Undo the Myth Maker: A Comparison of Ritual Torture and Religious Transaction in Popular Religious Rioting during the French Wars of Religion, and the Huron Prisoner of War Execution Ceremony in North America during the end of the Sixteenth Century.

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Religious Studies

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (History and Philosophy of Religion) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 2006

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ABSTRACT

Undo the Myth Maker: A Comparison of Ritual Torture and Religious Transaction in Popular Religious Rioting during the French Wars of Religion, and the Huron Prisoner of War Execution Ceremony in North America during the end of the Sixteenth Century.

Robert Charles Aitken

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century played host to two separate series of events wherein large groups of commoners willfully participated in ghastly scenes of torture and execution. On the European continent, the French Wars of Religion (1562-1629) afforded groups of average French citizens the opportunity to dismember their religious rivals and neighbors. The infamous *season of Saint-Bartholomew* was a zenith of such violent behavior. Across the Atlantic, French explorers were just beginning to learn of well-established Iroquoian traditions concerning the execution of prisoners of war. They would learn of common members of society, including women and children, joining in the torture of captives.

My thesis is an exploration of ritual torture and religious transaction. The extant to which the violence, in both contexts, reflected a process of *undoing* the victim was a point of particular interest. Attention was paid, in the North American context, to actions that effectively thwarted the possibility that the victim could ascend to the role of a formidable figure in the myth and felt spiritual reality of the tribe. Similarly, I approached the French context with an eye for behavior, seemingly, resulting in the reversal of the religious authority of the victim; the obstruction of the possibility that, in death, the target could offer a powerful testimonial of his/her religious convictions; or the creation of obstacles to any subsequent change in the status of this figure to that of saint or martyr. Along the way, various findings underscored the role of memory and the communicative capacity of ritual violence.

To my lovely wife,
Sandra.

Your support and encouragement
have made this work possible.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

I. Reason and Scope

Historical moments of mass violence challenge both our popular and academic sensibilities alike. The sheer brutality may defy our cultural self-perception as well as overwhelm our capacity to respond. This seems especially true when such proceedings involve the general populace. Yet large-scale cases of individuals, without recognized clerical or governmental roles, actively participating in horrific scenes of merciless killing are relatively rare in recent history. Such findings are likely to suit the reader, in so much as it can be said that a belief in humanity as having effectively progressed beyond the need for popular violence is a symptom of modernity in the West. Feelings of horror and a general optimism with regards to the human condition, no doubt, fuel an academic tendency to treat such events with an explicit concern for their specific causes. Of course, rare events invite particular explanations. Yet it is certainly also more comfortable to approach these gruesome scenes with an eye for their unique nature. Patterns of violence, while difficult to establish, are harder still to digest.

The late sixteenth and early seventeenth century played host to two separate series of events, wherein large groups of commoners willfully participated in ghastly scenes of torture and execution. On the European continent, the French Wars of Religion (1562-1629) afforded groups of average French citizens the opportunity to dismember their religious rivals and neighbors. The infamous *season of Saint-Bartholomew,* in particular, was a zenith of such violent behavior. Across the Atlantic, French explorers were just beginning to learn of well-established Iroquoian

traditions concerning the execution of prisoners of war. They would learn of common members of society, including women and children, joining in the torture of captives.

The foundation from which a comparison, between these two separate sequences of events, stems may be said to contain five key points. To begin, on the most superficial level, we are speaking of two contemporaneous societies. While it is not the intention of this author to search for, or even imply the existence of, evidence for cultural diffusion, the fact that these series of ordeals occurred simultaneously is an element that should not be ignored. Given the history of Western perspectives on Native North American peoples, in general, and the tendency towards the reduction of said cultural, ethical, and religious traditions, in particular, the fact that we have here the opportunity to compare these distinct peoples on what may be seen as a common point in the history of our species is a privileged dimension of this study. Secondly, as mentioned, in both contexts we find testimony for some of the most dreadful forms of violence known to humanity. Next, it should be noted again that we are here dealing with the presence and participation of ordinary members of society. The fourth foundation of this comparison concerns the nature of the proximal relation between these *audiences turned active* - or agent-crowds - and their eventual victims, in the period surrounding the violence. In both the European and the North American contexts, the perpetrators possessed a notable degree of common cultural heritage and familiarity with the people they would eventually kill. We are dealing here with a peculiar blend of enmity and rapport. Neither of these two sequences of events may be accurately deemed to have been conflict between peoples previously alien to each other. Probing deeper, there is evidence that in both cases the aforementioned brutality took on a ritualized form. The degree to which both the French and Iroquoian groups operated from out of an established religious perspective merits consideration.

I propose that a comparison of these separate, yet in some ways similar, outbreaks of mass belligerence may prove rewarding, not in so much as it is able to isolate unique features leading up to either context, but in the way that it explores the religious dimension of torture. In contrast to many previous studies it is not my intention to embark on an unyielding quest for the social, political, or economic variables responsible for either the outbreak of religious rioting in France or the establishment of a prisoner of war execution ceremony in Huronia. While a search for the specific causes behind each series of events is a noble, and perhaps daunting, academic task, such exploration lies outside the reasonable limits of this essay. Rather, the creative contribution of this work will, effectively, begin in the moment itself - mostly forsaking questions of *why*, in the pursuit of a better understanding of *what* and *how*. This is not to suggest that this author has abandoned the hope that the present investigation will yield insight, directly or otherwise, into the elements that gave way to these gruesome acts. Instead, I remain optimistic that a consideration of the religious nature and function of the aforementioned events may, in turn, expose a common meaning that finds its root deep in the human character.

I am intent, first and foremost, on mapping the variety of forms of torture recorded in both of these movements of popular violence. Looking ahead, I believe the tangible similarities between the types to be found in both contexts will, to no small extent, justify a comparison in and of itself. Beyond this, I shall focus on deducing the religious significance of the aforementioned events, for those involved. This approach may prove easier to do with respect to the experience of the assailants in so much as they undertook a more active and empowered role. Consideration, nonetheless, will be given to the religious experience of the victim, including especially with regards to the effect of confronting an agent-crowd. That is to say that we will reflect upon the impact of the particular type of mass participation noted above. The difference between encountering an executioner with an audience and a crowd that executes is significant. Finally, once I have established *what* types of torture occurred, and *how* they might have been

experienced on a religious plane, I shall attempt to compare the results and interpret their significance.

The extent to which the ritualized violence, in both contexts, may be said to reflect a process of *undoing* the victim is a point of particular interest. An effort will be made to consider the possibility that these cases of torture may be characterized in terms of an experience of religious disentanglement. We are speaking here of a process whereby signs may be meaningfully disassociated from a victim, in such a way that it affects both the individuals involved as well as the larger community, on a religious plane. Just as some objects or features may unite powerful religious connotations with the figures that bare them, in the minds of those present, so too might the removal of said signs generate a movement in the opposite direction. Attention will be paid, in the North American context, on actions that effectively thwarted the possibility that the victim could ascend to the role of a formidable figure in the myth and felt spiritual reality of the tribe. Similarly, I shall approach the French context with an eye for behavior, seemingly, resulting in the reversal of the religious authority of the victim; the obstruction of the possibility that, in death, the target could offer a powerful testimonial of his/her religious convictions; or the creation of obstacles to any subsequent change in the status of this figure to that of saint or martyr. We might also consider the way that these same actions worked towards dismemberment, on a social level as much as on the physical plane.

II. Methodology

Further mention should be made of our approach to the experience of religious torture. In an attempt to understand these events as they were lived we shall here adapt a phenomenological method. We will need to become sensitive to the concrete dimension of these acts of violence. This will involve becoming attuned to the basic nature, the bodily experience, of each moment.

We will strive to envision scenes of religious torture on the most fundamental level and build upwards from there. At times, it will be necessary to discard historical valuations, and allow the phenomena to disclose itself without added significance. By favoring a descriptive over an explanatory focus, we hope to be better able to imagine the most immediate impressions of both the aggressor as well as the victim. While prominent theories will be addressed, throughout the text, it is our intention to prevent these ideas from obscuring the primary task.

One of the foundational assumptions of this approach concerns the very structure of existence. The phenomenological perspective allows us to emphasize the interpretative dimension of human experience. Far from being detached observers of an objective reality, the individual is here supposed to be deeply involved in the process of encountering life. The popular subject-object construction is challenged by the way memories color perceptions. In a sense, the other is experienced through the individual; the object emerges from out of the subject. The phenomenological approach brings us to realize, that moments in life become significant by way of our capacity to recognize and interpret them as such. As John Russon suggests, in *Human Experience: Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life*, humans have a "general ability to comprehend the integration or unitary sense of a temporally extended, experiential diversity."[1] In this light, moments may be seen as units of experience, characterized by a relation between subject and object, which involves both expectation and imagination. Moments are evocative as well consequential, and the present experience is only made meaningful in terms of both the past and the future. This perspective will bring us to see religious torture with an eye for the role of memory and anticipation. This, in turn, will necessitate an understanding of religious history and beliefs.

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[1] John Russon, *Human Experience: Philosophy, Neurosis, and the Elements of Everyday Life* (New York, State University of New York Press, 1987), 13.

Examples of historical work pursued on said principles are numerous. For instance, in

The Semiotics of Fate, Death, and the Soul in Germanic Culture, Prisca Augustyn attempts to

illustrate the continuity between early Germanic and modern beliefs, through an analysis of the

Heliand, a ninth century Old Saxon epic.[2] Of interest to this present study is the fact that

Augustyn attempts to compare the notions of *fate, death,* and the *soul* in two - in some sense -

separate cultures. What is most significant is that she accomplishes this task by adapting a

semiotic method. Central to her approach is the work Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), an

American scientist, philosopher, and the founder of semiotic theory (Augustyn, *Semiotics*, 8). In

line with Peircean semiotics, Augustyn takes a sign to be any picture, sound, thought, event,

feeling, action, or person, which meets four essential conditions. First, it must be said to have an

object. Secondly, a sign must have the abstract capacity to represent something (its *ground*).

According to Peirce the relation between a sign and its object can be achieved in any of three

ways. The correlation may arise out of likeness (*icon*), it may stem from a causal relation in space

or time (*index*), or it may be based upon a rule of agreement (*symbol*). Thirdly, it must be able to

form an *interpretant*. That is, a sign must have the power produce or affect other signs in the

mind of the interpreter. According to Peirce, signs have the capacity to generate three types of

effects: a feeling or mood (*immediate interpretant*), a physical reaction (*dynamic interpretant*),

and an idea (*final interpretant*). Finally, Augustyn points out that, these three conditions are

"interdependent and mediated through each other." "This triadic relation," Augustyn writes

further, "is that of semiosis" (Augustyn, *Semiotics*, 9).

The work of Thomas A Sebok, in *American Signatures: Semiotic Inquiry and Method*,

aids us further in understanding and appropriating this method for our present purposes. [3] Sebok

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[2] Prisca Augustyn, *The Semiotics of Fate, Death, and the Soul in Germanic Culture* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

[3] Thomas A. Sebok, *American Signatures: Semiotic Inquiry and Method* [Hereafter cited in text] (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

points out that according to Peirce's scheme, "the object is a sign; the sign is, of course, a sign; and the interpretant is a sign" (Sebok, *Signatures*, 205). This point is significant for our present concerns. Augustyn, as noted, dealt with a rather determinable field of investigation: linguistic notions. In the case of religious torture and killing, however, we will primarily be dealing with signs of a different nature. Our study must account for the behavior of victims as well as antagonists. It must also address such things as the significance of religious ornamentation adorned and, more importantly, removed. We will need an approach that allows us to come to terms with the basic nature of religious torture and killing. The Peircean semiotic method offers a direction of insight. Sebok suggests that, "in Peirce's pragmatism, what I am is what I do, and what I do is tantamount to what I signify" (Sebok, *Signatures*, 108). He derives this claim from Peirce's powerful statement: "Man is an external sign." We will here join this line of reasoning. A semiotic approach to the human body allows us to understand it as a composite work of signs. All parts natural or artificial have an object, ground, and interpretant. Our method will involve a separate consideration of some of the distinct types of religious violence in each context, with an added focus on the signs involved. It is our hope that this technique will aid in the interpretation of specific actions, allow us to explore the communicative nature of different exchanges, and facilitate a cross-cultural comparison.

