



# Melancholy Politics: Loss, Mourning, and Memory in Late Modern France

*Jean-Philippe Mathy*

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The current cultural climate in France is often described as one of “déclinisme” or “sinistrose,” a mixture of pessimism about the national future, nostalgia for the past, and a sinister sense of irreversible decline concerning the present. The notion of “democratic melancholia” has become widely popular, cropping up time and again in academic papers and newspaper articles. In *Melancholy Politics*, Jean-Philippe Mathy examines the development of this disenchanted mood in the works of prominent French philosophers, historians, and sociologists since the beginning of the 1980s. This period represents a significant turning point in French intellectual life, as the legacy of major postwar and sixties theorists such as Lévi-Strauss, Derrida, and Foucault was increasingly challenged by a younger generation of authors who repudiated both Marxism and structuralism. The book is not a classic intellectual or cultural history of post-1968 France, but rather a contribution to the understanding of the present—a collection of soundings into what remains largely a complex, ongoing process.

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