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Christian Jouhaud, *Sauver le Grand-Siècle? Présence et transmission du passé*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2007. 315 pp. 23.00 Euros (pb.). ISBN 9-78-20203-76266.

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The spine of Christian Jouhaud's *Sauver le Grand-Siècle?* is Marie Du Bois, a valet-de-chambre whose service began under Louis XIII and continued until 1671. Du Bois wrote his memoirs with vivid, telling episodes that not surprisingly intersect with several of the traditional themes upon which historians have focused since the *Grand-Siècle*. Or perhaps, themes historians and others have focused on in creating the *Grand-Siècle*. Jouhaud peels back layers of thinking about the seventeenth century as the defining period of French history. He does not do this systematically, but rather, eclectically, moving from primary sources to nineteenth- and twentieth-century readings of them to theoretical interventions that are often historically based. Jouhaud offers a series of stimulating ways to think about the past, which challenge the historical pieties in which the *Grand-Siècle* has become embedded. While idiosyncratic in some ways, Jouhaud takes on a number of traditional aspects of the *Grand-Siècle*, which left me wondering about the ideological framework that is largely left unspoken. It seems to me that historians frequently engage in the dubious practice of using ideology as a methodological tool without acknowledging the extent to which ideology, by its nature, has conscripted one's methodology. In this instance, Jouhaud shies away from both the historical and historiographical conundra around the problem of ideological embeddedness, thus at times reconstituting issues he at other times quite brilliantly reconfigures.

In many ways, ideology relative to subjectivity is an early modern problem, but especially a problem born of the *Grand-Siècle*. Louis Althusser discusses ideological recognition in modernity in these terms: "But the vast majority of (good) subjects work all right 'all by themselves', i.e. by ideology (whose concrete forms are realized in the Ideological State Apparatuses)...They 'recognize' the existing state of affairs (*das Bestehende*), that 'it really is true that it is so and not otherwise', and that they must be obedient to God, to their conscience, to de Gaulle, to the boss, to the engineer, that thou shalt 'love thy neighbour as thyself', etc." [1] Althusser's focus is modernity, but Jouhaud highlights historiography in which the ideological constraints born of the *Grand-Siècle* are replayed—usually without apparent consciousness. Consider some of the ways religion, Catholicism in particular, is refracted throughout. Marie Du Bois writes his memoirs as a spiritual exercise, and he is an exceedingly religious man. Episodes in Du Bois's life are routinely structured in religious idioms. He marks events such as his son's receiving the *survivance* of his office as valet by the contacts he makes while attending mass. As Jouhaud notes, Du Bois routinely spiritualizes social experience (pp. 172-73). From battles to oust the corrupt local *curé* to Du Bois's persistent efforts to secure funds from the king to build a royal chapel in his parish church, religious sentiment is insistent. Away from Du Bois, Jouhaud frames his analysis of Loudun through the sacred language of the *commissaire du roi*, Laubardemont, who is sent to quell the disturbances caused by the possession incidents (p. 241). These sorts of behavior are not news, but Jouhaud pulls the religious through the historiography in complex ways. Chateaubriand's treatment of the acerbic abbé de Rancé, also a spiritual exercise; the debates over Pascal's Christianity between and among the abbé Bremond, Maurice Barrès, Paul Bénichou and Marc Fumaroli; André Chamson's and François Mauriac's

evocations of the Camisards; and Michel de Certeau's treatment of the possession episode at Loudun all weave together at various moments. While Voltaire's *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* figures prominently, Jouhaud foregoes the obvious anti-religious element in Voltaire's thinking, but the ways that Voltaire structures his praise-cum-critique of the *Grand-Siècle* linger about or lurk in all of the historical considerations that follow.

