Book Reviews

Emmanuelle Saada, *Les Enfants de la colonie: Les métis de l'Empire français entre sujétion et citoyenneté* (Paris: Éditions la Découverte, 2007).

Review by **Alice L. Conklin, Ohio State University**

Emmanuelle Saada's book is a welcome addition to several intersecting literatures not often in dialogue with each other: works on French citizenship and nationality, studies of colonial law and practice, and histories of race in France. Saada begins with her discovery of a 1928 decree in colonial Indochina that employs the term "race" in French jurisprudence for the first time since the abolition of slavery in 1848, when it was banned from official French legal discourse. The decree sought to regulate in Indochina the status of the "métis" (or person of "mixed race"), stipulating that a métis could be recognized as a French citizen if born to a father of French "race." This singular "eruption" (14) of the word "race," which was omnipresent in public life during the colonial era yet absent from metropolitan law, raises a number of intriguing questions for the author: how did the race concept come to be deployed via nationality legislation in the colonial context in the late 1920s? How was race defined in colonial case law, and where did this particular use of the race concept originate? Did this recourse to the category of race anticipate or prepare the way for Vichy's racial anti-Semitic legislation?

In this path-breaking work of "historical legal anthropology" (278), Saada focuses primarily on the codes regulating métis status between 1928-1942, rather than on the experience of the métis themselves. Yet this is no narrow study; Saada considers the métis question as it played out across the empire and uses a vast array of primary sources (including administrative and legal archives, records of philanthropic societies, naturalization applications, popular literature, the press, and oral testimonies) to trace the deep "racial logic" of a new set of laws. In the process, she shows how fears of deviant sexuality, improper families, and paternal dereliction in the colonies shaped the métis question. At a moment when much of the historiography of empire is focused on the crude violence of colonial rule, *Les Enfants de la colonie* persuasively argues for the critical role of law in the exercise of power overseas.

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While race is at the heart of this book, Saada's conclusion (stated at the outset) might surprise some readers: if the French authorities singled out the métis as a group meriting special consideration on the basis of their race, it was in an effort to include rather than exclude them from the nation, a move that Saada refers to as "inclusive racism" (14, 197). To substantiate this conclusion, she subtly reconstructs the stages that led to the codification of métis citizenship in law. Although physical anthropologists had long debated whether or not métissage produced racial degeneration, these scientific discussions had little purchase on colonial actors, and thus were not the driving force behind the "eruption" of race-thinking into law in 1928. Rather, following in the footsteps of Ann Stoler and Owen White, Saada argues that a group of overseas philanthropists, jurists, and officials began in the 1890s for political reasons to worry about children whose mothers were "natives" but whose fathers were French. These children were typically born out of wedlock and then abandoned by their fathers—creating, or so it was feared, a class of future pariahs whose very existence challenged the strict separation of the races into "citizens" and "subjects," a distinction upon which French colonial domination rested. In the empire, French hegemony required the continual reproduction of this hierarchy of difference. With their mixed heritage, métis scrambled these supposedly fixed categories—hence the urgent need to classify them as either "subjects" or "citizens" if the colonial edifice was to hold.

Yet determining to which category the métis properly belonged was no easy task, entailing lengthy debate among a variety of colonial power-brokers. The principal site of this debate was the French colony of Indochina, where métis were more numerous than elsewhere; but similar discussions took place in other colonies. The most important exceptions were Algeria, where the métis problem ostensibly did not exist, and the "old colonies" of the Caribbean and Indian Ocean, where citizenship had been bestowed upon all inhabitants with the abolition of slavery. As illegitimate children who were unrecognized and abandoned by their fathers, the métis posed a problem for French law as regulated by the Civil Code of 1804, which determined the status of persons on the basis of paternal descent [filiation] and, in the case of illegitimate children, by which parent recognized the child first. Overseas, however, recognition by a mother who was racially other (and Indochinese mothers usually did recognize the métis in question) meant that the child would be legally required to remain in an indigenous social and cultural milieu judged to be incompatible with his French paternal heritage. This disjuncture, it was believed, could only produce *déclassés*, since an ambient neo-Lamarckism at the turn of the twentieth century held that "Frenchness" was not only the product of heredity, but also of socialization. One was a member of the French "race" only if one had French blood coursing through one's veins (even if only a drop) *and* was raised in a properly French environment.

This line of reasoning led, between the 1890s and the 1920s, to a series of uncoordinated initiatives that culminated in the 1928 decree. At the turn of the

century, philanthropists in Indochina—which proved to be a virtual laboratory for métis legislation—created French "orphanages" where métis children were to be placed. These orphanages represented an important first step toward the reclassification of métis from subjects to citizens: identified as French biologically by virtue of their descent, they were henceforth to be made culturally French. A second step was taken when jurists became convinced (on the basis of no sound evidence) that "false" French fathers in Indochina were fraudulently recognizing native children in order to secure citizenship for the latter. In 1918, a 1912 law authorizing paternity suits in France was extended to Indochina, with two important amendments. First, the colonial state was given the right to annul recognitions when it could prove that they were manifestly false. Whereas in France "the honor and repose" of legitimate families militated against such annulments, in the colonies the maintenance of public order required this safeguard. The second amendment stipulated that even if the (native) mother recognized the child first, the child would assume the legal condition of his father, and thus acquire French citizenship. Both changes reflected the use of a racial logic to define who was French: paternity could be established by state officials on the basis of physical appearance; and European blood trumped Indochinese blood, always.