Chapter 2
The French Context

I. <u>Introduction</u>

A study of the relation between ritual violence and religion in the land of France could go

as far back as the mysterious Grotte de Chauvet.[4] This study will not. A brief sketch of the history

of France leading up to and including the sixteenth century will be used to establish the

background from which the events in question arose. In so much as our concern is with the

experience of individuals involved in scenes of torture and execution, an understanding of the

general living conditions of this time will complement this approach. Issues affecting the

prospects of survival inevitably impact societal views on death and dying. Accordingly, attention

will be paid, in this section, to some of the major political and economic realities of this period

and the way in which they affected the livelihood of French citizens. Inevitably, we will need to

consider, in brief, the military history of this period. In so much as we are here dealing with

events from which religious significance was drawn, it will also be necessary to address the

religious climate of this time.

II. <u>The Question of Sources</u>

It is all too easy to underestimate the challenge of understanding the past. In the modern

age of mass media, events are often captured on film and thereby preserved - from an angle - for

all to see and hear. Yet the construction of even early modern Western history is a complicated

enterprise. We have sources. There are records, testimonies, and accounts. There are stories. But

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[4] In 1994 this bear cave in France was found to contain 30 strategically positioned bear skulls and over three hundred painted images, including a human figure with a bison head. An Accelerated Mass Spectromatry date of 30,000 B.C. makes this the world's oldest (securely dated) art. See Brian M. Fagan, *People of the Earth: An Introduction to World Prehistory* (University of California, Santa Barbara: Longman, 1998), 138.

what can be made of these voices? We must judge tone without sound. We must determine

character without presence. We must account for personal intentions without personal experience.

We are a jury of the past in the present. Nothing we can do will make the moments in question

our own. Yet the sense that something of an approximation can be achieved, through reason and

academic exchange, is real.

If this is the situation for most historical reconstructions, our present task is even more

difficult. There is something distinctive about cases of torture, execution, and murder. We are

here dealing with situations that were geared towards a culmination in death. Naturally, this did

not favor the production of first hand accounts. On the one hand, assailants often had good reason

not to speak. On the other hand, survivors were only accidents, oversights, or exceptions. They

were often silent or silenced. Even when victims found the opportunity and the desire to divulge

their experience, problems persist. If they escaped unscathed their accounts will be of little insight

for understanding the ultimate moments of religious torture. The less they endured, the less their

experience is of the sort that concerns us. For those who did witness or experience a great deal of

violence of this sort, however, the trauma was often so great that they could hardly recall what

had occurred. In "Hidden Transcripts: Secret Histories and Personal Testimonies of Religious

violence in the French Wars of Religion," Marc Greengrass explores the personal testimonies of

some Huguenot survivors of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.[5] Greengrass remarks that these

accounts, "tell us remarkably little" about the violence itself. In essence, the author continues,

"their protagonists were too young, too frightened, too surprised or too hidden to have any

general perspective on what was happening around them" (Greengrass, *Transcripts*, 80). Further

complicating matters is the fact that of the accounts that have surfaced in the French context,

most were only put into writing decades later.

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[5] Mark Greengrass, "Hidden Transcripts: Secret Histories and Personal Testimonies of Religious Violence in the French Wars of Religion" [Hereafter cited in text], in *The Massacre in History*, ed. Mark Levene and Penny Roberts (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999).

Protestant authors have produced some of the most exhaustive accounts of the acts of the

popular violence in France during the sixteenth century. *Histoire des Martyrs*, the work of Jean

Crespin (1520-1572), proceeds from the viewpoint of the Reformed religion.[6] Théodore de Bèze

(1519-1605) also presents a Protestant perspective in *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises*

Réformées au Royaume de France.[7] Both texts were updated throughout this period. We shall

appropriate these sources in a limited manner to complement the secondary sources noted below.

But this will not be done without reservation. These are martyrologies. De Bèze and Crespin

compiled accounts of Catholic violence, with an express theological purpose. The extent to which

these works are one-sided and bias is a matter of unavoidable concern for this present study. We

will discuss the views and intentions of these authors further, below. For the instant it will suffice

to note that much of the violence we here aim to consider is taken with a measured degree of

certainty. The Latin account of Georges Bosquet offers a Catholic report.[8] Due to linguistic

limitations, this work is only accessible to the present study through secondary sources. It is our

hope that the balance it brings to the latter texts will be used to level the approach of this present

study.

Finally, a note should be included on our use of secondary sources. Due to the grand

scope of this study as much as to the limitations of its author, the reader will likely remark,

certain sections rely heavily on the work of a number of accomplished scholars. This is especially

true with regards to the historical and pre-historical sketches. A more authoritative scholar would

have been able to produce a more nuanced account. Had it been our intention to search for

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[6] Jean Crespin, *Histoire des Martyrs: Persecutez et mis a mort pour la verite de l'evangile, depuis la temps des apostres jusques a present (1619)* [Hereafter cited in text] (Toulouse: Société des Livres Religieux, 1889).

[7] Théodore de Bèze, *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises Réforméees au Royaume de France* [Hereafter cited in text] (Lilie: Imprimerie de Leleux, Grande Palace, 1842).

[8] Mark Greengrass, "The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (1983): 367-391; cf. A Georgio Bosqueto Iurisconsulto Tolosano, in *Se/natu Advocato memoriae prodita...* (Tolosae: Ex officina Iacobi Colomerii, Academicae Typographi, 1563).

specific causes, such an approach would have been necessary. Instead, it is our hope that this reliance should be seen in a positive light, as that which made the inclusion of these valuable sections possible. A comparative study of two distinct contexts without at least a succinct account of each setting would be shallow and difficult to assess. For the reader, this background information will, in some sense, allow for judgment on the question of whether these series of events may indeed be worthy of comparison. In the French context, we are much indebted to the work of Janine Garrisson, Marc Greengrass, David Nichols and Nathalie Zemon Davis.

III. <u>France in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Period</u>

Much could be said of the people of the land of France during the Middle Ages. Much could also be said of the violence. Discussing the reign of feudalism, in *France in the Middle Ages: Customs, Classes, and Conditions*, Paul Lacroix writes, "Everywhere society was in ambuscade, and waged civil war - individual against individual - without peace or mercy."[9] While this characterization is, perhaps, severe to the point of exaggeration, the feudal system certainly did not have the enduring peace and social union Charlemagne (742-814) likely envisioned. There were surely a number of factors that led to the breakdown of this system and the rise of early modern France. In fact, the late Middle Ages were a time of considerable change for the people of Europe.

Among the many catalysts for change were the technological advances of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. A refined compass and related knowledge, coupled with the development of the sternpost rudder, opened the seas for exploration. Advances in weaponry, including especially the use of gunpowder, radically undermined the feudal system and its defensive reliance on stonewalls. The invention of the printing press and the proliferation of printed

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[9] Paul Lacroix, *France in the Middle Ages: Customs, Classes, and Conditions* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co.: 1963), 19.

material had an impact on human knowledge and relations that is difficult to quantify, although surely great. But while these developments in material cultural and understanding may impress the modern reader, they did not translate into improved living conditions for the average person in late Medieval France. On the whole, it was a period of notable hardship for the French people. The conflict with England took a tremendous toll. The *Hundred Years' War* (1337-1453) cost lives, inhibited trade, and leached precious resources. The climate during this period had worsened the suffering. Janine Garrisson has addressed this issue in her concise study, *A History of Sixteenth-Century France.*[10] She points out that a series of droughts and floods had created severe food shortages and further strained the economy (Garrison, *History*, 10). The condition of the commoners was severe, indeed. When a plague erupted in the Mediterranean, the stage was set for the World's second major pandemic.[11] Within fifty years of its outbreak in the mid fourteenth century, the *Black Death* plague had killed somewhere between a fourth to a half of the people living in Europe.

Despite this adversity, the French were in a relatively enviable political position at the end of the Middle Ages. The conflict between papacy and the Hohenstaufen family, over the union with Sicily, had favored the emergence of French (Capetian) power. In the centuries following Innocent III (1198-1216) and the height of Medieval papal power, secular rulers would increasingly gain control over French lands. The arrest of pope Boniface VIII (1235?-1303) by the French King, Philip IV (1268-1314) underscored this trend. By 1483, the French kingdom possessed roughly the same territory allotted to Charles the Bald in the Treaty of Verdun (843 A.D.), but possibility for expansion was real (Garrison, *History*, 3). The Italian peninsula, for one, lay precariously in the shadow of French political power until at least the time of Henri II (King

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[10] Janine Garrisson, *A History of Sixteenth-Century France, 1483-1598: Renaissance, Reformation, and Rebellion* [Hereafter cited in text] (London: MacMillan Press, 1995).
[11] Religious views had led Europeans to exterminate hundreds of thousands of domestic cats during the Middle Ages. The impact of this persecution was felt when a plague spread by rat fleas made its way to Europe.

of France from 1547-1548) (Garrison, *History*, 4). The royal patronage of Leonardo da Vinci by

Francis I (d. 1547) in 1516 illustrates the significance of the French court during this period, at

the same time as it testifies to the strong cultural influence of the Italian Renaissance. France had

emerged as the most prominent example of the new nation states.[12] That being said, the Catholic

Church was still a powerful controlling body in the French kingdom. As Frederick J.

Baumgartner notes, in *France in the Sixteenth Century*, "Controlling as much as 40 percent of the

annual income of the realm, tied into every important family, and firmly buttressed by a tradition

that was older than the monarchy, the clergy was in a superb position to challenge the king over

any issue that involved its interests."[13]

By the end of the fifteenth century, the French kingdom showed signs of great strength

and tremendous potential. France had a most favorable geographic position between Spanish,

English, and German lands. It also laid claim to the largest population and the greatest wealth on

the continent (Garrison, *History*, 4). When taken as a whole, it was a political giant. J.H. Hexter

has suggested, in *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation*, that sixteenth century

Europe witnessed a significant development in political thought.[14] A growing sense of

constitutional law offered kings the power to rule, a means of overcoming the ineffectual

authority chronic to their medieval predecessors, with guards against tyranny. In formulating

enduring works of social critique, thinkers such as Thomas More and Niccolò Machiavelli shared

an approach that brought concern for the ideal principles of politics together with a understanding

of the reality of political practice. In France, this tendency was reflected in the work Claude de

Seyssel, who developed the practical side of this approach even more than his contemporaries.

Hexter points out the notable emphasis on royal policy in his parting advice for the newly

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[12] Colin Morris, "Christian Civilization," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 229.

[13] Frederick J. Baumgartner, *France in the Sixteenth Century* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 5.

[14] J.H. Hexter, *The Vision of Politics on the Eve of the Reformation: More, Machiavelli, and Seyssel* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 228.

crowned Francis I, *La Monarchie de France*. "He finds a way to bring the empirical observation of political actuality into effective relation with the conventional wisdom about the ends of political association and therefore with the perennial aspirations of man, the political animal," writes Hexter (Hexter, *Vision*, 227).

Yet there was also a serious element of instability in France at this time. In many ways the kingdom was not a whole. Language forced divisions along both economic and geographical lines. The bulk of the population spoke their own regional dialect, the elites favored French and Latin, and the court held its own vernacular. Linguistic plurality was the rule not the exception (Garrison, *History*, 5). Similarly, laws, taxes, and customs varied greatly from one part of the kingdom to another. Encroaching neighbors also undermined the King's power. Foreign nations held key pieces of French territory and coveted others (Garrison, *History*, 4). The papacy claimed ownership of Avignon and Comtat Venaissin in the Southeastern corner of France. The English continued to hold Calais in the North. The Dutch house of Orange-Nassau had land to the East. All the while, Spain menaced on the Western front. Perhaps worse still was the King's relative lack of control over his ruling class. The great lords of Brittany and the house of Bourbon effectively operated their regions as independent states. As Janine Garrisson has suggested, "'France' in its modern sense was a concept confined to the intellectual and political elite" (Garrison, *History*, 6).

