968 and is still in print today.

<sup>4</sup> In 2004, Christoph Weiß edited a collection of Börne's criticism of Goethe (see the Bibliography).

As Gert Sautermeister points out, the much-cited antithesis between “spiritual” Börne and “sensual” Heine is based on a misunderstanding which both authors sought to promote; in fact their travel writings share very close similarities (Sautermeister 133). Heine’s admiration for Börne’s wit is evidenced in a letter to Moses Moser of 1 July 1825: “Nur dann ist mir der Witz erträglich wenn er auf einem ernsten Grunde ruht. Darum trifft so gewaltig der Witz Börnes, Jean Pauls u des Narren im Lear” [I only find wit bearable when it rests on a foundation of seriousness. That is why the wit of Börne, Jean Paul and the Fool in *Lear* hits home with such power; *Werke* 20: 203, letter 138]. Wit, for Börne, was an essential aspect of his persona as a political commentator; it was always linked to his calls for political action. To quote Carl Hill: “Tell a joke, change the world” (Hill 230). In the service of his political agenda, Börne developed an astonishing array of rhetorical fireworks. According to Peter Uwe Hohendahl: “[For Börne], the critical act is a dialogue with the public. Börne’s style [...] is designed to accord with this goal: it is terse, sparing but effective in the use of rhetorical features; it avoids abstract formulations whenever an example can make a point more concretely” (Hohendahl, *Criticism* 224).

This chapter discusses Börne’s two masterworks, *Briefe aus Paris* (1832–34; Letters from Paris) and *Menzel der Franzosenfresser* (1837; Menzel: He Eats French People), setting them within the political and intellectual context of their time. It seeks to affirm the continued relevance of Börne’s work and his cosmopolitan version of German national identity. The central argument of this chapter is that Börne calls upon his fellow Germans to learn from the progressive politics of the French. He therefore represents a German patriotism that rejects nationalism, seeing France as an example worthy of emulation. Indeed, Börne regards close political partnership between France and Germany as a precondition for the spread of democracy in Europe as a whole. Furthermore, this chapter aims to let Börne speak as much as possible in his own words. All too often, critics have regarded Börne through the prism of

Heine. One of the purposes of this chapter is to show that Börne is well worth reading in his own right.

### <L1> Loving France in Germany's Interest

Börne draws on the heritage of the Enlightenment and sees the French Revolution of 1789 as a vital step towards the practical realization of the Enlightenment project. For him, France embodies the political modernity that Germany has yet to catch up with. In the 1830s Börne planned a history of the French Revolution, for which he produced around a hundred pages of notes. In the section entitled “Französische Revolution überhaupt, Vergangenheit, Gegenwart, Zukunft” [The French Revolution in General: Past, Present, Future], he writes:

Man darf die französische Revolution nicht als eine isolierte geschichtliche Erscheinung betrachten, die sich in Frankreich allein begab, so daß man die spätere Revolution anderer Länder nur als deren Folgen, als Nachahmung, Ansteckung erklärt. Die französische Revolution war gleich vom Beginne an europäisch. Frankreich war nur das Glied des europäischen Körpers, an dem jene innere Bewegung zuerst sichtbar ward. [...] Betrachtet man die französische Revolution als eine europäische Angelegenheit, so ergibt sich, daß sie durch Napoleon nicht unterbrochen, sondern befördert worden. Er nahm den ganzen Vorrat der französischen Freiheit, ihn als Saatkorn in Europa auszustreuen.

[We must not regard the French Revolution as an isolated historical phenomenon which only took place in France, so that we explain subsequent revolutions in other countries only as knock-on effects, imitation, or contagion. From the very beginning, the French Revolution was a European one. France was only the limb of the European body which first displayed this inner movement. [...] If we consider the French Revolution as a European affair, it follows that it was not interrupted by Napoleon, but promoted by

him. He took the whole stock of French freedom and scattered it across Europe like seed corn; 2: 1095.]

This explains why Börne was so interested in France and its politics: because he saw it as a remedy for the German *Misère*, and for Europe as a whole. Incidentally, Börne only admired Napoleon in so far as he propagated the values of the French Revolution. Unlike Heine, however, Börne had no sympathy for Napoleon as a political leader, rejecting him as a dictator. Instead, he hoped for a future in which France and Germany would eventually become equal partners in the context of a democratic Europe. In *Menzel der Franzosenfresser*, he writes: “Frankreich und Deutschland müssen, um mächtig und unabhängig zu sein, einander ihre Kräfte leihen und eines von dem andern abhängen” [in order to be independent and strong, France and Germany must lend each other their strengths, and depend upon each other; 3: 910]. Paul Michael Lützeler argues that, in his activity as a cultural mediator, Börne hoped to achieve a synthesis between the revolutionary, destructive talents of the French and the constructive energies of the Germans (Lützeler 106).<sup>5</sup> Hence the titles of his journals, *Die Wage* and *La Balance*, suggesting a political equilibrium between the two countries.

While Börne admired French political progress, however, he also loved Germany and celebrated the virtues of the German *Geist* [spirit]. As he put it in 1835: “Aux Allemands le génie, aux Français le talent” [the Germans have genius and the French have talent; 2: 891]. In other words, Börne’s cosmopolitanism was not entirely free of a cultural bias. This bias is perhaps most evident when he denounces the slippery qualities of the French language itself: “cette langue façonnée et corrompue depuis deux siècles par les rois, les diplomates et les aristocrates de toute l’Europe, cette dangereuse langue qui est polyglotte pour le mensonge et

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<sup>5</sup> This is a reference to a passage in *Menzel der Franzosenfresser*, where Börne writes: “Es ist die Aufgabe der Franzosen, das alte baufällige Gebäude der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft zu zerstören und abzutragen; es ist die Aufgabe der Deutschen, das neue Gebäude zu gründen und aufzuführen” [it is the task of the French to demolish the dilapidated building of bourgeois society and clear it away; it is the task of the Germans to plan and construct the new building; 3: 905].

bègue pour la vérité” [this language fashioned and corrupted for two centuries by kings, diplomats and aristocrats from all over Europe; this dangerous language which is polyglot when it comes to lying, but stammers to tell the truth; 2: 888]. As one French critic cleverly observed, Börne “liebte Frankreich im Interesse Deutschlands” [Börne loved France because it was in Germany’s interest to do so; Marcuse 190].