Thirty years of debate had produced a colonial consensus that the métis had a claim on the citizenship of their (unknown) French fathers by virtue of descent, yet no text laid out the conditions by which they would be legally incorporated into the nation until the 1928 decree. In order to attribute citizenship on the basis of *filiation,* state officials had to ascertain beyond doubt that a métis carried French blood in his veins. To deal with the problem of absent fathers, the 1928 decree stipulated that a métis presumed to be of "French race" must prove that one of his unknown parents was of the same race. Racial descent could be demonstrated by "any means possible," including the child's name, proof of a French education, reputation, or medical certificates attesting to the presence of appropriate physical traits. In effect, "the solution envisaged [was] to resort to the 'extralegal' concept of race" (195-96).

As Saada rightly points out, the legal concept of race deployed here should strike us as anomalous, because it is one in which notions of "biological reality," social behaviors, and cultural attributes converged. Since World War II, she argues, we have learned to "separate 'race' and 'culture.'" In the interwar years, by contrast, this lack of separation reflected the fact that state actors thought of race "as a collective form of descent" (220-21). For Saada, this definition suggests yet again that scientific constructions of métissage by French physical anthropologists had no direct effect upon colonial jurisprudence. Here, however, the author dismisses too quickly the influence of race science on jurists. In the 1920s and 1930s, even the most innovative interwar physical anthropologists (for example, Paul Rivet in France, or Franz Boas in the United States) accepted race as an essential biological component of human identity while also understanding race in cultural and historical terms. In this

sense, the racialized category of métis in colonial law may have an even more complex genealogy than that masterfully delineated by Saada, one corroborated by the best science of the day.

The métis decree adopted in Indochina was extended to the colonies of French West Africa, Madagascar, and New Caledonia in the 1930s, but Saada finds no direct link between this decree and Vichy France's racial laws targeting Jews in the 1940s, for the latter cited German legislation, not colonial jurisprudence, as precedent. Saada also concludes that the métis who became citizens after 1928 paid a high price for the socio-economic and political advantages bestowed by positive racism: separation from their mothers, placement in an orphanage, and after World War II, repatriation to a France they had never seen. Saada's larger point, then, is neither to rehabilitate the empire nor to posit a "universalist" French Republic that is also fundamentally racist. Rather, *Les Enfants de la colonie* argues for more nuanced histories of the uses of "race" in modern France, a notoriously unstable term whose meanings shifted according to time, place, and actors, and about which we remain surprisingly ignorant. Over the course of the nineteenth century, a French state increasingly concerned about the nation's biopower arrogated the right to determine the citizenship of children on the basis of descent—at the expense of paternal authority. In the absence of *jus soli* in the empire, this same impulse asserted itself even more aggressively overseas. Although the word "race" in republican law startles, it must be understood according to the norms of the era: as a colonial manifestation of the growing "étatisation des relations de filiation" in modern France (277).

Jonathan P. Eburne, *Surrealism and the Art of Crime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008)

***Review by* Jason Earle, Columbia University**

Perhaps no other remark in the history of surrealism has generated as much negative attention as André Breton's declaration in the *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* that the simplest surrealist act consists of blindly firing a pistol into a crowd. But the notoriety of this statement has had something of a distorting effect on considerations of surrealism and its relationship to violence, focusing critical attention too much on Breton, his polemical stances, and the group's militant period. In his book *Surrealism and the Art of Crime*, Jonathan P. Eburne reassesses the role that violence played in the development of surrealist thought from its inception to the 1950s, arguing that it was the continued interest of many surrealists in real and literary phenomena of violent crime that allowed them to articulate responses to complex questions of political and ethical action.

Eburne's book can be distinguished from cultural histories and formalist studies which have tended to view surrealism's interest in crime as, respectively, part of a widespread cultural trend or a purely artistic flourish, both critical tendencies that have generally maligned or marginalized surrealism's political side. Eburne's contention is that the surrealists' true political thought came through examining representations of violence and responding to contemporary criminal cases. What he refers to as "the art of crime," or "criminography" (9), is not so much the art that surrealists made in response to violent acts (although he does analyze several such works with attention to nuance and detail) but rather the variety of documents and reactions that crime itself produces: *faits divers*, sensational media coverage, clinical analyses, political commentaries. The heterogeneous and often clashing interpretations that a violent crime provokes serve as manifestations of the conflicting nature of modernity, representing how sometimes hidden social and political tensions come to the fore in unexpected ways. Surrealists, Eburne suggests, were in fact attuned to both the representative and productive nature of crime, and their participation in cultural debates surrounding violent acts helped them formulate their own positions on ethics, collective action, and art.