Nevertheless, the end of the fifteenth and beginning of the sixteenth century was a time of hope and relative prosperity for the working class. This period "was unusually free of rebellions and unrest," writes Baumgartner. The population crash had created the need for a significant amount of labor migration: the populace reshuffled. In the wake of the tragedies of the preceding age, this period saw a decrease in the number and consequence of epidemics and a consistent degree of favorable weather (Garrison, *History*, 10). The result was a dramatic increase in the

production of food supplies, and demographic recuperation - the impact of the Plague was made up. Royal taxation was reduced considerably from 1484 to 1510 and it remained, until 1530, below the level imposed in 1481 (Baumgartner, *France*, 65). These trends led to both a rise in the birth-rate as well as a decline in the mortality-rate. As Garrisson notes, "the French countryside enjoyed from 1450 until the 1520s, and in some places even until 1550, a period of sustained prosperity" (Garrison, *History*, 15). By 1560, the population of France had grown to 20 million. This was the highest it had been since 1340 (Baumgartner, *France*, 66). There is little reason to believe, however, that the average French citizen of this time was much concerned at all with the looming political instability that would manifest itself in the violence of the following period - something, perhaps, only clearly visible from our vantage point.

The favorable circumstances of the beginning of the sixteenth century were followed by a series of climatic catastrophes. Subsistence crises ensued, and the living conditions of the average French citizen degenerated rapidly. At the beginning of the sixteenth century the vast majority of the population of France had lived in a rural setting. Increasingly, however, in the years leading up to the Wars of Religion, people began to relocate to urban centers. The first half of the century saw the rise of French towns. Baumgartner has emphasized the appeal of grain reserves and police forces in French towns as a major reason for this trend (Baumgartner, *France*, 81-82). Garrisson has understood it in more economic terms. The peasant class, which had been, by and large, proprietary in the preceding century, now began to lose the land they toiled. Famine, inflation, and overpopulation in the countryside challenged farmers and favored moneylenders (Garrison, *History*, 52). Peasant debt escalated beyond hope. This trend had worsened dramatically by mid century and would continue to do so during the periods of war. The loss of property coupled with severe food shortages left many peasants with few options to survive.

"The rise of a new class of landless labourers marked a break with the old system," notes

Garrisson, but "the general impoverishment did not proceed without protest and revolt"

(Garrison, *History*, 27-28). Many peasants were surely unable to do otherwise. The burden of

paying tribute to both the church and the kingdom had become a heavy load to bear. Freedom

from the tithe must have been one of the most appealing features of the Reformation. The two

seem to have often gone hand in hand as the new Religion swept though the country.

Unemployment became a serious problem in France during this period (Garrison, *History*, 53).

Not surprisingly, many would choose to take rank with religious military forces when the time

came.

IV. The French Reformation

The rise of Lutheranism in Germany converged in France with the efforts of some, such

as Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and Guillaume Briçonnet, to bring about extensive church reform.

In his introduction to *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples* Eugene F. Rice has

called this a "fortuitous coincidence" that was met nonetheless with reproach from the faculty of

theology at the University of Paris.[15] Yet it is important to realize how close his work brought him

to being labeled a heretic. Lefèvre was a humanist with a great interest in Christian theology and

the works of Aristotle. He fled to Germany in 1525 to avoid the Parlement of Paris, although he

finished his career under the Protection of Francis I. On the whole, though, the first wave of

Protestant ideas, homegrown in Germany, achieved comparatively little in this part of Europe.

The auspicious conditions of the early sixteenth century may well have played a part in stalling

this development. Ernst Troelstch has sought to explain the fact that Lutheranism halted its

advance after a period of early success, in different terms. In *The Social Teaching of the Christian

Churches*, he fingers "its stress on personal piety, its acceptance of the existing situation, its

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[15] Eugene F. Rice Jr., introduction to *The Prefatory Epistles of Jacques Lefèvre d'Etaples and Related Texts* ed. (New York & Londond: Columbia University Press, 1972), XIV.

acquiescence in the objectivity of the means of grace, as well as to its lack of capacity for

ecclesiastical organization, and its non-political outlook."[16]

For whatever reason, the Reformation was slow to materialize in France. Indeed, the

momentum in this part of Europe may have been more the work of Jean Calvin (1509-64), than

Martin Luther (1483-1546). The fact that the former spoke French and Latin, studied in Paris, and

operated in nearby Geneva, no doubt, had something to do with it. But Calvin was also a

humanist with legal training. Patrick Collinson credits him with having made Protestantism "a

credible alternative to Catholicism, churchly, ecumenical, and as capable of withstanding and

undermining the political order of the state as of reinforcing it."[17] Troelstch has likewise found

the "deeper reason" for the success of Calvinism in its "active character… in its power for

forming churches, in its international contacts, and its conscious impulse towards expansion, and,

most of all, in its capacity to penetrate the political and economic movements of Western nations

with its religious ideals" (Troelstch, *Teaching*, 577). It may, in part, have been the absence of

these structural elements that impeded the early spread of Lutheranism in France.

If the wave of French Protestantism gained ground in the sixteenth century, it also

suffered great losses. The early acquisition of powerful enemies proved to be an enduring

obstacle for the Huguenots, and a chief source of their suffering. The stern and aggressive

character of this movement immediately was seen as creating political trouble and played a part

in the backlash, creating enemies where there had been potential allies. *L'Affaire des Placards*

provides us with a model example of this trend. The king, Francis I, had supported humanist ideas

in the early part of the sixteenth century - as mentioned above. When in the fall of 1534,

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[16] Ernst Troelstch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* Vol. II [Hereafter cited in text] (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1931), 576.
[17] Patrick Collinson, "The Late Medieval Church and its Reformation," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* [Hereafter cited in text], ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 258.

Protestants posted the offensive literature of Antoine Marcourt, the pastor of Plicardy, throughout

Paris and on the king's door in Amboise, it prompted a change in his relation to their cause.

Francis I openly turned his favor to the Catholic side. This began a period of violent persecution

by the royal court that would last until the very end of the seventeenth century. Protestants burned

as heretics until 1560, and then hung as enemies. We shall return to this point below.

When French Protestantism finally did emerge, it came with force. In *France in the Age of Henri IV: the struggle for stability*, Marc Greengrass describes the ideology of French

Protestants as "at once less tolerant, more convinced of its righteousness and, ultimately, more

violent than in German-speaking lands."[18] The force of this movement could also be seen in the

rate at which it spread. The Huguenots - as they would come to be known - convened their first

National Synod in Paris, in 1557, to establish their "Confession of Faith and Ecclesiastical

Discipline" (Greengrass, *Henri*, 2). In 1560, king Charles IX (1550-1574), decreed an amnesty

for heretics in the kingdom of France. By this point in time, writes Patrick Collinson, "more than

half the French nobility was Protestant and with the nobility much of the nation" (Collinson,

Medieval, 245). Greengrass has estimated that there was a minimum of 2 million Huguenots, at

that time, in roughly 1,400 communities, "with 800 of them concentrated in a broad crescent

sweeping across Western France and down through the Midi to the Alps" (Greengrass, *Henri*, 3).

Before the mid sixteenth century, France had been one of the most prominent Catholic

strongholds in Europe. The rapid advance of French Protestantism is all the more remarkable

when considered in this light. In January of 1562, the Queen mother, Catherine de Medici (1519-

1589), convened the Colloquy of Poissy in an attempt to have Protestant and Catholic theologians

reconcile their differences. The resulting edict granted the Huguenots the civil liberty they

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[18] Marc Greengrass, *France in the age of Henri IV: the struggle for stability* [Hereafter cited in text] (London: Longman, 1984), 1.

required to practice religious rites in private houses and in public outside city walls. While it would not last, this was a huge victory for the Protestants and a major step toward toleration.

A range of adversaries could well have been expected. A key feature of Protestantism was the doubt it placed on long held distinctions between clergy and laity. French Catholic priests may well have perceived Calvin's ministers and the Huguenot message as a direct challenge to their position and authority. Many seem to have responded with verbal force that reflects at least a degree of self-concern. Vehement attacks from the pulpit became a powerful weapon in France during the sixteenth century. The political climate of the time afforded many priests and other religious figures the opportunity to speak with a remarkable amount of freedom. At times, they operated virtually unchecked. As Greengrass points out, many preachers "openly criticized royal policy and invited their congregations to take the law into their own hands" (Greengrass, *Henri*, 4). The king had little recourse without threatening his foreign allies or weakening the allegiance of his subjects. Actions taken against a Catholic cleric risked catalyzing a movement in the opposite direction. Regional rulers were likewise compromised in their authority. The power and influence of French Catholic preachers swelled greatly during this period; but they were not the only public dignitaries leading the charge against the Reformation in France. The House of Guise, including François, the first Duke of Guise (1519-1563) and Charles the Cardinal of Lorraine (d.1574), were firmly committed to the Catholic cause and, at times, aligned with the powerful (Catholic) Spanish crown. In short, the Huguenots were opposed from the start by increasingly powerful religious authorities as well as major political figures.

The Huguenots called into question the role of Catholic liturgy, and rejected the thought that the bread and wine were the body and blood of Christ. In this way, we may see how the Protestant perspective challenged the significance of major Catholic signs. The mass was at times construed as a sort of satanic magic. In *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France,* Natalie Zemon

Davis remarks that it was also sometimes seen as "an effort to put up to ransom to God, to oblige the Lord by gift."[19] Davis' emphasizes the persistence of sixteenth century French gift exchange as "an essential relational mode," and thereby allows us to begin to envision the depth of the Huguenot challenge (Davis, *Gift*, 9). The author describes France at that time as an "over-determined culture of obligation." The mass, according to Davis, established "*a model of close gift reciprocity* between humans and God the father... and its frequent repetition nourished the human hope for divine favor" (Davis, *Gift*, 109). This favor was understood to manifest itself in a variety of forms. "The sacrifice of the mass was... a resource for many precise current needs: for pregnancy and safe delivery, for safe traveling on the sea, and for protection from fevers, storms, and animal plague, to name a few listed in a 1510 missal," writes Davis further.

Yet Catholics had a system of responsibility that extended beyond the individual and into the larger network of social relations. At the same time, needs were not confined to the corporeal existence but continued, and often intensified, in the spiritual life of the hereafter. Gifts to God could, in turn, bring about divine grace for relatives in Purgatory, just as they could bring one closer to forgiveness and the gift of life in the heavenly realm. It is in this light that the challenge of Calvinism must be understood. "In Calvin's 1536 work *Christianae Religionis Institutio*," Davis suggests, he went "well beyond the image of the clergy as thieving merchants" (Davis, *Gift*, 114). "The whole Catholic apparatus of gift and obligation he tried to dismantle," adds the author further, "recasting reciprocal relations in terms of gratuitousness wherever he could." Calvin sought redefine both the nature of God's gift of grace and the human response. "The gift is rather a predisposition, an orientation within Christians as a result of accepting a divine promise," writes Davis, and "what Christians do with God's gift is obey him, love him, be grateful to him,

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[19] Nathalie Zemon Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth-Century France* [Hereafter cited as NDG] (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2000), 109.

act always for his honor and glory, and exercise good works toward our neighbors" (Davis, *Gift*, 116). The Huguenot ideology struck deep into the foundation of Catholic belief and practice.

The extent to which Catholics were also incensed by the destruction of church property, during Protestant rioting, however, should not be underestimated. The Huguenots deemed church relics superstitious. They lambasted Catholic iconography as idolatry. The Reformation emphasized the primacy of the spoken and written word: the sermon and the Bible. But for Catholics, these religious icons were more than just symbols - much more. The religious force of sacred things and holy figures had long been thought to live on in related artifacts. The representations *were*, in some sense, that which they represented. As such, they held the capacity to intercede for the believer. Since the rise of the cult of the martyrs in the fourth century, relics had been used as a focal point of lay prayer. Beyond this, as Robert Markus point out, the "cult provided ways of securing social cohesion in the locality, and one of the means on which bishops depended to consolidate their authority."[20] To damage them was understood as an offense of the highest order - a defilement of the sacred. To question the validity of these artifacts was to challenge the church directly. Yet these ideologies also struck close to the roots of royal authority. After all, the king was anointed. To question the legitimacy of this process, even indirectly, was to move against the authority of the throne. For the belief that the bread of the Eucharist was the body of Christ rested on the same ground as the idea that the monarch embodied divine Majesty. So the Huguenots both undermined and offended Catholic tradition and royal power. The aggressive growth of this movement was met with a violent resistance: conflict ensued.

