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Jeff Kendrick and Katherine S. Maynard, eds., *Polemic and Literature Surrounding the French Wars of Religion*. Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Culture 68. Boston and Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019. ix + 208 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography, index. \$102.99 U.S. (hb). ISBN 9781501518034; \$102.99 U.S. (eb). 9781501513510.

Review by George Hoffmann, University of Michigan.

Religious polemic during the Wars of Religion in France counted less as an occasional subgenre than as an expansive body of arguments, styles, and images that suffused most writing (and thinking) of the period. At times vulgar, often spiteful, and seemingly thankless to modern tastes, however, this controversial literature has won few posthumous readers until recently. Jeff Kendrick and Katherine Maynard have joined in its rediscovery, aiming explicitly to reattach polemic to its multiple echoes in the period's literature more broadly. They smartly point out in their introduction that Reformation controversies did not relate to the period's literature merely by virtue of their contemporaneity. Rather, insofar as the conflict raged over the Bible's meaning, it centrally concerned literature's enabling circumstances: who read, how they read, and what they took away from their reading. Major work remains to be conducted on how homilies, for example, taught generations of new readers to approach the books they picked up.

Unsurprisingly, many contributions in this collection argue that polemic does not so much represent its time as attempt to exert influence over it. The authors generally assume a high level of political efficacy but rarely try to assess its real success. Charles-Louis Morand-Métivier hints at a more paradoxical picture in showing how Pierre de Ronsard's adversary, Antoine de Chandieu, seemed more engaged in pastiche exercises in which the authors' literary rivalry ultimately eclipsed their polemical purpose. While both authors claimed to champion the good of the realm, their tit-for-tat exchanges betray the brinksmanship that often clouded the Reformation and Counter-Reformation's agendas during public controversies. Simply because authors of polemic can behave as if the future of the party hangs in the balance awaiting their next argument does not mean their words actually carried such weight.

Whatever influence such commentary did or did not exercise, it created critical distance. Christopher Flood does well to relate religious polemic to classical satire from which it so evidently drew inspiration. However, he complicates this influence by juxtaposing it with biblical allusions. Bèze's typological identification with the giant-slayer David implicates himself and his reader within the conflict in way that would seem at odds with satire's propensity to create distance between satirists and their surrounding society. Flood nevertheless finds support for his argument for readerly implication from an unexpected quarter. Amy Graves renews the tired

conversation about print as an agent of change by narrowing our focus on the fascinating preliminary pages that framed religious polemic—pages that often prominently featured Biblical epigraphs. Scholars have long learned to distrust the false provenances that title pages used in order to escape censorship, but Graves alertly recognizes that such information also communicated information to readers, orienting them about how to read the pages within. Her discussion fields a convincing argument for the importance of paratextual allusion and design in implicating readers in the combative participation that Flood posits for them.

Jean Bégat's 1563 *Remonstrances* stands as an important witness to an important deliberative genre—if not, strictly speaking, a polemical one. No type of document expresses more directly the French Parlements' constitutionalist ambition to act as co-legislator with the king, as opposed to mere recorder and enforcer of his will. Jeff Kendrick assesses Bégat's balancing act as one that wavers between professing allegiance to the king and making veiled threats against his legitimacy. This risks overstating matters; Bégat exercised a longstanding prerogative to address to the king a *correctio* of his proposed legislation: the remonstrance hinges less on the king's legitimacy than his minority, and Bégat's tone might read as less political than pedagogical. However, Kendrick's overall point about remonstrances' crucial role in inculcating a "political society" stands as the key takeaway. Ashley Voeks proves less patient toward Catholic-led Parlements, accepting Agrippa d'Aubigné's scathing depiction of them as morally bankrupt. Homing in on cartographic and architectural references, she delivers a remarkable reading of d'Aubigné's contorted spatial poetics. But must we take at face value d'Aubigné's biased account of the French justice system? The question seems all the more pertinent insofar as Voeks attributes to d'Aubigné a notion of injustice as "disorder," which corresponds precisely to the Parlements' own conception.