Eburne pursues a largely chronological order, analyzing the surrealists' appraisals of violent crime in three main periods of the movement from the early 1920s to the postwar era, and he studies a wide variety of literary, visual, and theoretical texts from both major and minor surrealists. While the resulting portrait can at times seem cacophonous, this is precisely Eburne's point: surrealism was a movement, changing its philosophy and its members at various points in its existence, frequently when debating questions of violent action or cases of criminal activity. This contradictory nature of surrealism's approach to crime is abundantly manifest in the first three chapters of the book, which cover surrealism's early years. At this point their interest in crime genres and violence was primarily a means of coming to terms with their artistic and literary forebears, a process that was often fraught with ambiguity and ambivalence. For example, while the surrealists enjoyed the genre of the locked room murder mystery, they also mocked and subverted its conventions in an attempt to do away with nineteenth-century naturalism and its attendant need for narrative clarity and closure. Similarly, the group was attracted to the violent poetry of Lautréamont's *Chants de Maldoror* but rejected similar images of violence when uttered by their own member René Crevel during his hypnotic trances. A shift began to occur with the case of the anarchist assassin Germaine Berton, whom the surrealists admired not so much for her criminal act as for her capacity to serve (as Eburne puts it) as a "spur for the derangement of systematic thought" (93). Here, as in other chapters where he considers surrealist icons of criminality, Eburne offers a rich portrait of the case by comparing contemporary journalistic accounts with surrealist reactions, in the process showing that the surrealists considered these figures less as personal influences than as models for disrupting social conventions. By engag-

ing in the debate over Berton, the surrealists were able to define a practice for themselves, one based on a "call to thought" in the face of imposing political and ethical questions (95).

The shift in the status of crime from "thought" to "action" is explored in the second part of the book, which examines surrealism's "red" period, when the group became involved to varying degrees of success with the Communist Party. Beginning with the Rif War in Morocco in 1925 and continuing until the early 1930s, surrealists were preoccupied by the question of what form revolutionary action should take. In so doing, they sought out models in history and literature; the Marquis de Sade, for example, served as a particularly contentious example of the option of all-out revolt. As Eburne shows, it was often through the exploration of crime genres that surrealists debated this question, alternately posing revolutionary action as a way of life or a way of writing, and these debates helped define their own troubled collaboration with the Communist Party. This "red" period of surrealism was one of its most contentious, full of expulsions from within the group and polemical attacks from outside by other members of the artistic avant-garde, and it would be worthwhile to examine further how violent imagery infiltrated these critiques of the movement (one thinks, for example, of the hyperbolic venom of the various contributors to the 1930 pamphlet *Un Cadavre*). Eburne alludes to these criticisms at various points, but it would be interesting to explore in detail how surrealism's embrace of violence permitted and even conditioned increasingly violent responses to the group.

Eburne is perhaps most insightful when discussing what he terms the "noir" period of surrealism, when the group largely abandoned communist militancy to return to earlier formal practices such as automatic writing. This period is often viewed as a retreat from politics, but Eburne contends that these formal experiments were the catalyst for the surrealists in thinking of new forms of collective action. In particular, his analyses of the group's reactions to two sensational murder cases of the 1930s, those of the Papin sisters and Violette Nozière, demonstrate how surrealists used crime genres and their particular style as ways to lay bare and ultimately accuse dangerous political and social currents running through French society. Drawing on theories of paranoia developed by René Crevel, Jacques Lacan, and Salvador Dalí, surrealists ultimately viewed criminal acts as representations of a fractured modern society, events that could be analyzed and interpreted in order to reveal hidden oppressive tendencies of 1930s France. With the patricide case of Violette Nozière, for example, the surrealists created a literary and artistic response to her story that revealed how the rhetoric of family and tradition in political and media commentaries on the case in fact masked the growing presence of fascism in France. The ultimate goal of the surrealists in analyzing crime was not to reproduce the violent act but rather, in Eburne's words, to understand and accuse those "social myths and historical patterns that perpetuate suffering and social order alike" (219). Thus surrealists like Leonora Carrington

could portray the violence of the war by representing violence inflicted on the body, and the American author Chester Himes could give a surrealist treatment to American race relations in his 1958 thriller *La Reine des pommes*.

By ending with a short coda on the accusations of terror leveled against surrealism in the postwar era, and repeated by some in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, the book demonstrates how these questions of crime and violence continue even today to provoke discussions of the avant-garde group. While this is an intriguing point, it bears further development. Eburne's narrative trails off in the 1950s, which begs the question of what role violence played in the surrealist movement in the ensuing years. For example, did the increasingly extensive documentation of violence, beginning with the horrors of World War II but continuing throughout the second half of the twentieth century, have an effect on the cultural status of violent action for surrealists and their critics? In the end, however, Eburne's book challenges the accusation of surrealists as residents of an artistic ivory tower, unable to abandon art for politics. Instead, the portrait that emerges from this book is one of a group constantly involved in contemporary culture and politics, and one where the study of criminal violence played a crucial role in articulating challenges to ideological systems.

Sean Kennedy, *Reconciling France against Democracy: The Croix de Feu and the Parti Social Français, 1927-1945* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

***Review by* Paul Jankowski, Brandeis University**

Some political movements seem fated never to be understood in their own terms, but always approached canonically as though members of some other species or descendants of some other family. Many contemplators of fascism, for example, long denied it any recognition as *sui generis*, a phenomenon in its own right, and cast it instead as the latest variant of some well-known demon: capitalism for Marxists, despotism for liberals, radicalism for conservatives, Godlessness for Christians. Understanding suffered accordingly.

One of the merits of Sean Kennedy's study of the interwar French movement of the Right, the Croix de Feu and its successor, the Parti Social Français, is that it escapes this trap and sets aside for much of its inquiry the familiar question of whether the movement was fascist, and the even more vexed question of whether fascism ever existed in any major way at all in France.