The use of France as a model can be traced back to Börne’s early writings. In an essay of 1808 entitled “Über Theorie und Praxis in der Politik” [On Theory and Praxis in Politics], Börne observes the drastic liberal reforms taking place in Prussia. Baron von Stein (1757–1831), recently appointed Prussian interior minister, had announced the abolition of serfdom on 9 October 1807, to come into effect three years later. Börne comments:

Unser prosaisches Vaterland hat sich plötzlich der Genialität hingegeben, hat abgeworfen den Reifrock und die steife Schnürbrust, in der seine Staatsverfassung bis jetzt ängstlich keuchend einherging. [...] Doch der Leier des gallischen Orpheus konnte keiner widerstehen, und sogar die deutschen Bären tanzten.

[Our prosaic Fatherland has suddenly succumbed to brilliance; it has thrown off its farthingale and the stiff corset in which, until now, its political constitution went wheezing about fearfully. [...] Yet no one could resist the lyre of the Gallic Orpheus, and even the German bears have started dancing; 1: 155]

Börne’s point is clear: the Prussians have only liberated their serfs because their hand was forced by Napoleon’s liberation of the serfs in the Duchy of Warsaw and in the Kingdom of Westphalia (Bock 83). Prussia’s liberal reforms were simply a response to the Napoleonic threat. As soon as Napoleon was defeated, promises of further reforms soon evaporated; Stein’s liberal successor, Karl August von Hardenberg, died in 1822, his modest proposals thwarted by Metternich.



Börne's satire was sometimes vicious, but so was the repressive political system he opposed. Indeed, Börne justifies political militancy and revolutionary agitation by arguing that the authorities have left the liberals no other choice but to break the law (Marcuse 202). Marcuse tells us that Börne wanted to emancipate the Germans "aus dem Ghetto ihrer Sklavenart" [from the ghetto of their servility; Marcuse 23]. Some of Börne's formulations are almost Brechtian in their simplicity; for example, in the thirteenth letter from Paris, on the subject of the Belgian Revolution of 1830–31, we read: "Man muß sich nur immer fragen: wem gehört [ein] Land? Gehört es dem Volke oder gehört es dem Fürsten?" [you have to keep on asking: Who owns a country? Does it belong to the people or does it belong to the prince?; 3: 63]. The question of property is of course *the* Marxist question; Brecht asks it too in *Kuhle Wampe* (1932). Börne, however, lacked the intellectual weight of Heine, Marx and Brecht. It was as a publicist that he really excelled, and in terms of his influence as a moral authority he is perhaps most comparable to G. E. Lessing (Marcuse 32-33; Jasper 26). With these points in mind, let us now turn to Börne's *Briefe aus Paris*.

<LI> *Briefe aus Paris* (1832–34)

Börne moved to Paris in September 1830, shortly after the July Revolution which put the so-called "bourgeois monarch" Louis Philippe on the throne. The first few *Briefe* document Börne's excitement as he makes the journey from Karlsruhe to Paris. Once there, he writes his reports almost on a daily basis, like a barometer, tracking the shifts in French politics and right across Europe. Initially, extracts from the letters were published in liberal journals such as Wirth's *Deutsche Tribüne*. The letters were first published in book form by Julius Campe in Hamburg. In order to avoid censorship, the letters appeared with a fake title page giving a false place of publication (Offenbach) and an imaginary publisher (L. Brunet) (Jasper 198). Such precautions were necessary, because progressive German publishers in the 1830s risked

a variety of reprisals, including losing their licence to publish, arrest or even banishment (Kortländer 13-14).

Gert Sautermeister argues that Börne's Parisian letters are structured in terms of a double perspective: as the narrator walks through Paris, his mind reflects continually on the political conditions back home in Germany: "Nur im Spiegel des Pariser Lebens kann die ganze Schmach der deutschen Verhältnisse offenbar werden" [only in the mirror of Parisian life can the full disgrace of the conditions in Germany be revealed; Sautermeister 132]. The rhetorical term for this technique is *synkrisis* (σύγκρισις), the comparative juxtaposition of people and things, in Latin, *comparatio*. Through its "agonal element," *synkrisis* is "related to the genre of debate, both in prose and verse" (Gärtner). As Börne's text moves continually back and forth between France and Germany, it opens up a space for wide-ranging political debate. Every new political development in France is weighed up in terms of its implications for Germany. German conditions are tested against French conditions, but at the same time the frequent references to the situation "back home" in Germany reveal Börne's true loyalties: the French example shows that liberal democracy in Germany is not a pipe dream, but a realistic prospect.

Börne's political programme is clear: he wants the abolition of aristocratic rule in the German Confederation and the establishment of a liberal democracy. In the service of this aim, he develops a vivid, vernacular style, full of unexpected twists and turns, and enlivened by unexpected, entertaining set pieces. Readers whose picture of Börne derives solely from Heine's *Atta Troll*, where Börne is lampooned as a clumsy bear, or the *Denkschrift*, where Börne is cast as a puritan prude, are likely to be surprised if they read Börne's Parisian letters, which are full of grace, elegance and wit. The fraternal resemblance between the two rival authors is indeed remarkable. In the fourth letter, for example, Börne mocks the unbelievable patience of the Germans, their tendency to put up with their oppression. He uses the dramatic

conceit of addressing Patience herself, whom he apostrophizes as the goddess of the Germans and of tortoises. He begs her to hang his hopes with lead weights, and he promises to be loyal to her and to wait patiently, in all weathers, for many years, outside the Frankfurt Federal Convention until the deputies come out and announce press freedom (3: 12-13; letter 4). And Börne has some great epigrams as well, e.g.: “taub wie das Gewissen eines Königs” [as deaf as the conscience of a king; 3: 16; letter 4].