Perhaps it is my being a North American and the current culture of religious ideology as a weapon, but I felt that Jouhaud's creative and unsettling work could have gone further to challenge the seemingly tacit acceptance of the ideological structuration of religious belief and practice. This is not easy to do. Ideology itself invites a kind of capitulation. For Louis Althusser, this effect is the result of ideology disguised by its own seeming inevitability: "It is indeed a peculiarity of ideology that it imposes (without appearing to do so, since these are 'obviousnesses') obviousnesses as obviousnesses, which we cannot *fail to recognize* and before which we have the inevitable and natural reaction of crying out (aloud or in the 'still, small voice of conscience'): 'That's obvious! That's right! That's true!'"[2] While utterly certain that all subjects are constituted within ideology, Althusser imagines that scientific discourse could possibly obviate or circumvent ideological subjection, but even Althusser's attempts—through Balzac and Tolstoy, among others—to allow that historical distance might produce ideological distance concedes that this was a limited prospect at best.[3] Indeed, at moments, ideology might be recognized, but it is usually not. Slavoj Žižek points out that Althusserian ideology rests on a presumption of ignorance: "'[I]deological' is a social reality whose very existence implies the non-knowledge of its participants as to its essence—that is, the social effectivity, the very reproduction of which implies that the individuals 'do not know what they are doing.'"[4] For all the intractability of ideology, perhaps Jouhaud should not worry about it.

And yet, in addition to religion, Jouhaud's source takes him into some of the thickest sites of ideological subject formation imaginable. Du Bois's precarious noble status appears routinely as subtext in his anecdotes; his access to the highest echelon of power—the king—enables him to cross otherwise vast social distances to get things done. Du Bois uses his knowledge of the ways of the court to intervene on behalf of Couture, his home village in the Vendôme. In 1669, Du Bois takes a gift of pears to the king when he is hunting at Chambord. Jouhaud points out that Du Bois wants a potlatch relationship: he gives the king pears and asks for money to restore the royal chapel in his parish church. The king takes the pears, but ignores Du Bois's request. The next year, the king ignores the pears, but gives Du Bois the money. Du Bois has access, and, sometimes, that translates into material results. At the same time, Du Bois has fractious relations with his neighbors in part because of his claims around his social status. The source of tension for Du Bois is his relationship to the monarchy, a relationship that is always marked by power and abjection. In 1663, Du Bois presents Louis XIV with his account of Louis XIII's death. The king receives it graciously and later rewards Du Bois for it. The next year, Du Bois is accused of stealing 1000 *livres* of *jetons* and has to protest his innocence to the king. Du Bois serves Louis XIII and then Louis XIV until he can no longer follow the king on campaign, at which point he is transferred summarily to the dauphin's service. As Jouhaud recounts, Du Bois vociferously, but impotently, objects to the treatment of the dauphin, especially by his noble governor, the duc de Montausier. Du Bois's resistance, or at least, insistence on the impropriety of Montausier's actions reveals his struggles within the ideological constraints of monarchical power. On the one hand, Du Bois is forced to capitulate. He can not stop what he considers to be the abuse of the dauphin. As Žižek would put it, sometimes there is nothing to do but accept: "[T]he best way to frustrate it is to comply with it, to consent to it without reservation." [5] On the other hand, Du Bois refuses to consent on those terms. His complicity is forced and, in some ways, unsuccessful because the coercion is apparent.

In a way, Jouhaud acknowledges that Louis XIV's monarchy was productive of ideology. Jouhaud discusses debates in art history, particularly over the meaning and effects of

the baroque, in part for how knowledge of power is produced, transmitted, and revived. Victor-Louis Tapié, in *Classicism et baroque* (1957) and subsequent discussions of it, defended the baroque as a social “style preference.” Pierre Francastel scoffed that a society hardly chooses “style” like a person chooses clothes. Both rehearsed the familiar notions of baroque fluidity replaced by the order and harmony of classicism. Pierre Charpentrat, for Jouhaud, moves the discussion in a new direction. Charpentrat contends that obstruction around the history of the baroque has produced erasure, but those losses are revealing of how globalization of styles has a dehistoricizing effect.[6] Jouhaud emphasizes Charpentrat’s use of the baroque as a vestige of the past that can orient understanding of the present (pp. 227-29). Jouhaud suggests how the baroque and the kind of analysis he does of it construct monarchical presentation as historical and as an epiphenomenon of history. The memorializing that is central to debates over the baroque, as to the baroque itself, offers proof of subjectivity. The remnants of power on display, the reification of those remnants as definitional frames that mark the contours of subjection—these are obvious ideological structures.[7]

Jouhaud’s larger purpose of provoking ways of rethinking recalcitrant historiographical formulations such as the *Grand-Siècle* is admirable and worthy in and of itself, but perhaps ideological awareness brought to the fore might provide perspective on the categories that have long made up the *Grand-Siècle* as a historical entity. Gender norms are an obvious case in point. Jouhaud’s man on the ground, Du Bois, is very much a *man* on the ground. The academic tradition of the *Grand-Siècle*, one might say, hardly admits otherwise. But in an account that takes note of silences and slippages, why does that one not matter?