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[20] Robert Markus, "From Rome to the Barbarian Kingdoms," In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity, ed. John McManners* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 84.

The latter point brings us to recall that the French Reformation was a political as well as a religious conflict; the French Wars of Religion were also civil wars. The House of Bourbons challenged the power of the Catholic nobles. This group counted among its leaders Henri I de Bourbon, the Prince of Condé (1552-88); Antoine de Bourbon, the King of Navarre (1518-62); and the Chatillon brothers, from the House of Montmorency: the Cardinal of Chatillon, Admiral Coligny, and D'Andelot. They favored the Protestant movement and could look to either Germany of England for support. The House of Valois held the royal court for much of the late medieval and early modern period: from Philip VI (1328-1350) to Henri III (d.1589). They were faced with the growing challenge of reconciling rival noble parties who found religious discord to match their conflict for power. To what extent these two groups can accurately be said to have had religious concerns over and above their political convictions and ambitions is a question that cannot be properly addressed within the scope of this essay. What can be said is that the early political enemies of the Huguenot nobility proved to be enduring enemies of the French Protestants. When Charles IX inherited the crown in December of 1560 at the tender age of 10, the task of maintaining order in a religiously divided nation facing bankruptcy fell largely to the Queen mother, a Medici born in Florence. The stage was set for a catastrophe.

V. A Brief History of the French Wars of Religion (after 1560)

Tensions had been on the rise between rival nobles, on one level, and Catholic and Protestant groups, on another. The turning point came in the spring of 1560 when Huguenot forces attempted to abduct the young king in what came to be known as the Tumult of Amboise. Their intention was to free him from the strong Catholic presence in the royal court. The House of Guise caught wind of the conspiracy and it failed. The net result was a dramatic escalation in hostilities. France would be at war with itself for much of the second half of the sixteenth century, including especially the periods of 1562-63, 1567-70 and 1572-77. In 1563, the Duke of Guise

was murdered - on order of the king. Gaspard de Coligny was later implicated in the killing. A blood vendetta was sure to ensue. If the Edict of Saint-Germain in 1570 was aimed at re-establishing the peace, it missed the mark. For the first time Huguenots were given the right to worship inside city walls. Any real estate, property, or public office taken from them during the preceding war was to be returned. Many Protestants returned to their homes triumphantly. Catholics who had profited from the conflict now stood to lose - in some cases greatly. In this way, the restitution of goods worked against the Huguenots as a whole. The Edict had in effect fueled Catholic resentment.

The summer time wedding of 1572 between the King's sister, Marguerite de Valois (1552-1610), and the Protestant noble, Henri King of Navarre (1553-1610), was supposed to symbolize the reconciliation between these two parties. The outward appearance of unity in the royal court masked a deep inner rift over foreign policy. Huguenot leaders, including especially Admiral Coligny wanted to join the Protestant House of Orange in their fight for the Netherlands. A faction of Huguenots had already joined this cause, to their own misfortune, earlier in the summer. Catholic nobles disliked the idea of supporting Protestants forces of any sort and preferred to come peacefully to terms with the Habsburg king Philip II. On top of the Netherlands, the Spanish Empire already occupied Belgium, parts of Italy, the eastern region of Franche-Comté (now in France), and much of Central and South America. There was good reason for the French crown to fear the wrath of this powerful neighbor. Yet the House of Valois also had reason to be fearful of the growing power of Protestant nobility. Mere days after the marriage, the king appears to have unleashed a plot to rid himself of some of these worrisome Huguenots. The House of Guise took the life of Admiral Coligny, but they were joined by troops. This violence triggered bloodshed across the kingdom.

The Wars of Religion further strained an already fragile French economy. Living conditions would continue to degenerate for French citizens throughout the second half of the sixteenth century. The conflict created chaos and reduced many to a state of desperation. As Greengrass has noted, in some areas, "villagers were sheltered in churches, once-prosperous towns were half tumbled down and the bourgeois were forced to ransom themselves from ravaging troops if they left the comparative security of town walls" (Greengrass, *Henri*, 15). The fact that the military forces on both sides were largely supplemented with an eclectic mix of foreign soldiers likely did not help.[21] In the end, French Protestantism was all but exterminated. Yet it is not the result of this tragedy that is of ultimate concern for this present study. Rather, we are interested with the carnage itself: the forms of violence. It is to this that we shall presently turn.

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[21] Greengrass notes that "the Protestant army in 1569 spoke six languages; the royal forces included Italians, Germans, Swiss, and Albanians as well as French." Greengrass, *Henri*, 10.

Chapter 3
The Forms of Violence in France during the Sixteenth Century

I. Hunting

A quick note should be made of the practice of hunting. This consideration will add depth to our study and set the foundation for a comparison with the North American context. Hunting was a highly valued and securely guarded privilege of the nobility during the late Middle Ages. In France it had long been the favorite sport of kings. Charlemagne (742-814) was a legendary hunter. Francis I (1494-1547) was said to have had a considerable passion for this pursuit and Charles IX (1550-1574) came to be known for his courage and refined technique. Under the latter, arose a great number of guidebooks and treatises dedicated to this subject (Lacroix, *France*, 191). It is significant to note two things about hunting in France during this time. While the bourgeoisie had gained the right to hunt in the thirteenth century, the peasant class remained jealously excluded (Lacroix, *France*, 194). The fact that the clergy was permitted (in practice) to take game on occasion, likely frustrated members of the lay working class further. Secondly, we should note the ceremonial character of hunting. "Hunting formed a principal entertainment when public festivals were celebrated," writes Lacroix, and it was frequently accompanied with great magnificence" (Lacroix, *France*, 210).

II. Warfare

i. The Question of Legitimacy

The modern reader will likely be inclined to read the history of the French wars of Religion with an eye for the legitimacy of the rival Protestant and Catholic groups. It is certainly easier to accept situations of mass violence when they can be considered the sanctioned acts of legitimate authorities. Yet, as we shall see, the history of sixteenth century France does not lend

itself well to these modern legal notions. Much of what could be considered *unsanctioned*

violence was, in some sense, *sanctioned*. Church as well as state, actions as well statements, often

approved or even encouraged Catholic commoners to take steps against their Huguenot

neighbors. Some clerics went as far as joining in the violence. In a study on the religious rioting

of sixteenth century France, Nathalie Zemon Davis writes, "by every sign the crowd believed

their actions legitimate."[22] Along the same lines, many rioters seem to have felt as though they

were merely doing as the king wished – simply extending royal efforts. The presence of royal

troops or nobles amongst the feverish mobs, during times of rioting, would have certainly been

conducive to this sort of perspective.

At the same time, it is clear that *sanctioned* groups often perpetrated *unsanctioned* acts of

violence. According to the nineteenth century work of Henri White, *The Massacre of St.

Bartholomew,* French soldiers pillaged for three days against royal orders, following the battle at

Rouen in 1562.[23] This is but one example of the many atrocities committed by royal or clerical

agents. Of course it is important to recall that the social groups in France during this period were

not as clearly differentiated as, perhaps, the historian would like. Nobles were known to shed or

adopt religious allegiances for political reasons as well as for those of a spiritual nature. "Even in

1560-1," Owen Chadwick reminds us, "contemporaries distinguished between 'political'

Huguenots and 'religious' Huguenots, the latter being the lords who resented the power of the

Catholic Guises over the crown and were prepared to use the religious contest as an instrument."[24]

Similarly, the difference between a commoner, a bandit, and a soldier was often only a matter of

time or opportunity. Many peasants became thieves or mercenaries out of desperation, during

these troubled times. "The Husbandman, no longer able to till his fields in safety," writes Henry

[22] Natalie Zemon Davis. "The Rites of Violence in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 68.
[23] Henri White, *The Massacre of St. Bartholomew* [Hereafter cited in text] (London: J. Murray, 1868), 219.
[24] Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* [Hereafter cited in text] (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), 158.

White, "either joined the army or turned robber - a difference more in name than in reality" (White, *Massacre*, 231).

In so much as the King was catholic, we may be tempted to speak of this religious party as, in some greater way, sanctioned. Protestants, according to this scheme, would be considered, generally, unsanctioned. In so much as it was vulnerable to change, however, this distinction is rather tenuous. The fact that Huguenots gained varying degrees of liberty and religious freedom at different points during the sixteenth century, by royal will, further undermines such a simplistic dichotomy. Add to this the repeated attempts of Catherine de Medici to forge reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. The Queen Mother was joined in this regard by a middle group, *les politiques*. Their efforts towards peace often drew scorn from both Catholic and Protestant sides. Yet they too petitioned the king, and expected his support. The reality of the situation now begins to emerge. Namely, it was often unclear the extent to which any of these groups were favored by the House of Valois. The question is further complicated by the presence of rival sources of justification.

Leaders of the Reformed Religion offered their followers a way of believing that they were justified in their actions no less than those of the Roman church. The printing press afforded them a novel means of addressing a wider audience than would have otherwise been possible. Protestants used pamphlets to launch a diatribe against the Catholic nobles. The legality of the latter's position of influence was a particular point of contention. After Charles IX took reign, Protestants leaders declared that the catholic nobles were despots, illegally holding the king prisoner. They felt justified in their bid to purge the court and liberate the king. As Owen Chadwick notes, "even Calvin agreed that such a fight was permissible (if) it be led by the chief magistrates or by princes of the blood" (Chadwick, *Reformation*, 160). In fact, in contrast to the Lutheran position, Calvinism offered the Huguenots a framework that was especially well suited

to this struggle. While the former called for princes to be obeyed, the latter left open the possibility of resistance. For Calvin, it was God's will and a manifestation of His majesty that the state "can and must be adapted to the following ends: (1) the religious purpose of the maintenance of true religion; and (2) the social and utilitarian end of the promotion of peace, order, and prosperity" (Troelstch, *Teaching*, 615). Should the king fail in his function to pursue these ends, it was the duty of the lower ranking officials to correct him. In essence, he envisioned "a system of Positive Law, which provides the necessary subordinate powers for the control and reprimand of the supreme authority" (Troelstch, *Teaching*, 616). Calvin's ideas, in this vein, stem from his understanding of Natural Law, and bear the long-standing influence of Stoic philosophy on Christian thought. Interestingly, as Troeltsch notes further, "Calvin's idea of Natural Law is nearer to the Catholic idea of Natural Law than it is to the Lutheran conception from which it started."

If the Huguenots found the heart of their sense of justified resistance in the Christian tradition and their voice in the printed word, so did the Catholics. The media war was far from one-sided. Luc Racaut has emphasized the role of the Catholic press in demonizing the Protestants, in *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion.*[25] He argues that the work of Catholic authors, pamphleteers, and preachers towards "building a mental picture of Protestants as heretics and as such 'non-human'" goes a long way towards explaining, "why Catholics had so little respect for human life during urban massacres and why they attempted to exterminate Protestants to the last man" (Racaut, *Print*, 37). It is important to note the way in which this characterization was achieved through reference to the history of the Roman Church. Once again the past provided the keys to a justified position in the present. Racaut suggests that, "A major characteristic of Catholic polemic is its reliance on

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[25] Luc Racaut. *Hatred in Print: Catholic Propaganda and Protestant Identity during the French Wars of Religion* [Hereafter cited in text] (Aldershot; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002).

the authority of precedents - which were the building blocks of the legitimacy of any argument during this period" (Racaut, *Print*, 36). The great corpus of Christian apologetics against heresies and schism, reaching back to the early church, was reconsidered and appropriated by French Catholics of the sixteenth century. "This enabled the Catholic polemicists to use a register of ready-made stereotypes which had been applied to heretics before," adds Racaut further, "and allowed them to reduce Protestantism to a mere repetition of history."

