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**Robert Zaretsky**, *Cock and Bull Stories: Folco de Baroncelli and the Invention of the Camargue*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004. viii + 190 pp. Map, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$49.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 0-8032-4920-9.

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In this short book, Robert Zaretsky considers the role of Folco de Baroncelli in the cultural creation of the Camargue, that large and now well-touristed area at the delta of the Rhône. It blends the history of bullfighting and of the region with a partial biography of Baroncelli, a little-known nobleman who spent much of his life away from his family, living in his beloved Camargue and promoting both it and its bulls.

Zaretsky begins by tracing the history of bullfighting and the *course camarguaise*, the running of the bulls, from the Old Regime to the end of the nineteenth century. In the process, he examines the contrast between, on the one hand, a centralizing French state concerned about political threats from the *langue d'oc* as well as bullfighting and, on the other hand, the changing regional consciousness of the local political and literary elites. The book then turns to an examination of the late nineteenth-century *félibrige* and its defense of the *langue d'oc* and Occitan customs. Although Zaretsky discusses the efforts of Frédéric Mistral to recreate a "pure" *langue d'oc* as a literary language as a way of reinforcing Occitan identity, he focuses on Mistral's understudy Folco de Baroncelli, who attempted at this time to recreate a pure and wild "race" of the Camargue bull.

In one of the most interesting chapters of the book, Zaretsky considers Baroncelli's interest in the American West, particularly in the form of Buffalo Bill Cody's traveling Wild West Show. Zaretsky attained access to the considerable correspondence between the Dakota Sioux Jacob White Eyes and Baroncelli. Their interaction provides an interesting cross-cultural approach for considering how regional and national identities evolved in France and the United States. Using his new knowledge of Native Americans, Baroncelli refashioned his views of the history of Occitania. Baroncelli came to believe that there was little difference between American Manifest Destiny and the Albigensian Crusade, thus making no distinction between the medieval attack on "heresy" and the centralizing actions of the modern French state. The Camaraguais presumably resembled American Indians, a link reinforced for Baroncelli by wearing his Sioux headdress. Above all, Baroncelli believed that Cody's showmanship provided a model for how the Camargue might save its own traditions. Baroncelli thus worked to invent a tradition of the Camargue, claiming that he was merely preserving something that had really been there since time immemorial.

Zaretsky then turns to the Révolte du Midi of 1907, the strike of southern winegrowers desirous of central government action to resolve the crisis of wine production. The strikers' partial success was, according to Zaretsky, a problem for certain *félibres*, including Baroncelli, who had hoped that the revolt was the first move toward secession from Paris and the eventual establishment of an independent Occitania. After 1907, Baroncelli changed tacks, giving up much hope of independence and pushing instead for the preservation of the Camargue.

In a final chapter, Zaretsky traces Baroncelli's actions during and after the First World War, focusing on the ways that Baroncelli laid "the intellectual and imaginative foundations" for the eventual Parc Naturel Régional de Camargue (p. 107). Baroncelli claimed that when Mistral established the famous Museon Arlatan, the ethnographic museum of Occitania, Mistral had told Baroncelli that he had really

wanted to establish an “open air museum” consecrated to “preserving the purity of the race of bulls and horses” but he lacked the expertise and decided to leave Baroncelli that task (Mistral, quoted p. 107). Zaretsky describes how Baroncelli turned during the war to the preservation of the Camargue within the French state. In a sense, Baroncelli struck a deal. By depoliticizing Occitanism, “reducing it to a matter of folklore and bird sanctuaries, Paris could allow it to exist” (p. 108). The Camargue was increasingly portrayed as a wilderness needing the protection of Paris, thus preserving (if taming) Occitan identity at the same time.

This is, in many respects, an interesting book as Zaretsky excels at suggestion. However, some readers will clamor for greater specificity. For example, the final chapter ostensibly describes Baroncelli’s actions during World War I and the subsequent peace. Yet after laying out Baroncelli’s views of the necessity of historic preservation, the chapter turns to interwar regional writers attuned to Baroncelli’s sense of the Camargue and who helped to establish it as an intellectual construct. The chapter ends with a few words about Vichy, and then the epilogue skips forward to the creation of the Parc in 1973. Baroncelli thus gets the credit for setting the intellectual foundations for the Camargue, but the discussion jumps from the interwar years to the creation of the Parc without much information about subsequent political and cultural developments. Zaretsky may well be right that Baroncelli laid these intellectual foundations, but more contextualization and an account of post-World War II developments would make Baroncelli’s contribution more clear.

In addition, I would have liked a more detailed and systematic discussion of the threat of emasculation as used by Baroncelli and other champions of Occitania. Baroncelli claimed that Paris was metaphorically attempting to castrate the Camargue, a provocative characterization in the defense of regionalism against the French state. Moreover, Zaretsky mentions in a note that bulls of the Camargue were in fact steers (n. 22, p. 147). But there is no discussion of how champions of the Camarguais bulls, mobilizing notions of masculinity against Paris in order to avoid the symbolic castration of the Camargue, dealt with the fact that the bulls were neutered. Did they mostly avoid this awkward fact? It seems an irony worth pursuing.

Given the title, some readers will expect that *Cock and Bull Stories* portrays the symbolic struggle between the Gallic cock and the Camargue bull. While there is, of course, considerable discussion of the French state, the image of the French cock appears only briefly in the text. If the French cock is important enough for the title, I would like to know more about how that image, like that of the bull and that of Marianne, may have revealed a gendered understanding of the place of Camargue in the French national state. In the end, the difficulty for Zaretsky is that he has the task of trying to recount in a consistent and comprehensible fashion who Baroncelli was and what he believed. This is harder than it appears, for Baroncelli’s ideas seem rarely consistent. He seems to have veered from view to view, example to example, and idea to idea in a soup-to-nuts fashion. Had this been just a biography of Baroncelli perhaps a good title would have been not *Cock and Bull Stories*, but *du coq à l’âne* (nonsense). In short, the book’s apparent lack of clarity should be attributed at least in part to that of the subject.

Finally, I am hoping that the publisher did not expect an abbreviated treatment. This is not the most extreme example of the ever-shrinking monograph, of which there are more all the time. However, it appears that limitations of space have not allowed Zaretsky to develop fully many of his quite fascinating suggestions. There are also typographical errors that in several instances seem like the sort introduced in copyediting. Nevertheless, overall this is a suggestive book that students of regional identities and cross-cultural contact will want to read.

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