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Julian Bourg, ed. *After the Deluge: New Perspectives on the Intellectual and Cultural History of Postwar France.* Lanham: Lexington Books, 2004. vii + 426 pp. $99.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-7391-0791-1; $32.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7391-0792-8.

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French Thought without French Theory?

In an ambitious introduction, Julian Bourg, editor of the volume reviewed, explains that "after the deluge marks the arrival of a new historiographical and generational sensibility" (p. 2). This sensibility is to be understood in contrast to the editorial inflation that surrounded "French theory." Indeed, the title is chosen after a quip from Madame de Pompadour and is used with a double meaning: first, the deluge of World War II and, second, the idea that "emerging historical scholarship on postwar French intellectuals and culture after the Anglo-American academy in particular has been inundated with French theory for nearly three decades" (p. 3). The approach is set–this is not another book on postmodern or poststructural French thought, but rather an affirmation of the desuetude of French theory, an account of the end of an era: "when its partisans themselves declare the era of French theory to be closed, you know it is time to call in the historians" (p. 3). Julian Bourg seems to advocate a revenge of history on philosophy or cultural studies. In a telling analogy, he compares historians to "a crew of janitors who enter a ballroom after a very large party the previous night" and "try to reconstruct what had taken place the previous night" (p. 3).

The problem with such a sensational presentation is that, while attempting to fight stereotypes (the figure of the French intellectual *à la* Sartre for instance), it furtively introduces new ones. In particular, in reading Bourg we have the impression that French theory, a category problematic in itself, was just a teenage moment of fun–a coming of age episode–in the aging of North American intelligentsia and academia. After a corrupting, but pedagogic, discovery of French irrationality and aestheticism, maturity sets in and those experiments are now good memories to be documented but let go. This would be the intellectual version of the recurrent clichés of the romantic or depraved (the two are not mutually exclusive) character of French (Parisian) culture and ways of life. This can make for good novels or movies, but its transposition to intellectual history might not work as well.

However, the rest of the introduction and the following contributions shy away from this daring lead and, in a more modest and less polemical manner, propose to elucidate some contextual issues and introduce less famous French authors, not to argue against French theory but to present each work for its own sake. This creates a great diversity of topics and contributes indirectly at complexifying common (mis)understandings of French thought.

The first section of the work is devoted to "the historicization of French intellectual culture" (p. 8). More specifically, it aims at explaining and debunking some of the common misunderstandings or shortcuts concerning postwar French thought and its reception in North America. The theses defended by the contributors are thus original and purposely bold: Alan D. Shrift's title "Is There Such a Thing as French Philosophy?" is indicative, and William Gallois's contribution entitled "Against Capitalism" could be in the same vein subtitled "Is There Such a Thing as Capitalism in France?" Meanwhile, Warren Breckman wonders, in "The Post-Marx of the Letter," whether French Marxism has actually moved abroad, or to the other side of the Channel more precisely.

Alan D. Shrift's contribution is a useful and necessary reminder of the idiosyncratic academic situation in France, too often ignored by North American scholars. This particular institutional setting explains many of the dynamics within French intelligentsia and its relation with the rest of the public as well as its dealings with politics and politicians. In this essay, he interrogates the relationships between French and German philosophy and, in doing so, he explains the influence of phenomenology, structuralism, and the epistemological tradition on twentieth-century French philosophy, too often reduced

to "Gallic Heideggerianism" (p. 37). He argues that overall, institutional specificities more than common themes have allowed for the development of a specifically French philosophy.

William Gallois's contribution explains the specificities of French capitalism after World War II and, in particular, under Charles De Gaulle's presidency. He writes that few authors, with the notable exception of Jean-François Lyotard, have actually analysed and criticized the *dirigisme* of French capitalism (p. 61). Finally, Warren Breckman focuses on the works of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as an interesting combination of post-structuralism and Marxism. He argues that this multinational duo renewed the reflection on the role of the radical intellectual; simultaneously, he shows "the insufficiencies of the national paradigm in the study of intellectual history" (p. 74). The first section of the volume is the most transversal in its themes and will be the most interesting for readers looking for a *general* discussion of recent French intellectual history.

The rest of the book is composed of ten other contributions, distributed in two sections, which seem to address a readership with specific interests towards particular authors or historiographical issues. The second section is entitled "Figures: Overlooked and Familiar." Among the overlooked authors, first, we have Kostas Axelos, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Kostas Papaioannou, all authors of Greek origin and exiled in France right after World War II. They brought to contemporary French thought an unorthodox leftist critique of Marxism and totalitarianism. Two other overlooked authors are Daniel Guérin and Guy Hocquenghem, influential in movements of sexual liberation and leftist contestation in 1968 and afterwards. Their life courses also allow us to consider the tensions within the French left in the 1970s and 1980s, and the polarizing impact of the François Mitterrand's presidency on leftist intellectuals. This section closes with two essays on more familiar authors, Emmanuel Levinas and Raymond Aron.

