

*French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race.* Edited by Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele. Lexington Books, 2003. Pp. 383.

*French Civilization and its Discontents: Nationalism, Colonialism, Race* is a valuable contribution to the ongoing effort to strongly connect the influential French concepts of civilization, universality, citizenship and nationhood and the history of French colonial expansion. Examining different historical moments, the fifteen essays gathered in this collection explore the philosophical and political issues raised by the intersection of these key concepts with France's colonial and postcolonial history. This enquiry is undertaken through the lens of cultural productions including political theory, cinema and the novel. As the editors note in the Introduction, an important frame for this reflection is the acute sense of loss of influence and prestige that has been an important current of French political and cultural debates since World War Two. They locate among the symptoms of this malaise the embattled effort to portray France as a political 'exception' that resists the global power of NATO and United States, the dubious support that France has provided for a variety of neocolonial policies and ventures, and in academic life, a model of French Studies "safely brought back within the confines of the hexagon" and placing "renewed emphasis on the cultural retransmission by non-French scholars of the state of thought in the metropolitan capital" (4). The essays gathered in this volume, as the editors observe, struggle against this reactionary model, contributing to the countervailing push to reconceptualization of French Studies that in recent years has led some universities to replace the name 'French department' with the more inclusive term 'department of French and Francophone Studies.' This book grew out of a workshop and conference held at the University of California Humanities Research Institute in 1996 and 1997. The origin is reflected in the diversity of the essays, which address a wide range of historical periods and cultural and political concerns, deploy a variety of disciplinary methodologies, and vary considerably in rigor and originality. The essays are grouped into four parts, each of which focuses on a problematic or an historical or regional concern. These pieces are prefaced by an introduction that lays out the historical and conceptual parameters of the project.

In the Introduction, editors Tyler Stovall and Georges Van Den Abbeele offer a concise and focused account of some of the principal trends in French colonial ideology, contemporary French thought and politics, and French Studies as an academic field. This survey touches on the key colonial ideas of assimilation and the civilizing mission, and their roots in the post-revolutionary identification of civilization with the cultural achievements of France. This ideology is contrasted with the British colonial model of indirect rule. Although the editors nuance this account by acknowledging that assimilation was far more often the ideal than the reality of French colonialism, a longer and more de-

tailed account of the complexities and paradoxes of French colonial history would have been desirable, particularly since this volume will presumably sometimes be used as pedagogical resource. The Introduction also underscores the fact that the depth of twentieth-century French art and literature owes much to the contributions of colonial and postcolonial writers such as Césaire and Fanon, and to contacts with writers and artists from other parts of the world, for example American expatriates such as Stein and Wright. It also takes note of several cultural paradoxes, for example that much of the thought that has been influential in an international context, for example the work of Derrida and Lacan, has remained outside the academic mainstream in France, and that many significant Francophone writers have not secured institutional recognition in metropolitan France. Along the same lines the editors propose that French Studies as an academic field is now at a crossroads, with some practitioners retreating into a nostalgic idea of pure French culture, while others embrace the diversity of postcoloniality.

The first section is devoted to the question of the intelligentsia and new conceptions of French identity. The essays grouped here are in reality rather disparate. One examines the thought of Michel de Certeau, one addresses the orientalist and primitivist experiments of the architect Le Corbusier, one examines the representation of provincial life in French films of the 1930s, and one considers the presence of opacity in the cinema of Claire Denis. The question of the intelligentsia, a somewhat vague term to begin with, is not really explored here systematically. That said, the essays are interesting on their own terms. The essay by Richard Terdiman on Michel de Certeau's thinking on difference and marginality, is particularly compelling. Terdiman argues against the present tendency to reduce reflection on difference to the examination of fixed categories of race, class and gender. Following de Certeau's lead, he advocates consideration of other forms of marginality, for example psychological states such as neurosis. By extension he invites recognition of margins as sites of potential as well as of victimization, positions of epistemological privilege from which social discourses have often been questioned and refigured.

The second section turns to "black diaspora and creolization," and addresses the consonance of blackness and French identity. This is a more cohesive section, comprising four essays that complement each other very well because each addresses questions pertaining to translation, absorption and influence across cultures, languages and historical moments. One examines Fanon's account of the relationship between colonial oppression and the master-slave dialectic, one considers the French propensity toward universalism as it is translated in the work of Anglophone writers C.L.R. James and Anna Julia Cooper, one explores the Caribbean kinship between Maryse Condé's acclaimed novel, *Crossing the Mangrove*, and the great Haitian writer, Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, and one reads a novel by another Haitian writer, Maurice Casseus, against the historical background of the American occupation and the emergence of *noirisme*. The section opens with an essay by Édouard Glissant. In this insightful piece, Glissant lays out an in-

novative frame for thinking about Caribbean culture, and elaborates several fertile new concepts. He argues, for example, that creolization should be understood as a cultural as well as a linguistic process, and addresses the historical factors that supported the growth of creole cultures and languages under French colonialism. He also contrasts what he calls 'archipelagic' thought: fragile, fragmentary, yet productive for thinking on a global plane, with the more systematic but plodding rhythm of 'continental' thought.