Authority was not only contested in principle but in practice. In certain areas, a struggle for power was clearly visible on a civic level. The situation in Toulouse exemplifies this problem. The work of Marc Greengrass, in *The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562*, allows us to consider this particular case more closely.[26] By 1560, tensions had escalated in Toulouse between the largely Catholic judicial body, the *parlement*, and the mostly Protestant elected leaders, the *capitouls*. This political discord mirrored the dramatic religious dissonance. Both were municipal authorities, in some respect, but they often disagreed on some of the most fundamental issues. The fact that the *parlement* actually legalized "the pillage and slaughter of any heretic by any individual in May 1562," as Greengrass notes, should put the problem in perspective (Greengrass, *Henri*, 5).

Is for these reasons, difficult to discuss the social groups in France during this period as clearly distinct parties, and harder still to resolve the question of their legitimacy. Yet there remains a pragmatic need to distinguish certain forms of violence. In order to facilitate this present study it will be necessary to adopt a number of assumptions. To begin, it shall be presupposed that the acts of soldiers, while neither wholly legitimate nor never completely illegitimate in nature, may be taken as sanctioned, in some real sense, and indicative of the

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[26] Mark Greengrass. "The Anatomy of a Religious Riot in Toulouse in May 1562" [Hereafter cited in text], *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 34 (1983): 367-391.

climate of violence. For the purpose of refining the scope of this work we shall limit our

consideration of this topic. Secondly, we shall here take public executions to be the most

preeminent form of legitimized violence and, as such, a model of organized aggression. A brief

consideration of this form of brutality will be sufficient to put things in perspective. The primary

concern of this essay, as mentioned above, is with the role of commoners. Of particular interest

are the cases of religious rioting. We will here adopt Nathalie Zemon Davis' definition of this

behavior as, "any violent action, with words or weapons, undertaken against religious targets by

people who are not acting *officially and formally* as agents of political and ecclesiastical

authority."[27] It shall be assumed that such action may be treated as a distinct subject amidst the

sea of related behavior.

ii. Battle, Pillaging, and other Types of Military Aggression

The violence of battle during the French Wars of Religion was, undoubtedly, horrific. To

the natural passions of war was added the fervor of religious indignation and the desperation of

hungry men. Compassion seems to have been a rarity during military engagements and the loss of

life was great. But the violence of soldiers, including especially that of the French army, was not

confined to the battlefield. As noted above, troops took to pillaging the countryside on more than

a few occasions. Henry White records a number of gruesome scenes involving Catholic troops

and non-combatants in his. At Blois, in 1562, "a woman found praying with some neighbors was

thrown into the water, and as she floated was beaten with sticks and pelted with stones until she

died" (White, *Massacre*, 216). "An old man of seventy," White continues, "caught reading the

Bible was immediately massacred; another had his eyes plucked out and was then knocked on the

head." At Tours, during the same year, the president of the city, Jean Bourgeau, "was first

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[27] Natalie Zemon Davis. "The Rites of Violence in Sixteenth-Century France" [Hereafter cited in text], *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 52.

drowned and then hanged to a tree and disemboweled" (White, *Massacre*, 217). Similar atrocities are recorded at Poitiers, Angers, and Bourges.

The guilt of both Catholic and Protestant forces is unquestionable. An exhaustive account of the military violence during the French Wars of Religion, however, is not feasible. The carnage was, quite simply, too great, and too many voices have been lost to history. For our present purposes it will be enough to note that soldiers were known to victimize, not only each other, but commoners as well, and that they did so in cruel and unusual ways. This transgression of the line between combatants and non-combatants, already to some extent blurred by that fact that the latter began to increasingly take military rank (as noted above), no doubt, had an impact on French society. More and more commoners became soldiers, and ever more soldiers killed commoners of the opposed faith. It is in this light that we must view the religious rioting of the sixteenth century.

III. The Public Executions

i. Ritual Violence in Public Executions

Sixteenth century France had a well-organized system of public execution. This, of course, was nothing new. It should be recalled that Western culture has always had forms of capital punishment. The death penalty has continued to be employed, into the present, in some of the most modern industrialized nations. It was and remains a viable means for deterring insurrection and reinforcing authority. Beyond this extensive history, we might further note the great plurality of forms. Over time and space, executions have ranged from near mundane affairs to breathtaking exhibitions. The fabled Colosseum in Rome pitted men and women alike against exotic beasts, in front of 50,000 spectators. This mix of legislative enactment and brutish sensationalism effectively blurs the distinction between judicial force and popular entertainment.

The *trial by ordeal* or *trial by combat* of the Germanic kingdoms in Medieval Europe, likewise, combined elements of justice and dramatic display. Along the same lines, David Nicholls suggests, in "The Theatre of Martyrdom in The French Reformation," public executions in early modern Europe were part ceremony and part spectacle.[28]

Nichols' study enables us to take a closer look at the system in sixteenth century France. His work leads us to consider the social function of this ritual, the role of the victim, and the experience of the audience. Nichols suggests that the French public execution ceremony in many ways resembled the enactment of a morality play. The production consisted of three parts. In the opening scene the victim would be asked to give an *amende honorable*. This was a brief admission of guilt and statement of remorse, as well as an opportunity to plea for royal or divine compassion. It was consistent, Nichols remarks, with a larger European tendency to demand that the victim "make a 'good end' to his or her life by showing true penitence at the moment of death" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 49). In the second act, the victim was paraded to the site of their demise. Many, no doubt, would have been swept up along the way. The play closed, as one might expect, with the death of the guilty party.

It is important to consider what the experience of this procession may have been like. As it moved through the town it would have had the effect of enlarging and involving the audience. It turned bystanders into onlookers - a passerby becomes a witness. The ceremony would have forced its way into the lives and minds of the commoners by meeting them in their daily life. For the audience, the victim is disclosed as the transgressor. Of significance is the fact this occurred in a familiar locale. These were places with history: places with memories. Experience in such spaces conjures associated moments and related impressions. In this way, the audience would

[28] David Nicholls. "The Theatre of Martyrdom in the French Reformation" [Hereafter cited in text], *Past and Present* 121 (1988): 49-73.

have been met on a plane that extended from the present well into the past. Their encounter with the victim, *as transgressor*, made for a moment that likely confronted others they had held. The spectacle could challenge memories lodged deep in the minds of audience members.

So too would the victim participate in this encounter. Revisiting each corner, each spot, each sacred place and memory on that route, *as* this new character, would surely have been challenging. We might imagine that this experience often forced victims to confront their own self-perception. Victims were also forced to play witness to their own undoing. As the crowd encountered transgressors, as such, the latter would have seen the change in their own group status. On some level, the victims must have known that they stood to lose the memories they had made in others. If large enough, a crowd may be experienced as an absolute other: as everyone. They are the public consciousness, the collective account, which cannot help but record the victim *as transgressor*.

Public executions were more than "merely displays of public brutality and morbidity," Nichols suggests, "they were manifestations of the power of the state and church, and vehicles of a socio-religious ideology of consensus and exclusion of the transgressor" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 49). The concern was with the elimination of dangerous ideas, not just dangerous people. The importance of an audience for this purpose cannot be underestimated. The ideas in question, of course, were not necessarily limited to the mind of the victim. By shifting our focus away from the intention of the executioners and towards the experience of the execution, it becomes clear that this ceremony held the capacity to effect a change in the mind of all who were involved. The beliefs of the victim were, in a certain sense, put to the test. In most public executions, however, there was little to no chance that the transgressors could vindicate the dangerous opinions they represented. If the crime was sedition, for example, in so much as the play ended with the execution of the accused, the ideological force of an incitement to rebellion was undermined on

the most personal level. It is difficult to imagine how subversion of the state remain associated with gallantry, choice-worthiness, or the like - in the minds of audience members - if it was shown to result in remorse, personal anguish, and death. The ritual was often able to produce a desirable meaning for the church or state.

As mentioned above, the rise of Protestantism in sixteenth century France was met by developments in the public execution ritual. In the case of heretics, the ceremony began to operate with a special emphasis on the "total obliteration" of the victim (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 50). Protestants were burned to death during the first half of the century. France was not unique in this respect, it should be noted. Patrick Collinson reminds us that in England and the Netherlands as well, "hundreds of common people, women as well as men, were content to be burnt alive for their newly acquired Protestant beliefs" (Collinson, *Medieval*, 245). Many were forced to also endure dreadful forms of torture. Nichols records the common practices of 'dipping' Huguenots in the fire or basting them with grease and sulfur to accentuate the pain of burning (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 64). Various other forms of violence are also attested, including mutilation of the hands and strangulation. The execution of notable religious figures appears to have often been the scene of an even more elaborate ritual. Nichols claims that "for victims in clerical orders the ceremonial degradation represented an additional first act" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 52). A series of symbolic gestures was used to complete this process. Nichols summarizes it in five key strokes: "the chalice was taken from his hands; his thumbs were scraped to remove unction; each priestly vestment was removed in turn; a series of objects was taken from his hands, including sacred books, church ornaments and the keys of the church; and finally, his head was shaved to remove the tonsure" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 56).

In its essence, this ritual consists of the systematic removal of every significant symbol. The transformative power of these actions, I propose, would not have been limited to the physical

realm. As the symbols were stripped from the cleric, so too could the notions they represented be

disassociated from the victim in the minds of audience members. The religious figure was

undone, both on a temporal plane as well as on the field of memory. Associations could not only

be removed but also replaced. Distinguished religious leaders were often openly mocked and

humiliated. The crowd was encouraged to laugh. Some were paraded around in dung carts or

dressed as *the fool* - a recognizable type in European society of the time. The effect, Nichols

suggest, was to make the victim "a parody of his former self" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 57). The witness

would have also undergone a change. The memories they had brought to the ceremony were

stripped down and rebuilt. The audience was purged of any positive associations they had with

the victim - notions of religious power, prestige, etc. They were left with a lasting negative

impression. From the victim's perspective, no less, his public image was at stake. His self-

understanding was, similarly, liable to be altered.

It seems, however, that church courts were reluctant to resort to this level of punishment.

Mild forms of torture were often deemed sufficient for minor offenders. When they did occur,

Nichols suggests, it was crucial that the ceremonies be "well staged and controlled." The *theatre*

of martyrdom, according to Nichols, was a rare and spectacular event. It was geared towards

presenting the death of the Huguenot as "a suitably 'Catholic' ritual in which the victim would be

a degraded non-person and not a hero" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 51). Some Protestant resistance was

likely desirable. Authorities seem to have even taken steps towards heightening the drama.

Nichols suggests that there were conscious attempts at "underlining the theatrical nature of the

process" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 62). In short, the heretic execution was an elaborate production,

seemingly designed to leave the audience with a certain impression. The impact of the ceremony,

however, could not be insured. This was especially the case if the victim did not play his part.

It is interesting to note the sudden increase in a tendency to silence the victim. Nichols

points out that at first authorities allowed Huguenots the opportunity to "harangue the

accompanying throng" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 63). But eventually the ceremony adapted a number of

conventions for inhibiting them from preaching, singing, or otherwise (verbally) testifying to their

position. These included not only the strategic use of trumpets, the obstruction of airways, but

also the piercing or removal of the tongue. This development likely reflects a growing concern

that Huguenots could make a positive impact on the audience. Their behavior was not in line with

the traditional spirit of the *amende honorable*. The changing the role of the victim soon brought a

measure of instability to the heretic execution ceremony. Unlike common criminals, Protestants

held a rather dangerous capacity to challenge the ritual construction of meaning. Early Christian

martyrs had provided them with a powerful model. In fact, the behavior of many French

Protestants is rather reminiscent of their ancient precursors. Henri Chadwick reminds us that in

the early church, "some enthusiastic Christians courted martyrdom by smashing religious images

or, under cross-examination, appearing contumacious, dissident, and disrespectful."[29] Ultimately,

if Huguenots showed virtue, strength, or resolve in their final moments, it might bear witness to

the legitimacy of their religious convictions.

