
H-France Review Vol. 16 (July 2016), No. 114

Adeline Beaurepaire-Hernandez and Jérémy Guedj, eds., *L'entre-deux électoral. Une autre histoire de la représentation politique en France (XIXe-XXe siècle)*. Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2015. ix + 164 pp. Index. 16.00€. (pb). ISBN 978-2-7535-4005-7.

Review by Steven Kale, Washington State University

The eight essays in this collection, along with preliminary remarks by Didier Mineur, use a variety of methods and conceptual approaches but are all concerned with the nature of political representation in nineteenth- and twentieth-century France. They are also informed by a pervasive pessimism about the state of contemporary French democracy.

The collection assembles selected essays presented at a conference held in February 2013 entitled “Au nom de la *voix populi*: La représentation politique à l’épreuve de l’entre-deux-électoral, France, XIXe-XXe siècle,” the goal of which was to shift the focus of the study of elections from campaigns, voting, and results to the interval between the casting of ballots, when elected officials were called upon to implement their role as representatives and fulfill “the promise of representation” (p. 10). The authors are concerned less with public opinion, constitutional matters, or the formal modalities of constituent service than with whether representation itself entails a direct and effective bond between *les élus* and voters and how or whether that bond is maintained. Their concerns rely on the distinction between the principle of sovereignty and the exercise of sovereignty, and are situated at the intersection between the history of politicization and the informal politics of communications, public meetings, pressure groups, and polling.[1] They seek to analyze how the bonds of representation were formed and what techniques were developed to sustain it. Since France has had elections of one sort or another since the Napoleonic period, it constitutes a privileged terrain for observation.

In his preliminary remarks, Didier Mineur, a political philosopher at the Institut d’études politiques de Rennes, seeks to theorize the question of representation in the *entre-deux électoral* by linking it to the contemporary “crisis of representation,” characterized by growing absenteeism, the decline of political engagement, and declining faith in the political class. According to Mineur, the present crisis points to an inherent problem involving the distances between representatives and the represented in which the former can never completely or durably represent the will of the latter. The crisis of representation, therefore, is not a temporary dysfunction of the system but a structural reality implicit in the nature of representation itself. For Mineur, the problem is, first of all, entomological, because the term implies an authenticity that the thing itself cannot deliver. Representation is not a cohesive bond, but rather the site of a series of gaps or breaks involving the absence of the represented due to the abstract quality of national sovereignty and the role the public sphere plays in mediating between elected officials and voters. He attributes the discrepancy in modern liberal democracies between the goals expressed by voters and expression given them by their representatives mostly to the formation of partisan groups, largely created by politicians themselves, in the form of ideologically homogeneous political parties that can never truly represent the heterogeneous opinions of real voters. The evolution of modern politics involves the displacement of specific votes into a chronological series of increasingly remote abstractions. Politicians

create groups of voters, rather than the other way around, and arrogate to themselves the right to speak and act in their name in defense of general, rather than specific interests. Political parties substitute the party program for the will of individual voters, thereby creating the delusion that the system is unrepresentative, even though it functions according to its original contradictions and its own internal logic.

Mineur seeks to challenge the work of American political sociologists who studied political behavior in the 1950s and tried to show that voter discontent resulted from irrationality and inconsistent opinions.^[2] Frustration among French voters, he argues, reflects the fact that elections are a momentary snapshot that distills the convergence of opinion and gives a frozen image on which elected officials base their mandate. Political unity is an illusion because voters never entirely agree among themselves or are in complete accord with the candidate's opinions or the party platform. This discrepancy between homogeneity and heterogeneity already exists at election time regardless of whether voting behavior is stable or volatile, or whether observers perceive that voter's choices are ideologically consistent or inconsistent. Partisan unity is therefore always inadequate for voters whose diverse opinions leave them badly served by the categories that structure the political landscape. In a society of individuals, necessarily divided and atomized, representation that seeks to aggregate wills is simply impossible.

