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Margaret Attack and Christopher Lloyd, eds., *Framing narratives of the Second World War and occupation in France, 1939-2009*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012. xii + 251 pp. \$100.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-0-7190-8755-4.

Review by Hugo Frey, University of Chichester.

The essays that are presented in this meticulously edited collection were first delivered as papers in 2009 at an international conference hosted at the University of Leeds, United Kingdom. This academic event is just one element of a wider investigation into the role of war, literature and memory that has been funded by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). It gathers together twenty short essays, all of which address how contemporary French culture continues to respond to the Occupation and the Second World War. The dominant thematic emphasis of the whole collection is on literary production, though this category is quite broadly defined so as to include children's literature, mass-market bestsellers, poetry, autobiographical writing, and the adaptation of literature into film (notably, Claude Miller's interpretation of Philippe Grimbert's *Un Secret* [1]). In terms of chronological emphasis there is a significant weighting of material towards very contemporary production, notably works published in the last fifteen years. For example, four scholars (William Cloonan; Peter Tame; Richard J Golsan; and Luc Rasson) address some of the issues raised by Jonathan Littell's *Les Bienveillantes*. [2] Indeed, these contributions provide a rich and coherent corpus of perspectives on that controversial novel that caused such a stir in Paris when it was first published. These contributions are profitably read together and provide a useful range of responses that are suitable as the basis of a graduate seminar debate.

It is invidious to select any single chapter in a collection such as this for special attention, praise or criticism, and so I will not do so herein. Instead, let us note that historians working on modern France, but not the immediately contemporary literary milieu, will note with special interest the nuanced analysis found in several of the contributions that sit alongside up-to-the-minute literary discussions. For example, there is a fascinating and rich analysis of Louis Aragon's wartime poetry and the deeper context writers worked under during the war (Gisèle Sapiro), an important new essay on the "forgotten" surrealist poetry group, *La Main à Plume* (Nathalie Aubert), and two essays that expertly explore the "re-discovery" of Irène Némirovsky as a writer-witness and the recently published occupation diary of Hélène Berr (Angela Kershaw and Danièle Sabbah). Each of these contributions provides new and fascinating literary-historical interpretation. Read together they offer original insights into the Vichy period and constitute an important micro-historiography in their own right. As such they are profitably read alongside Colin Nettelbeck's chapter where he sketches out an argument for a cultural history approach to the Vichy years, a methodology of understanding that is sensitive to micro-history, case-work, and comparative reading. I would also like to mention here that, while Leah Hewitt's excellent essay on film mainly focuses on *Un Secret*, she also argues implicitly for some renewed historical attention on Jean-Paul Sartre's 1946 essay, *Réflexions sur la question juive*. That document from the immediate post-war phase is another valuable, but much too often neglected source (notwithstanding, Hewitt's work here and that of Jonathan Judaken).

In summary, this collection represents a most convincing snapshot of the state of the field and editors, contributors and publisher are to be congratulated on bringing out this new, but already definitive work. The collection as a whole will be very useful for many years to come for anyone working or teaching on literature and memory in France. French writers, intellectuals, journalists and novelists continue to reinterpret the *années noires* and this collection encourages new thinking, re-reading of some classic and also previously “lost” material, and offers much useful new detail (see for instance the contributions I have underlined above and that seem to me to be especially significant for historians, rather than contemporary literary specialists). So, in summary, this is a significant editorial achievement and it is a valuable contribution that all of us working in or around this field will surely welcome and return to.

Atack and Lloyd use their brief introduction to the collection to explain that the essays seek to tease out the many multi-layered understandings of where art, visual culture, and literature play a role in shaping modern day historical understanding. In the spirit of a collective research endeavour I will briefly next draw attention to some perhaps missing layers. Thus, Alan Morris’s fascinating and important discussion of two recent novels from the writer Patrick Modiano glosses over that same author’s equally recent and relevant publication, *Un pedigree*.<sup>[3]</sup> It is also a pity that Virgine Sansico’s account of the novel and film—*Un Héros très discret*—overlooks the family history of that film’s director, Jacques Audiard. Let us recall here that Audiard’s father, Michel Audiard, contributed to the collaborationist press, later becoming a controversial and popular postwar filmmaker. Similarly, while Hilary Footitt provides a very helpful reading of French historiographical attitudes to ‘Operation Overlord’ (D-Day)—this is one of the most important chapters in the collection—it seems to me that at least a footnote would have been merited to note the significant role of cinematic representation and reception. After all, Hollywood’s *The Longest Day* (1962, directed by Ken Anakin et al) was one the highest grossing films of the postwar years in France. Similarly, the public debate and reception of Spielberg’s *Saving Private Ryan* was comparatively extensive when that visually stunning work was first released. It would have also been fascinating if Richard J Golsan had expanded on his succinct discussion of Pascal Bruckner’s *La tyrannie de la penitence. Essai sur le masochisme occidental*. That essay was written in the context of the debates on how France should approach its colonial history and it would have been interesting to explore how that public discussion on history and memory shades across to impact perceptions of the Occupation.

