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Gisèle Sapiro, *The French Writers' War 1940-1953*. Translated by Vanessa Doriott Anderson and Dorrit Cohn. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2014. 672 pp. \$35.95 U.S. (pb). ISBN-10: 0822351919.

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The publication of Gisèle Sapiro's monumental *La Guerre des écrivains* in 1999 was a major event in Occupation historiography; one of the most important works to appear on the intellectual Resistance and its aftermath, it has become a key point of reference in the field.^[1] Impressive in scale and in its critical and historiographical erudition, it offers detailed investigation of the political and cultural choices of Resistance, Collaborationist and less committed writers within the conceptual framework of literary and intellectual analysis developed by Pierre Bourdieu. It is a summation of existing scholarship and archival knowledge, as well as forging new ways of thinking about what is at stake in the relation between literature and politics. Its translation into English is warmly to be welcomed.

This is a book about writers, not writings. The punning title sums it up: writers were waging war in the name of literary, cultural and political values; they were also at war with each other, and indeed could be the battleground over which the war was fought. Gide and Mauriac were at various times both object of dispute and protagonist in these battles. The Occupation pitched writer against writer, and, as Sapiro demonstrates so well, literature, its status, its profile and its allegiances, was the focus of a wide-ranging debate and vector of major political conflicts, one which had its roots in cultural positions and ideologies that long pre-dated 1940. "My goal in this book," writes Sapiro, "is to demonstrate what is specific about French writers under the Occupation, in light of the representations and practices proper to the literary world. The political positions taken by these writers obeyed logics that were not simply motivated by politics" (p. 1). The practices and pursuits of writers, their cultural and personal goals and self-representations, and the economic infrastructure of literary activity, from major commercial publishers to little magazines, are shown to have their own particular dynamic interacting with, but not subservient to, political or economic imperatives. Literary autonomy is a key value and operational principle in the literary field from Sapiro's perspective, and she argues that it is central to understanding why and how writers mobilise against regulation by heteronomous, that is to say non-literary principles.

The theoretical framework elaborated by Bourdieu has been productively, though at times controversially, used in literary criticism and the concepts of field, habitus, poles and logics have become familiar in both literary and cultural analysis. Bourdieu referred to Canguilhem's discussion of Newton's understanding of *milieu* in relation to the "champ de pouvoir," the field traversed by competing and conflicting forces.^[2] Canguilhem accentuated how very different Newton's notion of "*milieu* as fluid" was from later developments of "*milieu* as environment": "Le fluide est l'intermédiaire entre deux corps, il est leur milieu; et en tant qu'il pénètre tous ces corps, ces corps sont situés au milieu de lui."^[3] To this, Bourdieu and Sapiro bring metaphors of the magnetic field, the forces of attraction and repulsion operating between poles; just as writers, both actors and acted upon, are positioned by the constraints of the field itself, so also are they positioned by the multiple dynamic forces in play.

Anna Boschetti's important reappraisal of Sartre was something of a pioneering study in this respect, resituating Sartre and his journal in the very complex intellectual relations of their times, although the portrait drawn of a Sartre dominated by his mystifications in the very way that he tried to maintain his intellectual dominance was received as both hostile and reductive by some.[4] Dominique Jeannerod has demonstrated the importance of the tension between the devalued (symbolically dominated) practice of popular bestsellers and the prestige of high literary values for understanding the work of Frédéric Dard/San-Antonio.[5] In his study of Jean Genet that draws on both Bourdieu and Sartre, Ivan Jablonka defends Bourdieu's approach against accusations of reductionism, but still sees a value in the specificity of literary analysis.[6] It is true that by the end of *The French Writers' War*, the content of the literary work seems like the missing link or the ghost in the machine, which is not discussed, but which makes it all work. Writers and critics can be precious, narcissistic and mystified about literary value, and the drive to demystify claims of literary prestige that owe rather more to ideology than to pure literature is important. Nonetheless, the content matters in and of itself, and while the culture and aesthetic of the literary text are always profoundly ideological, the ideological stakes are not content-free. As Jablonka says, "le sens d'une œuvre est dénaturé si l'on ignore le processus par lequel elle se valorise symboliquement et s'institutionnalise," and the content of the work is fundamental to that process.[7]

Another reservation would be the lack of engagement with very different but arguably equally ambitious theorisations of intellectual politics and the literary, such as Sartre's *Qu'est-ce que la littérature?*, *Le pouvoir intellectuel en France* by Régis Debray, and Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle's *Les Non-conformistes des années 30*, an extraordinarily rich mapping of the politics and the cultural politics of the generation of young writers in the early 1930s and their heritage traced through the redrawn battle lines of the Popular Front and the Occupation.[8] Sartre remains to a certain extent a target here, dismissed as subjectivist, idealist and author of "the aborted attempt to break with spiritualism" (p. 380). In the context of the battle between literary mastery and constraint, the placing of his famous quotation: "Never were we freer than under the German Occupation" as epigraph to the Conclusion without Sartre's explicit gloss relating to life and death choices, is particularly unfriendly.