The subsequent essays that make up the body of the collection are arranged chronologically into two parts covering the *monarchies censitaires*, the Second Empire, and the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Republics. Few of the authors engage systematically with the theoretical issues presented in Mineur's preliminary remarks. The first essay is by Vivien Faraut, a graduate student at the Université de Nice Sophia-Antipolis, who examines seventy-seven *lettres aux électeurs* written by liberal candidates during the Restoration. These letters were intended to create and maintain a bond between the candidate and his voters, and were partly responsible for diffusing liberal ideas. They appeared mostly in highly contested districts and were aimed at defeating ministerial candidates by using rhetorical techniques designed to activate interpersonal bonds and convince electors to vote their conscience and ignore the instructions of administrators. Faraut subjects the letters to "a diachronic study of discourse" (p. 38) in order to trace the development of liberalism in the 1820s. Over the course of three elections (1824, 1827, and 1830) the lexicography of the letters changed according to the changing strategy of the liberal movement, becoming increasingly ideological as candidates moved from informing voters on specific issues to forging a collective partisan identity.

The next essay, by Emmanuel Fureix, a historian at the Centre de recherche en histoire européenne comparée, has an entirely different focus because it concerns populations ineligible to vote under the July Monarchy. Fureix seeks to show how charivari, a ritual derived from customary sociability, was adapted to modern political life in the 1820s, reaching its apogee in the years following the July Revolution. In the past it functioned to sanction violations of matrimonial traditions, but was transformed into "a rite of the civic surveillance of authorities" (p. 53) during the nascent phase of the French parliamentary system. Building on the work of Charles Tilly, Fureix argues that urbanization and politicization allowed charivaris to be used to sanction transgressions from expected political norms and to designate adversaries that crowds sought to delegitimize.^[3] As the practice spread across the nation, it became a means of democratic surveillance in a pre-democratic society. This "slide toward the political" (p. 55) coincided with the spread of democratic ideas in a politically volatile context in which the disenfranchised sought to demonstrate their anger at the corruption of political representation. In 1830 and 1831, charivaris frequently targeted former liberals who betrayed the promises of the July Revolution. They were also used to protest what were perceived as arbitrary administrative and judicial decisions. Such political charivaris operated according to a principle of popular justice based on a concept of natural or customary rights analogous to the moral economy studied mostly famously by E. P. Thompson.^[4] Fureix sees the charivari of early nineteenth-century France as a manifestation of popular vigilance and civic control involving an expansion of the space of public deliberation. It seconded and complemented other aspects of an emerging democratic politics—the satirical press, political associations, new symbols-

-in the run up to the Revolution of 1848, when non-voters contested censitary and elitist representation by positing an extra-legal concept of representation and by enacting a sovereignty they did not yet possess.

Marieke Polfliet's essay on the political itinerary of Pierre Soulé tests the proposition that democracy did not sink deep roots in the American political system during the early nineteenth century despite the expansion of universal suffrage. Soulé was a French exile to Louisiana who became a celebrated lawyer, a member of the House of Representatives, a Democratic Senator, and ambassador to Spain. Polfliet, a graduate student at Université de Nice-Sophia Antipolis and the *École des hautes études en sciences sociales*, studies the representative bond by examining how Soulé maintained his popularity beyond election-day by defending democratic suffrage and by headlining banquets and public rallies. Soulé's political success in the traditionally oligarchic politics of Louisiana in the 1840s was tied to the rise of immigration and the shift in the suffrage debate from the criteria of political rights to the integration of new citizens. Soulé's role in this debate was to defend the rights of virtual voters in the name of equality, especially among the Francophone population of New Orleans. Polfliet concludes that Soulé became a major figure, not by virtue of holding office, but because of the popularity he had acquired as an orator, a lawyer, a freemason, and a Democratic Party spokesman. His election consecrated, but did not create his success.

The next two essays shift the focus from representation as a formal or informal political function to representation as the construction of a public image. Juliette Glikman is interested in Napoleon III's efforts to seek and maintain popular acclaim outside the formal endorsement of plebiscites and elections. The Emperor hoped to demonstrate that he possessed the permanent support of the nation in order to validate a direct communion with the people through various non-institutional means, such as official tours, expressions of praise and gratitude from public officials, festivals, monuments, and the dissemination of images.^[5] The goal was to embody an expression of legitimacy anchored in the spontaneous instincts of the nation. In contrast to previous and subsequent regimes, the Second Empire did not try to master the anarchic forces of democracy by designating a competent elite or by counting on the reasoned judgement of an organized electorate. Instead, the regime sought to capture the emotions of the people by tapping into the desire for a providential leader and by coaxing acts of contrition designed to purge the rowdy populace of its penchant for insurrection. Although Glikman rejects the idea that the Empire's quest for consecration borrowed from the practices of the Old Regime, she concludes that the regime created a unique synthesis between revolutionary national sovereignty and providential determinism by forging "an alliance between the power of the multitude and divine inspiration" (p.96).