That the Protestants thought of themselves as in line with the earlier Christian tradition of

martyrdom is supported by the rise of Protestant martyrologies during this period. Jean Crespin

produced probably the most renowned of these works in 1554. The work of Théodore de Bèze, as

mentioned, may also be understood in these terms. Crespin's account reflects not only the grim

violence of this period, but his enduring conviction that Protestant victims were persecuted for the

truth of their message. He opens his account of the massacre of Saint Bartholomew with a blanket

motive for every killing he records. "... de milliers de perfonnes de toutes qualitez, mifers à pour

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[29] Henri Chadwick "The Early Christian Church," In *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* [Hereafter cited in text] ed. John McManners, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 42-43.

la profeffion du fainct Evangile, & non pour autre caufe, quelque chofe que leurs ennemis

alleguent au contraire, comme leurs procedures mefmes l'ont bien monftré" (Crespin, *Martyrs*,

663-664). The constancy of Huguenots was seen to be evidence of the work of God and, thereby,

the validity of the Protestant Church. Greengrass writes that Crespin, "attempted to demonstrate

that God had inspired martyrs to be constant so that their deaths proved the Huguenot Church to

be the true one" (Greengrass, *Henri*, 7). This perspective is at once reminiscent of such early

Christian accounts as, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* or *The History of Thecla*.[30]

By 1552, Nichols notes, Calvin "was urging the faithful to be prepared for persecution

and martyrdom and if it comes to accept it joyfully" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 66). Around the same

time, "Guillaume Dalençon 'leapt joyously on to the pyre and sat down at the stake that rose in

the center of it'" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 67). Pierre de la Place, president of the Court of Aids,

prayed, "Let us learn how to conduct ourselves firmly and temperately in this condition of trial.

Let us show that God's word has been copiously poured into our souls" (White, *Massacre*, 434).

It should be recalled, that the testimonial force of martyrdom had led Tertullian (d.200A.D.) to

suggest that, "the blood of martyrs is seed of the church" (Chadwick, *Church*, 43). Indeed, for the

sixteenth century French spectator, these seeds could have very well taken root in the field of

memory. It is with this in mind that we should note a major difference between the French

Protestant and the early Christian treatment of martyrs. In a move indicative of deep cultural

change, the Huguenots abandoned the practice of preserving and trading martyr relics. Such

behavior would have been deemed superstitious. Instead it was the written accounts, the

martyrologies, which spread through the community. In this way, the Huguenots did continue the

tradition of maintaining meaningful material representations of their martyrs. Simply stated, the

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[30] "The Martyrdom of Polycarp," in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Bart D. Ehrman (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); *The Apocryphal Acts of Paul and Thecla*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer (Kampen: Kok Pharos Pub. House, 1996).

printed word had replaced the bones. This fact underscores the significance of these accounts. For the French Protestant community the myth of the martyr was a new kind of seed.

ii. The Changing Role of the Audience

There was certainly an element of novelty in the execution of French heretics in the sixteenth century. Protestants, after all, were a new form of transgressor. A greater emphasis on destruction and added ritual complexity would have also made these ceremonies more spectacular or awe-inspiring than other public executions. But while the crowds were often large and boisterous, they usually displayed a concern for order. David Nichols maintains that, "audiences wanted the ritual to be performed correctly" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 60). Changes to the program, such as an incident of unmerited abuse or a premature execution, ran the risk of upsetting the people. This fact is telling, I believe, and it should lead us to examine the role of the audience. We have already considered the way in which public executions may have impacted the memory of individual spectators, but let us reflect further on the nature of audience involvement. The audience did have a role to play at these events, even if it was limited.

In the first half of the sixteenth century, it may be said that the heretic execution ceremony demanded three things of the audience. First, they had to be present. To this end, processions often wandered far and wide to summon onlookers. Secondly, they were expected to voice contempt for the victim. The greatest degree of humiliation, and therefore degradation, could only be achieved with the help of an audience, mocking laughter and abuse. Nichols underscores the dramatic importance of the crowd's scorn. Finally, the heretic execution ceremony required the audience to approve of the killing. By playing along with the execution, they were also tacitly endorsing it. Quite a part from the fact that these rituals were *sanctioned* forms of violence, we may discuss the way in which they generated their own sense of

legitimacy. In the *theatre of martyrdom*, a large crowd effectively was the community; the group

represented the whole. By participating in the drama, they were also sharing in it and, in a certain

sense, condoning it. In this way, the role of the audience may be seen as a part of a self-

legitimating facet of the public execution ritual. When taken together, it becomes clear that the

minor parts held by the audience amount nevertheless to a rather significant degree of

participation.

The second half of the century witnessed an escalation in the degree of crowd

involvement. Beginning in the 1550s, audiences increasingly sought a more active role. That is to

say that they began to interfere in heretic executions, often to the point of completing the ritual

without help. From an "undifferentiated mass inspired by curiosity," Nichols suggests, the

Catholic audience became "motivated by hostility towards the victim" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 65).

More importantly, Nichols points out, "they were no longer satisfied (with their role)... they

wanted to be the executioners" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 69). This shift forces us to reconsider our

terms. *Audience,* with its strong sense of passive participation, is not an appropriate appellation

for crowds that regularly interfere. In fact, it remains questionable as a designation for the more

placid crowds of the early sixteenth century discussed above. In its place, I propose, we employ

the term *agent-crowds* to designate a group of onlookers that collectively, and effectively, engage

with a greater degree of participation in public ceremonies or events. This term will also be used

to designate the religious rioters of this period. The latter use is justified in so much as these

groups can be shown to have behaved in a way comparable to the active audiences described

above.

IV. <u>Religious Rioting in France during the Sixteenth Century</u>

i. Agent-Crowds and Religious Rioting

A brief note should be made on the difference between Protestant and Catholic religious rioting. Huguenot civilians certainly cannot be cleared of any involvement in the torture and killing of this period. French Catholics were victimized, and this fact should not be diminished. Priests, especially, were not only mocked, but also brutalized, and even disemboweled on occasion (Greengrass, *Transcripts*, 73). That being said, we might also point out that, on the whole, the human violence was rather one-sided. As Natalie Zemon Davis notes, there is some truth in the Calvinist claim that "those of the Reformed Religion made war only on images and altars, which do not bleed, while those of the Roman religion spilled blood with every kind of cruelty."[31] The author maintains, further, "in bloodshed, the Catholics are the champions" (Davis, *Rites*, 77). Although they account for it differently, Marc Greengrass and Denis Crouzet, among others, have also acknowledged this asymmetry (Greengrass, *Transcripts*, 73). In the case of the rioting at Toulouse in 1562, Greengrass suggests that, "the Protestants were not as ruthless" (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 380). "The Protestants took greater care with human life," he writes further, "particularly at the beginning of the uprising" (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 385). It is for this reason, that our consideration of the religious rioting in sixteenth century France will focus almost exclusively on acts perpetrated by Catholics.

The work of Nathalie Zemon Davis allows us to take a closer look at this issue. Davis attempts to uncover the structure and meaning of popular disturbances in France during the sixteenth century. She has found a certain order in the ardor of these crowds. Far from being an "inchoate mass," she suggests, these rioting mobs "showed many signs of organization" (Davis, *Rites*, 88). Davis argues that they patterned their behavior after popular models, and operated with

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[31] Davis, *Rites*, 76; cf. Bèze, *Histoire* i, 887.

an explicit sense of their goals. "We may see their violence, however cruel," Davis suggests, "not as random and limitless, but as aimed at defined targets, and selected from a repertory of traditional punishments and forms of destruction" (Davis, *Rites*, 53). The types of violence, Davis writes further, were "derived from the Bible, from liturgy, from the action of political authority, or from the traditions of popular folk justice" (Davis, *Rites*, 81-82). In this light, the ritualized nature of popular violence begins to emerge.

If religious rioters appropriated known conventions to give structure to their violence, they may have also borrowed a sense of legitimacy. In so much as groups acted out of their knowledge and experience of church and state practices, they could likewise have adopted the impression that this behavior was justified. Davis argues, that both Protestants and Catholics were "prompted by political and moral traditions which legitimize and even prescribe their violence" (Davis, *Rites*, 53). Indeed, many rioters may have actually seen their violence as an appropriate substitute for a much needed ceremony. Along these lines, Davis claims that, "religious riot is likely to occur when it is believed that religious and/or political authorities are failing in their duties or need help in fulfilling them" (Davis, *Rites*, 70). In short, Davis maintains that the crowds assumed official roles - whether clerical or magisterial - and proceeded to play the part. Her efforts to substantiate this position need not be detailed at length, at this point, as much of what will be considered in the following chapter is to be found in her account. For our present purposes it should be noted, however, that Davis shows a great concern for the intentions of religious rioters. We shall attempt to limit our study, as much as possible, simply to what they did. Beyond this we might reflect upon how these moments may have been experienced.

If our consideration of the heretic executions of the sixteenth century showed that the audience had effectively enlarged their degree of participation in scenes of ritualized violence, Davis' work brings us to consider the possibility that the religious rioting of this period may be

understood along similar lines. Certainly both cases involved commoners taking a more active role in situations where they might otherwise be relatively passive observers. Further, we are here dealing with ritualized violence, seemingly derived from established traditions, typically following official ceremonies or *sanctioned* acts of violence, and always stemming from a religious context or operating in line with religious categories and beliefs. I propose that we may designate the audiences-turned-active in both situations as agent-crowds. That their experience shared some fundamental similarities seems likely. Nichols has described the interference of audience members in the *theatre of martyrdom* as a breakdown in ritual, suggesting that these ritual forms were "exposed as inadequate for the containment of a dynamic process of ever-increasing religious division" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 52). Davis' work brings us to see this behavior rather differently. Agent-crowds whether in public executions or during popular massacres, seem to have appropriated their knowledge and experience of ritual violence. A ritual that is inadequate for the containment of a dynamic process may at the same time be quite adequate for its expression. This is the point when a breakdown becomes an outbreak. A brief historical sketch of a couple major incidents of religious rioting will compliment this exploration of the changing role of the audience.

ii. The Violence at Vassy and Toulouse 1562

In the mid sixteenth century, Toulouse was a prosperous French city of approximately 40,000 inhabitants.[32] The Reformed Religion found great resistance here. As occurred elsewhere in France, the conflict between Catholics and Huguenots was also generally played out along economic lines. While the Protestant creed attracted many artisans, the peasantry remained largely Catholic. Relations between these groups would continue to down spiral through out the second half of the century. In 1561, a Catholic mob attempted to seize the corpse of a merchant's

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[32] Estimates range from 20,000-50,000 inhabitants. See Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 368.

wife, during a Huguenot funeral procession (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 373). Their intention was to give her a proper burial, "à leur mode" (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 3). The result was a two-day riot and the death of a number of Protestants. The fact that this popular violence developed out of the funeral procession is a significant point that should not be overlooked. That the Catholics sought to cut short the Protestant ritual, by intervening with their own ritual seems clear. The question remains, to what extent the violence that ensued may be viewed as an extension of this rite.

In the spring of 1562, the Duke of Guise carried the first conflict of what would come to be known as the French Wars of Religion. Far north of Toulouse in the town of Vassy, the Duke and his troops stumbled upon a large congregation of unarmed Protestants. Of significance is the fact that the royal family was known to frequent this local on sojourn, in the Loire Valley region, near Amboise. The Protestants were conducting a service in a barn, inside the city walls. The noble Guise judged them guilty of gathering in violation of the Edict of 1562. How exactly the violence erupted is unknown, but the troops ended it by killing some 48 Protestants and injuring many others. The slaughter at Vassy incited massacres in Languedoc at Béziers, Cahors, Carcassonne, Castelnaudary and Grenade (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, p375). That the original scene came about at the time of a religious ritual seems significant. The subsequent violence can be seen as something of a response to the inciting massacre at Vassy. Perhaps feeling themselves to be in a similar situation, agent-crowds in neighboring towns responded with violence of a similar sort - often ritualized in nature.