That said, *The French Writers' War* is without doubt a landmark study. The cultural politics of the literary Resistance have been the subject of various important works, often by key protagonists such as Pierre Seghers or Jacques Debû-Bridel.[9] *The French Writers' War* builds on them well: what Sapiro brings is an in-depth understanding of the interaction of generation, political stance, reputation, literary field and genre with publishers (commercial and independent), academies (Académie Française, Académie Goncourt) and universities, each of which has their own dynamic. In addition, she explores the different temporalities for each element and the particular influence of the conflicts between autonomous and heteronomous logics. This is an extraordinarily intricate piece of analysis.

The book is divided into three main parts. Part one, "The Literary Logics of Political Engagement", focuses upon the choices and the constraints facing writers, in the light of the upheaval of defeat and subsequent sweeping aside of the familiar landscape and its landmarks. "The redefinition of the stakes and the space of possibilities" (p. 14) shows how "the new powers' 'call for bids' opened, despite an apparatus of constraints, a new space of possibles that did not offer itself up to immediate decoding" (p. 16). In other words, there is a new and very different politicisation of literary activity and literary production, as both Vichy and the Germans set up their cultural machinery to oversee, court, cajole, encourage and control what is published and where, simultaneously pursuing various ideological agendas of normalisation and harmonisation with German and Vichy values and priorities. Writers and publishers must decide whether to work with the Germans or not. German censorship and Vichy's programme of "intellectual and moral reform" (p. 35) are direct attacks on the ideological and cultural value of the autonomy of literature since each is subordinating literature to non-literary values. Sapiro considers extensively the quarrel of the "bad masters" (pp. 119-157), writers designated by Vichy as having failed in their duties of moral leadership and having led the nation to defeat. It is the

championing of the *esprit français* as supreme value that Sapiro points to as the key mechanism enabling “the symbolic reunification of a shattered literary field” (p. 52), through the “reaffirmation of its national particularism as a universalism” (p. 327).

In order to understand their political stances, she places the writers of the war in various analytical contexts, of social positioning, class, formation and generation, such as which of the two “generations of fire” they belonged to, those who survived the First World War or those who came to adulthood in its aftermath (p. 58). To contextualise the schemata of perception and the systems of oppositions structuring the writers’ representations of literature, she turns to the debates of 1900 on the intellectual and ‘French genius,’ in alliance with the values of Republicanism, and their legacies as the battlelines drawn over literary qualities and political allegiances were renewed in the 1930s. The rise of fascism and creation of anti-fascist intellectual groupings caused literature to be enlisted in defence of humanist and Republican values, as it would be again at the defeat. In addition, writers active during the war years, 185 in total, are the object of a “Multiple Correspondence Analysis.” As is visually demonstrated in charts (pp. 66-67), and further supported by several tables and figures in the annexes (where the writers are plotted along two axes, a horizontal one between the poles of the popular and the avant-garde, and a vertical one between the financially successful [the pole of temporal dominance] and the high literary value [the pole of symbolic capital]), the Resistance attracted above all poets, the avant-garde and the young. That poetry carries resistance in its being, in its refusal of the utilitarian and the status quo of language, was a rhetorical point made time and again in favour of literature, and particularly poetry, being a key weapon in the Resistance struggle, but Sapiro shows empirically how heavily represented poets and the avant-garde were.

The analysis is consistently sensitive to the differences in configuration and circumstance between northern and southern zones, and plots with great skill the complex alliances and conflicts generated as the dynamics of the struggle set up forces of attraction and repulsion.