Kennedy traces the history and defines the nature of a political movement that began as a veterans' organization in France in the late 1920s, evolved into a major right-wing political party that commanded, by the late 1930s, more members than any other, disintegrated for the most part during the occupa-

tion, and finally died in liberated France. It has attracted considerable attention among historians, providing the material for many scholarly articles and allusions and a biography of its leader, Colonel de la Rocque. But it has not enjoyed a full-length book to itself, unlike other contemporary political formations. Anyone interested in modern France and in the history of the European Right in the twentieth century should welcome this book, the result of exhaustive research and the revised manuscript of a dissertation written under the aegis of an expert on the French Right since the nineteenth century, William Irvine.

The movement emerges as profoundly ambivalent. Anti-parliamentary in principle but avid of influence within the establishment, openly scornful of established leaders, such as André Tardieu, yet secretly eager for their support if not their money, right-wing by reputation, non-partisan by aspiration, accepting of a republic yet contemptuous of this one: the Croix de Feu like the PSF repeatedly said one thing and did another. How could it be otherwise, when their political program was hardly a program at all, and to act was to undermine it in one way while implementing it in another? By the middle of the 1930s the movement mixed a yearning for a stronger executive with a vague corporatism, a preference for national interest over international institutions, a call to civic duty and social conscience, all dissolved into a nauseating moralistic mush.

Its methods alarmed more than its ideology. The paramilitary trappings of the movement appeared subversive of the Republic, and when the Popular Front dissolved the Croix de Feu along with other right-wing leagues in the tense climate of 1936, genuine fears for the survival of democratic institutions were in play. La Rocque and his entourage had long envisioned the possibility of transforming the Croix de Feu into a mass political party, and had understood that they would have to espouse the Republic in order to transform it. So they did, but they could not always control their followers, especially in the reigning climate of civil war. During the late 1930s the PSF began to display xenophobic and occasional anti-Semitic traits, adding to the darkening image of the movement. But more than anything else, the street confrontations of the day, together with the martial antecedents of the PSF, stamped it in the eyes of its critics with the unmistakable character of the Blackshirts and the SA, and they did not hesitate to say so.

In fact, rather than in image, the PSF and the Croix de Feu were primarily authoritarian conservative organizations, frustrated by the existing options on the right and devoted to the defense of property, the family, and the nation against the threat of decay or revolution: *Travail, Famille, Patrie*, the motto that L'État Français would make its own in 1940. They were urban movements, particularly strong in Paris, the North, and Algeria, its leaders and members mostly male, fairly young (born after 1890), heavily middle class, with workers and peasants underrepresented.

By the time of the war the PSF had more members than the Socialists and Communists combined. It was an organized mass movement, making some

new inroads among working-class and rural strongholds as well. It had abandoned its old paramilitary ways and affirmed its attachment to the republican system. Once again, it seemed, the Third Republic had welcomed into its spacious rooms outsiders who appeared to want nothing more than to burn it to the ground: the Radicals, and the Socialists after them, and the Communists after them. The author insists that the PSF was antidemocratic, yet acknowledges it had accepted the Republic, once again deepening the impression of unbridled ambivalence. In any case, the PSF had become more of a threat to the traditional Right than to the Republic, and what would have happened had the parliamentary elections of 1940 ever taken place is one of the many questions to which the defeat precluded an answer.

During the Occupation the Vichy regime tried to marginalize and disperse the movement even while appropriating its themes and detaching its members. Like other organizations on the right, the old PSF split, some defecting to Gaullism, some to other resistance organizations (La Rocque himself was arrested and deported in 1943 for organizing the transmission of information to the British), some remaining loyal to Vichy, some withdrawing from the hurly-burly altogether.

Like other organizations on the right, and unlike those on the left, this one did not return at the Liberation. La Rocque died in 1946, and attempts among his followers to reconstitute the movement came to nothing. The members, perhaps a million strong on the eve of the war, appear to have drifted into new organizations of the Right, in particular the parliamentary MRP and the extra-parliamentary Gaullist RPF.

All of which invites a post-mortem. Those who have written about the Croix de Feu and the PSF differ over whether the movement was fundamentally fascist in nature, or whether on the contrary it prefigured the emergence after the Second World War of democratic mass conservatism, especially in the guise of the Gaullist tidal wave that eventually engulfed the country. Kennedy does not fully accept either of these views. He sees the movement as too tepid for prewar fascism and too viscerally antidemocratic, even exclusionary, for postwar conservatism. It conveyed an authoritarian, antipluralist, anti-individualist ethos, imposing a bleak and organic uniformity upon the nation, one that in the author's view shares more with today's Front national than with other rivals for consanguinity.

This is a perfectly plausible argument, even though the cultural paranoia of the Front national sits oddly beside the national reconciliation of the PSF, even peppered as it was by occasional xenophobic outbursts during the later 1930s. Given the respective sizes of the movements, and the current decline of the Front national, it might make more sense to ask where it belongs rather than where the more massive PSF does. Yes, we need to assess whether the PSF was fascist or conservative or something else. But more than that, we need to know what it wanted, and who its members were, and how it reacted to the gathering crises of the 1930s. Now, thanks to this valuable work, we do.