By this point in time, the Huguenots in Toulouse must have begun to fear the worst. At the beginning of May 1562, they attempted a preemptive coup of the city. Both sides seized strongholds and erected barricades; urban warfare ensued. Théodore de Bèze testifies to the brutality in Toulouse. He records a number of atrocities perpetrated by Catholic soldiers on Huguenot civilians, and describes the killing of a long list of noble Protestants. De Bèze estimates

the total number of executions to have been between three and four hundred (Bèze, *Histoire* iii

21-24). Most were hung or decapitated. Yet the acts of violence, perpetrated by soldiers in

Toulouse, pale in comparison to the carnage that occurred during the subsequent popular rioting.

Marc Greengrass has taken a closer look at this issue. He reports that in parts of the city,

"Catholics instituted a campaign of terror, sectarian murder, pillage and imprisonment"

(Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 379).

A belated siege ended with a truce and the promise of safe-conduct for the Huguenot

survivors. The violence, however, had only just begun. The ringing of the tocsins - a bell typically

used to signal emergency - summoned angry peasants from miles away. Nathalie Zemon Davis

has argued that this was a characteristic feature of religious rioting during this period (Davis,

Rites, 72). The moments that followed were gruesome indeed. Huguenots leaving the city were

slaughtered. As we shall see, much of this violence took on a ritualized form. The massacre at

Toulouse was among the bloodiest episodes in the early period of the French Wars of Religion.[33]

Théodore de Bèze estimates the total death toll to have been in the thousands. "La commune

opinion," writes de Bèze, "est qu'en toute cette sedition il y mourut de trios à quatre mille

personnes, tant d'une part que d'autre" (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 18). Similarly, Marc Greengrass has

figured the number of casualties to be around 3,000-4,000 (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 388).

iii. The Saint Bartholomew Day Massacres

The population of the French capital had swelled dramatically for the royal wedding of

1572. The visitors' presence added food and water shortages to an already oppressive heat. This

was the setting for one of the worst massacres in modern European History. Perhaps fearing a

conspiracy to overthrow the court, the king allowed The Duke of Guise to leave the Louvre with

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[33] Owen Chadwick, *The Reformation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton), 162.

two companies of arquebusiers, Anjou's guard, and the express intention of slaughtering

Huguenot nobles in the streets of Paris (White, *Massacre*, 415). The urban militia, many of whom

had personal reasons to oppose the Edict of Saint Germain, was all too willing to assist. The

commoners proved eager as well, and whatever the King's original intentions, the scene quickly

developed into a bloodbath of epic proportions: the massacres of Saint Bartholomew. Before

going any further let us point out, once again, that this massacre was pre-empted by a ritual.

Weddings are among the greatest rites of passage, and royal weddings are the most grandiose of

them all. Of course, it should be noted that this particular wedding was an offense to the Catholics

in and of itself. The fact that Henri de Navarre had not been forced to renounce his Protestant

faith before being allowed to marry a daughter of the King of France did not go unnoticed.

In any case, a string of mass murders ensued across the kingdom. Catholics of all sorts,

including women and children, were involved in the slaughter of Huguenots in Lyons, Bordeaux,

Orleans, Toulousse, Meaux, Bourges, Saumur, Angers, Troyes, Rouen, Gaillac, Bourdeaux, and

throughout the countryside. As Greengrass has suggested, "it was frequently the case that

authorities could not stop the killing, once it had started, and sometimes they did not try"

(Greengrass, *Henri*, 5). While the Reformation was witness to many horrific incidents, nowhere

in Europe was the popular violence as widespread or intensive as in France during this period.

Garrisson suggested that even a conservative count would have "5000 victims across the

kingdom as a whole, at least 2000 of them in Paris alone" (Garrison, *History*, 358). Greengrass

has estimated that 3,000 people were killed in Paris and another 8,000 died in the provinces

(Greengrass, *Henri*, 4). This was the apex of popular violence in France during the sixteenth

century. The duration of this violence is perhaps most concerning of all. As Denis Crouzet has

pointed out in his epic account, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*, the massacre of Saint Bartholomew was

not an isolated incident.[34] The violence was not confined to one night, one week, or one month

even. This was "la saison des St Bartholomé."

In both the religious rioting at Toulouse and in the St. Bartholomew day massacres, it is

interesting to note, commoners took action following royal, clerical, or military agents. That is to

say that commoners finished what began as organized, and in some way reasonably contained or

limited, aggression. The way in which this violence appears to extend public ceremonies is

another point of particular interest. Nathalie Zemon Davis has noted this facet of crowd violence

during the French Wars of Religion. "Much of the religious riot is timed to ritual," writes the

author, "and the violence seems often a curious continuation of the rite" (Davis, *Rites*, 72). That

the great massacres of Saint Bartholomew happened on the occasion of an ostentatious wedding

ceremony certainly seems to strengthen this connection. A more in-depth consideration of the

nature of rioting in France during this period will hopefully add insight to the above

considerations.

iv. The Role of Women and Children

A study of the popular rioting in France during the sixteenth century would be incomplete

without a note on the special character of the groups involved. It seems that many women and

children actively participated in these scenes of religious violence. "Women played their part and

children helped to foment disturbances and were prominent among participants on both sides,"

writes Marc Greengrass (Greengrass, *Henri*, 5). Along these lines, Nathalie Zemon Davis

suggests, "there was significant participation by two other groups of people who, though not

rootless and alienated, had a more marginal relationship to political power than did lawyers,

merchants or even male artisans - namely, city women and teenage boys" (Davis, *Rites*, 59). The

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[34] Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion vers 1525- vers 1610* (Champvallon, 1990).

impact of their involvement was likely significant. From the Catholic perspective it could have been seen as support for their cause. The participation of women and children may well have lent aggressors a sense of justification, by contributing to the perception that these were the acts of innocent people.

The Saint Bartholomew massacres provide us with some of the most interesting examples of the role of women. In some cases they joined fully in the carnage. "Women unsexed, men wanting everything but the strength of the wild beast, children without a single charm of youth or innocence, crowded the streets where the rising day still struggled with the glare of a thousand torches," writes Henri White. "They smelt the odour of blood, and thirsting to indulge their passions for once with impunity, committed horrors that have become the marvel of history," the author continues (White, *Massacre*, 423). Davis includes a number of examples of this phenomenon, found in the accounts of Crespin, De Bèze, and Bosquet. This is a rather particular facet of the agent-crowds of sixteenth century France. The large-scale participation of women and children in horrific acts of violence is a rarity in history.

In other cases, women were more passive partners in crime. One relatively tame example merits careful consideration. Following the Saint Bartholomew gauntlet massacre, further detailed below, victims were left lying in a pile outside the Louvre. Some noble women of the royal court ventured down for a visit. Citing Serranus, Henri White writes that, "some of the ladies in Catherine's train... later in the day, inspected and laughed at the corpses as they lay stripped in the courtyard" (White, *Massacre*, 425). White Notes further that they were "especially curious about the body of Soubise, from whom his wife had sought to be divorced on the ground of nullity of marriage." Of significance here is the way in which these women appear to have been guided by their memory. There was, if you will, a myth of Soubise. In this moment it was addressed. Surely some of the other victims had also made previous impressions on the noble

women of Catherine's train, and these would have been addressed as well. It is important to recall that laughter is a voice of dominance; to be laughed at is to be debased. Further we might note how the act of *de-robing* bodies, in any state, involves a sense of authority. The move to uncover the genitals of (dead) men may also be seen to contain a sense of freedom, the freedom to assert sexual control. We are speaking of a form of dominance. These facts should bring us closer to appreciating this moment as it was experienced. These noble women were confronting their own memory, and rewriting structures of power in the process.

In connection with this point, it should be noted that women played a significant role in the rise of the Huguenot movement. "Although French women did not become Protestant at a rate any higher than the men," writes Baumgartner, "a number of noblewomen were highly visible in their support of church reform and their adherence to the new faith" (Baumgartner, *France*, 159). Among the most notable Protestant women were princess Maguerite of Angoulême and her daughter, Jeanne d'Albret, the queen of Navarre; princess Renée of France; Eleonore de Roye, the wife of Louis of Condé; and Louise de Montmorency, the mother of Gaspard de Coligny, among others. As Baumgartner notes, these women did much to help Calvinists and their cause. They also converted a number of highly influential family members. The nitty-gritty work of support, encouragement, and persuasion should not be downplayed.

At times, the role of women underscored the relation between popular rioting and public ceremony. "As the wives of Catholic tradesmen march with their husbands in Corpus Christi day processions," Davis points out, "so they participate in Catholic religious disturbances" (Davis, *Rites*, 86-87). In the acts of children we may also see this connection with rite. In fact, the resemblance between rite and rioting may be strengthened by the very participation of children. Davis notes being "struck... by the similarity between the license allowed youth to do violence in religious riot and the festive license allowed adolescents in the youth-abbeys in villages and small

towns to act as the conscience of the community in matters of domestic discord" (Davis, *Rites*, 87-88). "In Lyon and Castelnaudary in 1562," adds Davis further, "*enfants* stoned Protestant worshippers on their way to services." This scene recalls the experiences of the early Christian church. It also brings us to consider the possibility that children were appropriating ritual forms. Others examples abound. In October of 1572, the boys of Poivins in Champagne conducted a mock trial on an already executed Huguenot. Their attention to detail is reflected in the fact that they played out the roles of lawyers and judge, with arguments and verdict. The final ruling was against the original court decision to simply hang the accused. "Before the eyes of a hundred spectators... the corpse was dragged through the streets by the feet and burned" (Davis, *Rites*, 64). The behavior of these children is at once reminiscent of the acts of agent-crowds noted above.

If women and children were assailants during this period, they were also the victims of religious rioting. Both groups were prominent among the three thousand victims in Toulouse, 1562 (Chadwick, *Reformation*, 162). Crespin's account of the Saint Bartholomew day massacres reveals a number of atrocities against women: female servants, wives, and daughters suffered greatly. White also notes a number of gruesome scenes. In one case, a pregnant woman was forced to walk over the face of her husband. She was later drowned (White, *Massacre*, 431). Forced to abuse her own husband, this woman was tortured from the inside out. The treasures of spousal love and loyalty were the targets of this violence. This case seems to typify the way agent-crowds were able to debase their victims. It is also important to note that French women were often the victims of sexual crimes. The account of De Bèze testifies to this fact. "Et quant aux femmes & filles, la plufpart eftoient violées," writes the author (Bèze, *Histoire* i, 486). The rape of two young girls in front of their own mother highlights a list of sexual violations perpetuated by agent-crowds in Toulouse (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 16). It should not be taken for

granted that this represents an entirely distinct form of violence. As our consideration turns to the Huron prisoner of war execution ceremony, it will be important to recall this point.

The violence directed against women and children was often brutal, and even the defenseless were targeted. In Paris, an invalid woman was dragged naked through the streets (White, *Massacre*, 432). A man named René Bianchi is said to have killed a crippled boy with his hands (White, *Massacre*, 431). Babies were taken from their mothers and smashed against the ground or wall, just as others were torn from the womb and likewise treated. "En la rue S. Martin, vne femme enceinte, prefte à acoucher, s'eftant fauue fur les tuilles de fa maifon, y fut tuee, & par après fendue, puis fon enfant ietté & briefé contre les murailles," writes Crespin.[35] This type of behavior is also quite distinctive. Again, it will be important to recall this facet of the as our consideration proceeds to the North American context. In connection with this point, we might add that it was not only adults who targeted the weak: children went after other children. In one case, writes Crespin, "Vn petit enfant au maillot fut trainé par les rues, auec vne ceinture au col, par des garcons aagez de neuf" (Crespin, *Martyrs*, 680). Following the initial violence, many children were exploited further. At Tours, as White notes, "little children (whose parents had been murdered) could be bought for a crown a piece" (White, *Massacre*, 217).