By focusing on less famous authors in France and abroad, the ensemble of contributions manages to give a more complex picture of the French intellectual. Faithful to a historical approach to intellectual production, essays in this section propose mostly externalist readings of the work of the author under study, that is, focusing on his life, his social milieu, and the historical events punctuating his biography and consequently his bibliography. Thus, these essays might read too often as mini-biographies. The reader is left on his/her own for making the intellectual connections between the authors and the issues studied. In the end, the essays devoted to particular authors provide a good introduction to their work and are well documented, with extensive notes and bibliographies; they also list useful secondary sources and provide a good reference point for further research.

The third section is concerned with "the interstices between culture and politics" (p. 8). This last section is the most heterogeneous. The essays by Michael Scott Christofferson and Samuel Moyn propose a detailed chronological account of intellectual controversies around two traumatic events, not only in France, but also in the rest of the world: the Jewish genocide and the repression of the Hungarian revolution of 1956. By explaining the different ways French historians, other intellectuals, and the educated public have responded to these two events and the consequences of such reception, the authors implicitly incite the reader to reflect on the very notion of a historical event and on the politics surrounding processes of collective memory.

Philippe Poirrier's contribution explains the French cultural policy from 1981 to 2003; the role of key-figures such as André Malraux and Jack Lang; the role of the Ministry of Culture and of the government in general; as well as the differences in matters of cultural policy between the Left and the Right, and the influence of each President of the Republic. The last contribution, by Michael Behrent, "Religion, Republicanism, and Depoliticization: Two Intellectual Itineraries–Régis Debray and Marcel Gauchet," explores the works of two contemporary figures in French political thought, both interrogating the relation between religion and politics–a timely topic in France and a problematic relationship within the context of French republicanism. Behrent shows the evolution of their respective thought and the centrality of the religious question, despite the great difference of their political thoughts (pp. 347-348). The two last contributions are also the ones dealing with the most recent history, right into the twenty-first century.

The afterword by François Dosse, author of the imposing *History of Structuralism* (1997) is important methodologically. It provides us with a clever and engaged discussion of the discipline of intellectual history and of its recent evolution in France. He argues that intellectual history has progressively developed into an "autonomous research space" situated "at the crossroads of traditional history of ideas, history of philosophy, history of mentalities and cultural history" (p. 356). In this context of "epistemological indeterminism" (Delacroix), intellectual history becomes a careful movement between different methods: "without imperial ambitions, intellec-

tual history simply aims to bring together works, their authors and the context that bore them, and to do so in a way that refuses the apparent alternative between an internalist reading of works and an externalist approach that privileges networks of sociability" (p. 355). After explaining the approach he set up in *History of Structuralism*, he concludes with elements of reflection on current historiography, proposing to contemporary historians the task of a "second-degree" history, where historians gain consciousness of this specific status of their discourse, "pursuing the convergences between the history of thought and history *tout court*" (p. 363).

In brief, the *parti pris* of the edited work is clear. It is a work of intellectual historiography, setting itself in contrast to the predominant reception of French thought in North America; it does not propose a theoretical reworking or commentary of philosophical or literary texts and it shies away from authors traditionally associated with French theory, post-Marxism, poststructuralism or postmodernism. Thus the reader finds none of the usual suspects of French thought here–such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Jean-François Lyotard or Jean Baudrillard. Also, because of the heterogeneity of the contributions and the arbitrary choice of the authors under study, the volume does not provide the reader with an overall picture of post-World War II intellectual and cultural history in France. This was not its goal. Instead, the book is successful in presenting an alternative picture of the postwar French intellectual landscape, rich in details and carefully researched. However, we are far from the end of an era announced in the introduction: French *theory* has always been an inadequate and artificial category, and, if we concede that its limits have been shown and accepted nowadays, it remains that French *theorists* have not said their last word. For instance, with some of Michel Foucault's lectures at the *Collège de France* still to be published and translated, or with the success in Paris of Alain Badiou's current seminars, we cannot help but think that the work of French *theorists* is richer and longer-lasting than many of the other intellectual productions of the period.

Although the contributors participating in this work are quite diverse, in terms of discipline and geographical origin, the book remains primarily addressed to a North American audience, and in particular to more advanced students, with a vested interest in contemporary European history. The bibliography and notes, containing recent publications in French and English, are extensive with regards to the works of the authors under study, but also to various debates and issues in the field of the history of ideas. Thus, the book can serve as a reference work and as a good starting point for further research. In the end, the volume's achievements are more modest than announced in the introduction, but it remains a valuable work and a useful read.

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