

The historian of popular culture would find much of interest in chapter 6. Woolf attempts to examine the popular culture of the poor, and considers the eighteenth century as a deep divide between propertied and laboring classes, one which effectively separated culture into “civilized” culture and that of the people. The question of language is of paramount importance, a question that does not concern the authors of the other books under review. The big problem was the language of communication between the legal terminology of the administrators of *bienfaisance* and the argot of the poor. Woolf examines the simple terms that the poor used to describe themselves in their applications for assistance to a major charitable institution of Florence as evidence of how the poor saw themselves. Their language revealed that they defined themselves in terms of their work. Shifting from the methodology of textual analysis to a quantitative approach, in two excellent subsequent chapters, Woolf examines family and household structure from a large sample of charity recipients (male and female) and endeavors to show how the poor, dependent on charity, differed from the working classes in general.

Carnivals, fairs, rituals, drinking establishments and games are absent from this story of the poor. Their absence here and their prominence in the other books reviewed illustrate how elusive the culture of the poor really is, and how important it is both to define the group studied and the methodology. Different approaches yield different conclusions. These three books, varying in scope, methodology and subject, when taken together contribute several pieces to the picture puzzle of the lives of the poor.

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Pierre Chevallier — *Les Régicides : Clément, Ravallac, Damiens*. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1989. Pp. 419.

This study examines the assassinations of Henry III and Henry IV and the successful attack on Louis XV in 1757. By a close examination of the circumstances and personnel surrounding each occasion, Chevallier seeks to find explanations for the attacks and place them in a wider context to illuminate a central feature of early modern France, the intimate alliance between church and state. He argues that the behaviour of each of these kings challenged the fundamental laws of France in such a way as to rupture the unity of church and state. These breaks inspired the widespread opposition to the crown which the assaults of the assassins represented.

Henry III's acceptance, for example, of the Protestant Henry of Navarre as his heir caused acute friction between the fundamental laws of the realm. Following salic law, he was the rightful heir, although only very distantly related to the Valois, but other principles dictated that the king of France must be Catholic. This irreconcilable dilemma split the nation. Clément is portrayed as the tool of the Catholic party. At the instigation of the duchesse de Montpensier and her brother the duc de Mayenne, he was dispatched to assassinate his ruler, both to revenge the earlier murders of the De Guise brothers who had offered the main alternatives to Navarre and to further the future political plans of the Catholic League. The possibility of such action was in little doubt at a time when the legitimacy of tyrannicide was widely discussed in intellectual circles.

The subsequent veneration of Clément by the Catholic League illustrated the deep divisions within French society created by the religious conflicts.

Ravaillac's murder of Henry IV inspired widespread grief in place of the rejoicing which, in many areas, greeted the news of Henry III's death. Nevertheless, Chevallier demonstrates that the king's policies were unpopular enough to arouse resentment across a broad social spectrum. His toleration of Protestants and pursuit of an anti-Hapsburg foreign policy which threatened the prospects for universal Catholicism were particularly provocative. Accordingly, the author attempts to ascertain the possible complicity of the pro-Spanish party at court and postulates the certain acquiescence of Ravaillac's Jesuit confessors in the assassination. The consequences of this murder were far reaching. The Estates General of 1614 confirmed the absolute power of the monarchy, foreign policy was reversed in favour of the Hapsburgs and Henry's untimely death facilitated posthumous elevation to heroic status.

Damiens' abortive effort to end the life of Louis XV was distinct from his predecessors, in the sense that his was an isolated and singular undertaking with few results of any great significance. However, Chevallier identifies him as part of the same larger pattern. Tensions created within the polity by strains on the church-state nexus inspired his actions too. The Jansenist controversy had aligned the *parlement* of Paris and the crown on opposite sides. Damiens' motivation may have been entirely religious, in the sense that he wanted to show his ruler the true course. The conflict itself, though, crystallised larger questions of authority which Damiens' attack and subsequent execution only magnified. Moreover, as a representative of the lower orders, he, like Clément and Ravaillac, represented a disillusionment with the crown which extended far wider than elite cliques and disrupted the bonds between monarch and subjects. As such, the Damiens affair offers an insight into the changes which were sweeping over France and culminated in the events of the Revolution.

