Sedition: The Spread of Controversial Literature and Ideas in France and Scotland, c. 1550–1610. John O'Brien and Marc Schachter, eds.
Turnhout: Brepols, 2021. 326 pp. €90.

This edited volume of thirteen essays is the fruit of a 2017 conference at Durham University. The introduction by John O'Brien and Marc Schachter describes some of the key themes: the language used to discuss sedition in France and Scotland, and how sedition relates to rebellion, civil war, and faction. The editors note that polemical writers always accused their opponents of sedition. Thus, *sedition* referred to "a constellation of ideas with differing values," but could also be "a stable term" (25). The volume's essays offer a mixture of interesting insights, relatively routine observations, and problematic claims.

Armel Dubois-Nayt asks whether gender had something to do with the Scottish conspiracy against Mary Stuart—a straightforward question—but discovers that attention to gender in the polemical poetry surrounding this event only emerged as the result of the timing of historical events. George Hoffmann explores the French royal edicts issued in 1560–61 as a third way between religious toleration and oppression, noting that the focus until 1563 was on sedition rather than heresy. He links this historical shift to continuing debates "over the social body and an evolving conception of the corporate body politic" (76). This is one of the few essays that situates the problem of sedition with respect to broader shifts in political thought or theology, ideas of sacral kingship, state or ecclesial institutions, or social structures. O'Brien traces the history of the adage *salus populi suprema lex* and outlines Cicero's place in the literature of sedition.

Natalia Wawrzyniak discusses the war on anonymous pamphlets, which were attacked in part because they made personal accountability impossible. This invites consideration of the larger history of ideas about personal responsibility, and of the depersonalization of political debate, a problem whose consequences have come to the fore in our own day. Ullrich Langer draws attention to a particularly aristocratic form of ethical behavior upon which Louis de Bourbon-Condé relied as he justified his taking up of arms in 1562. For Condé, virtue was heavily personalized and rooted in classical notions of friendship. Did all aristocrats share this perspective? Were classically educated bourgeois removed from it? Were ethical norms and relations between social orders shifting in ways that affected how sedition was perceived?

Tom Hamilton's study of the trial of François Brigard by the Leaguer *parlementaires* in Paris raises a similar question: how should sedition be dealt with in an environment devoid of consensus about proper lines of authority? Is loyalty owed to a kingdom, to state institutions, to one's city, to religious leaders? *L'Isle des hermaphrodites* (1605), a text representing an imaginary society whose laws are mirror opposites of contemporary French ones, is studied by Kathleen Long as a form of social critique. The island's laws permit the killing of others as long as it produces some tangible benefit, suggesting that

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the work was an extended attack on individualism and ambitious self-advancement (rather than an exploration of literal hermaphroditism and its destabilization of the gender binary, as Long somewhat anachronistically suggests).

Some essays suffer from interpretive shortcomings. Andrea Frisch's claim that Ronsard's use of *La Franciade* (1572) to link orthodoxy and Frenchness was self-defeating, since the Merovingians were Germanic and had been pagan; Frisch seems to view the problem from a post-Enlightenment perspective (I doubt that sixteenth-century observers would have reasoned in these terms). Two of the essays that analyze literary works offer no discussion of authorship, the context of writing and publication, or reception. Éric Durot's essay on John Knox's transnational influence in France addresses an important issue but requires more evidence. Few would argue with Schachter's claim that propaganda during the French religious wars was informed by "a longstanding tradition of using allegations of luxuriousness and excessive appetites to characterize bad rulers" (239).

Somehow, the hackneyed argument that "from ancient times the state allied itself to religion as a means of enhancing its control of citizens and subjugated populations alike" (271) made its way into the volume. The conclusion informs us that many contemporaries saw factionalism as the root cause of sedition. While certainly true, this finding adds little to our understanding of political culture during the religious wars. Nevertheless, many of the contributions to this collection point toward helpful avenues of further investigation.

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The Black Death: A New History of the Great Mortality in Europe, 1347–1500.
John Aberth.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xxii + 394 pp. $24.94.

Given all the innovative and groundbreaking work on the second plague pandemic recently published by humanities and sciences scholars alike, an updated textbook suitable for undergraduate survey courses is sorely needed. John Aberth has provided one with this "new history" of the disease in late medieval Europe. Aberth smartly comes at the subject with teachable subtopics that lend themselves to focused chapters: epidemiology, geographic spread, mortality, medical responses, environmental aspects, religious reactions, artistic impacts, the flagellant movement, the artificial poison conspiracy, social repercussions, economic effects, and, finally, lessons learned for the future. The chapters on the flagellant movement and plague-related artwork are especially appreciated, as they offer far broader and deeper discussions of the phenomena than have appeared in previous Black Death overviews. In an appendix,

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