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Katherine S. Maynard, *Reveries of Community: French Epic in the Age of Henri IV, 1572-1616*. Series: Rethinking the Early Modern. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2018. x + 183 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, and index. \$99.95 (cl). ISBN 9780810135840; \$34.95 (pb). ISBN 9780810135833.

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In this book Professor Maynard devotes individual chapters to Pierre de Ronsard's *Franciade*, the Protestant Guillaume Salluste Du Bartas's *La Judit* and *La Sepmaine*, Sébastien Garnier's *La Henriade*, Pierre-Victor Palma Cayet's *Heptaméron de la Navarride*, and the Huguenot Agrippa d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques*. She aims to contribute to the rehabilitation of the epic genre in the period during and immediately after the civil wars in France. She begins and ends with well-known poems and provides in the main body of the text translations for all her quotations in French and Latin (carefully acknowledging her debt for some renderings to Phillip John Usher and for others to Valerie Worth).^[1]

In her introduction, Professor Maynard maintains that the epic genre acts as a forum for discussing "peace, war, and community" (p. 4). The debates on these topics were particularly intense in the period she has chosen to analyse, as the Wars of Religion (1562-1598) were followed by further religious disputes. She points out, correctly, that French epics of this period have frequently been viewed negatively, whereas Phillip John Usher in his book, *Epic Arts in Renaissance France*, suggests that these works are important, vibrant, and closely linked to the plastic arts.^[2] Professor Maynard believes that the religious troubles, far from impeding the production of epic poetry, in fact stimulated it. At a time when many forms of fellowship had been threatened or destroyed by war, epic poetry provided a means of "imagining France in terms of community" (p. 7) and of envisaging the present and the future even while speaking of the past.

The first chapter looks at the unfinished *Franciade* largely from the perspective of other poems and works of art, starting with Ronsard's "Ode de la Paix" of 1550, which adopts a Virgilian framework, then moving on to three violent poems he wrote to celebrate royal victories during the Third War of Religion, poems which suggest that the enemy will be erased from the collective memory. This notion of erasure is central to the chapter, which next looks at how 242 verses are removed by Ronsard from the manuscript version of book one of the *Franciade*, including verses about the civil wars. Pages 25 to 32 consider the way Ronsard's epic avoids describing real places, especially in book four: "[w]hen Virgil constructs places of memory, Ronsard offers places of epic fantasy" (p. 32). Professor Maynard's focus then shifts to Ronsard's contribution to the 1571 Entry into Paris of Charles IX and Elizabeth of Austria, which reminded the people that Charles's

imperial France excluded the Protestants. She provides two illustrations from Simon Bouquet's *Bref et sommaire recueil* of 1572. This movement of the book away from the *Franciade* itself is somewhat disappointing, as is the final negative conclusion about the poem. It is perhaps rather surprising that not much attention is paid, say, to the procession of rulers in the fourth book of Ronsard's poem (but see page 139, note 43), or to the last lines of this fourth and ultimately final book, which evoke a type of erasure.

Chapter two is neatly divided into two sections. The first examines Du Bartas's *La Judit*, commissioned by Jeanne d'Albret, queen of Navarre and mother of the future Henri IV, and the "regional space of refuge for a small religious community" that it develops (p. 40). The second considers how the poet's later works, especially the *Seconde Semaine* and the "Cantique d'Ivry", move towards a comprehensive model of community, reflecting his welcoming of both Catholic and Protestant patrons. (One notes in passing that the translation of the indented quotation on page 49 omits a whole phrase.) Four quotations from the "Cantique" are used to show that Henri IV is depicted as having imperial grandeur, as adhering to the Protestant faith, and as willing to accept Catholicism within his realm. Unfortunately, the real king had to face deep-seated conflicts, so that Du Bartas's dream of a unified France was held in abeyance.

