

Francesco Benigno, Laurent Bourquin, Alain Hugon (dir.), Violences en révolte. Une histoire culturelle européenne (XIV^e–XVIII^e siècle), Rennes (Presses universitaires de Rennes) 2019, 314 p. (Hors série), ISBN 978-2-7535-7745-9, EUR 35,00.

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This essay collection is the fruit of a multi-year research program launched in 2013, »Cultures des révoltes et révolutions«, which focused on how cultural production was diffused during revolts. This volume looks specifically at the role of violence and responses to violence in different kinds of late medieval and early modern revolts. Laurent Bourquin and Alain Hugon note that violent acts (organized according to a rational goal) aimed not only at coercive success, but also to produce arguments and representations that were subsequently diffused. In that sense, violence can usually be read semiotically (and could itself be symbolic rather than physical), whether as part of an effort to construct or consolidate new political structures or as an instrument of order manipulated by authorities. This is the first study of cultural production related to violent revolts.

These essays are thematically unified, well-researched, and thought-provoking in many ways. They offer myriad examples of popular political action designed to make a specific juridical or political statement. The old view of commoners (and often peasants) as pre-political or motivated only by brute material necessity is no longer tenable. Here we see a rich environment of political and juridical communication across Europe, at all social levels, in rural and urban environments, relating to taxation, justice, customs, legitimacy, sacramental life, the proper location of authority, etc.

While the book is divided into three sections, dealing with semiotics and violence, violence and »projections politiques«, and repression, the essays themselves often transcended these categories, making it sometimes difficult to see what was distinctive about each section – short introductions for them might have helped. The essays vary considerably in terms of sources, the events described, place and location, and what was at stake. Given the importance of context, Denis Crouzet asks in his conclusion if a comparative history of revolt-related violence is possible. Context changed the form, impact, and meaning of violence. Perhaps coordination prior to and during the writing process would have helped the authors address similar contextual issues and fashion a more explicitly comparative outcome.

In part one, Juan Carlos d'Amico discusses the ritual nature of violence and repression during the Sicilian revolts of 1516–23, which were encouraged by nobles who opposed vice-regal centralization and then eventually repressed by those nobles when they turned anti-aristocratic. Studying popular violence in



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the Comuneros revolt, Hipólito Rafael Oliva Herrer sees popular political actors as aware of gradations of violence, and of how house burnings, decapitations, and defenestrations fit into an economy of violence. When Philip II prompted the Inquisition to jail Antonio Pérez in 1591, contrary to Aragonese privileges, the province revolted.

Jesús Gascón Pérez calls for a close study of this uprising that takes the rebels' contractualist arguments seriously. Michel Nassiet provides an overview of violence in French revolts between 1600 and 1800, devising nine categories of violence and arguing that, over time, physical violence diminished and symbolic violence increased, until the new messianic violence of the Revolution. Angela De Benedictis shows that, across Europe, the use of force by commoners against soldiers was juridically rooted (in medieval and early modern jurisprudential writings) and ritually expressed. Francesco Benigno agrees, proposing that the category of »rites of violence« (Natalie Davis) should perhaps be revised to »rites of justice«. He critiques E. P. Thompson's »moral economy« thesis for failing to focus specifically enough on precisely what protesters considered socially unjust.

Part two begins with an examination by Vincent Challet of violence as a political language in late medieval French revolts. He argues that both elites and commoners knew what acts were symbolically meaningful, what acts might lead to dialogue, and what acts were never licit. José Javier Ruiz Ibáñez shows how the Spanish monarchy allied itself with revolts in other countries in order to advance its strategic position, unguided by any constant ideological or legitimizing theme. Paloma Bravo returns to the imprisonment of Antonio Pérez; studying various sets of notes that he wrote about the event, she points to »l'existence d'un langage symbolique commun« (p. 160) concerning violence and rituals of justice.

Stéphane Haffemayer studies depositions made to English royal commissioners following the Irish revolt of 1641–1642. Comparing them to published tracts about the same events, he finds none of the same names and different kinds of representations in each set of sources, seeing in the alleged massacres »le point d'appui à la construction d'une identité anglaise« based on a supposed incompatibility with the Irish (p. 183). Chiara Pelliccia completes this section by studying how musical laments memorializing the executions of Charles I, Cinq-Mars, and Masaniello's followers in 1647 both sacralized rulers and cast rebels as martyrs.

Christiane Raynaud begins part three with a study of late medieval manuscript illuminations of translations of Valerius Maximus, focusing on images related to that text's account of the execution of fifty-three Capuan senators by the Roman proconsul Quintus Fulvius Flaccus. Over time the images increasingly celebrated Flaccus and deprecated the senators, reflecting a growing emphasis on the power of the state and its magistrates. Claudio César Rizzuto analyzes the language of diabolism used to describe the Comuneros revolt, concluding that it permitted a discussion of the conflict without diminishing the position of the emperor.



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Emmanuel Gérardin turns to the Peasants' War of 1525, asking how order was restored following the conflict. Pardon letters and state investigations in Alsace and Lorraine imposed a certain meaning on the revolt, constructing a history while delegitimizing the uprising and obscuring the claims and goals of the rebels. Despite this bias in the sources, village elites played a key role and together with state authorities experienced a »transition entre une conception médiévale de la paix et la conception nouvelle d'un ordre public« (p. 252).

David El Kenz's effort to identify evidence of guilt and compassion during the French wars of religion concludes that the conflict lowered the threshold of acceptable violence. In the next generation, according to Yann Rodier, Louis XIII refused to countenance even pro-Catholic popular violence, his propaganda framing the war of 1621 as a defense of justice against disobedient rebels. Finally, Rachel Renault's essay on tax revolts in Germany, ca. 1650–1720 concludes that quartering soldiers (the ruler's chief response to non-payment of taxes), »moins qu'une procédure de recouvrement, a avant tout une fonction punitive et réparatrice« (p. 297).



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