François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, trans. Jeff Fort (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

***Review by* Jean-Philippe Mathy, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

The subtitle of François Cusset's *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States* hardly does justice to the scope of his study. The book examines the impact of French Theory in the United States well beyond academic and intellectual circles, documenting its effects on the media, the entertainment industry, the artistic counterculture, and popular culture. The description of the influence of French Theory is not limited to the United States but extends worldwide, from Mexico and Argentina to Slovenia and Japan, and even to France, where the repressed of radical critique has returned for the past two decades in the form of what is often described as a deleterious form of "political correctness" made in America. In addition to being a detailed, balanced account of the adventures, and misadventures, of *la pensée 68* in the New World, Cusset's book also provides useful interpretive models to make sense of what he calls the "denationalization" of texts in a global academic market (xiv).

Cusset's study is more than the most complete intellectual history to date of French Theory as a global cultural phenomenon. It is also a manifesto for critical theory, an impassioned defense and illustration of its relevance to the understanding and transformation of today's world. The book opens with the question of the timeliness of an inquiry into the French philosophies of the sixties and their American and global reincarnations, when so many voices in academia have been proclaiming, and sometimes celebrating, the death of theory. During the famous Johns Hopkins conference on "The Language of Criticism and the Sciences of Man" (1966), which is universally credited for having launched French Theory in the United States, Jean Hyppolite asked whether it was not "too late to speak of Hegel in our age" (30). Four decades later, Cusset echoes the words of the Hegelian scholar by wondering, at the onset of his study, whether it is not now too late to speak about Derrida, Foucault, Deleuze, and Co. in the age of triumphant market liberalism (the book was written before the collapse of financial institutions worldwide and subsequent Great Recession, which seem to be giving anti-capitalism a new lease on life). The next three hundred and thirty pages provide a negative answer to the initial question of the irrelevance of French Theory, and the book concludes with a paean to *la pensée de la différence* as a means of combining criticism and activism today: "In the university and beyond, French Theory also embodies the hope that discourse might be able to restore life to life and provide access to an intact vital force that would be spared from the logic of the market and the prevailing cynicisms" (335).

One does not have to share Cusset's views on the transforming power of critical theory as political practice to find much food for thought in his comprehensive analysis. To use one of poststructuralism's master signifiers, his account is extensively "rhizomatic" in the way it makes connections among the various social and intellectual contexts that each provide their own momentum and their own direction to the unstoppable advance of "the linguistic turn" from one academic discipline, one cultural practice, and one domain of the social to the next. As so many Russian dolls, these various spaces encompass one another, disseminating critical discourse in ever widening circles of American culture: from departments of French and comparative literature, where the sacred texts were read in the original by a small group of devotees in the late sixties, to departments of English and Anthropology after the publication of translated texts in the mid-seventies; from "textual machinations," science studies and cyborg theory to art worlds, countercultural rock groups, and all the way to the mainstream media and popular culture, via *The Matrix*, *Deconstructing Harry*, and *The Village Voice* critic who once called Deleuze an "SF mutant" and "a virtual philosopher" (254).

Borrowing from the French Theorists their wide-ranging use of contextualization as a major interpretive strategy, Cusset anchors his narrative in the "prehistories" of the French philosophical presence in the United States (from the exile of philosophers, writers, and artists in New York during World War II to the Sartrean wave of the fifties), briefly delves into the history of liberal arts education in America, discusses the sociological roots of the 1960s student revolt, and underscores the importance of the New Criticism as fertile ground for the successful transplant of deconstructive readings. He goes on to examine the crucial role played by the conservative backlash of the 1980s in the invention of French Theory as a coherent body of thought (which it was not in the original French context, as shown in Derrida's reservations about Foucault's work and Foucault's attacks on deconstruction). In the process, Cusset paints a gallery of intellectual portraits of the major, mostly foreign-born, academic stars of US-based cultural and literary theory, from de Man and Hartman to Said and Spivak.

One context is conspicuously absent from Cusset's detailed reconstitution of what he calls "the prosopopeia" of French Theory: the story of its origins, of the conditions of possibility of its emergence within the French intellectual field of the late fifties and early sixties. This is understandable, since the book is mainly concerned with the *reception* of French Theory, and since so many accounts of its birth and development in France have been told over the years. Origins, however, play an important role in Cusset's argument, in view of his repeated claims that both the conservative backlash in America and the neo-liberal appropriation of Foucault and Deleuze in France have deliberately distorted the political intent of the Founding Fathers. In the chapter devoted to "the tactical *détournement* of the older generation" (312) by the *nouveaux philosophes* and their allies in the media, Cusset argues that

"the logic of flux and dissemination, with its distinctive vocabulary, was placed in the service" of the neo-liberal restructuration of French society (317). "From the Spinozan *conatus* to Deleuzean immanence to Foucauldian microphysics … ," he writes, "suddenly everything could be used to sing the new ode to the self-regulating market, even if it had to be coated in a new libertarian lyricism" (318).