The opening letters from Paris are characterized by a sense of euphoria. Börne delights in the achievements of the French and wants to thank them for championing the cause of liberty in Europe. Such is his sense of optimism that he even proposes the unification of France and Germany. He points out that a thousand years ago, long before “France” and “Germany” existed, their territories belonged to a much larger political entity called the Kingdom of the Franks, which was transformed by Charlemagne into the Carolingian Empire. Three decades after Charlemagne’s death, in August 843, the Carolingian Empire was divided by the Treaty of Verdun into three kingdoms (West Francia, Middle Francia and East Francia). Börne thinks that after a millennium of separation, it is time for a *rapprochement* between these territories:

In wenigen Jahren wird es ein Jahrtausend, daß Frankreich und Deutschland, die früher nur *ein* Reich bildeten, getrennt wurden. Dieser dumme Streich wurde, gleich allen dummen Streichen in der Politik, auf einem Kongresse beschlossen, zu Verdun im Jahre 843. [...] Ich hoffe, im Jahre 1843 endigt das tausendjährige Reich des Antichrists, nach dessen Vollendung die Herrschaft Gottes und der Vernunft wieder eintreten wird. Wir haben nämlich den Plan gemacht, Frankreich und Deutschland wieder zu einem großen fränkischen Reiche zu vereinigen. Zwar soll jedes Land seinen eigenen König behalten, aber beide Länder eine gemeinschaftliche Nationalversammlung haben. Der französische König soll wie früher in Paris thronen,

der deutsche in unsrem Frankfurt und die Nationalversammlung jedes Jahr abwechselnd in Paris oder in Frankfurt gehalten werden.

[In a couple of years it will be a millennium since France and Germany were separated; until then they formed *one* empire. This stupid trick was, like all stupid tricks in politics, agreed upon at a Congress, at Verdun in the year 843. [...] I hope that in the year 1843 the thousand-year empire of the Antichrist will end, after which the reign of God and reason will be restored. We have made a plan to reunite France and Germany into a great Frankish empire. Each country will retain its own monarch, but both countries will have a shared National Assembly. The French king will sit on the throne in Paris as before, the German one in Frankfurt, and the National Assembly will meet on an annual basis, alternating between Paris and Frankfurt; 3: 26-27; letter 6]

On the basis of this paragraph alone, Börne deserves to be credited as one of the intellectual pioneers of the European Union. It is worth noting, however, that at this point, 19 September 1830, Börne was still in favour of a constitutional monarchy in both France and Germany. As we shall see, it took a year before he became disillusioned with the July monarchy.

In the autumn of 1830, though, Börne was still enjoying the honeymoon period of the July Revolution. He admired the swiftness of the revolution and the absence of reprisals, then also contrasted the mildness of the French people with the viciousness of the (German) princes:

Schnell haben sie gesiegt, schneller haben sie verziehen. Wie mild hat das Volk die erlittenen Kränkungen erwidert [...]! Nur im offenen Kampfe, auf dem Schlachtfelde hat es seine Gegner verwundet. Wehrlose Gefangene wurden nicht ermordet, Geflüchtete nicht verfolgt, Versteckte nicht aufgesucht, Verdächtige nicht beunruhigt. So handelt ein Volk! Fürsten aber sind unversöhnlich, und unauslöschlich ist der Durst ihrer Rache.

[They were quick in their victory, and even quicker to forgive. How mildly the people have responded to the insults they have suffered [...]. They only wounded their opponents on the open battlefield. Unarmed prisoners have not been murdered, fugitives and those in hiding have not been pursued, those under suspicion have not been disturbed. That is how a people behaves! But princes are implacable, and their thirst for revenge is inextinguishable; 3: 28; letter 6]

The mercy and forbearance shown by the French people gives the lie to those commentators who try to depict the revolutionaries as vicious beasts: “Mich empört die niederträchtige Unverschämtheit der Fürstenschmeichler, welche die Völker als Tiger, die Fürsten als Lämmer darstellen” [I am disgusted by the malicious impudence of the flatterers of princes, who portray the people as tigers and the princes as lambs; 3: 29; letter 6]. Börne keeps coming back to the immorality of princes; he is convinced that justice is on the side of the liberals: “das ist die *Fürstennatur*, die sich hier gezeigt, die wahnsinnige Ruchlosigkeit, die meint, ihrem persönlichen Vorteile dürfe man das Wohl eines ganzen Volkes aufopfern” [it is the *nature of princes* that reveals itself here, the dastardliness which thinks that one can sacrifice the welfare of an entire people to one’s own advantage; 3: 54-55; letter 12].<sup>6</sup>

Although Börne is vocal in his opposition to the German princes, he nevertheless admits that he is scared by the prospect of a German revolution. Perhaps Germany is not yet ready for such an upheaval:

Möchte es nur bei uns friedlich abgehen; denn eine Revolution der Deutschen wäre selbst mir ein Schrecken. Diese Menschen wissen noch gar nicht, was sie wollen, und das ist das Gefährlichste. Sie wären imstande und metzelten sich um einen Punkt über das I [sic].

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<sup>6</sup> For other German responses to the July Revolution in France, see Wehler (2: 345–62).

[May it all go peacefully in our German lands; a German Revolution would be terrifying, even for me. These people do not even know what they want, that is what is most dangerous. They would be capable of butchering each other over a dot on the I; 3: 85-86; letter 18.]

