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After Jena

Goethe's *Elective Affinities* and the End of the Old Regime

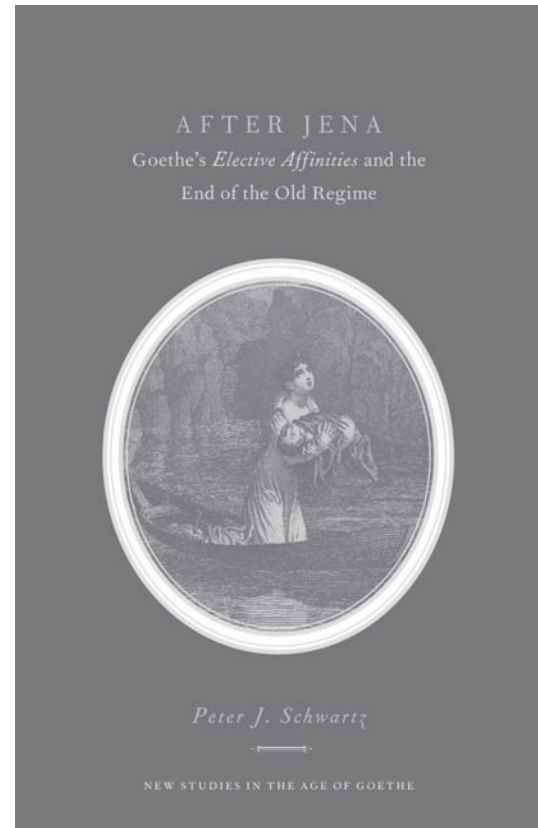
By Peter J. Schwartz

After Jena is the first scholarly work in English to set Goethe's influential and controversial novel *Elective Affinities* (*Die Wahlverwandtschaften*, 1809) squarely within the turbulent time in which it was written. Peter J. Schwartz explores the era of rapid modernization following Prussia's defeat at the battle of Jena-Auerstedt (1806) — a battle that permitted Napoleon to extend French hegemony throughout Continental Europe and to dissolve or reform the institutional structures of the German *ancien régime*. Adducing evidence from many spheres and applying the tools of several disciplines, Schwartz persuasively shows how *Elective Affinities* reflects post-Jena changes in marriage, property and inheritance law and in the political role of the German nobility. He links questions of character, fate and sacrifice in

the novel to modern problems of sovereignty and legitimacy and investigates how key scenes in the novel comment implicitly on Napoleon, Rousseau, the French Revolution, and the politics and aesthetics of the German Romantics. *After Jena* reveals the novel's ethical core to be a calculus of political legitimacy, and its aesthetics a means of conciliating tensions provoked by modernity's onrush. It will be of special interest to students of literature, history, philosophy, art history and aesthetics.

Peter J. Schwartz is an assistant professor of German at Boston University.

Jacket illustration: Heinrich Schmidt after Heinrich Anton Dähling, *Ottolie with the Dead Infant*, 1811. The Klassik Stiftung Weimar.



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“*After Jena* breaks new ground in many unexpected ways and will set a new benchmark in *Wahlverwandtschaften* criticism not only in English but also in German.”

Hans Rudolf Vaget, Professor Emeritus of German Studies, Smith College