These remarks on the dual movement of rejection and (mis)appropriation of the main tenets of French Theory in France during what Cusset describes in another book as "the great nightmare of the 1980s"[1] raise once again the issue of the relationship between "poststructuralism" and "postmodernism," understood as the new culture of individualism, consumerism, and electronic spectacle said to have displaced the revolutionary, anti-institutional mood of the sixties and seventies, at least in the media and among leading public intellectuals. If French Theory was so radically foreign to the complacent and reactionary intellectual market that took its place, how are we to account for the easy way in which it could be made to say the opposite of what its proponents had intended, serving to legitimize the new order rather than subvert it? Is it because all philosophies can be read in opposite ways and used for conflicting purposes, from left Hegelianism to the uses of Nietzsche by the Nazis? Or is it because the deconstruction of Western metaphysics and the critique of the Enlightenment subject were an expression of the general dissolution of metanarratives that marked, for Lyotard, the advent of the postmodern condition? Where shall we place, for example, the enigmatic figure of Baudrillard in this complex overlap between French Theory and postmodernism? Is the empire of the simulacrum the negation of postructuralism, as Cusset would have it, or were deconstruction, genealogy, and schizoanalysis local manifestations of a broader, epochal retreat of modernist political, epistemological, and aesthetic categories? To put it more bluntly, did not French Theory help pave the way for the depoliticized individualism of the 1980s by calling into question some of the major symbolic and material institutions of modernity, including "orthodox" Marxism? French Theory, as a *response* to the decline of the Modern was as much a manifestation of this decline as it was a form of resistance against some of its consequences.

Because of the *French* in *French Theory*, Cusset's study is as much about France as it is about America. It inserts its own set of arguments in the unending French debate on the sixties and their aftermath over whether "the movement of May," including the philosophies that were associated with its radicalism by supporters and opponents alike, was the last anti-capitalist revolution or the birth pang of a new phase of capitalism. The story is one of numerous reinventions, re-descriptions, "creative" re-readings, displacements, translations, and transpositions. Ironically, this interpretive plurality makes it harder to police the boundaries of French Theory today, and to recover its original intent and the true nature of its politics, from under the proliferation of its copies. But wasn't one of the major claims of French Theory that the original,

the Urtext, is always missing, absent, unrecoverable? This multiplicity of possible interpretations, this equivocity, this undecidability, as the French Theorists would have said, is what makes conflicting appropriations inevitable.

Notes

1. See François Cusset, *La Décennie: Le cauchemar des années 80* (Paris: La Découverte, 2008).

Laurent Bonelli, *La France a peur. Une histoire sociale de l'« insécurité »* (Paris : La Découverte, 2008).

Review by **David Lepoutre, Université de Nanterre-Paris Ouest**

Comment les déviances, les indisciplines et la délinquance des jeunes de condition populaire et les perceptions qu'elles induisent (le sentiment d'insécurité) ont-elles été définies et construites comme un problème social en France entre la fin des années 1970 et le début des années 2000 ? Telle est la question à laquelle tente de répondre ce gros ouvrage, issu d'une thèse en sciences politiques.

L'auteur examine d'abord les transformations qui ont affecté les quartiers et les milieux populaires au cours des dernières décennies : la construction des grands ensembles et l'évolution de leur population au profit des couches modestes, immigrées et précarisées dans les années 1980 ; les difficultés propres des jeunes dans un contexte de chômage, de développement du travail intérimaire, de tertiarisation du marché de l'emploi, de massification de l'école et de désenchantement scolaire ; les spécificités locales, évoquées à travers la présentation des deux quartiers où s'est déroulée l'enquête. Les premiers gouvernements socialistes ont d'abord eu une approche globale des questions urbaines, en instituant une politique de la ville active et novatrice. Mais ils ont été rattrapés par les émeutes urbaines des années 1990 et ils ont radicalement changé de perspective.

C'est la généalogie des discours politiques de sécurité qui est donc présentée ensuite, dans le but de comprendre surtout la conversion de la gauche à l'approche sécuritaire. D'un côté, la montée du Front National et la nouvelle emprise des sondages d'opinion ont contribué à faire de l'insécurité une question très présente dans le débat politique. De l'autre côté, le parti socialiste, après sa prise de pouvoir, s'est professionnalisé tout en se rapprochant des classes moyennes et supérieures (avec la montée de l'abstention populaire) et les carrières politiques de ses membres se sont de plus en plus fondées sur des alliances stratégiques et la communication médiatique. La voie était alors ouverte à des prises de positions publiques individuelles opportunistes

(notamment après les débâcles électorales). Quelques acteurs clefs (ancrés localement et nationalement) ont ainsi largement contribué à faire de la sécurité un bien politique de gauche.

Le colloque de Villepinte, en 1997, et l'action de la gauche plurielle ont consacré cet aggiornamento socialiste. Dans l'optique nouvelle, la première cause du crime est le criminel, c'est-à-dire l'individu. La délinquance n'est plus une conséquence des conditions sociales et de l'inégalité, mais devient un facteur de l'inégalité, les délinquants s'attaquant aux fractions les plus démunies de la société. Le gouvernement de Lionel Jospin recrute vingt mille adjoints de sécurité et quinze mille agents locaux de médiation, institue les Contrats locaux de sécurité et réforme la police de proximité. Cela n'empêchera pas la droite de reprendre la main et de faire campagne sur l'insécurité avec succès aux municipales de 2001 puis aux présidentielles de 2002, en s'appuyant principalement sur l'augmentation des chiffres de la délinquance et en exploitant, grâce aux médias, quelques faits divers marquants.

