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H. R. Kedward, Nancy Wood, eds. *The Liberation of France: Image and Event.* Oxford and Washington, D.C.: Berg Publishers, 1995. xvi + 369 pp. $39.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-85973-087-4; $109.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-85973-082-9.

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The ambition of the editors of this book–which is to open the Liberation of France to close conceptual analysis–may not have been fulfilled, but not for lack of trying. The book is a collection of twenty-four articles first presented at an interdisciplinary conference held at the University of Sussex in April 1994 commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Liberation of France. The articles are grouped under five headings: Resistance Narratives, Gender, *Epuration*, *Outre-Mer*, and the Contested and Ambiguous Image. That the Liberation of France was a pivotal event of manifold dimensions–as editors H. R. Kedward and Nancy Wood (both from the University of Sussex) say in the introduction–is undoubtedly true, though so also was the fall of France four years earlier. France was liberated by the western Allies as had been expected by the French themselves well before the summer of 1944. The most interesting chapters of this book do not dress these old facts in new garbs, but instead add interesting and painful details to the picture we have of the Liberation of France.

In his thoughtful study of the Resistance group *Carmagnole-Liberte* in Lyon, J. C. Simmonds tells us that a large influx of recruits to the FTP-MOI (*Francs-Tireurs et Partisans Francais et Main d'Oeuvre Immigree*) Carmagnole occurred, not surprisingly in the summer of 1944, in the wake of the Allied landing. Who were the brave men and women who put their lives on the line well before 1944? Eight-three percent of them were not French citizens, but often political–communist or anti-fascist–refugees, or immigrants with no citizenship, toughened up by years of living in the extremes of poverty. They were young, between 18 and 25 years old, and many of them were women. Twenty-three percent were Jewish, and Polish Jews proved to be the backbone of FTP-MOI Carmagnole. They established the group on 6 June 1942. They remained its most loyal long-term members and carried most of its actions. Last and least: French citizens accounted for 17 percent of the membership of *Carmagnole-Liberte*, including all the converted of the eleventh hour. The first to join *Carmagnole-Liberte* were the last to be remembered: the French Communist Party has bestowed upon them some recognition only recently.

We learn of other unsung heroes in Tony Chafer's essay "African Perspectives: The Liberation of France and its Impact in French West Africa." French West African soldiers who fought in the battles for the Liberation of France were rounded up in camps in France pending their repatriation to Africa, and because of the "whitening" of the French army in 1944-45 they could not take part in the victory marches and celebrations. Their mistreatment did not stop there: many had to fight hard to receive their pay or their full pensions. In Algeria the moderate nationalist leadership pressing for reforms drew attention to the enormous sacrifices made by Muslim soldiers who made up 90 percent of the force commanded by General Henri Giraud, but to no avail.

When left to fend for themselves and given liberation on a silver platter, some French proved to be comically inept. Simon Kitson, in an article entitled "The Police in the Liberation of Paris," relates an episode which forebode the misadventures of Inspector Clouseau. On Saturday, 19 August 1944, around a thousand police insurgents gathered in the *Prefecture de police de Paris*, becoming easy targets for the Germans who lost no time in attacking them. The valiant insurgents became panic-stricken but luck–if not sound judgement–was on their side: German resolve was weak in view of their impending defeat. So a truce was quickly reached. Thanks to the diligent work of French historians, this incident was subsequently gained mythical proportions. Quickly forgotten was the most damning evidence of all, namely that in July 1944 a few weeks prior to the occupation of the Prefecture, the police of Paris had arrested five hundred foreign Jews.

Epuration (i.e., the purge of French collaborators after liberation) also raised many questions the authorities did not wish to consider. In his interesting article entitled "France's Little Nuremberg: The Trial of Otto Abetz,"

Nicolas Atkin relates that when Otto Abetz, the German ambassador in Paris (1940-44) was tried on 64 counts, the main one being the murder of the Georges Mandel, former French cabinet minister and belliciste, he successfully claimed that he had engineered Mandel's escape to Germany where he was safe only to be brought back to France and shot by Joseph Darnand's *Milice* under orders from Pierre Laval, head of the Vichy government. This claim dramatically deflated the confidence of the prosecution, though Abetz was eventually sentenced to twenty years (and released in 1954).

