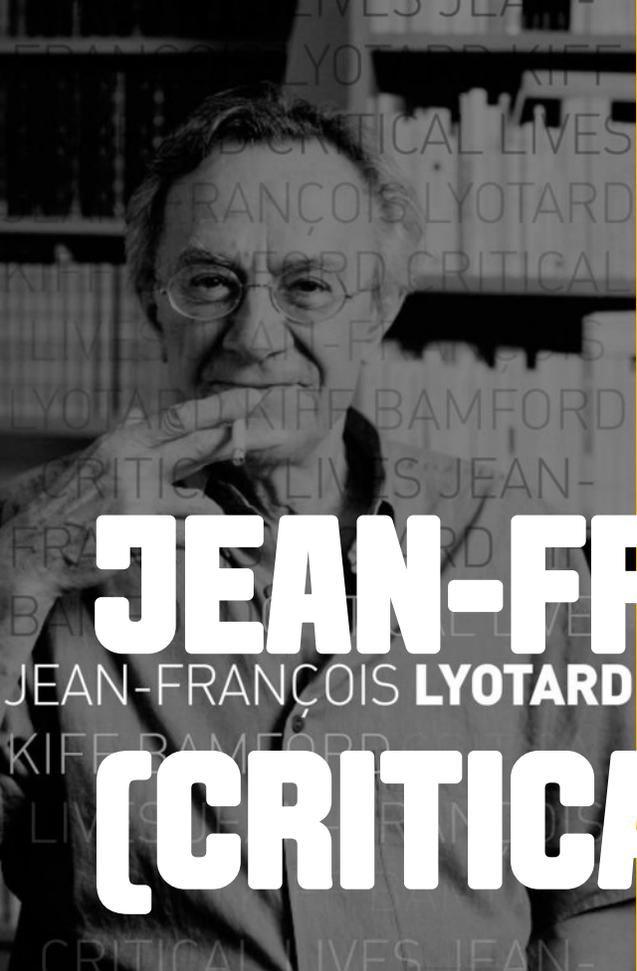


**LEEDS  
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A black and white portrait of Jean-François Lyotard, an older man with glasses, resting his chin on his hand. The background is a bookshelf filled with books. The text 'JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD' and '(CRITICAL LIVES)' is overlaid on the image in white.

**JEAN-FRANÇOIS LYOTARD**  
**(CRITICAL LIVES)**

**DR KIFF BAMFORD, READER IN  
CONTEMPORARY ART**

# OUTPUT INFORMATION

Title:  
Jean-François Lyotard (Critical Lives)