L'ouvrage montre aussi de manière très concrète comment, au cours des années 1990, les maires (de toute tendance) ont été confrontés à diverses formes de mobilisations et ont su gérer, dans leur intérêt électoral, la question de la sécurité à travers de multiples réunions et rencontres de proximité, des arrêtés anti-mendicité, l'installation de la vidéo-surveillance, en cherchant toujours à rassurer les « établis » et à contrôler les « marginaux » tout en négociant en sous-main avec ces derniers (offres d'emplois ciblées, équipements sportifs, séjours de vacances). Les associations d'élus, les revues, les colloques, ainsi que l'émergence de nouveaux acteurs prospères—les consultants en sécurité—ont facilité la circulation des idées et des pratiques et ont ainsi contribué à l'universalisation des catégories.

Parallèlement, le thème de l'insécurité a connu un essor médiatique considérable. L'intérêt politique pour la question en a fait un sujet noble. Les médias, particulièrement la télévision, qui ont conquis une position dominante, y trouvent leur compte en termes d'audience. Ils privilégient le traitement rapide ou sans distance et les débats qui tranchent les questions de manière simpliste. L'examen statistique de la composition des plateaux d'une cinquantaine d'émissions sur le sujet montre que les invités sont principalement des élus, des policiers, des magistrats, des experts, tandis que les travailleurs sociaux, les enseignants, les délinquants, ou les habitants victimes de délits sont très faiblement représentés. Quant à la teneur des reportages documentaires aussi étudiée avec rigueur, elle est le plus souvent alarmiste et spectaculaire et les solutions proposées sont presque toujours coercitives. À travers l'analyse détaillée d'un numéro spécial de l'émission *La Marche du Siècle*, intitulé « Vous avez demandé la police », on peut par exemple voir comment interagissent, dans un relatif consensus, des policiers qui se servent de l'émission comme support d'une communication élaborée sur la réforme en cours, des jeunes « entrepreneurs de cause » appartenant à un mouvement très normatif qui a connu un succès momentané (« Stop la violence ») et des

experts en sécurité urbaine légitimés par leur positionnement multiple et par leur rareté.

Bonelli en vient ensuite à ce qui a fait l'objet précis de son enquête de terrain : les Contrats locaux de sécurité (CLS). Il replace d'abord ce dispositif institué par le gouvernement socialiste en 1997 dans le contexte de l'histoire des connaissances sur la délinquance et sur la police et de la constitution contemporaine de savoirs intermédiaires, entre études savantes et pratiques administratives. Depuis 1989, une officine du ministère de l'Intérieur a joué un rôle central, à la fois dans la production des recherches et des études, dans l'ingénierie des réformes et dans la diffusion des idées nouvelles auprès des professionnels de catégories variées : l'Institut des Hautes Études de la Sécurité Intérieure, dans lequel l'auteur a été employé. C'est en son sein qu'a notamment été conçue la doctrine des CLS. Son département Ingéniérie et Études a fortement contribué à leur mise en place en pilotant les diagnostics locaux de sécurité. Ces enquêtes préalables à la signature des contrats entre les villes et l'État reposent notamment sur la passation de questionnaires auprès des habitants et sur l'établissement d'une cartographie fine de la délinquance à partir des statistiques policières. Les CLS ont pour objectif d'intégrer l'action collective des différentes institutions concernées par les questions de sécurité (préfets, procureurs, maires, police, établissements scolaires, de transports, commerciaux, offices de logements sociaux, etc.). Ils débouchent sur des actions concertées de prévention, de dissuasion, de sanctions, de réparation, grâce aussi à des moyens financiers et humains spécifiques alloués par l'État.

À travers l'analyse de la mise en œuvre d'une politique qui a connu un assez grand succès (plus de six mille villes ont signé des contrats), l'ouvrage montre de manière détaillée le travail concret et invisible de l'État : la mobilisation nationale et locale des acteurs, la création des missions techniques, l'élaboration concertée du guide des CLS, les centaines de rencontres, colloques et ateliers, la publication des « bonnes pratiques », les actions de promotion, etc. Il montre aussi comment la collaboration des politiques, des chercheurs, des experts et des différents acteurs institutionnels a conduit à l'émergence de catégories universelles et floues permettant d'interpréter les faits de manière unifiée à travers des points de vue très variés. Si l'école, la police, les organismes de logements sociaux, les maires, etc., n'ont pas précisément les mêmes préoccupations en matière de délinquance juvénile, ils peuvent néanmoins s'accorder sur des notions aussi imprécises que les « violences », les « incivilités », ou la « tolérance zéro ». Il montre encore comment les CLS, traversés par d'autres réformes institutionnelles en cours (comme celle de la pratique judiciaire, avec l'accélération de la procédure, le traitement de la délinquance en temps réel, les mesures alternatives aux poursuites), ont contribué à redéfinir les équilibres locaux au profit d'une orientation plus coercitive et répressive, ce dont témoigne, par exemple, l'établissement de liens de collaboration étroits entre l'école et la police, chose qui aurait semblé difficile à envisager dans la période antérieure.

