party formations, with James Shields arguing interestingly that the Front national has in fact reinforced bipolarity. Memory features prominently in Part Two, on the politics of postcolonialism including the difficult transmission of activist cultures between generations, contrasting approaches to commemoration in public spaces, and Patricia Lorcin’s discussion of nostalgia for empire. Part Three arguably represents the core of the book, and connects to Christophe Prochasson’s stimulating piece in Part One on François Furet’s concept of ‘the passions’. Reflecting the editor’s own research interests (see Chabal, *A Divided Republic: Nation, State and Citizenship in Contemporary France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)), the final set of essays combines intellectual history and political philosophy approaches to examine recent developments in French liberalism and Republican thought. Particular strengths are chapters by Iain Stewart on the ‘anti-68 liberal revival’, and Camille Robcis on Republican critiques of human rights, both showcasing important new research that chimes closely with the call for imaginative approaches. Lest the reader get carried away, Sudhir Hazareesingh’s pithy conclusion reminds us why talk of crisis may not disappear any time soon. From the populist left to the radical right, he paints a fairly depressing picture of a political culture that appears introverted and incapable of meaningful self-renewal. Whilst acknowledging pragmatic local accommodations of pluralism, and the hopes expressed by some commentators that weakened state institutions might reinvigorate participatory democracy, he sees few signs of any positive consensus emerging. The consistent quality of the essays here, and their accessibility even when presenting complex ideas and debates, mean that the volume should be of interest to advanced undergraduates as well as to researchers from a wide range of disciplines looking for new insights into France’s uncertain present.

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As the title indicates, the editors of these three volumes have set themselves an ambitious goal. The articles collected here were generated by the Équipe Traverses 19–21 between 2004 and 2008, and they make for a publication that covers an immense range of topics. Inevitably, the sheer extent of the subject matter entails methodological omissions, as a result of which the seventy-four articles do not always combine persuasively into a coherent whole. The inclusion of the life sciences, for example, even if there are a number of chapters focusing on topics other than medicine, indicates the need for an all-inclusive concept allowing the editors to link together this mass of disparate material. Perhaps the most frustrating oversight is that there is no contextualization of how approaches from the ‘medical humanities’ have understood the tangled relationship between literature and medicine in recent decades. Lise Dumasy-Queffélec proposes in the General Introduction that ‘le rapport médecin/patient comme figure du rapport auteur/lecteur, voir écrivain/corps social est également à étudier, pendant toute la période considérée’ (I, 13), which is a precept so close to this field of research that this should have been acknowledged, particularly since the volumes propose also to look beyond France. About a quarter of the contributions focus on other European (and some non-European) texts and contexts, and ‘literature’ is defined in very open terms (‘poésie, fiction romanesque et théâtrale, et aussi textes d’idées, politiques, scientifiques et philosophiques’, I, 10) that occasionally also allow for chapters on film, visual art, and music.
These and other issues of methodological fine-tuning (‘medicine’ is understood in the broadest sense) compromise the overall rigour of the project; however, if consulted selectively, the three volumes are immensely rewarding and offer many fine essays.

It helps that each volume is given a distinct title, and the editors have further attempted to narrow down their volume-specific focus with separate introductory chapters. The first volume assesses the image of the physician and questions how medicine produces power structures and forms of interpretation; the second sets out to analyse clashes between materialism and spiritualism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; the final volume returns to an analysis of the role of the physician and examines the resulting relationship between medicine and fiction. The three subsections of the first volume (‘Interpréter; ‘Juger; ‘Soigner’) consider the ways in which the clinical gaze may be capable of creating entire social pathologies, an example of which Jean-Dominique Goffette sees in Balzac’s idea of the ‘Paris monstre’, a social body endangered by degeneracy and death (i, 42), and which, as Gaëlle Le Dref outlines in her examination of theories of social Darwinism and degeneracy, ultimately culminates in anti-humanism. Even if the significance of Foucault is only briefly mentioned (i, 31), a key theme of the volume — the tension between normal and pathological, and the physician as mediator between the two — is masterfully presented in Jean-Jacques Courtine’s postscript, which explores the ‘médicalisation du champ du regard’ (i, 413; emphasis in the original) and the fundamental role of the physician in shaping this gaze from 1840 to 1940. In his chapter on Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s doctoral thesis on Ignaz Semmelweis, Shane Lillis importantly emphasizes the side effects of that gaze, namely that in accounts of physicians or by physicians, be it in visual art or literature, the patient often disappears behind the disease under examination, which, according to Lillis, is a concern that also shimmers through *Voyage au bout de la nuit*.