Jean Garrigue's essay looks at two representations of Léon Gambetta: the image he projected of himself as the salesman of the Republic, and the image of him constructed by various publics. Gambetta traveled across France in the 1870s, not only during electoral campaigns but between them, in order to advocate for the Republic. According to Garrigue, Gambetta explicitly rejected the mantle of *homme providential* and did not seek personal acclaim, but still was unable to control his public image because his audiences interpreted his words and gestures in their own way. The public theater of political rallies at which he "performed" gave rise to images and aspirations that activated long-standing hopes and fears, hopes associated with exceptional personalities, and fears of dictatorship. The dialectic between the two was grafted onto his entire political career because of the role he played during the Franco-Prussian War, which made him vulnerable to accusations on both the Right and the Left that he harbored dictatorial aspirations. Garrigue is interested in how Gambetta dealt with this problem in his role as republican spokesman and party chief. He argues that Gambetta's moderation--his advocacy for a moderate democracy and his reformist strategy of taking small steps--explains his success, but his charisma allowed his detractors to accuse him of caesarian ambitions.

In "L'antiracisme dans les années 1930," Emmanuel Debono describes the Ligue internationale contre l'antisémitisme (LICA) as "a new meeting ground between citizens and elected officials" (p. 113). The

Ligue, founded in the late 1920s by journalist Bernard Lacache, served as a pressure group designed to push for the institutionalization of anti-racism through legislative action. Since the Ligue's efforts required the assistance of legislators, it exemplified a new form of activism in which associations and politics interacted to give expression to popular causes. LICA's activists came mostly from the SFIO and the PCF and were interested in a wide range of progressive anti-racist causes. They hoped to have a direct impact on politics by mobilizing deputies to adopt anti-racist measures, providing assistance to immigrants and refugees, denouncing the actions of foreign governments, and appealing to the authorities to guarantee the security of threatened minorities. Debono insists that many deputies were responsive to LICA's appeals and conveyed their support of its agenda by speaking at LICA rallies, attending its meetings, and accepting honorary positions in its organization. At the same time, the Ligue's organ, *Le Droit de Vivre*, publicized the actions of friendly politicians and provided them with a platform. By identifying anti-racism with the values of the Republic, LICA took on the role of public guardian, holding elected officials to account, questioning deputies who failed to keep their promises, and encouraging them to clarify their position. Public officials aligned with LICA forged links between its militants and the government, especially during the era of the Popular Front, when many LICA affiliates occupied positions of power. Conversely, the Ligue's clout evaporated when the Popular Front collapsed.

Of all the contributions in the collection, the one by co-editor Jérémy Guedj tries hardest to engage with the themes discussed in Mineur's preliminary remarks. Guedj uses the example of immigration policy in the 1950s to examine what he considers one of the basic traits of the Fourth Republic, namely whether politicians sought transparency or whether they worked to breach the trust implicit in their representative role. He believes that the present crisis of representation can be traced to the 1950s. The issue of immigration mobilized public opinion, but sharply divided politicians and voters. It also became an important occasion for rethinking the terms of political representation at a time when the foundations of the political system were up for grabs. The Constitution of the Fourth Republic paid less attention to the doctrine of popular sovereignty than to the goals and principles of the various political parties, and explicitly prohibited the *mandate impératif*. Party programs, in turn, came to weigh heavily on the relationship between voters and representatives in the interval between elections, when elected officials were more apt to be responsible to parties than to the people. Under the day-to-day tasks of governing, political and institutional imperatives asserted themselves; the growing importance of the National Assembly increased the role of the parties as private interests and pressure groups came to exercise greater influence.

Guedj uses the issue of immigration to test whether these factors prevailed over public opinion and focuses on how deputies used opinion polls in order to show a marked increase in the distance between voter preoccupations and the actions of their representatives. Polling showed that voters opposed immigration because of immediate fears over unemployment and national identity. Politicians, by contrast, sought a long-term solution to labor shortages and paid heed to polling only as way of legitimizing a contrived fidelity to popular concerns. The bond implied by representation was stretched thin as public opinion became a "disincarnated guide" to political action (p. 139). Polling was used as window dressing for a purportedly rationalized politics in which opinion was mediated by science and became merely one indicator among many that elected officials employed to legitimize conduct considered to be in the national interest.

