
Herman Lebovics. *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004. 232p.

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What do José Bové and anti-globalization have to do with the current explosion of new and the reconfiguration of old museums in France? This reviewer concludes that the link has to do with the ever-present and seemingly ever-lasting effects of the French colonial empire. Lebovics provides an engaging and challenging history of post-colonial France that seeks to identify what it means now to be French and how the French identity has been in constant evolution since the decline of the empire. *Bringing the Empire Back Home: France in the Global Age* is an attempt to chart the future of France and the French identity in times of globalization by examining recent (i.e., 20th-century) history and especially the effects of decolonization on a society resistant to change and that holds its history dear.

Lebovics presents this contemporary look at post-colonial France not chronologically but thematically, beginning with a more recent event in French cultural politics: the 1999 de-construction of a new McDonald's in Millau, a small town in the Larzac region of France, as a response to American tariffs on exports including the regional or *terroir* product Roquefort cheese. The leader of this anti-globalization, anti-Americanization movement, José Bové was later sentenced to time in jail for his actions. Lebovics provides a historical account of the political and cultural activism of this fairly remote agricultural region highlighting the Larzac's adamant opposition to the French military project to expand a training base in the region in the 1970s. Lebovics traces what he calls "a direct line of connection from these regionalisms of France back in time to the wave of decolonization...and forward to the anti-globalization movements" such as that in the Larzac (19).

The main premise of Lebovics' work is that decolonization is and has been the impetus for a perceived crisis of French identity and France's decline as a world power. Lebovics highlights the role that De Gaulle's appointment of André Malraux in 1959 at the head of the newly created Ministry of Cultural Affairs had on the cultural evolution of France. With decolonization, an abundant supply of French-trained colonial administrators were out of work and ready to implement the government's plan to apply colonial strategies back home, bringing the French empire's "civilizing mission" back to the regions of France. Similar to its goal of cultural "assimilation" of the colonized, France set out to bring its very unique regions together and closer to Paris. Lebovics links this move to the establishment of a "standard" French culture that leads to a number of cultural projects including President Giscard d'Estaing's declaration of the *Année du Patrimoine* (Year of the Heritage) in 1980 and later,

President François Mitterrand's lasting mark on the country, *les Grands travaux* (the Great Works) during the late '80s and early '90s.

The author suggests that all of the talk and hype concerning France's cultural heritage, respect, and recognition of cultural differences, regionalism as well as Mitterrand's support of decentralization may very well have provided Jean-Marie Le Pen just the ammunition he needed to gain support for his "France for the French" campaign against immigration and pluralism. Lebovics then makes a connection between the post-colonial dilemma of France and the current "dance of the museums" beginning in the '90s. Although the museum projects still under way began with the intention of better representing all of the French, including ex-colonies and the DOM-TOM's, the end results are or will be simply a reconstruction of "the old dichotomy between the 'civilized' and the 'primitive'" (176).

Lebovics' work is timely and informative as well as creative in the connections made between the French empire, its decline and current issues in French politics and society. It is definitely a must-read for anyone involved in French studies research and teaching as well as for those whose discipline is cultural studies and more specifically postcolonial studies. It is an excellent guide to understanding the current political and cultural climate in France. ✱