One of the strengths of this work is the demonstration of the ways public stances were constrained by all sorts of political, professional and generational contexts, a fact that Sapiro will show operating even more extensively during the *épuration*. As Mauriac said: “My enemies...had designated my true place to me by their insults” (pp. 154-155), for the attacks on the high values of “pure literature” pushed many establishment literary figures into the resistance. Overall, Aragon, Mauriac and Paulhan emerge as immensely powerful figures, in part because they occupy and effectively exploit intermediary positions in various networks, moving between northern and southern zones, between resistance and more orthodox, pro-regime circles.

Part two, “Literary Institutions and National Crisis”, provides a detailed analysis of four powerful literary institutions of the time. The public ones experienced the tensions of writers divided in their attitudes to the Germans and to Vichy within and across their internal hierarchies and power struggles; in addition the very different cultural and ideological positioning of each one also created distinct challenges. The Académie française, a state institution characterized by a commitment to order and duty, was however placed in opposition to the occupying forces by its adherence to the “French spirit,” a combination of factors leading, it is argued, to the inertia and *attentisme* with which it sat out the Occupation years. For the other institutions, vulnerable to closure by the authorities, inertia was never an option. With a fascinating discussion of the role of scandal as a survival strategy, Sapiro shows how the Académie Goncourt, one of the “hinge authorities” (p. 277) between the small-scale and large-scale production poles, between Vichy and Parisian collaborationism, between the media and respectability of an academy, ended on a terrain legitimising pro-regime positions.

The situation of the *Nouvelle Revue française* (NRF), the high-minded literary review published by Gallimard and long associated with Gide, is, like that of the clandestine Comité national des écrivains (CNE), quite well known. In addition to discussing the trajectory of the NRF, from its publication with German approval under the banner of literary autonomy and continuity under Drieu la Rochelle, Sapiro

focuses on the importance of the relationship between Drieu and Aragon, the “brother-enemies” (p. 312) where Paulhan played the role of arbiter. She discusses the NRF alongside the contraband little magazines (*Poésie*, *Confluences*, and especially *Messages*), bringing out the importance of Aragon and the use of poetry as weapon across all these outlets as writers regrouped around the poetic, France and humanism; the NRF, yoked in service to the politics of collaboration, disappeared. The story of the CNE, one of the many professional groupings founded by the Communist Party in line with the inclusive patriotic republican politics of its *Front national*, is also a trajectory, from subversive resistance to a position of authority, the powerbase of the new generation of young writers who would dominate the postwar years.

Part three, “Literary Justice,” offers a detailed discussion of the trials and processes of the *épuration*, as well as the writers’ blacklists published by the CNE which have become emblematic of the competing, contradictory and often irreconcilable expectations and demands placed on the whole process. The new literary generation of Camus, Sartre and Vercors, its legitimacy forged in the commitment to the resistance, has an undeniable moral capital. Resisters sought justice, but what that meant, who should be accused, and of what, was in practice expressed in and through other currents of political support and exclusion. Resisters divided along the political fault-lines of pro- and anti-communism. Communist writers often brought their own political considerations to the table; Camus and others argued that what the Resistance had stood for and its memory were under serious attack, while denunciations of *résistantialisme*, that is, of a supposed resistance-led (code for communist-led) witch-hunt against decent Frenchmen and women, aimed at stopping the whole process. Sapiro follows the controversies, the quarrels, the point-scoring, the internal and public struggles over legitimacy through the turbulent postwar and cold war years, with the memory and legacy of the Occupation continuing to play an important role. The writers’ war does not end in 1945.

Given the scale of work involved, and the evidence on the page of acknowledgements of the extensive effort devoted to it, it seems churlish to express reservations about the translation. But for non-French-reading scholars wishing to use this study, there are problems of which they need to be aware. There is a slightly one-dimensional feel to it, as if the social, cultural and historical resonances of the French language have not been taken into account; there seems to be an underlying methodology of taking the term in English that appears closest to the French, and of following the structure of the French syntax, both of which can wrong-foot the reader. I found “engaged literature” for “littérature engagée” one such stumbling block, and it clashes with the received “committed literature” in the translations of quotations. False friends abound, including journal for newspaper, editor for publisher, trouble for confusion or distress, conference for lecture, bachelor for a holder of the baccalaureate, lapse for slip of the tongue, infamous for vile or dishonourable, bearing for import or influence, Latin theme for Latin prose, though confusingly most of these can also appear accurately at times. Other choices also sent me back to the original: “Mediterranean” for “méditerranéenne” (p. 93) “bimbo morality” for “moralité de midinette” (p. 78) and “pion” (in the context, meaning pedants) left as “pion” (p. 147). “The ‘banks’ of the Atlantic” (p. 78) is odd, “iron-clad fellow travelling” makes me smile, and I’m not sure what “ingrate erudition” actually conveys.