Such moments of doubt and desperation often recur in the Paris letters, as Börne swings back and forth between optimism and pessimism. His spirits are alternately lifted and crushed by the constantly changing fortunes of the progressive, liberal cause. The Belgian declaration of independence is a high point; the Polish Uprising of November 1830 gives rise to initial optimism, which is later crushed. Gradually, an increasing sense of disillusionment with the July monarchy creeps into the letters.

The sixtieth letter from Paris, dated 30 November – 4 December 1831, shows Börne at his most radical. The letter starts with a glimmer of optimism, as Börne pays tribute to his colleague Johann Georg August Wirth, the publisher of the *Tribüne*, who has moved to the Rhineland-Palatinate in order to evade censorship, because French laws were still in place there (3: 370; letter 60).<sup>7</sup> The sixtieth letter was, however, written against the background of the Lyon silk weavers' revolt (Canut revolt) of October – December 1831. The revolt had begun in October when the poverty-stricken silk weavers (*canuts*) had asked the government prefect to intervene in their negotiations to establish a fixed rate for their products, but the manufacturers refused to come to an agreement. On 22 November 1831 the silk weavers attacked Lyon and held the city for ten days, proclaiming their slogan “Live free working or die fighting.” The rising was put down by 20,000 troops at a cost of 600 military and civilian casualties (Goldstein 147).<sup>8</sup> The uprising revealed the clash of interests between workers and

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<sup>7</sup> In order to enjoy the privilege of French-style laws, the inhabitants of this province were forced to pay higher taxes by the Bavarian government. As a result, the region became a centre for the republican opposition within Germany, and in May 1832 the Hambach festival was held there, with Börne as one of the guest speakers.

<sup>8</sup> The July monarchy reacted to strikes with repression: “Troops were frequently used to break strikes, and over a thousand strikers were jailed between 1830–4” (Goldstein 147). On the Canut revolt of 1831, see also Mason 25–46.

the bourgeoisie, and in his sixtieth letter, Börne expresses his disappointment with the July Monarchy, and his recognition that another social revolution is still to come:

Hier geht es schlecht, man hat die Suppe kalt werden lassen, und dabei rufen die Väter des Volks demselben wie einem Kinde noch ganz ironisch zu: verbrenne dich nicht! Das gute Volk hat sich mit Blut und Schweiß die Freiheit erworben, und die spitzbübische Kammer, die in Pantoffeln in ihrem Comptoir saß, sagte ihm: Ihr wißt mit dem Gelde doch nicht umzugehen, wir wollen es euch verwalten. Und ich sehe nicht, wie die Sache besser werden kann, außer durch eine Art neuer Revolution. Nach dem bis jetzt bestehenden Wahlgesetz wählen nur die Reichen, also die aristokratisch Gesinnten, und nur die Reichsten können Deputierte werden. [...] das Wahlgesetz [müßte] geändert, demokratischer gemacht werden. Allein die Kammer votiert die Gesetze und wird natürlich kein Wahlgesetz genehmigen, das ihnen die Macht aus den Händen zieht.

[Things are going badly here, they have let the soup go cold, and yet the patricians address the people as if they were children and, with complete irony, they tell them: Don't burn yourself! The good people have earned their freedom with their sweat and blood, and the villainous Chamber, sitting in its office in slippers, tells them: You do not know how to handle your money, we will look after it for you. And I do not see how this matter can be improved unless there is some kind of new revolution. According to the existing electoral law, only the rich can vote, those who are aristocratically minded, and only the richest can become deputies. [...] The electoral law must be changed and made more democratic. But the Chamber votes on the laws and of course it will never pass an electoral law which removes power from its own hands; 3: 113; letter 24]

The image of the revolutionary soup gone stone cold, while the patricians instruct the people not to burn themselves on it, is a sensual image worthy of Heine. It contradicts the cliché of the puritan, ascetic Börne. Like Heine, Börne envisages the revolution in terms of food, in the knowledge that sometimes only hunger can drive people to rebel (Reed 23-24). In a manner similar to Heine, Börne conveys his point graphically, depicting the aristocratic deputies lounging around in their slippers, while the people are condemned to sip cold soup. And the passage also alludes to the tutelage (*Bevormundung*) that Kant had criticised in his famous essay on Enlightenment, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (1784; Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?), in which Kant urges his readers to have the courage to use their own reason. Börne echoes Kant, condemning the patronizing attitude of the ruling classes who infantilize their citizens, claiming to know what is best for them (i.e. cold soup).

The workers' uprising in Lyon gives Börne an insight into the phenomenon of revolutionary class struggle that would later be theorized by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Börne declares that there is now a war going on between the rich and the poor (3: 370-72; letter 60). The people will no longer be fobbed off by empty promises: "das Volk gibt keine Bratwurst für die allerhuldvollsten Redensarten, es will bares Geld sehen" [the people don't give a sausage for the most elegant-sounding phrases, they want to see cash; 3: 370; letter 60].<sup>9</sup> Börne's insights about class warfare were occasioned by a damaging slip by the French Minister of the Interior, Casimir-Pierre Perier (1777–1832). Perier, who had refused to make any concessions to the people of Lyon, had let slip an explosive truth, that there is a class struggle taking place between the rich and poor. Börne regards Perier's admission as an embarrassing tactical error:

Es sei nichts weiter als ein Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen, derjenigen, die nichts zu verlieren hätten, gegen diejenigen, die etwas besitzen! Und diese fürchterliche

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<sup>9</sup> There is a similar rhetorical move in Heine's later poem "Die Wanderratten", although Heine's poem emphasizes food rather than money.



Wahrheit, die, weil sie eine ist, man in den tiefsten Brunnen versenken müßte, hielt der wahnsinnige Mensch hoch empor und zeigte sie aller Welt!

