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Gilles Laferté, *La Bourgogne et ses vins: image d'origine contrôlée*. Paris : Belin, 2006. 319 pp. Maps, tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. € 22 (pb). ISBN 9-782701-142982.

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In recent years, there has been a revival of scholarly interest in French regionalism. Historians have joined this increasingly interdisciplinary debate by focusing specifically on key periods such as the nineteenth century or the inter-war years. Julian Wright adds a political dimension missing from some of the earlier French studies of the cultural history of regionalism notably the impressive works of Anne-Marie Thiesse.[1] Wright noted recently that if we want to present a convincing case against the mis-association of regionalism with Vichy, then a certain amount of political history is necessary.[2] Yet few studies have successfully engaged with interdisciplinarity in the study of regionalism. The book under review here is one of the rare examples of such an approach.

Scholars working on both sides of the Atlantic have recently shed light on the relationship between regionalism and folklore by focusing either on rural society and French politics, as Shanny Peer has done with her *Peasants, Provincials and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* or by looking at regional marketing and its links to national identity, as Kolleen M. Guy attempted in her path-breaking *When Champagne became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity*. Both works have in common a desire to examine collective representations of the French peasantry at a time of major political shifts and ideological transformations of the intellectual landscape. While Peer questions folk representations of rural France and their exploitation by the leftist Popular Front, Guy, concentrating on the example of Champagne, argues that collective representations were fostered around the idea of *terroir* by the local producers as a national reference in the context of an internationalised economy. The political dimension of the period under scrutiny is given some attention, but both authors focus mainly on specific groups, their ideologies and their ideas.

Gilles Laferté's work *La Bourgogne et ses vins: image d'origine contrôlée* provides an original contribution to the debate on regionalism, folklore and politics. His book published under the series *socio-histoires*, directed by Gérard Noiriel and Michel Offerlé is the result of a doctoral thesis defended in 2002 at the EHESS in Paris in sociology and entitled: *Folklore savant et folklore commercial: Reconstruire la qualité des vins de Bourgogne. Une sociologie économique de l'image régionale dans l'entre-deux-guerres*. As Robert Boyer notes in his *postface* (p. 251), the book is an excellent example of interdisciplinarity combining economy, history, sociology and the political sciences. Laferté succeeds in opening up a series of broad questions by engaging with the recent discussions about the multifaceted nature of regionalism free from any monolithic or fixed interpretation.

The main strength of Laferté's work is its ability to scrutinise various developments at the crossroads of several disciplinary traditions such as geography, history and folklore in parallel with the regional and national political *milieu* in which they evolved. Like Peer, Guy and Philip Whalen, Laferté proposes an innovative reading of French regionalism that he characterises as a "commercial regionalist folklore" initiated by republican elites which have invented a marketing strategy for their wines based upon the traditional images of wine-grower, *terroir* and authenticity.[3] To some extent, his argument combines

previous Anglo-Saxon interpretations of regionalism, but with an added sociological twist. Laferté put emphasis upon social capital and network theory providing us with a functional interpretation of processes at the core of regional identity building.[4] Yet the main strength of his work is to show how various key social figures, landowners for the wine industry, the tourist industry, the political sphere and the university, have all contributed—through the establishments of networks constituted by alliances between wine producers, political elites, the food industry and the University of Dijon—to the creation and management of a still dominant rural and folk image of Burgundian wines. His interpretation combines the history of institutions such as the University of Dijon or local folkloric societies with that of individuals and their interpersonal relationships. He also examines professional contexts like the Comte Laffon and the famous *Club des Cent* with a detailed background of the changes affecting the history of ideas, theories and debates around tourism and regional images.