I would like to suggest that it may matter too much. Gender is not just about women, but women are especially ideologically disruptive. Žižek locates that effect in the opacity of their desire:

It is this intuition which is behind the ill-famed male chauvinist wisdom that “woman is a whore”: woman is a whore because we never know what she means—for example, she says “No!” to our advances, but we can never be sure that this “No!” does not really mean a double “Yes!”—an appeal to an even more aggressive approach; in this case, her real desire is the very opposite of her demand. In other words, “woman is a whore” is a vulgar version of the unanswerable Freudian question “*Was will das Weib?*” (“What does the woman want?”).[8]

The seemingly seamless narratives and crossings that Jouhaud excavates suddenly take on different weight when the ideologies of gender are taken into account. Jouhaud stresses examining the play of time and space as a way to encounter the past. The town of Richelieu is an especially rich site for this. Julien Gracq visits the town, noting its decay and distance from its past links to power and privilege. Against Gracq’s angry account, Jouhaud places Maurice Fourré’s novel about the transformation of Richelieu. Fourré’s Richelieu is no less a ruin than Gracq’s, but Fourré sees the town as alive. For Jouhaud, encounter with the town through writing interlaces the past and the reconstitution of it. This is why the town reappears in Jouhaud’s later discussion of spatialization. Drawing on Louis Marin’s distinction between *lieu* (defined by the law of local propriety) and *espace* (meaning representation of vectors animated by movement), Jouhaud sees Richelieu as a *lieu* with emphatic laws of propriety organizing it (p. 292). Geometric and optically flat, Richelieu was designed in terms of visibility and order. But everything I have just written is actually highly gendered. Space is not neutral. The space of Richelieu was created by a man with specific notions of order and hierarchy and power as gendered emanations ultimately traceable to God (the father). The retellings of Richelieu remove the lives lived in gendered time and space as if that did not shape the tales of desolation or transformation, of failure or promise that Jouhaud is then able to encounter.

I have deliberately chosen what may seem like a recalcitrant example—a town—as illustrating ideological aporia around gender because of the suggestiveness of Jouhaud’s efforts

to save the *Grand-Siècle*. Jouhaud's decision to engage, often brilliantly, with cultural artifacts without discussing them as symptoms of power leaves me wanting the ideological more deliberately exposed. Jouhaud may rightfully see this as irrelevant—his aim is to examine the mediations of power through memory. But this very thought-provoking, smart book ought to inspire fruitful engagements with the ways that ideological imperatives are effected by cultural artifacts—including memory, which is, after all, saturated with the ideological that made it worth remembering.

NOTES

[1] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp. 127-86; see p. 181.

[2] Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," p. 172.

[3] Althusser, "A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre," in *Lenin and Philosophy*, 221-27; see esp. pp. 222-23.

[4] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London: Verso, 1989), p. 21.

[5] Žižek, *Object of Ideology*, p. 112.

[6] This is similar to Garrett Sullivan's work on memory and forgetting. For Sullivan, in the early modern period especially, forgetting is a strategy one can deploy in order to construct aspects of subjectivity according to more or less conscious desire. See Garrett A. Sullivan, *Memory and Forgetting in English Renaissance Drama: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

[7] Pierre Bourdieu could be talking about monarchical symbolic politics when he writes: "Symbols are the instruments *par excellence* of 'social integration': as instruments of knowledge and communication. . . they make it possible for there to be a *consensus* on the meaning of the social world, a consensus which contributes fundamentally to the reproduction of the social order." See Pierre Bourdieu, "On Symbolic Power," in *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John B. Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 163-70; see p. 166.

[8] Žižek, *Object of Ideology*, p. 112.

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