The second volume questions the ways in which literature stages the self as processing scientific discoveries and medical progress from the Revolution to the twenty-first century. Ranging from contributions on Diderot to contemporary artists such as Stelarc and Orlan, the volume, as Hélène Spengler notes, is arranged around the figure of the medical subject, which is understood in the broadest sense. Ranging from contributions on Diderot to contemporary artists such as Stelarc and Orlan, the volume, as Hélène Spengler notes, is arranged around the figure of the medical subject, which is understood in the broadest sense. A final volume sets out to analyse (III, 288). The ‘double mouvement’ of exaltation and loss of confidence caused by the limitations of scientific knowledge is what the final volume sets out to analyse (III, 9). A first part successfully addresses the ways in which positivism and Darwinism have shaped the social and human sciences (even an article on economics is included) in the course of the nineteenth century. Annie Petit recalls, significantly, that medicine was far from being accepted as a science in the Comtian system, and she thereby confirms Dumasy-Queffélec’s introductory remark that ‘la médecine, indissolublement art et science, est
par là même le domaine scientifique dont la littérature, réflexion et pratique, peut se sentir le plus proche’ (iii, 18). This concern is also at the heart of the stimulating second part, on the literary representation of physicians, and the final part presenting four biographical studies of physicians. Joël July’s reading of the figure of Bruno Sachs in Martin Winckler’s œuvre exemplifies how the practice of digression in fiction is a way of bridging the medical background of the author with his identity as a writer. Another essay by Petit ends the volume with the assertion that Émile Littré ‘est un médecin hanté par l’histoire, la philologie et la philosophie. On pourrait aussi bien dire un philosophe habité, hanté par le médecin historien et littérateur, ou un historien hanté par la médecine, la philosophie et la littérature’ (iii, 335). Even if there might have been more room for critical reflection or a more rigorous general methodological framework, this sums up the impression these volumes leave, namely that the practice and cultural role of medicine is deeply intertwined with the social and natural sciences and humanities, and that this is an important and unexhausted area of pluridisciplinary research.

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Sylvie Freyermuth and Jean-François Bonnot have previously co-edited Ville infectée, ville déhumanisée (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2014) and Malaise dans la ville (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2014). This co-authored book brings these two researchers from different backgrounds together again to further a pioneering approach to the urban world around us. Freyermuth works on the inscription of literature in sociopolitical questions. Bonnot has a background in linguistics and an interest in the interface between literature and social history. Following in the tradition of Pierre Bourdieu and his defiance of theories of the ‘irréductibilité’ of art and its ‘transcendance’ (Les Règles de l’art (Paris: Seuil, 1992), p. 11), this study ventures further away from literature to analyse literary texts not for their literariness but rather for their documentary value. As such they are placed alongside ‘micro-histories’ of historical persons. The boundaries between fictional and real-life stories of men and women are broken down, and each reinforces the other in the choice of corpus and the confrontation of the fictional with newspaper extracts, medical accounts, and photos. In a chiasmic move, the speculative narrative that builds up real-life accounts from written or oral ephemera converges with the documentary reinsertion of the fictional into the real. Citing Christine Dupuit’s ‘Pour une sociologie de la littérature’ (Cahiers de l’Institut de recherches marxistes, 51 (1989), 48–53), the authors affirm that literature is neither a ‘monument’ nor an actual ‘document’ but rather a ‘trace […] d’un processus de signification à construire’ (p. 11). Having freed the text of its aura as a literary work, the authors’ approach is to try to develop a detailed understanding of the sociohistorical context to which it relates. An integrated approach is adopted, which neither compartmentalizes the different disciplines nor separates the contributions by author. Instead the study is organized into four parts. Part One, ‘Malaise dans la vie et dans la ville’, examines the reasons for exclusion and how it is made bearable. The overall tone of the book is pessimistic, with a sustained analysis of the ‘misère du monde’, or, as the authors term it, the ‘taedium vitae’, which they see as characteristic of the end of epochs (p. 1). Key here is the deconstruction of Marc Augé’s concept of the ‘non-lieu’, and the book is structured around the idea of ‘habiter un lieu inhabitable’, which Freyermuth and Bonnot work up from concentration camp testimonies. Parts Two and Three examine questions of urban structure, change, and individual and collective identity and