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Bernard Cattanéo, *Mésentente cordiale: Les Anglais vus par les Français au tournant du XXe siècle.* Paris: L'Harmattan, 2020. 174 pp. €18.50 (pb). ISBN 978-2-343-21540-2; €13.99 (eb). ISBN 9782140167126 2140167120.

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"Mais que se passa-t-il donc au tournant du vingtième siècle pour que l'ennemie héréditaire depuis la terrible Guerre de Cent-Ans devienne bientôt l'alliée courageuse des tranchées de Verdun?" (p. 12). Bernard Cattanéo's *Mésentente cordiale* presents itself as a study of the moment of transition between Fashoda and the *Entente cordiale*, a six-year period 1898-1904, during which the attitudes of the French toward the English passed "brusquement...de la haine jalouse à la moquerie indulgente, et ce changement majeur va rapprocher les deux nations d'une manière incroyable" (p. 11). This relatively slim volume is neither an intellectual nor a diplomatic history, but really a history of prejudices that provided a backdrop to any interaction or entanglement of France and Britain. These prejudices, being those of the elite, are often expressed in more or less beautifully turned phrases--Flaubert's "Anglais: tous riches!" appears more than once. Cattanéo finds them in newspapers, novels, travel guides, schoolbooks, and academic publications, and in presenting them his own prose is brisk and amusing. Rather than demonstrating a sudden change in attitudes, what *Mésentente* does most effectively is point out the function that Anglophobia or Anglophilia played at different moments in French political and intellectual discourse.

After a panoramic introduction, the first several chapters recall the degree to which the French nation was built against the English one from the emergence of both up through the Napoleonic Wars and the Second Empire. The Normans conquered England in 1066, but it was during the Hundred Years War that the French learned to be French by hating the English. It seems that no French person irritated with any English person over the past several hundred years has failed to remind their antagonist that, after all, it was the English who burned Joan of Arc. Cattanéo is interested in what is happening mainly in print--as he often says, with the elites--and is not attempting anything like, for instance, Christine Haynes's recent history of the post-Napoleonic occupation.[1]

One of Cattanéo's arguments is that enthusiasm for England and English politics and society was linked with a certain embrace of political modernity, specifically a liberal political modernity. Napoléon Bonaparte famously called Britain a nation of shopkeepers. In contrast, Guizot and friends were its eager students, as had been the more moderate *philosophes* in the decades before the Revolution. The Second Republic did not have the same chilling effect on Franco-British relations as did the First, not least because it succumbed so quickly to Louis Napoléon, a man well acquainted with British life and apparently well-liked by Queen Victoria. Still, as Cattanéo tells the story, neither that personal good feeling, nor cooperation in the Crimean War, nor the economic interests furthered by free trade agreements in 1860 were able to preclude hostility. The emperor's territorial ambitions were too serious a fault. Thus in 1870-1871, when France was at its lowest, the British expressed polite disinterest.

The fourth chapter canvases the opinion of *élites françaises* in the early Third Republic. This means the press, of both "opinion" and "information" (p. 53, p. 57), novelists such as Jules Verne and Paul Bourget, guidebooks like the Baedeker, and history books, especially school manuals. This was a period of diplomatic isolation and recovery, of self-strengthening always best pursued with an enemy in mind.[2] But which enemy? The two great foreign policy questions of the period were Alsace-Lorraine on the one hand and the colonies on the other. It seems that domestic politics generally cued the relative intensity of animosities toward Britain and Germany. Here Cattanéo tracks not only the continuing existence of opinions like Michelet's--"La guerre des guerres, le combat des combats, c'est celui de l'Angleterre et de la France; le reste est épisode" (p. 69)--with a growing appreciation for Britain's undeniable strength as a world power. As he concludes, "les élites républicaines" may have remained open in principle to the possibility of alliance even with Germany and indeed pursued with vigor a Russian alliance, but still they "rêvaient en secret à une entente franco-britannique car l'Angleterre était une puissance mondiale...et...la mère incontestée de la démocratie parlementaire" (p. 72).

Chapter five is organized around Hippolyte Taine who is perhaps best remembered for his conservative interpretation of the French Revolution and enormously influential broadly positivist account of literature and philosophy. Taine visited Britain several times between 1858 and 1871, and produced a multi-volume history of English literature, as well as engaging in the long French tradition of travel writing. Here as in other fields, Taine can be said to have synthesized and given a veneer of scientificity to what were essentially the prejudices of the conservative bourgeoisie.