Guedj traces the growing distance between voters and elected officials during the Fourth Republic. By contrast, Magali Guaresi finds that an increasing number of deputies and candidates for the National Assembly under the Fifth Republic emphasize their closeness to voters through a rhetoric of proximity. Guaresi employs a computer-aided logometric analysis of the language used in the *professions de foi* written by deputies elected between 1958 and 2007 to examine "the representation of proximity" (p. 141). She claims that the *entre-deux électoral* was a crucial time in a deputy's mandate because electoral victories proceed from a legitimacy constructed in the interval between the act of voting. She insists on the importance of the *professions de foi* because campaigning is performance manifested in language, best

apprehended through a discursive analysis of electoral texts, and because such texts embody the promise of representation, as well as a representation of acts performed on behalf of the voters. Guaresi's analysis shows that the rhetoric of proximity pervades the electoral discourse of the Fifth Republic. Candidates, she observes, feel obliged to appear close to citizens, indicating the search for a legitimacy that cannot be conferred by election alone. Candidates seek to represent themselves as familiar members of the community with local roots, anxious to listen to voters and take concrete steps to address their practical needs. At the same time, the rhetoric of proximity underlines the fundamental problem of representation by confounding the national and the local, by implying that other citizens are strangers and that general interest does not pertain to specific voters, and by perpetuating the idea that the physical distance of the national government symbolizes the distance between representatives and the represented. The *professions de foi* indicate that candidates see themselves as spokespersons for their constituents and believe that physical proximity to citizens and knowledge of their needs is a remedy for remoteness. Guaresi worries that this practice organizes the relationship between legislators and citizens around a promise of personalized local action that is bound to frustrate the electorate.

Guaresi sees the increasing use of the rhetoric of proximity in recent years as a response to a crisis of representation that has gone hand in hand with the progressive feminization of parliamentary representation. In the early Fifth Republic, electoral rhetoric was closely associated with the ideologies of Right and Left. In recent years, however, ideological discourse has given way to the management of the practical, politics has become a matter of attentiveness to immediate needs, and candidates have embraced the rhetoric of proximity because they believe that voters see government as too remote. [6] Guaresi finds a correlation between the rise of proximity discourse and the growing number of women elected to the National Assembly since the 1980s and insists that there is a connection between the two because female candidates talk openly about representation as implying closeness, and make their gender the reason for why they would handle their role in a different manner. They use assumptions about the qualities women acquire in domestic life to construct the image of a different sort of politician, one that would be a caretaker solicitous of daily needs. Guaresi also finds that women use proximity rhetoric more than men because it works in a context in which there is a pervasive sense that the political system has ceased to be representative. Finally, proximity discourse has contributed to a redefinition of the qualities voters expect from their representatives in favor of attributes associated with femininity.

In his conclusion, Jean-Paul Pellegrinetti suggests that the authors' pervasive concern with the contemporary crises of democratic politics has led them to neglect aspects of political life that have historically animated the interval between elections, namely vibrant political debate, new forms of political sociability, and an array of festive political practices, many of which proliferated after the advent of the Third Republic. He also notes that the methods candidates use to maintain a connection with voters have changed dramatically since the early nineteenth century. The means used to address voters and stage-manage public images underwent a revolution in the twentieth century with the advent of film, radio, television, mass marketing, and the internet. Moreover, politics became professionalized with innovations such as polling, mass mailings, and consultants in ways that made the interval between elections a more formal part of the political process. At the same time, France has recently seen a growth in local political activity associated with decentralization and regionalization. Since the 1980s, France's crisis of representation has been closely connected with the democratic deficit that plagues the European Union, which ties France's own political malaise with a broader set of international issues, raising the question of whether foreign experiences may have illuminated the problems the authors identify. Pellegrinetti worries that representation based on proximity threatens national homogeneity and weakens the ability of citizens to think about the national interest, assuming that it is even possible today for voters to believe that the national interest can be defined. A politics without ideology, he suggests, is one that will have a hard time conceiving of a better society.