There are some difficult and notorious translation problems, such as professeur/professor, which usually need a scholarly gloss to explain the solutions taken in the context to ensure the clarity of the argument. This should have been the case here, and not only for professor: scholar and scholarly are used at different times to translate all the following: “lettré,” “universitaire,” “scolaire,” “académique,” and “savant”—which means that the dynamics of the shifting oppositions of intellectual power, particularly the dynamics of the Academies versus literary debates in the literary press, or of journals as sites of power opposed to the universities, become blurred. That “academic” is used for both “académique” (relating to an Academy) and “universitaire” will again make things more difficult for readers trying to follow the intricacies of the mapping of power relations. In the specific context of the Occupation, it is not helpful to translate *Zone franche*, a free zone in the sense of a tax-free zone, as free

zone: “between contraband and underground, the free zone only held by a thread” (p. 420). The phrase added in the translation concerning Camus’s article on Pierre Pucheu—executed in Algeria for having sought to defect: “in which [Camus] spoke out against the Vichy government’s execution of prisoners” (p. 446) is bewildering and unfortunately misrepresents the focus of the article. It is not surprising that the author has added a footnote to explain that the “French State” in the text is l’Etat français, not the French State but the name of the regime that replaced the Republic.

One has also ask questions about the copy-editing process which should have picked up slips such as *Vendredi* writers being described as “fascist” (p. 66), habitus translated as habit (p. 63), the sentence where two possible versions are left in and the errors that produce sentences that do not make sense.[10] The two charts in the annexes (Figures A1 and A2, pp. 565-566) are transposed: the images are on the wrong page for the caption. The index abounds in spelling mistakes of names (e.g., Anglés, Robles, Palhan, Laurent-Célly). There are also significant numbers of cuts to quotations and in sections of text which again could have been explained. It is difficult to avoid the impression that a university press could have served this major piece of scholarship rather better.

Nonetheless, the vital contribution to understanding the cultural politics of the Occupation that this work represents is not impaired. The ambitious sweep, diachronically and synchronically, across institutions and writers, the combination of complex detail and the bigger picture, the handling of such large numbers of writers, undercutting the heroic individuality of the great writer, but complemented by detailed case studies, is impressive indeed. And it is because of what both Bourdieu and Sapiro have taught us about the hierarchy of publishers and writers and the dynamics of literary and intellectual consecration, epitomised by Sartre and by Gallimard, that one can only greet with a wry smile the publicity wrapper around Bourdieu’s *Les Règles de l’art* proclaiming it: “Le *Flaubert* de Bourdieu”, and the design of the cover of *The French Writers’ War*, which nods to the notices of *La France Libre*, certainly, but which recalls nothing so much as the classic design of the famous *collection blanche* of Gallimard.

NOTES

[1] Gisèle Sapiro, *La Guerre des écrivains 1940-1953* (Paris: Fayard, 1999).

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *Les Règles de l’art : structure et genèse du champ littéraire* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 28.

[3] Georges Canguilhem, *La Connaissance de la vie* (Paris: Vrin, 1989), p. 130.

[4] Anna Boschetti, *Sartre et les Temps modernes : une entreprise intellectuelle* (Paris: Editions de minuit), 1985.

[5] Dominique Jeannerod, *San-Antonio et son double : l’aventure littéraire de Frédéric Dard* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2010).

[6] Ivan Jablonka, *Les Vérités inavouables de Jean Genet* (Paris: Seuil collection Points, 2014), p. 24.

[7] Jablonka, *Les Vérités inavouables de Jean Genet*, p. 27.

[8] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Qu’est-ce que la littérature ?* (Paris: Gallimard, 1948); Régis Debray, *Le Pouvoir intellectuel en France* (Paris: Ramsay, 1979); and Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les Non-conformistes des années 30 : une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (Paris: Seuil, 1969).

[9] Jacques Debû-Bridel, *La Résistance intellectuelle* (Paris: Julliard, 1970); Pierre Seghers, *La Résistance et ses poètes* (Paris: Seghers, 1974).

[10] “The bookstore windows blossom with works on Péguy. The windows flourish with works on Péguy” p. 36. (“Les étalages des librairies se fleurissent d’ouvrages sur Péguy.” *La Guerre des écrivains*, p. 48).

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