This explains, in part, why the introduction to Laferté's book focuses on his intellectual positioning, locating his work relative to an array of different disciplines. He provides us with a very useful theoretical introduction to the thorny and controversial issue of identity.[5] In his view, concepts of images and social belonging which are linked to groups in positions of social authority in relation to a specific territory provide a stronger theoretical framework for conceptualising regionalism (p. 15). Here Laferté follows the Marxist approach developed by Robert C. Ulin, the American anthropologist, who when documenting the cultural construction of wine as a commodity at the regional, national, and global levels, argued that superior marketing and the invention of a winegrowing hierarchy accounted for the dominance of Bordeaux wines over those of the southwest French interior.[6] It is a pity, however, that Laferté does not engage with some of Ulin's specific conclusions, especially in relation to the social hierarchy established between landowners. The anthropologist details the origins of the esteemed château labels created by bourgeois landowners with invented ties to an aristocratic past emphasising the power in the hands of one social group imposing its rules over the others. However, Laferté, a critical sociologist, provides a more subtle interpretation when he argues that social discourses and images could only be imposed if they were not too distant from the existing social and political context (p. 15). The force of his argument is to contextualize his actors into a specific chronological period marked by strong ideological cleavages. Yet sometimes his sociological analysis appears mechanistic and is confined only to the dominant groups or figures and it lacks a strong archival grounding (for example, see chapter four).

The book's first chapter concentrates upon the local economy, especially on wine and *négociants* or wine merchants. It is mostly dedicated to a presentation of the local wine industry and its history and geography (map p. 4). Focusing on the inter-war period, Laferté demonstrates that Burgundy wines, which had a more traditional image than other French vineyards, have enjoyed a privileged economic position combining a long historical and commercial influence with a small volume of production from a fragmented landscape, owned by a large number of small landowners who acquired property following the phylloxeric crisis (p. 28). The *terroir* of this part of Burgundy was based on the traditional commercial structure dominated by the local *négociants* and its image was that of aristocracies and family traditions. The classification of local wines was indeed already based upon the notion of "quality" attached to the geographic location of the land, but at the time the commercialization of local wines created tensions between villages which all wanted to belong to the same *appellation* which was not the object of a collective ruling.

One of the major successful achievements of the period preceding the 1930s was the regulation and organization of the wine market by the wine profession and landowners to the detriment of the *négociants* who previously dominated the market. The progressive politicization of the peasantry, which included wine growers, came to transform the rules of the game and to foster a more democratic control of the market. In 1908 the creation of the democratic *Confédération Générale des associations viticoles de la Bourgogne* (C.G.A.V.B) and in 1919 with the local agreement between the *négociants* and landowners, the local wine market became dominated by landowners and wine growers. For Laferté, it is precisely this

change of context that explains the emergence of regionalism and the state networks it benefited from, making regionalism a founding doctrine of national expression. The concept of territory thus become a buzzword for the elites first in the cultural *milieux* and then in the economic sphere (p. 65).

The next chapter examines the transition of the image of Burgundian wine production from a traditional bourgeois representation of Burgundy to a more folkloric and peasant based regional marketing supported by the construction of Dijon as a gastronomic pole. After the First World War, a renovation of local regionalism was undertaken by both folkloric societies and the tourist industry which later merged into what might be described as an erudite folkloric repertoire. According to Laferté, this is because they both relied upon the ideological consensus of the Third Republic which reconciled the *Petite Patries* into the French Nation (p. 69). Tourism became a tool for promoting the economic interests of the region both within France and in terms of international exports. Gaston-Gérard, mayor of Dijon between 1919 and 1935, who Laferté describes as a liberal pragmatic, is a telling example of this new type of regional elite, who through his networks of industrialists and politicians at local and national levels, institutionalised the region into one of the main elements of the economic and political landscape (p. 109). The Chamber of Commerce and the local university contributed to this edification of Burgundy as a dynamic and modern region by providing legitimacy to a specific regional discourse through the works of historians and geographers such as Gaston Roupnel or Georges Chabot. This forms the bulk of the excellent chapter four which demonstrates very convincingly the links between radicalism and tourism with its emphasis on regional gastronomy and folklore by recounting the experiences of individuals such as Gaston Gérard.