Taine produced an account of the English that was at once sharply observed, trite, and incoherent. Taine, like Diderot before him, emphasized the effect of climate, beer, liquor, and "grosses viandes" in rendering the English "triste et mélancholique" (p. 76). For Taine, Protestantism turned the English away from Latin frivolity and contributed to the great value put on independence and individual initiative by the Englishman who was, Taine wrote, "un barbare moral, un animal robuste aux sens peu affinés, passant sa vie sous un ciel nuageux, parmi des brouillards presque sempiternels" (p. 77). The English family as social unit according to Taine gave way before an individualism that was nonetheless balanced by an absolute paternal authority, which itself echoed into the larger cultural and political realm as a powerful sense of duty. The English were also understood to match an outward coldness with volcanic eruptions of passionate violence, expressed in enthusiasm for hunting, boxing, and various forms of sexual cruelty. Such were the attributes of John Bull, the stereotype of the Englishman. But English life did have its downsides. Again echoing many other observers, Taine wrote that in England, "le misérable est plus misérable, la destitution est un abîme...Certainement, l'horrible et l'immonde sont pires ici qu'ailleurs...Voilà une plaie, la vraie plaie de la société anglaise" (p. 87). Such a recognition was not incompatible with a certain grim appreciation for the dog-eat-dog nature of English society--the capable ascended the ladder, and the incapable fell off the bottom. What is most important about this portrait of national character is that it could fit well both Taine's approval of England as the leader of aristocratic liberalism, and also Boutmy's later, equally racialized Anglophobia. England, because of its national character, was both a fertile ground for socialism and also exemplary in the professionalism of the gentry, or local ruling class. Taine, rather than fixing evaluations of the English, provided an idiom that allowed for the expression of a range of feelings.

The sixth chapter treats the moment of Fashoda, what Cattanéo calls "l'apogée de l'anglophobie." For Cattanéo it is a paradoxical moment in which "la violence des réactions anglophobes dissimulait en fait le dévoloppement silencieux d'une politique anglophile" (p. 99). A lapse not even of judgment but of attention on the part of Gabriel Hanotaux allowed the collision between Marchand's expedition and the British in upper Egypt. For Cattanéo the scene is set by the arrival of the triple alliance between Germany, Austro-Hungary, and Italy in 1878, and then the decisive intervention of the British in Egypt. Between the lost provinces and imperial jousting over Africa, whither France? First of all, to an understanding with Russia.[3] The Marchand expedition made its way to Fashoda, was met by a significant British force, and a standoff ensued that gave rise to extraordinary passions back home. Yet as Delcassé said to the Chamber, "Nous n'avons que des raisons et ils ont des soldats là-bas" (p. 98). For the nationalist right, Marchand became a betrayed hero, "l'expression accomplie de notre race" (p. 98), and the whole thing a fiasco, a mistake. The failure to fight was a stain on French honor: "l'Allemagne est un adversaire accidentel, alors que la Grande-Bretagne est l'ennemi eternel" (p. 104). Britain was a modern Carthage--and Cattanéo points out here as in a few other places that such language would return in the 1940s.

One consequence of the events at Fashoda was a massive surge of support in France for Paul Krüger and the Boers in what was suddenly clearly understood as a heroic freedom struggle in the Transvaal (no easier to find on a map than Fashoda itself) against the tyrannical British Empire. Kipling was "haineux et puéril" (p. 105). Krüger in November of 1900 began a European tour to solicit support in Marseilles, and received an "accueil…délirant" (p. 107)--but the enthusiasm burned out quickly as the Boers lost ground. In fact, writes Cattanéo, "la flambée d'enthusiasme anglophobe, un peu surjouée, n'avait été qu'un frisson délicieux" (p. 109). Here is a fascinating suggestion. In the introduction, after all, Cattanéo described the "Français moyen" as "la proie délicieusement consentante de ses propres préjugés" (p. 10). Was, then, the rhetorical violence a sort of indulgence? A pleasure taken in excessive but ultimately meaningless expression of hatred?