This book is presumably intended for a popular rather than a scholarly audience, as it was published without footnotes and only with a brief bibliography. Chevallier draws heavily on the work of other scholars, especially in the sections on Ravaillac and Damiens which occupy almost three-quarters of the text. In the structure and main points of these sections, he follows closely the earlier works of Roland Mousnier, *L'assassinat d'Henri IV* (Paris, 1964), and Dale Van Kley, *The Damiens Affair and the Unravelling of the Ancien Régime, 1750-1770* (Princeton, 1984), respectively. Chevallier reproduces the conclusions of Mousnier and Van Kley, for example, in his identification of the concession of absolute power to the king at the 1614 Estates General and of the exposure of widespread changes in French society as the most important reverberations of the actions of Ravaillac and Damiens.

Where this work does diverge from previous interpretations, it is usually to maintain the thesis that fractures in the unity of religion and politics were the central factor. In the case of Ravaillac, for instance, Chevallier accepts the questionable evidence of an aristocratic plot, and definitely implicates Ravaillac's Jesuit confessors as conspirators in order to focus the assassination clearly within the political-religious matrix of his thesis. Mousnier's rejection of the conspiracy theory as not proven and refusal to speculate on the role of the confessors for which no documentation exists still seem to have greater validity, especially in view of Ravaillac's own constant assertions, even under the most acute duress imaginable, that he had acted alone.

Elements of profound disequilibrium were certainly present in the early modern French state. Opposition to the crown found expression in many forms in the two

hundred or so years between the murder of Henry III and the execution of Louis XVI. As Chevallier affirms, religious differences had an important role in this opposition. With this emphasis, *Les Régicides* provides a welcome corrective to the narrowly political perspective which besets many works intended for wider readership. Whether religious issues were genuinely the foundation of the problems France faced or whether they served to focus and symbolise a more general and wider-based opposition remains open to question.

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Arlette Jouanna — *Le devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'État moderne, 1559-1661*, Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1989, 504 p.

Madame Arlette Jouanna, professeure à l'Université Paul Valéry de Montpellier, a publié l'an dernier, chez Fayard, un livre passionnant.

Le but que l'auteure de cette brillante étude s'était fixé : chercher à comprendre les comportements de la noblesse dans la période dite baroque, celle qui va de la mort d'Henri II à l'avènement de Louis XIV. Pourquoi cette investigation ? Pour deux raisons. La première, c'est que les attitudes de la noblesse sont, en apparence, incohérentes : tout d'abord, il n'y a pas unanimité dans les prises de position tellement elle est divisée; elle évolue dans ses analyses de la situation; ou mieux dit, sans doute, elle préfère ce que les uns appellent les fanfaronades et d'autres les actions glorieuses à une réflexion sensée et pondérée. La deuxième, que les historiens, obnubilés pas le succès de l'absolutisme, ont le plus souvent jugé cette noblesse comme étant avant tout désobéissante au roi, vaniteuse, téméraire, sinon écervelée, au lieu de scruter les motivations profondes de ces actions, essentiellement ici, les oppositions organisées et les révoltes contre le pouvoir monarchique. Pour expliquer en profondeur l'attitude des nobles, Arlette Jouanna s'est livrée à une recherche minutieuse dans les écrits qui nous restent des acteurs de ces révoltes ou de ceux qui les ont inspirés : « déclarations » accompagnant une prise d'armes, traités, pamphlets, mémoires et correspondance. La réponse est claire et nette : il y a cohérence dans la pensée de ces acteurs turbulents; il y a aussi continuité, mais non pas uniformité parce que l'évolution de la conjoncture politique et religieuse impose des révisions et des adaptations constantes.

La première partie du livre traite donc de la condition noble. On y trouve à la fois une définition, puis une description de l'état nobiliaire, avec une instance bien justifiée, sur un phénomène social de grande importance : les relations de clientèle et de patronage. Or, cette condition nobiliaire n'est pas étudiée de façon intemporelle mais dans un contexte précis, celui d'une époque marquée par une certaine « absence » du pouvoir royal : faiblesse de certains monarques, règne des « favoris » et des tout-puissants ministres. Le mécontentement est structurel : la part que doit assurer la noblesse dans le gouvernement — sa vocation historique — lui est refusée ou est usurpée. D'où le titre de cette première tranche de l'étude : « Les implications politiques de la condition nobiliaire »; traduisons : comment les nobles furent amenés à prendre position politiquement contre le roi ou plutôt, dans certains cas, le « tyran » et, dans d'autres, le « roi mal conseillé ».