

Zusammengefasst handelt es sich hier allerdings um eine wichtige Bereicherung innerhalb dieses Forschungsfeldes. Entscheidende Aspekte der Alltagsgeschichte werden hier nicht losgelöst von politischen Einflüssen untersucht, sondern bewusst mit ihnen verknüpft. Auch die Perspektiven und die Argumentation, die Alice Weinreb aufzeigt, sind nachvollziehbar und hochspannend. Das Werk hat fraglos das Potential, ein Standardwerk zu werden.

Anmerkungen:

- 1 A. Weinreb, Die sozialistische Schulspeisung: Kinder, Mütter und die Bedeutung der Arbeit in der DDR, in: M. Middell, F. Wemheuer (Hrsg.), Hunger, Ernährung und Rationierungssysteme unter dem Staatssozialismus, Frankfurt a. M. 2011, S. 245–267.
- 2 A. Weinreb, The Tastes of Home. Cooking the Lost Heimat in West Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, in: German Studies Review (2011), S. 345–364.

**Patrick Boucheron (ed.): Histoire mondiale de la France, Paris: Seuil 2018, 1076 pp.**

Reviewed by  
Marco Meriggi, Naples

In this new edition which appeared in 2018, just over a year after the first, the volume includes, besides the introduction of the editor Patrick Boucheron, 161 contributions, written by 132 different authors. These are short articles of four or five pages, enriched with an essential bibli-

ography and assembled into sections. Each article corresponds to a date, connected with a theme.

Dates range from 34,000 before Christ (the presumable composition age of prehistoric paintings housed in the Chauvet cave) to 2015, the year of the IS terrorist attacks to the editorial staff of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and later to the Bataclan theatre.

The first two sections include prehistory, the ancient world and the early Middle Ages and touch the year 800 after Christ. The third and the fourth ones (the feudal order; growth of France) respectively arrive until 1159 and 1336. The fifth (the great Western monarchy) considers a period from 1347 to 1629, whereas the last seven sections are respectively entitled: absolute power (1633–1720); the nation of the enlightenment (1751–1794); a home for the universal revolution (1795–1852); the globalization of France (1858–1905); modernities in the storm (1907–1960); after the empire, in Europe (1960–1987); today, in France (1989–2015).

The common thread that runs through this complex narrative structure is, admittedly, of a political nature, and one should primarily appreciate the book as the result of a civil commitment by the authors and the editor.

Boucheron's ambition is, in fact, that of proposing "a pluralist conception of history" against the narrowly nationalistic historical narration, which in recent years has ruled the public debate in France. In this way, he aims to challenge those authors who – precisely by emphasizing the national identity obsession – seem to have acquired the monopoly of the popularization of the history of France.

This kind of literature, which still enjoys huge editorial success in the French bookstores, has built its fortune above all by painting „the history [of France] as an endless struggle to keep its sovereignty preserved from external influences” (p. 11). These latter are accused by this literature of distorting, weakening, and finally endangering France in its very essence.

According to Boucheron, this has been an easy, simplistic, and reductive answer to the challenges launched by globalization over the last thirty years, as well as by the increasing problems of integration of ethnic and cultural plurality within a complex society, as it is today the French one.

However, the fact is that France, actually, since the most remote times has always been a complex and culturally composed framework, even before today’s French territory was given the name of France. Opportunely, Boucheron recalls what Lucien Febvre explained in a very lucid way already in the year 1944, inviting his audience in the University of Paris to reject “the idea of a necessary, fatal, prefigured France; the idea of a France once and for all given by the geographical nature to the ‘man of France’” (p. 11).

Just as the idea of provincializing Europe has been proposed, the question is now, therefore, provincializing France; that is, a country at the core of the Eurocentric master narrative of History, particularly in relationship to two topics: modern state, both in its bureaucratic and military components; freedom and universal rights, on the other hand.

Now, provincializing France means, within this book, showing how the supposed identity of a nation – of every nation, indeed – is an object perpetually under

construction and transformation, whose content is partly the result of the agency of exogenous factors and actors, as well as of intellectual and material contributions borrowed from other cultures.

Thus, from the time of the Cro Magnon man to the present day, France appears to be the result of a cultural hybridization, and we can only understand its history through the perspective offered by the global network. Further, if this network, up until the early part of the modern age, mainly (though not exclusively) coincides with the European space, in the last few centuries – and, of course, even more in recent decades – it has expanded greatly beyond the borders of Europe.

Many are the forms of cultural and material hybridization in which France has been involved over time. Drastically summarizing, one can say, first, that France has often played the function of a leading centre of extensive transnational processes in the political and economic spheres. This appears evident, for example, in the articles dedicated to the Norman conquest of various parts of Europe, to the Crusades, to Charles VIII expeditions in Italy at the end of the fifteenth century, to the commercial India companies at Colbert’s time. More generally, see also the reconstruction of the French power politics developed in many other articles, from the age of Louis XIV until the modern colonial empire building on a global scale between 19th and 20th centuries.