[We hear that it is nothing more than the war of the poor against the rich; those who have nothing to lose against those who own property! And this terrible truth, which, because it is true, should be buried at the bottom of the deepest well, this lunatic has held this truth aloft and displayed it to the entire world; 3: 371; letter 60.]

By presenting himself as the champion of the middle classes against the poor, Perier has effectively let the cat out of the bag. His admission, that the political interests of the bourgeoisie and those of the workers are irreconcilably opposed, has revealed the existence of the class struggle that the July monarchy had attempted to conceal. Perier would have been wiser to have concealed this “terrible truth [...] at the bottom of the deepest well.” But now that this truth has been revealed, it challenges the very legitimacy of the July monarchy, exposing it as a plutocracy that serves the interests of the rich against the French people. Börne goes on to consider the full implications of this truth:

Es ist wahr, der Krieg der Armen gegen die Reichen hat begonnen, und wehe jenen Staatsmännern, die zu dumm oder zu schlecht sind, zu begreifen, daß man nicht gegen die Armen, sondern gegen die Armut zu Felde ziehen müsse. Nicht gegen den Besitz, nur gegen die Vorrechte der Reichen streitet das Volk; wenn aber diese Vorrechte sich hinter dem Besitze verschanzen, wie will das Volk die Gleichheit, die ihm gebührt, anders erobern, als indem es den Besitz erstürmt?

[It is true, the war of the poor against the rich has begun, and woe betideth those statesmen who are too foolish or too wicked to understand that one must not combat poor people, but poverty itself. The people do not contest property, they only contest the privileges of the rich; but if these privileges become entrenched behind property,

then how can the people win the equality that is their due, except by storming property?

3: 371-72; letter 60.]

Instead of combating poverty, Perier has chosen to combat the poor, and Börne can already see that the writing is on the wall for the July monarchy. The July Revolution of 1830 stands exposed as a plutocratic coup; a genuinely egalitarian social revolution has yet to be achieved. The Revolution of 1848, a decade after his death, proved him right. But although Börne observes the reality of a class war, he stops short of any Marxist conclusions. He does not want the bourgeoisie and the workers to fight each other. On the contrary, he wants both classes to unite and oppose the continuing power of the aristocracy:

Diese Furcht und diesen Hochmut [der Bürger] wissen die Aristokraten in Frankreich und England sehr gut zu benutzen. Den Pöbel hetzen sie im stillen gegen die Bürger auf und diesen rufen sie zu: Ihr seid verloren, wenn ihr euch nicht an uns anschließt. Der dumme Bürger glaubt das und begreift nicht, daß seine eigene Freiheit, sein eigener Wohlstand schwankt, solange das arme Volk nicht mit ihm in gleiche Freiheit und gleichen Wohlstand eintrete; er begreift nicht, daß, solange es einen Pöbel gibt, es auch einen Adel gibt und daß, solange es einen Adel gibt, seine Ruhe und sein Glück gefährdet bleibt [sic].

[The aristocrats in France and England know very well how to use this fear and arrogance of the bourgeoisie. In secret they stir up the rabble against the bourgeoisie and then they tell the middle classes: You are lost if you do not join forces with us. The foolish citizen believes it and does not realize that his own freedom, his own prosperity is at risk as long as the poor people do not also enjoy the same freedom and prosperity; he does not understand that as long as there is a rabble, there is also an aristocracy; and as long as there is an aristocracy then his own freedom and fortune are in danger; 3: 372-73; letter 60.]

Börne thus appeals to the bourgeoisie, arguing that the aristocracy threatens their interests more directly than the workers do, and pointing out that an egalitarian society has no need to fear a revolution. These are the insights that Börne derives from his observation of French politics in late 1831.

Meanwhile, Börne was coming under fire from moderate liberal authors in Germany, to whom his radicalism was something of an embarrassment. Börne was censured, for example, by the Prussian novelist Willibald Alexis. In a review of the first volume of Börne's *Briefe aus Paris* published on 1 December 1831, Alexis wrote: "Mich dünkt, so etwas von erschütternd Nichtigem, in einer abschreckenden Gestalt, ist noch nicht dagewesen, wenigstens in der deutschen Literatur" [it seems to me that this sort of shocking nullity, in a such a disagreeable form, has never been seen before, at least not in German literature; Jasper 209]. Börne retaliated with a biting caricature of Alexis in his seventy-fourth letter from Paris, subtitled "Herings-Salat" [herring salad], a reference to Alexis's real name G. W. F. Häring (3: 523-61). Börne and Heine were also criticised by the Jewish author Berthold Auerbach, who felt that their inflammatory rhetoric was bringing the Jewish minority in Germany into disrepute; Auerbach thus took care to distance himself from the "libertinism" of *Junges Deutschland* (Bunyan 70-71). In the seventy-fourth letter, before launching into his caricature of Wilibald Alexis, Börne defends himself against the charge that he is not a German patriot:

Wenn ich den Deutschen sage: [...] eignet euch die Vorzüge der Franzosen an; und ihr werdet das erste Volk der Welt – habe ich denn damit erklärt, daß die Deutschen Zwerge sind und die Franzosen Riesen? Austauschen, nicht tauschen sollen wir mit Frankreich. Käme ein Gott zu mir und spräche: Ich will dich in einen Franzosen umwandeln mit allen deinen Gedanken und Gefühlen, mit allen deinen Erinnerungen und Hoffnungen – ich würde ihm antworten: Ich danke, Herr Gott. Ich will ein

Deutscher bleiben mit allen seinen Mängeln und Auswüchsen; ein Deutscher mit seinen sechszwanzig Fürsten, mit seinen heimlichen Gerichten, mit seiner Zensur, mit seiner unfruchtbaren Gelehrsamkeit, mit seinem Demute, seinem Hochmute, seinen Hofräten, seinen Philistern – –

[If I tell the Germans: [...] acquire the virtues of the French, and you will be first among the nations of the world – have I thereby declared that the Germans are dwarves and the French giants? We should exchange ideas with France, not change places with them. If a god came to me and said: “I will transform you into a Frenchman with all your thoughts and feelings, all your memories and hopes” – I would reply: “No thank you, Lord. I want to remain a German with all his faults and deformities; a German with his thirty-six princes, with his secret courts, with his censorship, his fruitless erudition, his humility, his arrogance, his court counsellors, his philistines – –”; 3: 513; letter 74.]

