

BOOK REVIEW

De la République de Constantin Pecqueur (1801–1887), ed. Clément Coste, Ludovic Frobert and Marie Lauricella (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2017; pp. 464. €25);

Libertaire! Essais sur l'écriture, la pensée et la vie de Joseph Déjacque (1821–1865), ed. Thomas Bouchet and Patrick Samzun (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2019; pp. 270. €26).

Who has heard of Constantin Pecqueur (1801–1887)? Or Joseph Déjacque (1821–1865)? Pecqueur, a leading nineteenth-century French socialist, scarcely features in histories of nineteenth-century France, or, for that matter, histories of French social and political thought. Déjacque, an anarchist, feminist, ecologist and insurrectionist, does not feature at all. As Thomas Bouchet, co-editor of one of the remarkable collections of essays reviewed here, puts it, Déjacque was one of those ‘cadavres que l’histoire s’acharne à faire disparaître’ (‘corpses that history attempts to make disappear’). History did not try quite so hard to bury Pecqueur, but his legacy fared hardly better. Fortunately, these forgotten figures have been brought back to life in these two collections of notable and outstanding essays, which have captured the sheer breadth and depth of Pecqueur’s and Déjacque’s oeuvres, and show with impressive scholarly rigour the full extent of just how extraordinary, influential and prophetic Pecqueur and Déjacque actually were.

The thirteen essays that make up *De la République de Constantin Pecqueur* cover the complete, and extensive, horizon of Pecqueur’s work: from his numerous essays and articles, and his many books (including the profoundly influential *Économie sociale* [1839] and *Des améliorations matérielles dans leur rapports avec la liberté* [1840], a work that ran to three editions and was published by Charles Gosselin, publisher of Tocqueville), to the impressive archive of manuscripts that would have yielded some thirty books on topics as diverse as the nature and role of the social sciences, political sovereignty and direct democracy, the history of religion and morality, and the philosophy of history. What these essays reveal—with scholarly rigor and great clarity—is just how well Pecqueur was admired and known by his contemporaries. Marx read his work carefully and drew on it extensively, particularly in the composition of *Capital*. Marie Lauricella offers an illuminating essay on Pecqueur’s attempt to construct an authentic feminist social identity—outlined in a plan for a *Histoire des femmes*, a work he planned to publish in 120 instalments of 25 pages, totalling nearly 3,000 pages—and shows that Georges Sand described his ideas as ‘the confirmation of all that I believe and profess’. Patrick Henriot provides a fine essay on Pecqueur’s *De la République de Dieu*, a work that fused socialism, republicanism, ethics and religion, and replaced the republican (and all too male) idea of fraternity with the gender-inclusive idea of solidarity—one of the earliest uses of the term; he shows that Alphonse Lamartine believed it ‘embodied’ and ‘concentrated the energy and movement of the epoch’. Pecqueur’s ideas on social functions and social science, as shown in

Vincent Bordeau's superb essay, anticipated Durkheim's sociology by nearly half a century. And his ideas on the social spheres necessary for a coherent and just society—the spheres of justice—anticipated reflections in our own era, as Clément Coste illuminates in his arresting 'L'idéal de charité et l'impôt idéal': Pecqueur prefigured ideas central to Michael Walzer's classic *Spheres of Justice* (1983) and Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2014). Ludovic Frobert's two exhaustive contributions, alongside those of Andrea Lanza on labour and credit and Alain Clément on social inequality and poverty, give us the full import and originality of Pecqueur's economic and social thought, while essays by Jonathan Beecher and Philippe Régnier describe in detail Pecqueur's early engagement with Saint-Simonianism and Fourierism. Pecqueur's reflections on direct democracy are thoroughly treated by Anne-Sophie Chambost, whilst Jacques Thbaut and Michel Bellet treat in their respective engaging essays Pecqueur's life, work and the legacy of his ideas.

The result of this close collaboration is a worthy, impressive and remarkably cohesive collection. It is a work of erudition, scholarly rigour and literary craft, and surely must be viewed as one of the definitive contributions to understanding one of socialism's great thinkers, a man who expressed his undying faith in social justice and hope for the future in the words 'vivre d'idéal, dans l'utopie, c'est vivre dans l'avenir' ('to live in an ideal, in utopia, is to live in the future').

Thomas Bouchet and Patrick Samzun's volume on Joseph Déjacque is no less impressive. Its energy and literary craft bring to life this electrifying, yet sadly forgotten, romantic. Déjacque was an anarchist, feminist and friend of Eugénie Niboyet, Pauline Roland and Jeanne Deroin, member of *Le club des femmes* and contributor to *La Voix des femmes*, ecologist, author of *Humanisphère* and of *Lazaréennes: fables et poésies sociales*, a collection of poems so incendiary that they were condemned by the authorities the moment they came off the press. Déjacque's epic life, which is so lovingly put together in this superb volume, was not so much a seamless progression, a personal history whose narrative thread is easily unwound, as a fractured and ruptured existence punctuated by incarcerations, and exiles in Brussels, London and Jersey, where, from 1852 until 1854, he lived alongside Victor Hugo (who detested him), and the abolitionist Victor Schoelcher, who could not control him. Déjacque emigrated to New York and became a luminary in the exiled francophone republican community of that city, before moving on to New Orleans where he embraced the Cajun culture and language and he took up the cause of Black emancipation. His fiery 1858 poem *Nouvelles Orléans* laid bare the hypocrisy that was at the heart of American life. American opportunity could only exist, he raged, on the cruelty and injustice of slavery and plantation life.

Déjacque's fiery and compelling verse commanded the attention of many, including Joseph Proudhon, Eugène Pelletan and Pierre Leroux, whom he met in exile. Leroux's theory of the *circulus*, or circular economy, inspired Déjacque's ideas on regeneration and perfectibility that feature in *Humanisphère*, an alternative history of humanity that placed nature at its centre and argued that human flourishing could only be achieved when domination, violence against nature, peoples, sexes, children and the marginalised and dispossessed was supplanted by a way of life and ethic that treated nature and people with empathy, sensitivity and equal respect. The *humanisphère* was a mutualist and collectivist universe that, in fusing nature and humanity, went well beyond

the outer limits of the socialism of Déjacque's age. Déjacque promoted these ideas, some of which find echoes in Nietzsche, with zeal. Their revolutionary potential became dynamite after his meeting with a fellow exile and anarchist, the writer and apocalyptic visionary, Ernest Coeurderoy. Déjacque was an ultra-revolutionary, a true *libertaire* (the neologism was his) whose strident poetry and uncompromising ideas exceeded pretty much anything written in that era. It is therefore propitious and welcome that the selection of unpublished writings by Déjacque and the fourteen essays that make up this fascinating volume should be published now, in a new era of *les enragés*. Bouchet and Samzun have assembled an outstanding group of scholars whose essays cover not only the broad scope of Déjacque's thought and writings, from his reflections on the nature of work and the organisation of labour, to his thoughts on the emancipation of women and peoples, to ecologism and utopianism, to his ideas on deliberative and participatory democracy, but also his poetry and political activities. Both of these books have done a magnificent job in reviving two of the nineteenth century's most intriguing and complex figures.

<https://doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceab187>

MICHAEL DROLET
Worcester College, Oxford, UK