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Malina Stefanovska and Adrien Paschoud, eds., *Littérature et politique: Factions et dissidences de la Ligue à la Fronde*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2015. 244 pp. Notes, bibliography, index nominum, and article abstracts. 32€ (pb). ISBN 978-2-8124-4590-3.

Review by Bruce Hayes, University of Kansas.

This collection of essays proposes to explore notions of sedition and conspiracy, examining the legitimacy of opposition from 1584, the start of the second Catholic League, to the Fronde (1648-1653). A specific set of terminology linked to this forms the basis of inquiry for many of the essays in this collection, words such as “cabale,” “faction,” and “parti.” In the introduction, the editors note that “faction” is a critically important concept that finds its roots in Machiavelli, in religious differences, in the clientele relationship of the nobility, in theories about the monarchy, as well as a “raison d’État,” and even the constitution of the modern subject. A final stated goal of the volume is to break up traditional distinctions between history, political theory, and fiction in treating these topics.

The volume is divided into two parts: “À la naissance de la ligue” and “Ramifications, répétitions, amplifications.” Achieving perfect symmetry, there are six contributions for each section. The first half focuses primarily on the religious and civil conflicts and wars of the second half of the sixteenth century, while the second is primarily centered on events and issues surrounding the Fronde. As one who works primarily on sixteenth-century France, I am better informed about the topics of the first half of the work. Disclaimer aside, this volume provides a wealth of topics and critical explorations on a rich subject of inquiry. If there is a weakness to the overall proposed project, it is its vastness. Literature and politics is a very general topic, but many of the essays in this collection connect well to both the theme and current research trends. Certainly in the field of sixteenth-century studies, there has been a notable increase in scholarship focusing on religion and polemics, the two primary topics of the first half of the volume.[1] The editors do an admirable job of assembling a diverse set of essays in a way that maintains an overall coherence and connection to the volume’s stated subject.

The first part begins with Nicolas Le Roux’s “Factions et associations nobiliaires à la naissance de la Ligue.” This is a very useful introduction to both the notion of “faction” and a helpful overview of the progressive fracturing of the nobility before and during the reign of Henri III. Under Charles IX, various royal edicts stated that the formation of seditious groups or raising of private funds or armies was not to be tolerated, but they had little effect. Starting in 1570, however, this limitation was only imposed on Huguenots. Le Roux identifies this as a key moment when the crown had chosen its own faction. During Henri III’s rule, the division into factions only grew worse, with Henri III seeking to isolate himself and creating his own factions, which had the effect of weakening the monarchy. “Partis” and “factions” were constantly in flux and changing. In the funniest line of the volume, Le Roux observes concerning Henri III’s mercurial nature, “Le roi pouvait jouer du caractère bipolaire de la faveur” (p. 32). Le Roux attributes a great part of Henri IV’s success to his work to reestablish the king as the monarch of all his subjects and to put an end to factions.

Next, Ruth Stawarz-Luginbühl provides an analysis of a little-known play in “Un chacun et chacune, O Roy, t’honorera’. Factions et dramaturgie tragique dans l’*Adonias* de M. Philone (1586).” Stawarz-Luginbühl makes a persuasive case for the author of this play being a member of Henri de Navarre’s inner circle, perhaps even its intellectual leader, Philippe Duplessis-Mornay. While the play, which focuses on the turbulent succession from King David to Solomon, seems aimed at a reformist audience, it does not contain any of the typical anti-Catholic propaganda one typically finds. It is much subtler, fitting well with Henri de Navarre’s intention to govern all French people.

In the only treatment of a woman in this volume, Catherine-Marie de Lorraine, the Duchess of Montpensier, Amy Graves-Monroe offers a fascinating exploration of this highly important leader of the Catholic League. Graves-Monroe rightly points out that the view of an extremist League in the popular imagination is due at least in part to satirical portrayals of the group, most notably in the *Satyre ménippée*. While the Guise brothers have dominated the League and its mythology, Graves-Monroe asks a simple but important question: What about the women? The Duchess of Montpensier, referred to by Pierre de l’Estoile as the “gouvernante de la Ligue” (p. 57), played a key role in the League and paid dearly for it. Graves-Monroe acknowledges that Montpensier’s collusion with priests earned her the kind of opprobrium that created *légendes noires* about her rivaling those of Catherine de’ Medici. As Graves-Monroe concludes: “Une telle femme ne se fait pas pardonner” (p. 73).

Chris Flood addresses the important topic of satire in “La France satirisée, satyrisée et fragmentée. L’autoreprésentaiton factionnelle au temps des guerres de religion.” He gives a useful overview of the satirical tradition and connects it to France’s religious divisions. He begins with two satirical texts from 1560, the *Satyres chrestiennes de la cuisine papale*, likely authored by Théodore de Bèze, and the virulent catholic polemicist Artus Désiré’s *Le Contrepoison des cinquante deux chansons de Clément Marot*. While this is a very good starting point, it would have helped if Flood had explained why he begins almost twenty-five years before the ostensible start date of this collection of essays, and a brief explanation about Désiré, who is unknown even to most sixteenth-century specialists, would have also been beneficial. Still, the texts he discusses are important. He then jumps thirty-three years to discuss *Le dialogue d’entre le Maheustre et le Manant* (1593), a League-produced satire attacking Henri IV, while curiously not mentioning the much better known royalist response, the *Satyre ménippée*, circulated the same year and published the following year. Instead, Flood concludes with Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques*, perhaps the most bitterly satirical work to come out of the religious conflict and wars in the last half of the sixteenth century.