Collections derived from conferences that focus on a specific issue have their strengths and weaknesses. They can illuminate a neglected area of research and provide an outlet for exciting new scholarship, but

they can also lack coherence and disregard the need to outline the contours of the larger issues at stake. The present collection offers glimpses of how the political techniques used by candidates between elections changed, but it provides no cohesive portrait of the problem and fails to examine how the modalities of the *entre-deux électoral* were shaped by technological developments in communications, changes of regime, and alternations in the political system. What, precisely, is the historical significance of this *longue durée* series of political intervals? The problem posed by the collection concerns a practical and technical matter: how did elected officials maintain links with their constituents between elections? Most of the authors address these methods only as discrete objects of study, rather than as a continuous series of political modulations. Some of the essays are too narrowly focused to address Mineur's preoccupation with the philosophical contradictions inherent in any representative system. At the same time, the issues raised by the contemporary crisis of representation go well beyond the technical aspects involved in maintaining a political bond with voters. Mineur's analysis states explicitly that representation is impossible because he is focused entirely on the theoretical lacuna in the thing itself, rather than on the historical problems associated with the elaboration of a representative system in France. In that respect, the collection would have been strengthened by a discussion of the changing theories and practices of political representation that have characterized French constitutional history and influenced the evolution of French politics life since the Revolution.[7] It would also have benefitted from a clarification of the term "representation" itself, since it is alternatively used to denote a political theory, a juridical relationship, and the discursive construction of images and perceptions.

LIST OF ESSAYS

Adeline Beaurepaire-Hernandez and Jérémy Guedj, "Introduction, l'entre-deux électoral, un 'envers' de l'histoire politique contemporaine"

Didier Mineur, "Propos lumineuse. L'écart constitutive de la relation de représentation"

Vivien Faraut, "Convaincre et conquérir. 'Les lettres aux électeurs' dans la diffusion des idées libérales sous la Restauration"

Emmanuel Fureix, "Le charivari politique: un rite de surveillance civique dans les années 1830"

Marieke Polfliet, "Mr. Soulé goes to Washington: itinéraire d'un représentant entre deux mondes, à l'heure de l'avènement du suffrage universel en Louisiane et en France (1844-1848)"

Juliette Glikman, "Consacrer l'Empereur: les plebiscites par acclamation du Second Empire"

Jean Garrigues, "Gambetta en représentation: commis-voyageur ou homme providential?"

Emmanuel Debono, "L'antiracisme dans les années 1930: un nouveau terrain de rencontre entre citoyens et élus politiques"

Jérémy Guedj, "À l'écoute d'un peuple désincarné? Gouverner au nom du peuple sous la IV^e République: l'exemple des politiques migratoires"

Magali Guaresì, "La représentation politique de la 'proximité.' L'entre-deux électoral dans les professions de foi des député(e)s (1958-2007)"

NOTES

[1] See for example, Jacques Lagroye, ed., *La Politisation* (Paris: Belin, 2003) and Laurent Le Gall, Michel Offerlé, and François Ploux, eds., *La Politique sans en avoir l'air. Aspects de la politique informelle, XIXe-XXe siècle* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2012).

[2] Mineur is especially critical of the work of Philip Converse. See A. Campbell, Philip Converse, W. Miller, and D. Stokes, *The American Voter* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

[3] See especially Charles Tilly, "Charivari, Repetitions, and Urban Politics," in John Merriman, ed., *French Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Hutchinson, 1982), 73-91.

[4] E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971), 76-136.

[5] Marieke does not cite the following English language sources: Sudhir Hazareesingh, *The Saint-Napoleon: Celebrations of Sovereignty in Nineteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004); David Baguley, *Napoleon III and His Regime: An Extravaganza* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000); Matthew Truesdell, *Spectacular Politics: Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte and the Fête Impériale, 1849-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[6] Gauresi's analysis relies heavily on Pierre Rosenvallon, *La légitimité démocratique: Impartialité, réflexivité, proximité* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2008).

[7] The literature on the Restoration has seen a lively debate on this questions: See Emmanuel de Waresquiel and Benoît Yvert, *Histoire de la Restauration, 1814-1830* (Paris: Perrin, 1996) and J. A. W. Gunn, *When the French Tried to be British: Party, Opposition, and the Quest for Civil Disagreement, 1814-1848* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

Steven Kale
Washington State University
kale@wsu.edu

Copyright © 2016 by the Society for French Historical Studies, all rights reserved. The Society for French Historical Studies permits the electronic distribution of individual reviews for nonprofit educational purposes, provided that full and accurate credit is given to the author, the date of publication, and the location of the review on the H-France website. The Society for French Historical Studies reserves the right to withdraw the license for edistribution/republication of individual reviews at any time and for any specific case. Neither bulk redistribution/ republication in electronic form of more than five percent of the contents of H-France Review nor re-publication of any amount in print form will be permitted without permission. For any other proposed uses, contact the Editor-in-Chief of H-France. The views posted on H-France Review are not necessarily the views of the Society for French Historical Studies.

ISSN 1553-9172