radicaux, les troupes d'enthousiastes, les figures des marginaux et des athées (le dernier article s'intitule précisément « Éclaircissement sur les athées »). Belle cohorte, tumultueuse et bigarrée, où se croisent et se répondent par Bayle interposé les érudits, les politiques, les philosophes et les savants dans une joute intellectuelle en quête de la vérité.

On relève à la lecture une série de coquilles, d'oublis de mots et d'erreurs de transcription, qui déparent parfois ce travail pourtant si utile. Vérification faite sur l'édition de référence, il faut lire, par exemple, p. 33, l. 30 : Voilà ce *que* j'ai tiré (nous utilisons l'italique pour signaler la correction nécessaire) ; p. 37, l. 8 : l'examen *qui* la précéda ; p. 44, Remarque (R), l. 8 : qu'*il* serait le premier ; p. 47, Remarque (B), l. 6 : une doctrine *qui* tendait ; p. 91, l. 14 : l'un des *principaux* piliers ; p. 92, l. 3 : *quelque* temps ; l. 5 : *d'autres* pièges ; p. 93, l. 32 : aux désirs de son adversaire ; p. 103, dernière l. : cela donna lieu *aux* médisants ; p. 151, l. 26 : *leur* propre ouvrage ; p. 159, l. 22 : qu'il le *fit* sortir ; p. 188, dernière l. : qui *était* alors ; p. 203, l. 6 : méprisée *des* plus sages ; p. 244, l. 19 : Thomas *a* Kempis ; p. 300, l. 17 : était *convaincue* ; p. 323, l. 30 : *dictionnaire* ; p. 352, l. 4 : *adressées* ; p. 375, l. 5 : *Adamum* ; l. 10 : *fabulae* ; l. 12 : transcription grecque erronée ; p. 376, note 9 : *un* livre ; p. 391, l. 29 : que *de* choses égales ; p. 402, l. 9 : *connaître* ; p. 425, l. 14 : *son* sommeil ; p. 435, l. 26 : *pour* le roi ; p. 436, l. 252 : se *réduisit* ; p. 452, l. 24 : de *l'éducation* ; p. 471, avant-dernière l. : laisse *aller* sur ; p. 474, avant-dernière l. : *un* bon acte ; p. 478, l. 13 : *accommoder* ; p. 483, l. 13 : il *n'y a* rien ; p. 496 : *Melanchthon*. Autres inadvertances de ponctuation : p. 43, 232, 307 ; d'accentuation : p. 116, 131, 151, 251, 380–81, 392, 398, 507 ; maintien de coquilles manifestes dans le *Dictionnaire* : p. 323, 352, 398, 400, 402, 404, 415, 462, *etc.* ; p. 50, la Remarque (L) est annoncée incorrectement. On déplore l'absence d'un index des noms propres, si utile lorsque l'on se trouve en présence d'une telle masse de noms et de références. Ces quelques observations n'enlèvent évidemment rien à la qualité de cette d'édition bienvenue et indispensable dans tous les cas.

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Alain Boureau. *The Myth of Pope Joan*. Trans. Lydia G. Cochrane. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. Pp. x, 400.

Originally published in French in 1988, Boureau's work realizes his "dream of exhausting a historical object and of presenting a complete description and explanation of it" (p. x). It is a remarkable achievement on all counts. Although thoroughly scholarly, it transcends a narrowly academic genre both by the lucidity and liveliness of its prose and, more importantly, by the depth and elegance of its argument. A book of this virtuosity will reward all students of culture, regardless of whether the initial interest is focused on historical, religious, or gender-related issues.