In a country where literature and political convictions are apparently important, many writers showed an extraordinary ability to switch allegiance at the last minute without batting an eyelid. A case in point is the world of comic strips where many famous authors and especially illustrators worked with no hiatus for the Vichy regime and for the post-Liberation Fourth Republic. In "Plus ca change…? Propaganda Fiction for Children, 1940-1945," Judith K. Proud relates the story of a certain Vincent Dancette. He had written *Il etait une fois un pays heureux* in 1943 (One upon a time a happy land), a work of propaganda fiction for children in praise of Marshal Philippe Petain, which was published by a company called *La Generale publicite* on behalf of *Le Bureau de documentation du chef d'etat*, Petain's personal propaganda machine. Around the same time Dancette was publishing *Il etait une fois un pays heureux*, he began working on another book for children: *La Bete est morte. La Guerre mondiale chez les animaux* (The Beast is dead. The World War among Animals) which celebrated the Liberation, and was published by the same *Generale publicite* in June 1945. Nicholas Hewitt in "The Literature of the Right and the Liberation: the Case of the 'Hussards"' demonstrates that young writers linked with the far right *Action francaise* before the Second World War enjoyed a considerable measure of success in the post-war era. *Uranus* (1948), an anti-Resistance novel by the right-wing anarchist Marcel Ayme, was, for example, well regarded.

Gender analyses fall short in opening up the Liberation of France to close examination. These consist mainly in glorified cliches and the continuous re-invention of the wheel. In "Women's Aspirations, 1943-47: An Oral Enquiry in Toulouse," Hanna Diamond conducted a lengthy and time-consuming oral inquiry among women on their aspirations at the Liberation only to learn that most of them had hoped it would bring back their traditional lives as housewives. Some wanted to continue to work outside the home because they had enjoyed their first taste of it. According to the same oral sources, during the Occupation, women had not surprisingly spent an inordinate amount of time searching for the victuals and other life essentials for their families.

Everywhere in liberated France and in every sphere of life, women were subject to repressive social construction in a patriarchal society. Hilary Footitt, quoting Genevieve Fraisse (*La Raison des femmes* [Paris, 1992]) claims that the election of thirty-three women to the *Assemblee constituante*, was one "of these historic moments where women defined themselves as women, as the subjects of history" ("The First Women Deputies: les 33 Glorieuses", p. 131). During the life of the assembly (1945-46), they put gender above politics, not letting their political rivalries get in the way of their common interest. However, after a little more than a year, women reverted to traditional politics, putting the agenda of their political parties ahead of their shared concerns as women. Why did it happen? Footitt explains it as a result of the imposition of "repressive social construction" on these *deputees*.

Interestingly enough, and contradicting the feminist credo, many women Resisters rejected an interpretation of their actions emphasizing their gender because it was too restrictive. Such an emphasis may distort reality. For example, it is true that Lucie Aubrac, author of *Ils partiront dans l'ivresse*, as a woman Resister, had to lead a double life outwitting the Gestapo, but this situation was not created by her gender as much as by her activities as a Resister (Claire Gorrara, "Reviewing Gender and the Resistance: the Case of Lucie Aubrac," p. 149). Male *resistants* led a double life too not because they were men, but because clandestinity was essential for survival and the success of their missions. A case in point: Raymond Aubrac, her husband, who Lucie rescued many times from the grasp of the Gestapo.

Shearings of women at the Liberation were an "enactment of a gender-based violence enacted by men on the bodies of women" (Corran Laurens, "'La femme au Turban': les femmes tondues," p. 155). Let this reviewer try her hand at gender idiom: putting male collaborators in front of a firing squad was a gender-based violence inflicted by men on the bodies of men. Stating the obvious should not be confused with close conceptual analysis. Why were women sheared who were suspected of having collaborated with the Germans? Scratch through the jargon and appreciate the explanation for what it is worth: "they represented both an attempted symbolic reversal of women's emergent power and an exorcism of the image of threatened masculinity from public memory" (p. 177). Because we learn in this book that masculine identity stood as another casualty of the Occupation. In the

words of Michael Kelly, it earned a place in the "familiar and bitter catalogue of humiliations" which France suffered during the Occupation (Kelly, "The Reconstruction of Masculinity at the Liberation," p. 117). Consequently it became "one of the many devastated reaches of French life which had to be reconstructed" at the Liberation (p. 17). Let this reviewer suggest that for the outright collaborators, for the *Miliciens*, for the supporters of the National Revolution, the Occupation was not particularly humiliating. Their masculinity may actually have flourished with the power they exerted during the Occupation.

Misplaced pity and truisms do not make for close conceptual analysis. To open up a historical event to close conceptual analysis remains a worthy pursuit, but this book teaches us very little which is new. Its success lies elsewhere, in the careful studies of well-known episodes of the Liberation using the conventional tools of the historian's craft.

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