The next three chapters return to images and representations of the region discussing, for example, the role of the mysterious *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin*, and, finally, looking at Burgundy and its *mise en scène* during the 1937 Universal exhibition. The *folklorization* of the region that Laferté describes as a model imposed by the local elites and landowners who held a dominant position in the local landscape at a time of social conflicts proves to be a consistent feature of regional marketing and it is only comparatively recently that new representations have led to a repositioning of Burgundy wines in international markets. Taking the examples of Comte Laffon with the *Paulée de Meursault*, Jacques Prieur with the *théâtre Jacques Copeau* or the *Confrérie* with its Rabelaisian rituals, he argues that traditional values, community and rustic representations were used as a means of portraying notions of quality attached to a territory and to promote Burgundy economically. However, Laferté largely ignores the role of local wine-growers who he describes as a new political force (p. 40 and p. 59), but subsequently neglects to define thereafter. The social structure he describes is not always clearly economically and socially contextualized. What is the difference between a wine-grower and a landowner and a *négociant*? As a result, he never addresses the question of whether or not wine-growers contributed to this representation of themselves and to what extent the social hierarchy of each village enables the more active and educated wine-growers to exercise political influence.

Laferté's work is based primarily upon printed sources and a few family papers and he has not consulted local, municipal and national archives in a systematic fashion. A more serious archival investigation could have provided a broader picture of the political scene and perhaps could have given a voice to wine-growers, especially through the archives of the *syndicat viticole* or the INAO. [Institut National des Appellations d'Origine Contrôlées] Even his analysis of the appellation *Corton* (p. 57) leaves the reader wanting to know more about the social hierarchy and access to power, the relationship between *négociants* and landowners—leaving aside the question of frauds that the author conveniently avoids addressing. Even the analysis of the *Paulée de Meursault* is conducted through the eyes of the local newspaper and family archives which offer a somewhat one-dimensional interpretation of this gathering.

Finally, chapter eight synthesises the main conclusions of this innovative work by explaining the role regionalism played in the modernization of the nation during the inter-war period. Burgundy provides a useful example of how it was possible to reconcile the region to the nation by playing on the folkloric

and erudite tradition and modern commercial marketing techniques. Drawing similar conclusions, Elise Marie Moentmann suggested that the very diversity of its regions characterized the essence of France, an evolving synthesis of traditional and modern industries, as well as the cultural traditions that would continue to define the country in the post-war period.[7]

Overall, this book succeeds in opening new avenues into the study of regionalism in other parts of France and its great merit is to bridge various disciplines suggesting how history, ideas, theories and debates can be combined with the study of academic institutions, pressure groups and the history of individuals. Moreover, his work helps to establish a dialogue between scholars on both sides of the Atlantic, and illuminates an area of research very often labelled as reactionary, archaic and conservative. For all these reasons, Laferté's book is required reading for anyone interested in the development of French politics, regionalism and national identity in the first half of the twentieth century.

#### NOTES

[1] Julian Wright, *The Regionalist Movement in France, 1890-1914: Jean Charles-Brun and French Political Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Anne-Marie Thiesse, *Ecrire la France: Le mouvement littéraire régionaliste de langue française entre la Belle Epoque et la Libération* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991); and *Ils apprenaient la France: "exaltation des régions dans le discours patriotique"* (Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1997).

[2] Julian Wright, "Tradition, modernity and the regionalist Republic: a response to Philip Whalen," *Cultural Analysis* 6 (2008):63-66.

[3] Shanny Peer, *Peasants, Provincials and Folklore in the 1937 Paris World's Fair* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Kolleen M. Guy, *When Champagne Became French: Wine and the Making of a National Identity* (Baltimore, Md: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); and Philip Whalen, *Gaston Roupnel, âme paysanne et sciences humaines* (Dijon: Editions Universitaires de Dijon, 2001).

[4] For a synthesis, see the article published by Philip Whalen, "Burgundian regionalism and French Republican Commercial Culture at the 1937 Paris International Exposition," *Cultural Analysis* 6 (2007):31-69.

[5] In another publication, Laferté provides a useful theoretical discussion over the issue of identity arguing that its conceptualisation requires the adoption of three other concepts: identification, social representations and belonging. See Martina Avanza, and Gilles Laferté, "Dépasser la construction des identités ? Identification, image sociale, appartenance," *Genèses* 61 (2005):154-167.

[6] Robert C. Ulin, *Vintages and Traditions: An Ethnohistory of Southwest French Wine Cooperatives* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996).

[7] Elise Marie Moentmann, "The Search for French Identity in the Regions: National Versus Local Visions of France in the 1930s," *French History* 17:3 (2003): 307-327.

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