



Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture (Modern German Culture and Literature)

Russell A. Berman

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Enlightenment or Empire is a crucial contribution to our understanding of the culture of European colonialism. The book opens with a bold reconsideration of the relationship between the Enlightenment and colonialism, at the heart of which is an examination of two parallel texts—Captain James Cook’s and Georg Foster’s accounts of Cook’s voyage of 1773. Berman then examines geography, religion, gender, and fiction in the writings of nineteenth-century travelers in Africa. He concludes with a discussion of the alternative anti-colonial traditions of Germany and France.

Berman’s book is a provocative contribution to current debates about the Enlightenment and its political legacy. In opposition to contemporary critics who argue that the Enlightenment is fully implicated in structures of domination, including colonialism, Berman argues for a more subtle, complex understanding of the political and cultural consequences of the Enlightenment.

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