The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France (review)

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Discussions of "socialist modernization" and the campaign for "cultured trade" of the 1930s also need broader contextualization. Hessler rightly acknowledges the debt that the Soviet government owed to the West—and Macy's New York—for ideas on inaugurating cost-efficient procedures, beautiful luxurious interiors, polite salesclerks, and customer service. Such modernizing trends, however, were not limited to Western Europe and the United States. Merchants such as Grigorii Eliseev and the proprietors of Muir & Mirrielees department store, not to mention the commercial press, were visible advocates of rationalizing and beautifying the late Imperial retail sector. Hessler acknowledges that both Eliseev's and Muir & Mirrielees were used by the Bolsheviks to house socialist retail stores, but doesn't acknowledge the legacy or the significance. Instead the pre-revolutionary retail sector is subsumed under the term "old merchant Moscow," i.e., dirty, disorganized shops, and contrasted to the Stalinist state's vision of civilized modernity. Commercial officials of the NEP years had also tried to construct a modern socialist retail network. In light of earlier attempts, the "new model" of retailing put forth in the 1930s appears much less novel, although no less important.

These criticisms aside, Hessler's book offers the most comprehensive account of the consumer economy and should serve as the standard reference work on the subject. In its scope and detail, it adds enormously to our knowledge of the workings of the official and unofficial economies of the USSR (and the connections between the two) and our understanding of major trends in consumer behavior and consumption. As a work of Soviet history, Hessler makes a major contribution, demonstrating the significance of consumers and seemingly ordinary acts of buying and selling in the working out of Soviet economic policy.

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The Pride of Place: Local Memories and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century France. By Stéphane Gerson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003. xii plus 324 pp.).

Gustave Flaubert held in horror the suffocating conventionalism of provincial life, its buttoned-up formality and pretentious-cum-comic erudition à la Bouvard and Pécuchet. Stéphane Gerson, however, takes the matter of provincialism to heart, mapping the extensive and varied efforts of nineteenth-century Frenchmen to cultivate sentiments of loyalty and affection to hometown and *pays*.

Gerson's point of entry into the subject is local associational life. He takes the department of the Nord as his principal base of operations but wanders afield from there, drawing on examples from all over France. An arresting picture emerges in the process. From the 1830s, there was a proliferation of societies, academies, institutes—associations of all kinds—which made a cult of local memory. They inventoried archaeological treasures and place names; they organized pageants and parades; they erected monuments and memorials to regional luminaries. However much learning went into it, this was amateur work.

And who were the amateurs so taken up with nurturing pride of place? Gerson characterizes them as "middling bourgeoisie": civil servants, litterateurs, and liberal professionals in the main, joined by a smattering of clergy and businessmen. The promotion of local knowledge might be an end in itself, a form of friendly sociability which brought local notables together, but there was a public face to such activity as well, a desire to instruct the community as a whole in the past virtues and present accomplishments of the *pays*. The past celebrated, at least in the case of the Nord, tended to be distant, evoking the communes of the middle ages or the counts of Flanders. There were political connotations in such choices, but this was politics at a remove. When it came to touting recent accomplishments, however, it was not so easy to keep partisanship at arm's length. The good burghers of Montargis (located just south of Paris) set aside a room in the town hall to memorialize local greats, and the pantheon they assembled is revelatory, running from the admiral turned Protestant martyr Coligny through the revolutionary orator Mirabeau to the Romantic painter Girodet. Each in his way embodied a value: Coligny religious toleration, Mirabeau a love of liberty, Girodet a devotion to art as civic-minded uplift (he was student of David's). Toleration, liberty, uplift, it's not hard to put a political label to this package.

These were liberal values, and this is a key part of the story Gerson has to tell. Mid-nineteenth-century liberalism in France drew much of its energy from grassroots associational networks, bourgeois in composition, which took localism and amateur learning as their guiding principles. This would be a worthwhile finding in itself, but Gerson gives the story an added twist which redoubles the interest.

Authorities in Paris took cognizance of such local activism and decided to promote it. In 1834, the Minister of Public Instruction François Guizot created a Comité des travaux historiques. Through such agencies, the July Monarchy inserted itself into the life of local communities, handing out awards and subsidies, using its weight to sponsor learned projects of its own. But more than that, the regime encouraged local worthies to get together with their counterparts from other towns and locales, to meet in nation-wide congresses for the greater glory of learning and of France itself. Now, Gerson devotes considerable effort to documenting the state's ambivalence about advancing the localist cause. From a certain perspective, such hesitations made sense: too great an accent on parochial matters risked fostering particularist sentiments dangerous to national unity. But the weight of Gerson's evidence shows just how sound Guizot's policy in fact was. The state's interventions kept local societies from wandering down unwelcome political paths; its efforts to create a national culture of erudition brought local notables from all over together, fusing fragmentary local elites into a more cohesive whole. It might be thought that the Second Empire, centralizing and authoritarian (at least at first), would be put off by the liberal-minded symbiosis of local and national Guizot had labored so hard to effect, but nothing of the sort. The Empire kept the subsidies flowing. Anxious as it was about its own legitimacy, it saw clear advantages in cosseting local notables who might be persuaded of the usefulness of the regime, if not of its virtue. Guizot's successors, as Guizot himself, understood that smart cultural policy was also smart politics.

No, it was not the Second Empire which upset Guizot's edifice but the Third

Republic. Gerson is not always as clear as he might be on how this came about, but the general outlines of the process do come into focus. The 1870s and 1880s witnessed the emergence of new town-based elites, men of more modest social origins than in the past. Did they have a different vision of what local life meant? It's hard to say, but erudition seems to have mattered less to them. They spoke a new vocabulary, touting not so much the particularities of the *pays* as the virtues of the *petite patrie*. Pedagogy had mattered to the notables of old but not as much as it did to the new men who wanted to teach a hometown consciousness that would lead citizens to a greater love of nation. Such a municipalist groundswell might have troubled the elitist Guizot, but not the more democratic-minded men of the Third Republic who embraced it. On occasion, the new localism took a Nationalist turn with the accent on rootedness, on a conception of local identity which froze out outsiders in a way inconsistent with the Republic's putative universalism. But even the Nationalist spoke in a populist idiom that would have made the erudite of bygone days uneasy. Long ago, Daniel Halévy characterized the coming of the Republic as *la fin des notables*. In matters of localism, there was an end of the notables as well.

Gerson sketches in a particular historic epoch, the period 1830 to 1880, when men of means and erudition enjoyed the upper hand in provincial life. They were people of liberal views on the whole, firm believers in learning and localism, and in these beliefs they were not so different from their homologues elsewhere in Europe, whether the Honoratioren of the German hometowns or the Dissenting city fathers of the English Midlands. But they did differ in one respect: in their participation in a nation-wide, state-sponsored network of erudition. There was a statist tinge to French liberalism. It is a point Pierre Rosanvallon[1] has been hammering away at for years, and Stéphane Gerson's elegant and learned book fleshes it out from a novel angle and with a fine-grained attention to nuance and ambivalence.

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ENDNOTE

1. See, most recently, Pierre Rosanvallon, *Le Modèle politique français. La société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours* (Paris, 2004).

Secrets of the Soul. A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis. By Eli Zaretsky (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004. xv plus 429 pp. $30.00).

Eli Zaretsky has set himself a very ambitious goal: to bring together developments in psychoanalysis in the West with wider cultural changes and show a relationship between the two. Although his book is liberally sprinkled with interesting information, on the whole he does not succeed in his project. Moreover, Zaretsky's errors of detail cast doubt on the accuracy of his broader syntheses.