

# The Unnamable Death of Michel Bounan<sup>1</sup>

A prolific essayist for éditions Allia, Michel Bounan never stopped studying the psychic disturbances of an epoch gripped by ecological, social and individual disasters.

An extract from *Temps du sida*<sup>2</sup> (1990): “The endless pursuits of the market system involve us in an ecological disaster that will bring back to us, even more brutally, the economic catastrophe that had been delayed. The risk of revolt has certainly been reduced. Living men and women have continued to make and consume the things that destroy their minds and their bodies simultaneously. But the traffic in emotions, minds and consciousnesses uniquely disturbs the physiology of living beings, and the exhaustion of the enchained subject, of the ‘God of the armies,’ has caused new tumorous infectious diseases. Another misfortune is coming, something that even the pessimism of Orwell didn’t dare imagine and against which market civilization will not find a solution.”

Michel Bounan was an essayist of alexithymia.<sup>3</sup> This psychic disturbance, which affects the emotions and reduces life and its desires, was, according to Bounan, emblematic of the particular weakening of the modern individual and the internalization of the dominant ideas of the market system. The mass media, the commodification of relationships, the State, and the collapse of societies and nature inspired him to write a dozen books, each one more abrasive than the last, that describe the disaster. He also wrote about Céline (*L’art de Céline et de son temps*),<sup>4</sup> who, for him, was more surely – beyond his image as libertarian buffoon – a propagandist for the established order, whose anti-Semitism, worthy of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,<sup>5</sup> served to rule out any risk of him being a revolutionary. Bounan’s book, *Logique du terrorisme*,<sup>6</sup> and his dialectical blackmail of governmental overprotection against terror, published in 2003, will shock and be criticized for its conspiracy theories [*complotisme*]. His quiet death at the age of 77 on 11 November 2019<sup>7</sup> thus silenced a singular little voice that we can connect to the Orwellian family of the *L’Encyclopédie des nuisances* publishing house.<sup>8</sup> Discreet Michel Bounan, a

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<sup>1</sup> “La mort innommable de Michel Bounan,” published 19 November 2019 by *Les influences*: <https://www.lesinfluences.fr/La-mort-innommable-de-Michel-Bounan.html>. Translated by NOT BORED! 4 April 2020. All footnotes by the translator.

<sup>2</sup> *The Time of AIDS*, not yet published in English.

<sup>3</sup> Literally “no words for feelings,” a psychiatric syndrome in which the subject is unable to identify or describe his or her own feelings.

<sup>4</sup> *The Art of Céline and his Times* (1997), which, with the exception of its Chapter VII (“Revision”), not yet been translated into English. See <http://www.notbored.org/revision.html>

<sup>5</sup> Bounan’s essay *L’État retors* (“The Crafty State”) was published as a preface to a 1992 French reprint of Maurice Joly’s 1864 book *Dialogue aux enfers entre Machiavel et Montesquieu*, which was plagiarized to create the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. For a translation of Bounan’s preface into English, see <http://www.notbored.org/crafty-state.html> and, for a translation of Joly’s book, see <http://www.notbored.org/dialogue-in-hell.html>.

<sup>6</sup> *The Logic of Terrorism* (2003), translated into English here: <http://www.notbored.org/logic-of-terrorism.html>.

<sup>7</sup> The entry for Bounan in the French version of Wikipedia does not list a cause of death.

<sup>8</sup> *L’Encyclopédie des nuisances* started out as a Situationist-inspired journal (circa 1984) and later became a publishing house.

former homeopathic physician inspired by the Situationists in his youth (he corresponded in a lively fashion with Guy Debord),<sup>9</sup> honed his writings like seductive little Toledo swords.<sup>10</sup> The entirety of his works is published by Allia.<sup>11</sup>

**How did you meet Michel Bounan and how was the loyalty between author and publisher forged?**<sup>12</sup>

*Gérard Berréby*:<sup>13</sup> During 1989, I received a letter from Michel Bounan, whom I did not know, in which he proposed to send me the manuscript of his work *Le Temps du Sida* and gave me an editorial summary of great clarity. I immediately got the significance of his remarks, which didn't fail to provoke a lively polemic when they were published. We gradually began to see each other on a regular basis. An hour once a week, which, over the course of 30 years, wasn't a negligible amount of time. We came to know each other, we won each other over, I would say, and, beyond our exchanges as author and publisher, we spoke about nearly everything. I was always struck by his ability to take up the problems of our era and to make connections between things in a way that was always pertinent and often unexpected. I learned a great deal from him, in part because of his long experience as a doctor. He was an open and receptive man, able to listen to others and be very generous with them.

**Which is your favorite book by him, and which one would you recommend to people who want to enter his universe?**

To discover his works and enter into his way of thinking, I would suggest *La Vie innommable*,<sup>14</sup> in which he puts together the ecological, social and affective aspects of the organization of our society and the disturbances that they generate on the psychic plane. He denounces the disappearance of the subject, which is both individual and historical, and anticipates – the first edition was published in 1993 – many current reflections, notably about the environment.

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<sup>9</sup> For Debord's letters to Bounan (16 of them between 1990 and 1994), see <http://www.notbored.org/debord.html>.

<sup>10</sup> Iron blades forged on the Iberian Peninsula, circa the Fifth Century B.C.E.

<sup>11</sup> Link provided by the publisher of this article:  
<https://www.editions-allia.com/fr/auteur/40/michel-bounan>.

<sup>12</sup> Interviewed by "E.Lx."

<sup>13</sup> Editorial director of Editions Allia.

<sup>14</sup> *Unnamable Life* (1993), which, with the exception of its Annex ("Editorial Politics"), has not yet been translated into English. See <http://www.notbored.org/editorial-politics.html>.