The last two essays of this section both focus on Aubigné’s works. In Jean-Raymond Fanlo’s “Les actions, les factions et les choses monstrueuses de ce temps-là. La notion de faction chez Agrippa d’Aubigné,” he contrasts Aubigné’s two personas, the historian of his *Histoire universelle*, who must condemn the spirit of “faction,” and the poet of *Les Tragiques*, who embraces that spirit. Ultimately, it is the notion of partisan, connected to “parti,” that motivates Aubigné. The author argues for parisanship, belonging to a faith rather than a kingdom, in his rejection of Henri IV. Gilbert Schrenck deals with Aubigné’s telling of the betrayal of Biron in *Les Tragiques*. Charles de Gontaut, duc de Biron was one of the first to rally around Henri IV and was one of the king’s closest friends. He plotted against the king during the Franco-Savoyard War (1600-1601) and was finally arrested, condemned for high treason, and beheaded in 1602. For Aubigné, while Biron is an unlikeable, Machiavelian character, he asserts that Biron’s revolt was the natural result of Henri IV’s conversion to Catholicism, a political move that left him forever vulnerable to the spirit of factions, producing disastrous results.

The second half of the volume begins with Malina Stefanovska’s philosophical exploration centering on factionalism and absolutism in the writings of Bacon, Hobbes, and the Cardinal de Retz. As a leader of one of the factions of the Fronde, Retz was all too aware of the challenges this posed. Stefanovska’s reading of Bacon and Hobbes focuses on their warnings regarding factionalism and its danger to the monarchy. She speculates that Retz may have known Hobbes and may have read his work. Regardless,

she concludes that “la question du corps politique et de son unité menacée par des groupes qui le composent se retrouve au cœur de la réflexion de l’homme d’action autant que de celle du théoricien” (p. 141). Just as Stefanovska draws upon Retz’s *Mémoires*, Jean-Marie Constant focuses heavily on the writings of memorialists in “Partis, ‘cabales,’ ‘factions.’ Études des sensibilités politiques dans les Mémoires du temps de Louis XIII.” He seeks to identify nuances and evolutions in the use of these different words. While cabals were a regular part of the court landscape for memorialists such as Beauvais-Nangis, when they started to threaten power, the word “factions” began to appear. These could quickly evolve into “partis,” the most divisive group, whether they were motivated by religion (the Catholic League) or politics (the division between “parti de la paix” and “parti de la guerre” in the conflict with Spain).

Ioana Manea looks at La Mothe Le Vayer’s *De la Vertu des païens* to explore whether the work is subtly undermining Christianity. In her analysis, she addresses uses of “cabale” and whether it is negative or positive. Answer: it depends. For Manea, it is clear that the work proposes at least an ambivalent interpretation of Christianity, and not simply an attack against his Port-Royalist enemies. Éric Méchoulan addresses the revolt of Louis de Bourbon, Comte de Soissons, against Richelieu, and the Campion brothers’ “entretiens” that sought to explain the foundations and motivations for this revolt. He uses this as an example of how “belles-lettres” could be used to legitimate revolt, focusing on social factors and the bonds of friendship to produce “une histoire des formes publiques d’affection” (p. 187).

Bruno Tribout takes four different works that address at least in part the Fronde, two shortly after the Fronde, Jean Nicolas de Parival’s *de l’histoire de ce siècle de fer* (1653) and Galeazzo Gualdo Priorato’s *Historia delle revolutioni di Francia* (1655), and two from the following decade, Benjamin Priolo’s *De rebus gallicis* (1662-1665) and Charles Sorel’s *L’Histoire de la monarchie française sous le règne de Louis XIV* (1662). These four different points of view concerning the Fronde, which Tribout classifies in order as religious, encomiastic, sceptic, and “national,” provide an intriguing comparison, illustrating the malleability of discourse in the “évolution des régimes d’historicité et des usages de l’exemplarité, lente évolution qui viendrait butter contre la Révolution française et la mise en place d’un temps autre” (p. 204).

The final essay of the collection by Adrien Paschoud takes a very different approach and looks at the notion of faction in the spiritual writings of the Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin (1600-1665). His writings were primarily apolitical, and focused on topics such as mysticism and demonology. It is in the context of this latter subject that the use of “faction” comes up in his writings. This study is primarily an exploration of factions within the self, either through possession or spiritual dissidence. This is the one essay that addresses most explicitly connections between “faction” and the constitution of the modern subject, although its conclusions in this regard seem rather limited.

Overall, this is a fine volume on an engaging, if very general topic that provides the reader with several ways to approach questions surrounding the notion of “faction” and related concepts. The collection has been meticulously edited and includes a useful bibliography and Index Nominum. It also includes abstracts of the contributors’ articles, a helpful addition I hope will become more ubiquitous in humanities scholarship. For historians and literary scholars of this time period, this is a beneficial work with a number of well-researched and engaging contributions.

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Adrien Paschoud, “Les factions de l’âme. Jean-Joseph Surin”

NOTE

[1] See for example Denis Crouzet’s *Dieu en ses royaumes. Une histoire des guerres de Religion* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2008); Antónia Szabari’s *Less Rightly Said: Scandals and Readers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); and Pascal Debailly’s *La Muse indignée* (Paris: Garnier, 2012).

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