Börne thus explains that he is indeed a true patriot, because he wants his fellow Germans to enjoy the same benefits of modern political democracy as the French. Heine’s own definition of patriotism in his preface to *Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen* is much more radical in terms of its secularism.<sup>10</sup> Whether or not such arguments had any effect on Börne’s many opponents is another matter. At this point, 7 February 1832, Börne was still able to shoulder such attacks relatively easily. Things were very different four years later, however, when Börne’s patriotism was called into question by his close ally Wolfgang Menzel.

<LI> *Menzel der Franzosenfresser* (1837)

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<sup>10</sup> “wenn wir die Dienstbarkeit bis in ihrem letzten Schlupfwinkel, dem Himmel, zerstören, wenn wir den Gott, der auf Erden im Menschen wohnt, aus seiner Erniedrigung retten, [...] ganz Frankreich wird uns alsdann zufallen [...] Das ist *mein* Patriotismus” [if we destroy subservience even in its very last refuge, heaven itself, if we rescue from degradation the God who lives on earth in the form of human beings, then all of France will fall at our feet [...] That is *my* patriotism; *Sämtliche Schriften* 4: 574–75].

In early 1836, Ludwig Börne and Wolfgang Menzel, who had been colleagues for years, publicly broke with each other. Until 1835, Menzel had often published Börne's articles in his periodical, Cotta's *Literatur-Blatt*, the literary supplement of the *Morgenblatt für gebildete Stände*. The two critics' united front against Goethe had concealed fundamental differences in their approaches, for, while Börne accused Goethe of political conservatism and support of censorship, Menzel's real target was Goethe's cosmopolitanism. The collaboration between the two men broke down when Menzel, in the autumn of 1835, published a vicious review of Karl Gutzkow's *Wally, die Zweiflerin* (1835) [Wally the Doubter] which condemned Gutzkow and his colleagues in *Junges Deutschland* [Young Germany]. Although Gutzkow and his friends had previously contributed to the *Literatur-Blatt*, Menzel was infuriated by their intention to launch a new periodical, the *Deutsche Revue*. The hatchet job on Gutzkow was therefore an attempt to ward off a competitor.

Menzel's denunciation served as the pretext for a Prussian ministerial decree of 14 November 1835 banning the writings of *Junges Deutschland* and Heine. Worse still, certain aspects of Menzel's attack on Gutzkow and Heine drew on Börne's own review of Heine's *De l'Allemagne*, published in the *Réformateur* on 30 May 1835 (2: 885-903; on this point, see also Weber 10). Menzel exempted Börne from his denunciation, hoping that he could drive a wedge between Börne and Gutzkow. But Börne chose instead to defend the Young Germans, and responded at first in French with "Gallophobie de M. Menzel" [The Gallophobia of Mr Menzel], published in January 1836 in his own Paris-based journal, *La Balance* (2: 952-60). This was the definitive break between the two men, as Menzel now turned his fire on Börne himself in an article of 11 April 1836, "Herr Börne und der deutsche Patriotismus" [Mr Börne and German Patriotism]. It contained a number of personal attacks—Menzel claimed that Börne was a turncoat and a sick man who, from an excess of spleen, had sworn to take revenge on his German fatherland. But the article also embodies the ideological parting of the

ways between the two men: Menzel rejects Börne's cosmopolitan republicanism, proclaiming that only patriotism can guarantee freedom. Menzel also defends the monarchy and advocates only gradual, piecemeal constitutional reform: "langsame Evolution" [slow evolution; Menzel 147]. In response to this provocation, Börne decided to settle his accounts with Menzel. In a letter to Karl Theodor Welcker of 16 May 1836, he says that he wants: "eine Fackel unter die Nachtbuben [...] schleudern" [to throw a torch among the nocturnal rogues; 5: 787]. Börne's definitive polemic against Menzel was published as *Menzel der Franzosenfresser* (1837).

The end of the alliance between Börne and Menzel heralded the division of German liberalism into two opposing camps, republican and nationalist. Menzel's political strategy aimed at separating German liberalism from its French counterpart; he feared French expansionism more than the political repression of the German confederation. Börne, in contrast, feared a German national renewal without political liberation, as he had already experienced in 1815 (Hohendahl 197). While Menzel prioritized national unity, contenting himself with moderate political reform and the gradual transition towards a constitutional monarchy, for Börne the project of radical democratic reform took precedence. And while Menzel's nation-building project rejects French republicanism as a foreign import, Börne warns against a blind patriotism that would leave the oppressive political structures of the *ancien régime* intact. In the words of Peter Uwe Hohendahl:

Ein Nationalismus, der auf die liberalen Freiheiten der Bürger verzichtet, ist in den Augen Börnes ein verzerrter Patriotismus, der den Fürsten in die Hände spielt. Aus diesem Grunde hält Börne am Paradigma Frankreichs fest, denn das postrevolutionäre Frankreich ist ihm eine Garantie dafür, daß Deutschland seine Unabhängigkeit von den Fürsten erreichen wird.

[A nationalism that sacrifices the liberal freedoms of the citizenry is, in Börne's view, a distorted patriotism that plays into the hands of the princes. For this reason, Börne remains attached to France as a paradigm, because he regards post-revolutionary France as a guarantee that Germany will achieve its independence from the princes; Hohendahl, *Kosmopolitischer Patriotismus* 197-98]

In spite of his disillusionment with the July monarchy, Börne still stresses the importance of learning from political developments in France, and still believes that Germany and France should work closely together in order to usher in a new age of democracy in Europe.