However, the “hexagon” was also often the place where important and not always enough known experiences of contamination from abroad were produced. It was, in other words, a sort of living open laboratory, not a fortress enclosed in itself and anx-

ious to preserve its supposed nature intact. Very interesting, among the many, appear to be, from this point of view, the articles dedicated to such topics as, for instance, the import of the Neolithic revolution in France in 5,800 b. C. – three millennia after its first appearance in the Middle East –, or as the Hungarian origin of St. Martin, patron of Gaul. Again, particularly intriguing results the contribution offered by Rabbi Rachi, commentator of the Bible and the Talmud, to the process of growth of the French language at the beginning of the twelfth century. But think, also, to the fairs of Champagne, a medieval place of intertwining of great European trade and of encounter between East and West, or – suddenly jumping to the present time – to the victory of the “black-blanc-beur” French national team at the 1998 football world championships.

Over the centuries, finally, France was a pole of attraction, which first Europe, then the whole world was looking at, as an example from which to draw inspiration. This happened in the religious field, how the story of the abbey of Cluny in the tenth century and the following ones clarifies; even more in the cultural field, if one recalls phenomena like the enlightenment, or, in recent times, like the planetary diffusion of Michel Foucault’s thought. Obviously, this was also the case in the politics. Just think of the “universality” of the French revolution and its ideals, to which an entire section of the volume is dedicated. Of course, this list could continue. I do not think it is a coincidence that the cultural operation promoted by this peculiar world History of a nation has seen the light in France in the first instance, even if it was promptly replicated also in Italy

(thanks to Andrea Giardina) and in Spain (by José M. Núñez Seixas). The hexagon is, in fact, perhaps the European country whose problems of multi-ethnic and multi-cultural integration have been in the last few years the most dramatic. At the same time, France is also the country which in the last decades offered the intellectual ground to many highly interesting historical considerations on cultural hybridization and critical rethinking of the theme of space and of its relationship with history.

I think not only of the great lesson of the *Annales* school, but also of the work of such scholars as Denys Lombard and Serge Gruzinski, who have, however, mainly consecrated their works to spatial and historical contexts far from France. I also think, of course, of the tradition of human geography, recently re-proposed in the key of *Géohistoire* by a scholar like Christian Grataloup.

Finally, France is the country where the regression towards the myth of “pure” identity and nationalism in the worst sense has been politically more alarming. It is no coincidence that the cultural approach suggested by Boucheron found an immediate resonance into the political program of Emmanuel Macron, who in an important interview explicitly acknowledged his intellectual debt to him.

This world History of France has, therefore, certainly many merits; not least, that of adopting a simple and captivating narrative style, far from academic pedantry and at the same time, however, careful to offer the reader a reasoned methodological lesson about the purposes of historical reflection. This latter consists in the study of complexity and entanglements, as well as in the clarification of connections, which

often take place beyond the space enclosed within national borders; the space which, vice-versa, seems to be the privileged object of narrative of the popular unprofessional literature on History, which the volume edited by Boucheron explicitly aims to compete with.

The resulting experiment is undoubtedly interesting. However, I am not entirely convinced that the formula adopted is the best, if what one really cares about is to produce lasting results. In fact, the choice of fragmenting the history of France in dozens and dozens of short articles, which are weakly connected to each other, seems, in the end, to produce the side effect of losing sight of the very object of the work: France itself, precisely. This happens despite the presence, at the bottom of each contribution, of a sequence of references to other dates included in the work.

From this point of view, after the reading of the over 1000 pages of this book, one remains with the unfulfilled desire of a more structured, selective and ambitious narration.

More than “World history of France”, the work we have here discussed about should be properly, perhaps, better entitled „World histories in France“ (or “connected with France”).

**Frederick Cooper: *Citizenship, Inequality, and Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 2018, xii + 205 pp.**

Reviewed by  
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We live in a world where bounded citizenries are the norm. We also live in a world where political movements offering deceptively simple solutions to the complexities of globalisation and migration have been gaining traction. Brexiters, Donald Trump, Jair Bolsonaro, Marine Le Pen, Viktor Orbán, Recep Erdoğan, among many others, have either won power or gained traction by indulging in identity politics and stoking fears of cultural ‘difference’. They have prioritised the nation-state in seeking to secure votes and support for their policies. In doing so, such modern-day populism posits a definition of citizenship that confines it strictly to national boundaries, while at the same time driving at a more exclusive definition of citizenship *within* those borders. They seek to roll back the more multi-layered concepts of the citizen that more readily accept overlaps in different forms and sources of identity and belonging. Playing to the British Conservative Party base, Prime Minister Theresa May indulged in this kind of rhetoric when she (now notoriously) opined in 2016 that ‘If you believe you are a citizen of the world, you are a citizen of nowhere’. Such language tends to reduce identity and citizenship to the simple idea that the