Dans la dernière partie de son étude, l'auteur présente deux catégories de changements qui ont affecté la police depuis les années 1980, en soulignant d'abord que cette institution comporte des activités très différentes. Les enquêteurs de police judiciaire, les agents des services de renseignements, les ilotiers et les CRS, pour ne prendre que ces quatre métiers, ont des fonctions assez peu comparables, même si leurs tâches peuvent se recouper et qu'ils se retrouvent parfois en concurrence. Le premier ensemble de transformations concerne l'augmentation des effectifs, l'amélioration des équipements techniques et de la formation, des tentatives peu abouties de redéploiement de personnels au profit des zones urbaines de petite et moyenne délinquance, des réformes souvent contradictoires, simultanées ou alternées, renforçant soit la répression (Brigades anti-criminalité) soit la prévention (police de proximité). Ces transformations, combinées aux réformes législatives (interdictions des regroupements dans les halls d'immeubles) convergent vers un taux d'encadrement policier accru, un contrôle coercitif plus élevé et un traitement judiciaire plus systématique des indisciplines juvéniles au détriment des régulations sociales informelles. Le deuxième grand changement est la conversion des Renseignements généraux (RG) à la surveillance des quartiers populaires et à l'anticipation des émeutes. Cet appareil de surveillance politique qui comportait six mille agents à la fin des années 1980, avait auparavant pour mission d'informer le pouvoir sur les activités des partis, des syndicats, des groupuscules, des sectes, etc., ainsi que sur l'état de l'opinion publique. Mais les groupuscules ont disparu et les instituts de sondage ont supplanté les RG pour connaître l'état d'esprit de la population. Menacés de disparaître, les RG ont réussi, grâce à l'action intense de la nouvelle section « villes et banlieues » et sous la houlette de sa directrice avisée, à sauver leur institution. La création de l'échelle des « violences urbaines » et sa promotion auprès des journalistes, des experts et même des universitaires (plus de deux cents interventions du commissaire Bui-Trong) ont contribué à réifier cette catégorie qui est venue s'ajouter à l'ensemble des représentations à travers lesquelles sont désormais perçus les quartiers populaires et les jeunes qui y résident.

Cette histoire sociale de l'insécurité est vaste, en même temps que fouillée et rigoureuse. L'auteur a puisé dans une somme de lectures importante (il est cependant surprenant que l'ensemble des références ne soient pas regroupé dans une bibliographie à la fin de l'ouvrage). Il cherche toujours à rendre compte de la genèse des phénomènes, des processus de changement, de l'histoire des institutions, des actions, des transformations, remontant parfois loin dans le temps pour expliquer les situations contemporaines. Il prend toujours en compte les trajectoires biographiques des acteurs. L'ouvrage offre ainsi un grand nombre de résumés synthétiques sur des changements sociaux, institutionnels et politiques variés, en rapport avec son sujet et concernant l'État, les villes, les collectivités locales, le parti socialiste, les médias, les consultants en sécurité, la justice, la police, l'école, etc. Il offre au final un panorama historique explicatif très riche et solidement étayé de ce nouvel

avatar historique du contrôle social des indisciplines juvéniles et populaires : la politique de lutte contre l'insécurité.

Pour autant, il a les défauts de ses qualités que l'on peut principalement pointer à travers le déséquilibre des méthodes mises en œuvre. Sur les quatorze chapitres, huit seulement reposent sur de l'enquête, les six autres étant exclusivement construits sur la base de lectures. Les deux chapitres sur les médias s'appuient sur l'analyse du contenu des émissions et sur un seul entretien avec un journaliste. Six chapitres reposent sur une enquête de terrain, dont le sérieux n'est pas à mettre en doute (près de cent cinquante entretiens ont été réalisés). Mais, là aussi, il y a une sorte de distorsion, puisque l'enquête par observation participante avec occupation de rôle (l'auteur a été employé pendant un an à l'IHESI comme chargé d'études) ne fournit presque pas de données analysées, si l'on en juge par le texte du livre. L'essentiel des matériaux présentés consiste en extraits d'entretien. Les notes d'observation sont presque absentes, à l'exception du chapitre sur la gestion locale de la sécurité qui en comporte quelques-unes. Quant aux sources de lectures utilisées, elles sont au premier abord assez variées, mais la perspective d'analyse est fortement marquée par les théories de Pierre Bourdieu, les notions de champ et de position dans le champ étant omniprésentes dans l'ouvrage, dès qu'il s'agit de comprendre les itinéraires biographiques et la logique de fonctionnement de l'action institutionnelle.

L'avantage de l'observation directe des phénomènes et des techniques qui y sont associées réside principalement dans la possibilité donnée au chercheur de construire lui-même ses propres catégories d'analyse. Tandis qu'en se fiant uniquement à des entretiens ou, a fortiori, aux recherches des autres auteurs, il est soumis à des catégories déjà construites qui orientent a priori la compréhension des faits. Le décalage partiel entre le terrain d'enquête et la définition d'un objet d'étude beaucoup plus large, ainsi que le manque de variété dans les références théoriques mobilisées explique peut-être pourquoi Bonelli n'a perçu l'évolution du traitement des jeunesses populaires qu'à travers l'idée univoque d'un renforcement du contrôle coercitif. Une approche par observation mieux construite et plus diversifiée, ainsi que l'accès à des sources d'inspiration théoriques plus variées, par exemple des travaux interactionnistes comme ceux de Philippe Masson ou Christophe Andréo, lui auraient permis de voir que des tendances contradictoires s'affrontent ou s'imbriquent et que, par exemple, au sein de l'institution scolaire, ce qui s'est opéré dans la même période, c'est à l'inverse un affaiblissement et un assouplissement du contrôle social des jeunes. Son tableau historique aurait gagné en complexité et en pertinence.