Phillip Usher contributes a daring and impressive argument for early modern materials' relevance to debates about the Anthropocene. He specifically discusses "atmoterrorism"—attacks that shift from bodies to the conditions that sustain those bodies, namely through making the atmosphere dangerous to breathe. Usher lines up an impressive array of examples, accompanied by a sophisticated and thoughtful theoretical engagement—in short, exactly the kind of work premodernists need to consider if they wish to intervene in the conversations held by their modernist colleagues. Unfortunately, not only is the topic of polemic absent but, to the degree that polemic often proves *ad hominem* and explicitly targeted, Usher in fact draws attention to polemic's opposite: faceless hostility that operates indiscriminately and eludes finger-pointing and traditional efforts to sort out moral responsibility.

Katherine Maynard handles forthrightly a similar departure from the topic of polemic in her examination of Lescarbot's efforts to heal France's divisions after the war through the policy of *oubliance* and renewed colonial enterprise. Using travel literature (as does Usher), she might seem to introduce a foreign genre; however, polemical engagement with France's religious conflicts emerged in the earliest French accounts of the New World. Half a century later, she argues, Lescarbot attempted to transform the fact that France survived the wars into an argument for its suitability to conduct a civilizing mission. She deftly points out the ambiguities of such claims and their incoherency on the ground, suggesting in her conclusion that one can put down polemic more easily than heal the wounds it causes.

While a great deal of religious polemic expressed itself in verse, Brooke Di Lauro chooses instead to look at metaphors of polemic and combat in mid-century literary poetry. The question over

the extent to which lyric, through drawing upon common images of love as a battle, can bleed into political discourse is an interesting problem. Her essay argues that Pléiade reworkings of Petrarchan imagery made French poetry ripe for polemic exploitation. Kathleen Perry Long tracks this exploitation at the same time as she complicates the assimilation of polemical ends into literary projects by showing the stylistic and generic distortions required to combine the two. Insofar as these distortions entail harsh alliterations and broken rhythms distinctly opposed to grandiloquence and euphonic sweetness, she suggests that polemic resisted incorporation into high literary form. Marcus Keller pushes these generic tensions even further, scrutinizing d'Aubigné's equivocation between epic and tragedy to suggest how generic instability figured the self-destruction inherent in the religious conflict considered as a civil war.

Half this volume devotes itself to literary epic (especially d'Aubigné's *Tragiques*) as the genre most closely associated with conflict. Although these are some of the most satisfying pieces in the volume when taken on their own terms, one cannot help but note that the richness of d'Aubigné's texts shoulders aside his polemical precedents and somewhat overwhelms the volume's topic. All the contributors to this volume hail from literary studies. They treat their texts' relevant historical and theological contexts diligently but not originally. Historians who pick up this volume would best prepare themselves for the rehearsal of a number of well-known features, episodes, and characteristics of the Wars of Religion. Literary scholars, however, stand to learn how little the period's ostensibly partisan and instrumental writings surrender in the way of paradox, equivocation, and rich conceit, as well as how deeply they informed many literary works long read as holding little or no affinity with pamphlets.

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Katherine S. Maynard and Jeff Kendrick, "Fighting Words: Contextualizing Polemic in the French Wars of Religion"

Christopher M. Flood, "Forging Satire from Scripture: Biblical Models and Verbal Violence before the Wars of Religion"

Charles-Louis Morand-Métivier, "The Literary Conflict of Pierre Ronsard and Antoine de Chandieu: A Fight for France"

Amy Graves Monroe, "Skirmishes in the Margins: Polemic at the Threshold of the Text"

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Ashley Voeks, "*Comme au monde à l'envers*: Mapping Injustice in Agrippa d'Aubigné's 'Chambre dorée'"

Phillip John Usher, “Atmoterrorism in the Humanist Anthropocene”

Katherine S. Maynard, “Exporting Peace and Arming Vengeance in Lescarbot’s *Histoire de la Nouvelle-France* (1609) and *La Défaite des Sauvages Armouchiquois* (1607)”

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