The less well-known *Henriade* of the moderate Catholic Garnier was intended to extol Henri IV's acts and buttress his claims to the throne. Henri himself is the protagonist, which runs counter to Ronsard's advice in the 1587 preface to the *Franciade* that epic characters should be chosen from antiquity. Henri's abjuration of Protestantism in July 1593 obliged Garnier to change tack part-way through his poem and to advocate a community "whose internal conflicts must be resolved through forgiving rather than forgetting" (p. 61). Garnier contrasts French identity and sovereignty with those of Spain. Maynard's analysis of the poem is illuminating and includes a brief study, with an illustration in black and white, of the anonymous portrait, currently housed in the Musée Carnavalet, of Henri IV before Paris (pp. 72-73).

Cayet's *Heptaméron de la Navarride* is in part a translation of a medieval *Cronica de los reyes de Navarra*. The French poet has to tread carefully as regards his depiction of Spain. He is far less anti-Spanish than Garnier. Cayet is also selective when referring to the religious past of Henri IV; Professor Maynard convincingly detects here the influence of Cayet's own recent conversion from Protestantism. She touches upon tolerance (in particular of the Protestants) and its limits (pp. 87-88). Her study of Cayet's treatment of the king's three marriages indicates that power is being concentrated in the figure of the monarch (pp. 92-99).

The seven-book poem by the militant Protestant, D'Aubigné, is quite different. He felt betrayed by Henri's conversion to Catholicism and deeply disillusioned with the French monarchy as a whole. He "shares none of Du Bartas's hope for future peaceful cohabitation" (p. 101). In a cogent chapter, Professor Maynard considers up-to-date research on D'Aubigné, in particular an article by Andrea Frisch.^[3] She shows how the poet calls for "communal cohesion and remembering" (p. 102). Shared trauma is used by D'Aubigné to argue for ongoing military engagement, and the perils of peace are uncovered. D'Aubigné opposes the sort of poetics of forgetting recommended by Ronsard. Professor Maynard also contrasts D'Aubigné with Ovid and with biblical models (pp. 110-113). She looks at ekphrasis in "Les Fers" and compares it with Aeneas viewing the murals of the Trojan War. She might in addition have suggested parallels and contrasts with ekphrasis in Ronsard and Garnier (the index fortunately enables the reader to make comparisons), and she could usefully have indicated what features she sees as pertaining to

Protestant writing. In her conclusion, Professor Maynard maintains that these epics reflected the hope that “new ways of conceiving community would foster a long-lasting peace” (p. 127). By way of contrast she looks briefly at Voltaire’s *La Henriade*, which has Henri IV as its protagonist and the Wars of Religion as its context (pp. 128-130).

The informative notes are grouped together at the end of the book, perhaps because many are long. In fact, one wonders whether the balance between notes and the main body of the text is always as it should be. For instance, page 134, note 44 discusses definitions of epic, which should probably have gone into the introduction itself. Similarly, the fact that there is no modern edition of Garnier’s *Henriade* (p. 151, n. 12) could surely have been mentioned in the main text. (Individual chapters, without their notes, are slim, averaging twenty pages; those on Ronsard and D’Aubigné are the longest, with twenty-six pages each.)

In spite of such quibbles, this is an interesting and in fact refreshingly concise study in a field that has often been neglected. It blends well-known works with relatively obscure texts. The research behind it is thorough and the comments on community are thought-provoking. A very light sprinkling of misprints does not detract from what is on offer here.

NOTES

[1] *The Franciad (1572) by Pierre de Ronsard*, translated, annotated, and with an introduction by Phillip John Usher (New York: AMS Press, 2010). The translations of *Les Tragiques* by Valerie Worth were based on her forthcoming edition, *Agrippa d’Aubigné’s Les Tragiques (1616)*, translated, annotated, and with an introduction by Valerie Worth-Stylianou (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies).

[2] Phillip John Usher, *Epic Arts in Renaissance France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[3] Andrea Frisch, “Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques* as Testimony,” in David P. LaGuardia and Cathy Yandell, eds., *Memory and Community in Sixteenth-Century France* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 97-111.

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