In *Menzel der Franzosenfresser*, Börne adopts an Enlightenment position with respect to nationalism, seeing enlightened debate and tolerance to be more important than particularism. His principal target is nationalist vanity (*Eitelkeit*), which he regards as a flaw that will play into the hands of the conservative reaction. He points out that the egoism of a country is just as damaging as the egoism of an individual: "Ist der Egoismus eines Landes weniger ein Laster als der eines Menschen?" [Is the egoism of a country less of a vice than that of a person? 3: 905-06]. He also declares: "Was mich betrifft, so war ich, Gott sei Dank, nie ein Tölpel des Patriotismus; dieser Köder des Ehrgeizes, sei es der Könige, sei es der Patrizier oder der Völker, hat mich nie gefangen" [as for myself, thank God, I have never been a fool for patriotism; it is a snare for the ambitious that has lured kings, patricians and peoples, but I never fell for it; 3: 906]. This critique of nationalist vanity resonates with Voltaire, who, in the entry on "Patrie" [country, fatherland] in his *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764), observed: "Il est triste que souvent, pour être bon patriote, on soit l'ennemi du reste des hommes" [it is sad that to be a good patriot one must often become the enemy of the rest of humanity]. Thus, for Voltaire, nationalism is a dangerous imposture, one that has a detrimental effect on humanity in general.

Writing in 1945 at the close of the Second World War, George Orwell made some similar observations, arguing that nationalism tends towards the abandonment of morality and reasoned debate. Orwell defines nationalism as “power hunger tempered by self-deception” (Orwell 4) and points out that, for nationalists, “actions are held to be good or bad, not on their own merits but according to who does them, and there is almost no kind of outrage [...] which does not change its moral colour when it is committed by ‘our’ side” (Orwell 13). This means that a nationalist tends to interpret everything in ideological terms: any argument or fact that obstructs or diminishes national pride is simply dismissed, and morality is subordinated to the so-called “national interest.” Voltaire, Börne and Orwell therefore agree that the moral and intellectual integrity of nationalists becomes compromised to such an extent that they will tend to avoid rational debate.<sup>11</sup>

In *Menzel der Franzosenfresser*, Börne quotes Menzel’s accusations against him in detail, including the claim that Börne is guilty of slandering his own country. Börne responds that speaking the truth is more important than flattering national vanity:

Für jeden redlichen Mann ist es eine Qual, durch die Wahrheit gezwungen zu werden, von seinem Vaterlande übel zu sprechen; die Landsleute, die Fremden selbst sehen darin nur eine strafbare Verrätere. Allein hören Freimütigkeit und Unparteilichkeit auf, Tugenden zu sein, sobald man sie auf einen Gegenstand seiner Liebe wendet? Die Deutschen haben, seit sie Frankreich mit Erfolg bekämpft, eine Nationaleitelkeit bekommen, von der sie früher frei waren.

[For any honest man it is agonising to be forced by the truth to speak ill of your fatherland; your fellow countrymen, even foreigners regard it as punishable treachery.

But do frankness and impartiality stop being virtues if they are applied to the object of

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<sup>11</sup> On Bismarck’s arrogance and national pride, see Snyder 134-35.



your love? Ever since the Germans defeated the French they have acquired a national vanity they once lacked; 3: 909.]

Sometimes the truth hurts. Like Orwell in 1945, Börne is defending the importance of reasoned, balanced debate. He opposes the *logos* of rational argument to the *pathos* of Menzel's egoistic cult of Germanness. And Börne adds that there is even something childish about Menzel's inability to tolerate any criticism of Germany and its culture: "Und dann, ist nicht in jeder Nationaleitelkeit etwas Kindisches, ja selbst Unsinniges?" [and doesn't every form of national vanity have something childish, even nonsensical about it?; 3: 909]. Like Orwell, Börne sees that nationalism has a tendency to lead to the abdication of reason, and the acceptance of tutelage. Menzel had called Börne a disgrace to his country, but Börne responds: "es ist eine Schande, in seinem Vaterlande Sklave zu sein" (3: 913) [it is a disgrace to be a slave in one's own Fatherland]. Thus, according to Börne, political freedoms and nationalist dogma are essentially incompatible.

Börne had attended the *Hambacher Fest* (Hambach festival) in May 1832, a peaceful democratic assembly which took place in the Rhineland-Palatinate (at the time, part of Bavaria). The festival featured speeches by many leading liberals including Börne, Wirth and Siebenpfeiffer. (Unfortunately, in the aftermath of the festival, laws on censorship were tightened and all such assemblies were prohibited). Börne knew from first-hand experience that some of the liberals present at Hambach were also nationalists who were hostile to France, making frequent references to the Wars of Liberation in their speeches. Some of the speeches had even called for Alsace-Lorraine to be returned to Germany. Barer argues that many of the participants at the Hambach festival were "rabid nationalists": although they "paid lip-service to a cosmopolitan federated Europe," they also demanded the return of Alsace, and were the first to resort to "folksy Fatherland slogans" in order to prevail over the "democrats" (Barer 346). In *Menzel der Franzosenfresser* Börne touches on the controversial

status of Alsace-Lorraine. In the spirit of democracy, he suggests asking the Alsatians themselves which country they would prefer to belong to:

[...] fragt die Elsässer, ob sie einwilligen, wieder Deutsche zu werden, ob sie sich glücklich schätzen würden, ihren König gegen einen der deutschen Bundesfürsten, ihre Deputiertenkammer gegen die Frankfurter Bundesversammlung, die Freiheit der Presse gegen die schändliche Zensur, die Nationalgarde gegen die Gendarmerie, die Öffentlichkeit der gerichtlichen Verhandlungen gegen geheime Tribunäle, die Jury gegen abhängige Richter und die Gleichheit der Stände gegen den Hochmut und die Unverschämtheit des Adels und der Satrapen zu vertauschen.

