is agile and thorough enough to address both micro-policy detail and macro-ideological matters.

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**1668: The Year of the Animal in France.** By *Peter Sahlins*. New York: Zone Books, 2017. Pp. 492. $34.95.

Peter Sahlins opens his learned and engaging book with a delicate allusion to Virginia Woolf. Like Woolf, who suggested that "on or about December 1910, human character changed," Sahlins sees interlocking cultural transformations clustering around a single historical moment, and the changes he sees are almost as momentous as Woolf's. Human character may not have changed in 1668, he argues, but the boundaries separating humans from other animals did change; so also did ideas about the state, science and medicine, and some of the arts. Of course these changes did not all play out in 1668 itself, and Sahlins explains that "the year of the animal" in fact lasted a decade. Yet the mild overstatement contained in the book's title accurately conveys the texture of its argument: Sahlins sees change happening fast, with important effects. In keeping with that interpretive stance, alongside Woolf's allusive presence, the early Michel Foucault hovers throughout the book as a direct and explicit influence.

Sahlins explores these issues in a series of eight case studies, most of them centering on Versailles, all of them concerned with France's sociocultural upper crust. Non-French influences occasionally pop up, but this is essentially a national history, organized around a conventional political chronology. Early in his personal reign, Sahlins argues, Louis XIV and his advisors used animals as instruments in their project of constructing an absolute state, and they devoted immense energy, ingenuity, and resources to that enterprise.

The enterprise began with the creation of the menagerie at Versailles, and the book's first case study carefully examines its history and implicit messages. The following four studies deal with artistic representation, for the menagerie and its inhabitants occasioned a startling burst of creative activity, in the form of literature, tapestries, engravings, drawings, and paintings. Meta-level debate naturally ensued, as art theorists and practitioners argued over the proper place of animality in high art. Louis XIV's administrative team set much of this activity in motion and sought to shape its contours. They directly commissioned many of the works Sahlins examines and took steps to define the audience for each, for instance, by prohibiting cheap, unlicensed reproductions. Yet Sahlins also shows how firmly these projects gripped contemporary imaginations. If Louis XIV sought to use animals for his own purposes, upper-class French society apparently had its own need to engage with them.

That enthusiasm emerges with particular clarity in the following two case studies, which return to examining real life and real animals. In these chapters, Sahlins first recounts efforts to use animal-to-human blood transfusions to cure disease, then the novelist Madeleine de Scudéry's experiences with a beloved, supposedly domesticated chameleon. For contemporaries, he shows, both examples raised questions about differences between humans and animals, and thus both illuminate the influence of René Descartes, who famously sought to erect an absolute barrier between them. Of course Descartes had died long before "the year of the animal," but Sahlins convincingly argues that his influence actually peaked in the 1660s, while at the same time provoking vigorous questioning. In describing her pet reptile as an intelligent, affectionate friend, Scudéry was pushing back against the Cartesian

vision of animals as mere machines; the claim that dogs' blood could reinvigorate debilitated humans likewise weakened the frontier that Descartes had sought to reinforce. Yet while they rejected one aspect of Descartes's teaching, Sahlins shows, Scudéry and the transfusionists demonstrated their acceptance of his broader ideas about science; both claimed to look at the bare facts of nature, unmoved by extra-scientific concerns or preconceptions, and in the case of the transfusionists, indifferent as well to animal suffering in the cause of science.

The book's final case study brings the inquiry back to Versailles itself. It examines the animals represented in another of Louis XIV's additions to the palace, the labyrinth completed in 1674. Sahlins sees in its sculptural program an ideological message that contrasts sharply with that of the Versailles menagerie, completed a decade earlier. Commentators had taken from the menagerie the message that animals had much to teach humans; elegant, graceful, living in concord despite their differences, they exemplified the civilizing process. A decade later, Louis XIV wanted his palace to convey a different message, centering on the dangers of animality. The labyrinth's sculptures highlighted bloody animal conflicts, teaching the lesson that only a wise, all-powerful state could control the violence lurking in human animals as well.

The contrast between menagerie and labyrinth encapsulates Sahlins's semi-Foucauldian conclusion: the 1660s witnessed the eclipse of one world view and its replacement by another. Into the seventeenth century, the French had seen animals as emblematic of virtues—courage, strength, fidelity, wit, and the like—to which they themselves aspired. Around 1668, that belief in continuity between the animal and human realms faded, replaced by the belief that the animals were fundamentally menacing. Animals had been naturalized, reduced to mere animality, and now offered only negative lessons.

Given the book's multiple themes and forceful conclusions, questions inevitably arise. Over the last thirty years, multiple questions have been raised about the concept of absolutism, so it is startling that Sahlins treats it as an unproblematic reality and that he loads it with such a heavy explanatory burden. For almost as long, there have been calls for transnational and global histories, but Sahlins's approach is resolutely Francocentric, even in exploring issues that had at least European histories, if not global ones. Sahlins briefly acknowledges the pervasive engagement that French men and women had with animals long before "the year of the animal," yet that engagement remains underexplored. Horses are an especially notable absence, given the attention that Louis XIV and Colbert lavished on both the animals themselves and artistic representations of them.

But such queries distract from the book's real strength, which lies in its sensitive, intelligent, and well-informed readings of specific cultural monuments and encounters. Each of Sahlins's case studies provides insights and surprises, and each displays his ability to see connections among apparently disparate phenomena. One need not accept its broad conclusions to find this an immensely valuable study.

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**Socialism and the Experience of Time: Idealism and the Present in Modern France.** By *Julian Wright*.
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One's first impression is that there are actually two books in Julian Wright's *Socialism and the Experience of Time*. The first is a series of biographical essays on individuals and epi-