

**Myriam-Isabelle Ducrocq, Laïla Ghermani (ed.),
Le prince, le despote, le tyran The Prince, the
Despot, the Tyrant. Figures du souverain en Europe
de la Renaissance aux Lumières/Figures of the
Sovereign in Europe from the Renaissance to
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This volume consists of contributions from a conference at the University of Paris-Nanterre in 2016. Myriam-Isabelle Ducrocq places the issue in her introduction squarely into the context of the rise of Bodin's paradigm of »sovereignty« and the »construction of territorial centralized monarchies« (p. 15).

Mario Turchetti reconstructs the very different shades of meaning about the »tyrant« and the despot (p. 59) into the seventeenth century and the increasing overlap during the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. While Turchetti mentions that Bodin argues that in Europe proper, seigneurial monarchies did not exist, but that Turkey was one, he does not further inquire about the increasingly systematic way in which the term despotism was used since the seventeenth century to describe a dangerous kind of regime to be studied with respect to the Near East, Africa or Moscow, but potentially threatening the liberty of European subjects proper. For this debate, however, a closer look for example at the 1648–1653 Mazarinades would have been necessary.

Armel Dubois-Nayt discusses the image of Maria Guise (1515–1560), the spouse of James V king of Scotland, mother of Mary Queen of Scots and regent in Scotland (1554–1560), who as a Catholic obviously raised the scorn of Calvinists such as John Knox. His attacks on her as »libidinous infidel« say a lot about this specific combination of misogyny and Protestant »hatred in print«.

Teresa Malinowski reviews the use of the »Polish experience« of Henry III in the attacks on him from ligue pamphlets. Given the hostility of Knox to Marie Guise and of the Ligue to Henry III, it is not clear what to learn from their arguments. Would they not have put anything together to undermine their opponents?

Christine Sukic looks at »Alexander the Great as Hero and Tyrant on the early modern stage«. She does not refer to Augustine's »De Civitate Dei, IV 4« and his famous quip that informed during the seventeenth century many, including for example the 1655 sermon for governors (*Regentenpredigt*) by Joachim Luetkeman, but rather to Michel Foucault. It does not seem to be a relevant argument in this contribution that the choice of Alexander as an ambivalent figure for the state might have something to do with Augustine's famous passage.



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Gilles Bertheau considers some of the less often used texts of James VI/I, penned after the Gun Powder plot and in McIlwain's edition almost 200 pages long, in particular in so far as they attacked the claim of the papacy to be in any sense superior to kings in their kingdoms, and along the way James accused the papacy of tyranny in making that claim.

In the second section of the book, the use of the terms tyrant and despot during the mid-seventeenth century conflicts on the British Isles and in Ireland is considered. Blandine Kriegel compares Bodin, Hobbes and Spinoza. Raffaella Santi analyses the »Dissolution of Tyranny« in Hobbes' »Leviathan«, while Mary Nyquist focusses on »Hobbes on Despotic Power, Tyranny, and Resistance«, offers some important reminders about the polemical nature of some of Hobbes' writings and the subsequent need to understand his arguments in this light (p. 194).

Claire Gheeraert-Graffeuille shows us the use of these terms in the thoughts of literate but nevertheless more common English landowners – compared to the likes of Hobbes -- and the partly clear cut way in which both Charles I and his son Charles II were perceived, by the later seventeenth century, as tyrants, but how in their thought also the victorious parliamentary army erected its own tyranny, and Oliver Cromwell and his son appear to be even worse than the Stuart kings (p. 221).

The last and third part of this volume addresses the use of the term despot and tyrant in eighteenth century enlightened Europe. Fenelon's didactic novel »Les Aventures de Telemaque« is unfortunately missing from the investigation, though it was a very popular and successful text. Monique Cottret focusses on the contemporary reflection on Robert Damiens, a common French servant who tried to assassinate Louis XV in 1757. Carine Lounissi analyses the thought of Thomas Paine with regard to Tyranny and despotism. Susan Levin considers the »Turning point of Varennes in the Republican Press«, transforming Louis XIV from being incompetent into a »despot« (p. 270). Finally Félix Mangano considers the use of the terms in 1792–1793.

The volume is characterized by some of the heterogeneity of such volumes. Some of the contributions, in particular Turchetti's, are a »must«. He is arguable one of the best experts on the issue. The framework Myriam Isabelle Ducrocq and Lhaila Ghermani offer invites question marks. Which of the major monarchies of the period was »centralized«, and in which sense? The heterogeneous lands of the Stuarts or Habsburgs or the kingdom of France under the Valois or Bourbons? Both the introduction and chapters like that of Armel Dubois Nayt rely heavily on a very small number of texts. The kind of intense integration of published source material into the concrete historical context that characterizes most modern research is not always fully present. What about the role of confessional doctrine – did not confessional disputes deliver a good deal of the »tyrants« of the 16th and 17th century, to both Catholics and Protestants, who then marshalled all sorts of evidence to portray a given monarch not quite delivering the right defence of the one »true« church as a tyrant, be that Marie Guise in Scotland or Henry III in France?



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What about the major transformations of European published discourse, the decline of the legitimacy of the defence of confessional doctrine since the last third of the seventeenth century, the integration of the earlier vocabulary of the tools of »ratio status«, some of them indicating impious and thus potentially tyrannous behaviour, as an entirely legitimate pursuit of national interest during the eighteenth century? However, the topic is of course a vast one and many of the contributions of this volume are helpful.



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