[Ask the Alsatians if they are willing to become Germans again. Ask them whether they would count themselves lucky to exchange their king for one of the German confederate princes, their Chamber of Deputies for the Frankfurt Federal Convention, their press freedom for disgraceful censorship, the National Guard for the Gendarmerie, their public legal proceedings for secret tribunals, their juries for dependent judges, and the equality of social classes for the arrogance and outrageous impudence of the aristocracy and the satraps; 3: 912-13.]

Börne thus uses the example of French rule in Alsace-Lorraine as a means to illustrate the benefits that France has to offer, such as press freedom and public legal proceedings.

At the centre of Börne's critique of Menzel's "patriotism" is the distinction between external and internal threats to a country: the ruling powers encourage patriotism if it is directed against an external threat, but they oppose and criminalize patriots whenever they attempt to improve the domestic situation. Börne urges his readers to distinguish between these two types of patriotism. Patriotism is virtuous if it seeks to ameliorate domestic conditions, but it is immoral if it is used only to advance the interests of individuals or a

particular social class. This leads us to Börne's key argument, namely, that being a patriot does not give you the right to dispense with your conscience:

Wenn Herr Menzel sagt, *für das Vaterland handelt man immer schön*, so ist das eine alberne Floskel, albern und lästerlich zugleich. Nein, man handelt nur schön für das Vaterland, wenn es das *Vaterland* ist, für das man sich bemüht, nicht aber ein einzelner Mensch, ein Stand oder ein Interesse, die durch Ränke und Gewalt sich für das Vaterland geltend zu machen wußten.

[When Mr Menzel says "any action in service of the Fatherland is beautiful," that is a silly cliché, silly and malicious too. No, you only act beautifully for the Fatherland if you are making your efforts for the *Fatherland* itself, but not if you serve a single individual, a class or an interest group, who, by means of violence and intrigue, have managed to assert that they represent the Fatherland; 3: 919.]

Börne thus warns his readers not to sacrifice their conscience on the altar of "the national interest," particularly when it is merely a mask for the opportunism of a narrow elite.

The analysis of the debate between Börne and Menzel has shown how the two men represent radically different versions of liberalism which are, in turn, informed by opposing conceptions of history and national identity. Menzel regards Germany with almost religious fervour; for him it is a destiny, a sacred imperative which, he thinks, will evolve gradually and organically from within, and which must be defended from French aggression at all costs. The reaction to the French occupation is, of course, the keynote of modern German national identity. Louis Snyder argues that German nationalism was shaped by political Romanticism: "In essence it was a reaction against the democratic rationalism expressed in the French concepts of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The French Revolution, it was said, was an explosion of immoderate forces, a tragic watershed which would not be repeated on the German scene. Germans would stress law, order, security and legitimacy" (Snyder 59-60).

While Menzel adheres to an essentially Romantic form of nationalism that postulated the organic unity of the German people, and views patriotism much like an unquestioning religious faith, Börne remains attached to a more enlightened, rational version of political progress informed by the French model. Thus he argues that Germany can only achieve true political emancipation if it cooperates closely with France and its other European neighbours. Furthermore, actions are only truly patriotic if they genuinely aim at *domestic* improvements which would benefit *all* citizens, and especially the poorest ones. Actions are certainly not patriotic if they exploit people's vanity and prejudices in order to benefit the careers of a handful of opportunists.

#### <L1> Conclusion: Börne Today

At the time of writing, shortly after the AfD-related Chemnitz riots of 1 September 2018, with right-wing populism and nationalism on the rise again in Europe and elsewhere, Börne's work has great contemporary resonance. As his biographer Ludwig Marcuse points out, Börne was a decent man who campaigned for the practical realization of the values of the Enlightenment (Marcuse 32-33). In the face of rising German nationalism, Börne took a stand for universal values: universal suffrage, parliamentary democracy, liberty, fraternity and social equality. It must be conceded, however, that in the final years of his life, Börne retreated from some of his Enlightenment positions, translating the radical Catholic author Lamennais (1782–1854) into German. It is certainly ironic that Börne, an admirer of Voltaire, was drawn by the religious extremism of Lamennais. Börne justified this about-turn by claiming that Voltaire's criticisms of the Catholic Church had been necessary in order to change the constitution of the Church and shift the power balance from the pope and his bishops to the laity (2: 898). But this ignored Lammenais's deference to ultramontanism, and

the rise of papal absolutism in the first half of the nineteenth century under a series of reactionary popes, culminating in Pope Gregory XVI (1830–1846) (Wehler 2: 471). Börne’s turn to radical Catholicism may have been motivated by his dedication to the cause of social revolution, and by his desperation at the reactionary climate of the mid-1830s. Social Catholicism was (and still is) a force to be reckoned with, particularly in the Rhineland and southern regions of Germany, and Börne observed that the Catholicism of the Polish people did not prevent them from playing a leading role in European liberation struggles (2: 894). Catholicism also sustained the Irish liberation struggle, too. Even if Börne’s support for social Catholicism was motivated by the best of intentions, it still seems like an error of judgement, one that risked exchanging one form of absolutism for another.<sup>12</sup> Despite this lapse, Börne’s prose works of the 1830s are still a model of cosmopolitan intellectual engagement. Two centuries after Metternich’s restoration, and a century after the First World War, Börne’s writings are to be highly recommended: he is one of the most lucid antidotes to nationalism in the whole of German literature.

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<sup>12</sup> George Orwell regards both political Catholicism (as exemplified by G. K. Chesterton) and Communism as forms of “transferred nationalism” (Orwell 9, 20).

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