Chapter seven treats the arrival of the *Entente* itself, and begins with the observation that, in 1904, Edward VII received a welcome just as enthusiastic as had Krüger a few years earlier. Cattanéo is especially interested in how, for instance, Edward's personal history--his time spent in French high society and enjoying the pleasures for which Paris was so well known--eased or enabled this transition for the press. The inevitability of the *Entente* came first of all from a perception of shared interest in opposing Germany, and second of all from a substantial commercial lobby eager for closer trade relations with Britain. In this context, opinion both acts and is acted upon. It is its own evidence. For instance, Cattanéo writes that in the wake of the retreat from Fashoda, Delcassé took to the floor of the Chamber of Deputies and defended France's actions, reminding the public that France's real interests were elsewhere. "Et lorsqu'il répondit par le mépris au député d'extrême droite Firmin Faure qui l'accusait d'être à la solde du 'complot judéo-maçonique anglaise', il remporta complètement la faveur de l'opinion" (p. 116). If such invocations of a known and stable thing called "opinion" are frustrating, one strength of Cattanéo's narrative is in places to get inside the factories where opinion is made--the newspapers. There are excellent pages describing the long campaign orchestrated by Jean Dupuy through his newspaper, *Le Petit Parisien*, to secure an English alliance. There was a social location to the Anglophile lobby, and it overlapped largely with, as Cattanéo writes, the Republican elite. The political dominance of this group in the post-Dreyfus years is thus key.

The eighth chapter asks if the image of the English dominating French imaginations really had changed. It had not. At the time of the *Entente*, writes Cattanéo, the vision of the English held by "une bonne partie de l'élite intellectuelle française...n'était guère originale: un individu solitaire, individualiste, orgueilleux et brutal, grossier et pieux mais imbu de lui-même et convaincu de son droit à tout dominer, enfin incapable d'imaginer et même de comprendre les émotions d'autrui" (p. 134-5). The French still, this is to say, had a low opinion of the English. "Si les choses changeaient malgré tout, c'est que les Français voyaient augmenter leur détestation de l'Allemagne" (p. 139). The disciples of Taine remained influential, having lost not the elitism but the liberalism of their master. For Cattanéo, there is a clear political meaning to the Anglophobia that remained in French intellectual life, "ceux qui rejetaient les Britanniques avec cette violence étaient les mêmes...qui n'acceptaient pas le monde nouveau en train d'émerger sous le leadership de Londres. La Grande-Bretagne, c'était pour ces hommes le constitutionnalisme, le libéralisme, l'industrialisation et le déclin de l'agriculture traditionnelle, le socialisme aussi" (p. 145). If Charles Maurras is the clearest example here, Cattanéo also lumps Elie Halévy into the Anglophobe column. The appearance is brief and on the strength of Halévy's short book on British imperialism. Indeed, Halévy deplored British imperialism, but he devoted a great deal of scholarly work to Britain's history and was, despite his association with Boutmy, in no sense simply critical of it. Here, as perhaps elsewhere, the dichotomy of Anglophobe and Anglophile that organizes the narrative does so at some cost.

The stated aim of the book is somewhat at odds with the unfolding of the text itself. Is there really any connection between the diplomatic history of relations between France and England--its various chills and thaws, periods of tension and relaxation--and the current of French thought that sees England as the avatar of a modernity it wishes to reject? From the evidence presented, I am not convinced that there is. Further, can we really make sense of that image of England without getting clear on French images of other dangerous avatars of modernity? Perhaps the Americans, who surely take the place of the British, at least in the later twentieth century? Then, too, given the central role that Germany has in the narrative, one could imagine a more comparative approach. But this is asking Cattanéo to have written a very different book. Cattanéo does not engage directly with contemporary scholarship--virtually all the citations are primary sources--even on the cultural history of national identity that might be thought to be relevant. Perhaps most striking for this reader is that while Cattanéo clearly is aware of and wishes readers to see the latent antisemitism in much of the Anglophobe literature he discusses, he does not explore the significance of this beyond gesturing toward Vichy. In any case, the material presented here suggests many threads for future study, a cardinal virtue of any historical work.

*Mésentente cordiale* was written in the shadow of debates over *funeste Brexit*, and one of its goals is surely to confront the commentariat of contemporary France with the words of their forebears, which may be uncomfortably familiar. Like many other words, "snob" came into French from English. *Mésentente* is considerably more than a record of snobbery, but it will be appreciated by those able to take vicarious pleasure in the exercise of that particular vice.

NOTES

[1] Christine Haynes, *Our Friends the Enemies: The Occupation of France after Napoleon* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2018).

[2] See Rachel Chrastil, *Organizing for War: France, 1870-1914* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010).

[3] This has been the subject of significant scholarship. A classic example is chapter 9, "Rococo Revival and the Franco-Russian Alliance," in Debora L. Silverman, *Art Nouveau in Fin-de-siècle France: Politics, Psychology, and Style* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). See more recently Faith Hillis "The 'Franco-Russian Marseillaise': International Exchange and the Making of Antiliberal Politics in Fin de Siècle France," *The Journal of Modern History*, 89 (2017): 39-78.

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