More generally speaking, if just for a sense of ‘completeness’ of postwar literary history, it is also a shame that the story of the so-called ‘Hussards’ novelists (Roger Nimier, Michel Déon, Antoine Blondin, Jacques Laurent) is not included at all in the collection. The disappearance of the ‘Hussards’ does leave a significant gap in the record. For it was here that writers, journalists and publishers with right-wing sympathies voiced their particular positions on the meaning of the past. They do remain influential in some quarters and are often the subject of nostalgia of the 1950s. More importantly their works represent a significant literary strategy to shift memory of Vichy away from the resistance and towards a right-wing anarchist approach. They can also be profitably read alongside the as-yet-unwritten history of the reprinting of collaborationist writers’ works in the new mass-market paperback formats, Folio and Livres de Poches.

Maybe more surprising for readers of H-France is that not much coverage explores how “Vichy in the tropics” (to borrow a phrase) is commemorated or processed in any literary or visual aesthetics (notwithstanding Golsan’s perceptive reading of Sansal’s fascinating novel, *Le Village de l’Allemand*). This selection seems a little askance from mainstream historiography’s currently strong emphasis on rapidly replacing French metropolitan history with a more open and expansive appreciation of the experiences of colonialism and the permanent exchanges and dialogues that linked Paris to much of the rest of the globe, and vice versa. Readers of this review are encouraged to take up this space and to map in their own more Francophone corpus.

There is little, if any explicit literary theory in any of the chapters or explanatory sections; Gisèle Sapiro's excellent work standing out as an exception to the more general rule. The majority of contributions, including that of the editors, offer intelligent, historically informed, and critically nuanced interpretation, rather than exercises in one school of theory or another. *Grosso modo*, the editors and contributors do continue to take Henry Rousso's *Le Syndrome de Vichy*, as at the very least being an initial compass for understanding the changing patterns of emphasis in post-war memory. It is useful then to quickly recall here how this is a complex and even contested work. For example, Henry Rousso has always been quite careful to emphasize that his periodization model of memory is relatively flexible. Writing on the critical phase of "les refoulements, 1954-1971," he has noted that even in that period Vichy never really fully faded from public view.

Such perspectives are very different from the more common assumption that somehow all of the Vichy past disappeared or was forgotten until the 1970s fashion for revival and revisionism. Moreover, substantive criticisms of the 'syndrome' argument have been made in important works of scholarship. Bertram Gordon offered a far more nuanced and subtle commentary on the cycles of historical publishing than that which features in Rousso's own study. Maybe more importantly the work of the film historian Sylvie Lindeperg consistently shows that the resistance narratives created in the cinema were never processes of establishing a simplistic hegemonic version of what the resistance meant. Time and again in her ground-breaking research, she emphasizes the debates and contestations that surrounded the making and editing of postwar resistance films.[1] Such nuances mean that the Vichy syndrome is even more complex than is sometimes assumed and usually implicitly taken for. In fact, Attack and Lloyd wisely follow in this same direction of argument when they underline the complexity of postwar memory construction. Quite swiftly in their introduction they explain that there is more to consider than maybe first imagined, based on a popular understanding of how the French have processed their modern history. Here, their reading of Roger Boussinot's 1962 novel, *Les Guichets de Louvre*, stands out as a fascinating vignette in its own right, an exemplary analysis that is well worth returning to after reading the collection as whole.

#### LIST OF ESSAYS

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## NOTES

[1] Philippe Grimbert, *Un Secret* (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 2004).

[2] Jonathan Littell, *Les Bienveillantes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006).

[3] Patrick Modiano, *Un pedigree* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

[4] See Bertram Gordon, "The 'Vichy Syndrome' Problem in History," *French Historical Studies* 19.2 (1995): 495-518; Sylvie Lindeperg, *Les écrans de l'ombre* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1997); Sylvie Lindeperg, *La voie des images. Quatre histoires de tournage au printemps-été 1944* (Paris: Verdier, 2013). See also Hugo Frey, *Nationalism and the Cinema in France: Political Mythologies and Film Events, 1945-1995* (New York: Berghahn, 2014), pp. 44-60.

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