Boureau's inquiry into Pope Joan rests on the notion that "The fact of believing in the existence of the popess or of rejecting that belief constitutes a historical object" (p. 300). Consequently, his investigation quickly goes beyond claims of her existence (which he demonstrates incontrovertibly as impossible). Rather, Boureau explores the entire complex of the myth and assesses for us the relative values of its many facets. In dealing with the myth of the ninth-century popess, he follows a rough chronology and breaks his study into three parts. The first, focusing largely on the Roman origin of her career, traces her earliest mention in a thirteenth-century chronicle including the ritual allegedly devised to verify the sex of newly elected popes. The second part follows her through popular and pontifical documents of the high middle ages, while the final section tracks her demise during the Reformation and subsequent "canonization" as a cultural figure in imaginative literature. Like a virus, Joan wedges herself as a bit of centuries-old folklore into a chronicle, then circulates and multiplies through various written genres, always adapting herself to her hosts and their times until her final "passage into the realm of allegory" (p. 165).

A quick skim through Boureau's acknowledgments indicates the depth of his debt to the French social science method, and indeed Boureau spells out his approach at the outset: in the first half of the work, he identifies and contextualizes "telling indications" of his subject, which he follows by an in-depth and far-ranging "diagnostic" (p. 5). Along the route tracing Joan's gestation, birth, early career, and final apotheosis, we investigate a wide variety of intersecting paths, from a visit to Sibyls and Joan of Arc as exemplars of female power, to the origin of Tarot cards and their late-medieval connection with prophecy. Each of these paths enriches our understanding of the popess's role and documents Joan's gradual metamorphosis.

In setting out the "indications" of Joan's presence, Boureau focuses briefly on the early written accounts, but his main discovery revolves around two crucial bits of physical evidence: the existence of a pair of curiously carved stone chairs in the Lateran Palace (leftover furniture from imperial Rome first figuring in papal rites during the pontificate of Paschal II in the late eleventh century) and an inexplicable deviation in the traditional papal itinerary from the Lateran to the Vatican. Boureau convincingly demonstrates that both pieces of evidence, long used to support Joan's existence, are more correctly seen in the light of an increasing concentration of power (both ecclesiastical and civil) in the hands of the pope. The chairs, once used as representations of the papacy's negotiated assumption of imperial rule in a city no longer hosting an emperor, quickly became symbols of an assumption of a power no longer negotiated. Their curiously carved seats then attracted resentful attention from a displaced clergy, who explained the perforated bottoms with reference to Joan. Similarly, a slight deviation in the papal processional (due to an increasing number of spectators in a narrow street) was explained by an increasingly constricted Roman population (informed by a tradition of social inversion) as a deliberate avoidance of the place where Pope Joan revealed her sex by giving birth.

But this much is only Boureau's beginning. Having exposed the physical, Boureau turns to the conceptual, and it is here that his work achieves true brilliance. Why would clerical sources repeat such tales? Why would an otherwise devout laity embellish and, in the end, enshrine them? How can we account for the Carnival-like inversion of Joan's appearance, dressed as a mendicant yet wearing the papal tiara, as a tarot "triumph"? As he traces, with characteristic energy and flair, the links among Joan and her various incarnations, Boureau uncovers layer upon layer of nuances. His material, changing as it does under his very feet, requires frequent shifts in methodology if it is to respond to his larger narrative. For example, when frustrated by a conventional but fruitless approach to a particular issue, Boureau playfully suggests to the reader that we "abandon the search for evidence, ignore strict methodology, and examine the events of 1300 as part of a picture of female aspiration to religious supremacy" (p. 175) — in order, that is, to see whether a restrictive ideology turns up any new leads. Not surprisingly, the approach fails to illuminate the material, but it does suggest ways in which metaphor informs the historian's craft.

Boureau's work on Pope Joan has remained the definitive treatment since its first appearance in 1988, yet, as he notes, "the deconstruction of the myth of the popess has not impeded its survival" (p. ix). Since he has demonstrated that such myths respond to factual debunking by reasserting themselves in areas immune from such unwanted attention, Boureau's conclusion should cause little surprise. Pope Joan will be with us for as long as her kinsman, King Arthur, will.

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