The four essays gathered in Part Three, titled "Orientalism and the Maghrebian Presence in Postcolonial France," turn to France's colonial history in the Maghreb. All four reject an easy opposition between the colonial and the post-colonial, highlighting rather the ways in which the colonial past continues to reverberate, notably in the context of the discourse surrounding immigration. Broadening and complicating the standard approach to this topic, two of the essays in this section explore the experiences of two groups of non-Muslim Algerians, the pied-noir and Jewish communities. The first essay, by Hafid Gafaiti, is particularly rich both in argument and historical detail. Gafaiti portrays the debate over immigration that in recent decades has mobilized political discourse and public opinion in France as an extension of the political history of French rule in Algeria. In Algeria, despite the rhetoric of universalism, assimilation and civilizing mission periodically espoused by the French authorities, colonial legislation progressively differentiated between Muslim 'natives' and French nationals on the premise that the latter were fundamentally inassimilable. Similarly, since 1987, successive reforms or proposed reforms of France's Nationality Code have implied that Muslim immigrants and their children are qualitatively different from previous generations of immigrants and cannot easily be integrated into French culture. Such arguments betray amnesia about the historically high rates of immigration to France, and belying the universalist claims of French republicanism, suggest a strong historical interplay between French nationalism and the idea of cultural purity. Gafaiti consequently argues, contra Benedict Anderson (194-197), that in both colonial and postcolonial periods, racism was an important facet of French nationalism, as well as the flip side, rather than the polar opposite, of universalism.

The final section groups essays on "Miscegenation, Degeneration, and Other Metropolitan Identities." Like Section One, this is a rather loose grouping that includes essays on decadence, degeneration and racial mixing in a novel by Rachilde, relations between colonial men and white women during World War One, and the recurrent metaphor of the child in constructions of Belgian identity. The final essay on "The Children of Belgium" by Georges Van den Abbeele lays out some interesting new ideas, knitting together French and Belgian history by considering how, dwarfed by its larger and older neighbor, Belgium has often been figured as a child. Van den Abbeele suggests that this portrayal has often been internalized, contributing to failures of responsibility both in the colonial arena (the hollow paternalism of the oppressive Belgian regime in the Congo) and on the domestic front (over the past few decades Belgium has

opened its external borders to trade while decentralizing internally to satisfy the claims of those demanding the separation of Flemish and Walloon communities, with the result that crimes such as the international traffic in arms and human beings have proliferated while the means to prevent or punish them have diminished). This is a dense piece that thoughtfully combines historical and political analysis with a reflection on Belgian cultural icons.

One sign of the overall success of *French Civilization and its Discontents* is that it leaves you wishing for more of the same. Hopefully this volume will pave the way for other books that offer a composite picture of the history of French colonialism and its complex cultural legacy, and which combine cultural interpretation with historical and political analysis. Certainly this collection highlights the need for additional pedagogical resources such as document collections accompanied by critical essays that would encourage the teaching of a new model of French civilization as a rich culture rife with contradictions and shaped, to a considerable extent, by its discontents. (MADELEINE DOBIE, Columbia University)

*Genetic Criticism: Texts and Avant-Textes*. Edited by Jed Deppman, Daniel Ferrer, and Michael Groden. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004. Pp. 272.

This collection of essays aims to introduce English speakers to one of the most important critical trends in France today: genetic criticism, the study of writers' manuscripts. The volume's editors have paid meticulous attention to presenting and framing the material. The comprehensive introduction by Daniel Ferrer and Michael Groden outlines genetic criticism's intellectual history and the conditions that have favored its development in France. Jed Deppman gives additional background for each individual chapter, and explanatory notes provide further clarification on points that might be obscure to readers unfamiliar with the French literary and critical context. The eleven translated essays offer a fascinating glimpse of the objects of study; some include copies of actual manuscript pages (Biasi, Mitterand, Grésillon), while others use transcriptions (Debray Genette, Ferrer and Rabaté, Viollet).

*Genetic Criticism* spans over twenty years of literary study and represents an impressive range of topics and approaches. It begins with three articles on general principles of genetic criticism. Louis Hay, the founder of the Institut des Textes et Manuscrits Modernes, traces the interest in writers' manuscripts from Romantic-era Germany to present-day France. In "Psychoanalytic Reading and the Avant-Texte," Jean Bellemin-Noël views manuscripts as a gateway to the author's associations and thereby to the text's unconscious. Pierre-Marc de Biasi focuses on the need to establish genetic editions that accurately reconstruct the text's prehistory and enable critical readings. Other essays provide close readings of particular manuscript documents. Raymonde Debray Genette analyzes the final paragraph of Flaubert's story "Un Cœur simple" through its various draft stages to the final text, while Almuth Grésillon ex-