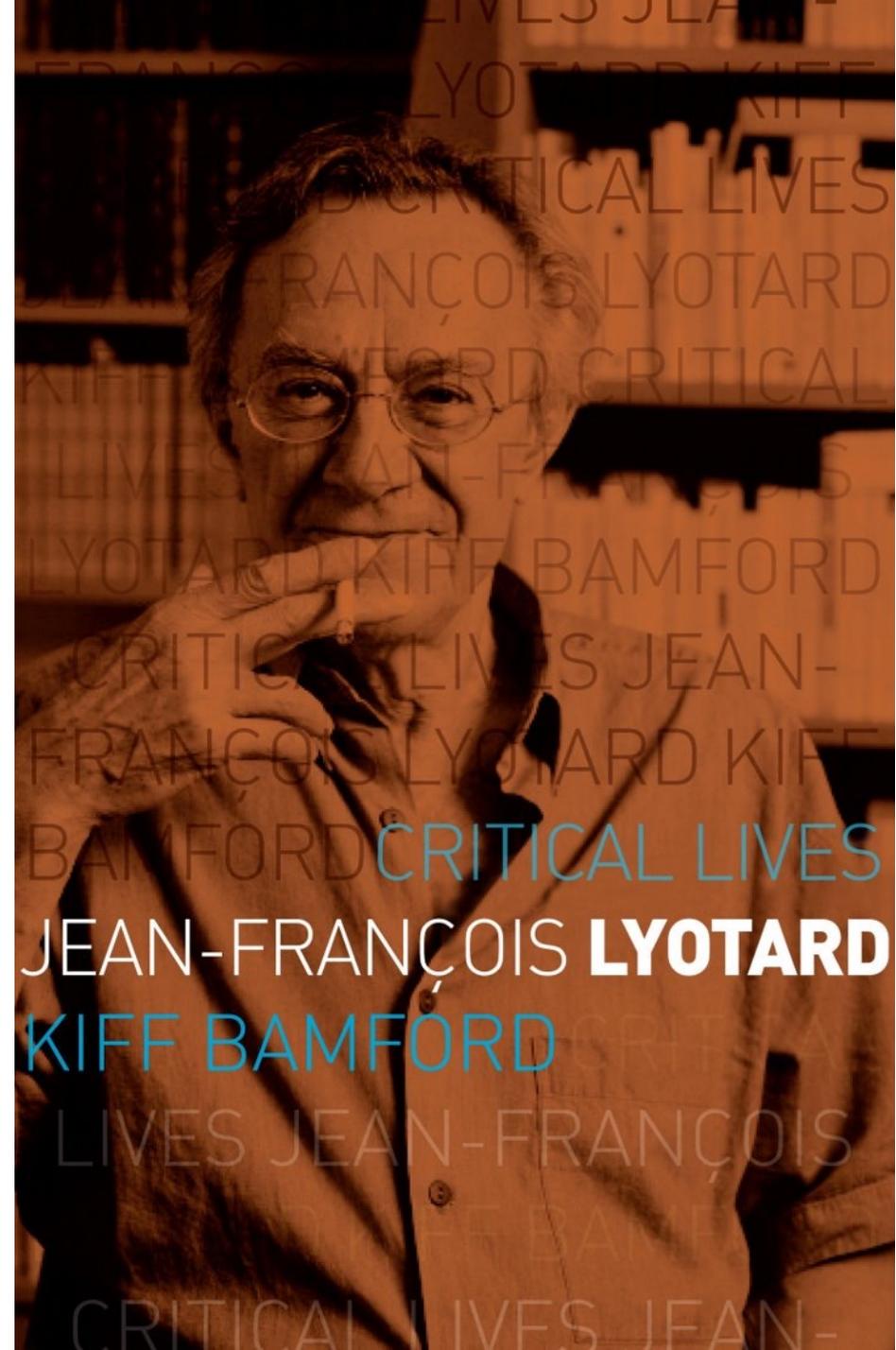
Output Type:  
A – Authored Book

Publisher:  
Reaktion Books

ISBN:  
978-1780238081

Date of Publication:  
2017

Research Groups:  
Critical Theory



# ADDITIONAL INFORMATION STATEMENT

How to present the work and life of a thinker as complex as the French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard? This is the question addressed by the first critical biography of the thinker, important for both art and philosophy.

Primary research was central to this project. Archival research was undertaken in French at the Lyotard archive in the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet, Bibliothèque Kandinsky, Pompidou Centre and the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Interviews were undertaken with Lyotard's daughters and his widow, Dolorès Lyotard, correspondence with whom facilitated introductions, clarifications and access to personal photographs. Further interviews and correspondence with friends, colleagues, translators and former students located in France, Italy, Germany, the United States, Canada, and Brazil broadened the range of research sources available, as did attendance at conferences and events in France and the United States. Translator Roger McKeon writes: 'Remarkably astute and thoroughly researched ... an intellectual biography of this calibre, depth and breadth is hard to come by.'

Following publication Bamford was invited to the United States to speak at the University of Indiana, and Stony Brook University, New York. Translations in Chinese and Turkish are forthcoming.

Reviewing the book in Cultural Politics Professor Robert Harvey writes 'Bamford masterfully renders the sometimes baffling, but ultimately rewarding complexities of Lyotard's passage among us [...] an invaluable contribution to Lyotard's legacy and thus to the future of cultural politics.' Writing on art was central to Lyotard's work, as Keith Crome notes in the Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology: 'Bamford's beautifully written book brings this home with passion, conviction and force, and as a result is likely to exert considerable influence over future responses to Lyotard's work'. Additional reviews published in: French Studies; H-France Review; The European Legacy; La Quinzaine Littéraire; Zeitschrift für philosophische Literatur; Interpretation; La Vie des Idées.

# **DOUBLE- WEIGHTING STATEMENT**

Requested to reflect the complexity of the task. Given the absence of reliable secondary research, extensive primary research, often in French, was necessary. This included archive research, correspondence, face-to-face and remote interviews, plus the location of hard-to-find resources. In addition, the synthesis and analysis of a significant quantity of material, both written, visual and aural was undertaken to produce a short, but critical biographical work that took account of both anglophone and francophone contexts.



“Jean-Francois Lyotard is one of the most important, and complex, French thinkers of the twentieth century. Best known in the English-speaking world for his book *The Postmodern Condition*, the multi-faceted nature of Lyotard's work has often been obscured by its sometimes problematic association with the postmodern. His life refuses to follow the clear trajectory common to academics in France: it stalls and hesitates, with Lyotard's first 'career' consisting of fifteen years of militant Marxist political engagement. Kiff Bamford traces this circuitous journey, unravelling the thrust of Lyotard's main philosophical arguments, his struggle with thinking and his confrontation with the task of writing and thinking philosophy in a different way. These all take place within a series of very particular contexts: the Algerian war, the experimental university at Vincennes and a sustained engagement with the visual arts. Lyotard's own tentative reflections on his intellectual life help to frame his suspicions of easy narratives and highlight his rejection of 'the delusion that we are able to programme our life'. It is by following these cautions that Kiff Bamford is able to present a compelling portrait of a challenging subject.”

**Book Blurb**

GG

“A magisterial introduction to a complex but important thinker that elucidates and contextualises the writer in equal measure.”

**Andy Stafford, Senior Lecturer in French Studies,  
University of Leeds, and author of Roland Barthes**

GG

“An impressively detailed survey of Jean-François Lyotard’s work and cultural milieu, that fills a real gap in Lyotard studies.”

**Stuart Sim, Professor in Critical Theory at  
Northumbria University, Newcastle**



Keywords:

Critical Theory

Philosophy

Jean-François Lyotard

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