These present considerations make clear a number of notable points. To begin, we might reiterate that women and children were rather actively involved in the violence of this period. Secondly, it is clear that they were not often spared. Next, we have seen how they were operating out of their memories. We have seen how these impressions were affected as well. On a related note, we have also considered the way that ritual forms were appropriated. In short, women and children were at once the stock and target of agent-crowds. Yet the reader should not be led to

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[35] This is but one of many examples Crespin includes of babies being thrown against walls or floors. Crespin, *Martyrs*, 680.

believe that Catholics were entirely unique in these respects. Protestant women and children

participated no less in the popular disturbances of their own religious community, even though

they may have been less violent. It becomes apparent that a wide spectrum of people were

involved the violence of this period. That is to say that a broader demographic than is usual, even

in times of war, became intimate with the horrors of religious rioting in France during the

sixteenth century. A more detailed consideration of some of the outstanding types of violence will

add depth to this study, and set the stage for a comparison with the aforementioned North

American tradition.

V. Types of Violence in Sixteenth Century French Religious Rioting

i. The use of Water and Fire

Many French Protestants were ceremonially burnt to death during the first half of the

sixteenth century. Death by fire also became a popular motif in the religious rioting of this period.

This tendency must be seen in light of the larger European practice of heretic executions.

Catholics and Protestants alike were known to put religious deviants to death in this way -

although the former showed a greater willingness to resort to this level of violence. Discussing

the Late Medieval church, Patrick Collinson writes "Both Catholic and Protestant regimes gave,

as they thought, honour to God by burning, on an unprecedented scale, those enemies of God,

mostly female, who were believed to be witches and in league with Satan" (Collinson, *Medieval*,

266). In the Christian tradition fire has often been associated with the damnation of hell. For this

reason, it may certainly have seemed to be an appropriate end for blasphemous heretics. But the

complex and often ambivalent nature of fire is reflected in the fact that it may be seen as the work

of Satan no less than that of God.

In "Arsonists in Eighteenth-Century France: An Essay in the Typology of Crime", André

Abbiatecci points out that, "In the Middle Ages the fire-setter (*boutefeu*) was regarded as one in

league with the devil, with the powers of hell."[36] This ambivalence is likely to be found in early

modern perspectives on the work of French agent-crowds. The difference between 'wicked

arsonists' and 'holy executioners' was, on some level, a matter of perception. At the same time,

we might add, the experience of being a *boutefeu* in sixteenth century France likely proceeded on

either front, despite popular impressions to the contrary. Abbiatecci's study, while focusing on

French culture of the eighteenth century, reminds us that arson was a powerful means of applying

social pressure. The arsonist was a very feared figure in French society at this time, especially in

the countryside. Abbiatecci also notes the enduring prominence of fire at rural festivals and

ceremonies, such as Saint John's Day (Abbiateci, *Arsonists*, 159-160). In this way he underscores

the ceremonial character of large fires.

The number of references to burning will likely strike a reader of Jean Crespin's account

of the Saint Bartholomew day massacres. In fact, the extensive use of fire is among the most

notable facets of the popular violence in the French Wars of Religion. Soldiers, executioners, and

commoners alike employed this basic element as a part of their torture and killing techniques. It

seems that aggressors from all levels of society appropriated these means. In Palmiers, for

example, "a bookseller's wife set fire to the house of the leading Huguenot," writes Davis.[37]

While this fact should be seen in light of the natural distribution and efficacy of these means, it

remains nonetheless intriguing. Both water and fire would have been readily available in most

areas, and since the human condition is so very vulnerable to their effects, one might expect that

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[36] André Abbiateci, "Arsonists in Eighteenth-Century France: An Essay in the Typology of Crime" [Hereafter cited in text], In *Deviants and the Abandonned in French Society: Selections from the Annales* Vol. IV, ed. Robert Foster and Orest Ranum (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, January- February 1970), 157.

[37] Davis, *Rites*, 86; cf. Bèze, *Histoire*, i, 227, 719; cf. Crespin, *Martyrs*, iii, 522; cf. Bosquet, 148-150.

they would have found use during the French Wars of Religion. But the sheer frequency of use is remarkable.

De Bèze's account of the violence at Toulouse likewise testifies to the role of fire in the religious rioting of this period. The author claims that during the conflict several hundred buildings were intentionally set ablaze (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 16). Most of the damage was done to Protestant places of living or work, but it seems that authorities were also willing to allow neighboring buildings to be destroyed as a part of a general sweep of the area. Greengrass notes that they had earlier set an example by "burning all the book shops around the Palais de Justice and taking many of the shopkeepers prisoner whether or not they were known to sell heretical material" (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 385)

Drowning and the use of water in acts of religious rioting is also a common theme in the popular violence of this period. In Paris, such behavior may very well be understood in relation to a tradition of related abuse. Water torture had been a regional specialty here, during the Middle Ages (Lacroix, *France*, 410). Yet, while this fact may help us understand some of the initial scenes of the Saint Bartholomew massacre it should be noted that cases of cruelty and murder involving water were common across the country. On the 15th of May 1562, Théodore de Bèze suggests, 25 Protestants found hiding in the Roman sewer system in Toulouse were promptly drowned in the river (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 19). Suspected Huguenots were rounded up in such numbers during the height of this conflict that the prisons needed to be cleared in order to free space. Excess prisoners were thrown in the river and shot if they tried to swim. De Bèze further records men, women, and children being thrown out of windows and into the river below (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 10). Henry White describes the massacre at Tours in 1562. In one instance, "two women were dragged to the river and flung into water so shallow, that they could not drown, whereupon they were beaten to death with oars and poles" (White, *Massacre*, 217). The scene

was horrific, and water played a prominent role. "Boats filled with victims were sunk in the river," says White. "In five or six days the banks of the river down to Angers were covered with dead bodies," he adds further (White, *Massacre*, 217). The interesting case of the killing of the president of Tours, Jean Bourgeau, leads us to consider the impact of such behavior on the perpetrators themselves. Bourgeau, as White notes, "was first drowned and then hanged to a tree and disemboweled" (White, *Massacre*, 217). The order of abuse is quite peculiar. As we shall see, however, this is far from the only case of post-mortem abuse. This fact points us, once again, towards the memory of those involved. While Bourgeau was dead, the memories he had helped make lived on in the minds of his attackers. Bourgeau would participate in the full ritual even if some gestures came after death. Perhaps, in this way, these impressions would be addressed.

It should not be assumed that forms of water and fire related violence should be taken as one, as a single type of violence. But a brief look at this subject will show that there is good reason to consider them together. Both fire and water had, of course, long been used to purify, ritually or otherwise. Early modern Europeans were, on some level, aware of the value of fire for destroying diseased corpses or sanitizing food. Similarly, in Catholic liturgy, Holy water was used to cleanse spiritual disease and purify the body. The interesting case of the Gillette Le Mercier, witnessed her parents murder before being baptized in their blood, forces us to consider the way religious motifs of this sort were being appropriated for violence (Greengrass, *Transcripts*, 81). The fact that Henri White records that she was "dipped" should bring us to recall the practice of fire dipping in the public execution and, likewise, force us to probe deeper along these lines (White, *Massacre*, 430). "The religious significance of destruction by water or fire is clear enough," writes Davis. "The rivers which received so many Protestant corpses are not merely convenient graves, they are temporarily a kind of holy water, an essential feature of Catholic rites of exorcism" (Davis, *Rites*, 82). As for the fire, Davis sees a connection with the

burning of spices. "If Protestants rejected holy water and incense, they still follow Deuteronomy in accepting fire as a sacred means of purification."

The many incidents involving fire and water have led a number of theorists to surmise that some of the violence of this period manifest itself in the form a rite of purification. "Huguenot victims were thrown in the river Garonne in Toulousse in May 1562," writes Marc Greengrass, "and part of the city was burnt to the ground as ritual cleansings of an impure city" (Greengrass, *Henri*, 5). David Nicholls points out that the tendency to burn heretics (rather than hang them), beginning in the sixteenth century, was "an honour otherwise reserved for witches, homosexuals, and those guilty of bestiality" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 50). This fact, Nichols continues, can be understood as "underlining the connection with impurity and 'unnatural acts'" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 50). Along these lines, Davis adds of both Protestant and Catholic groups, that their intention was "to purify the religious community and humiliate the enemy and thus make him less harmful" (Davis, *Rites*, 81-82). We shall return to this sense of disempowerment, below.

While there is good reason to believe that assailants meant to enact a purification rite of sorts, it is not our present task to dwell on intentions. Rather we are here concerned primarily with the experience itself - the *what* and *how* of religious torture and killing. On this level we might simply point out that the work of agent-crowds in many ways cleansed France of the Protestant threat, and much of the violence may have been experienced along these lines. One particular facet of this violence that merits further deliberation, and seems likely to shed light on our present investigation, is the use of fire and water in cases of post-mortem abuse. While many Huguenots were drowned to death, many more were thrown in the water after death. In fact, the water seems to have served as something of a drop-off point for the dead, the near dead, and victims likely to drown. In one incident during the Saint Bartholomew day massacres, as many as 700 to 800 people were clubbed to death and thrown in the river. Writing weeks later on the 15th

of September, the nuncio Salviati wrote, "some tens of Huguenots, caught by day in various places, are thrown into the river without any disturbance" (White, *Massacre*, 470). Indeed many authors, including Crespin, suggest that La Seine ran red with blood during these massacres. Jaques Copier pointed out that the bodies were "envoyés à Rouen sans bateau" (White, *Massacre*, 435).

While there is a practical element to this convention, there may also be more to the experience itself. Far from being left in the city on display, as was often done with the bodies of convicted heretics, these remains were taken away. If the former custom served as a reminder, can the later also be seen for its relation to memory? The emblematic relation of water to the mind should here be noted. Just as the victims were to drift down the river, so too were they, in some sense, to be removed from the minds of the assailants. That is to say that we may see the dumping of bodies in the river as both a way, as well as a sign, to forget. But if the river helped some forget, it may have helped others to learn (or remember). Just as the bodies were sent to Rouen, so too were messages or impressions. We may this in so much as they can be thought to have invoked certain ideas, moods, or reactions. There was much more than mutilated remains floating in that river: there were, moments, signs, and memories.

While burning became the preeminent form of heretic executions, in the first half of the sixteenth century, many victims of religious rioting were burned, throughout the century. In some cases the corpse was set aflame long after the initial violence. It is interesting to note in connection with these occurrences, the fact that many trial records were also burnt. Nichols points out that the ashes were often scattered as well. In all, he suggests, "even their memory was meant to be destroyed" (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 50). This is a most significant point, and one that is all too easily overlooked. Our perspective is such that torture and execution are typically viewed as the actions of one party against another. Certainly this is with good reason. It should not, however, be

allowed to blind us to the possibility that there is more involved. At death the victim ceases to collect memories and to have memories, but continues to inspire memories and to be a memory, or part of some, for others. My point is that the victim's memories - that is the memories of the victim - live on and must be dealt with. In Nichols statement, the memory to be destroyed belonged, in fact, to the perpetrators. To be clear, these were actions taken by one party against itself.

It is in this light that we may see the Huguenot penchant for producing martyrologies. At stake in the struggle between Catholic agent-crowds and Protestant writers was the legacy of the victim. This was a powerful seed for the Huguenots. As such it was a dangerous force, which threatened to haunt the Catholic community. If we have seen how one group appropriated ritual forms and the way that their efforts worked to *undo* the victim, and the myth of the martyr by consequence, we might also appreciate the ritualized nature of the opposing struggle: the efforts to maintain the integrity of the victim, and generate such accounts. For the Huguenots, victims of religious violence were seen as witnesses. In their deaths the community recognized support for their claims. These testimonies had to be recorded. Through Protestant martyrologists victims were ritually transformed into powerful myths.

ii. The Effigy

On one level, an effigy is not the individual it is meant to represent. Effigies are models or symbols, they are mannequins or dummies, but they are not people. The victim holds this sense most keenly, and others may share it. On another level, however, the effigy *is* that who it is meant to be. For those who create and destroy it, the effigy effectively becomes the individual. It embodies all that this individual is or was. It may conjure the same memories and impressions, and it affords others the opportunity to treat it as they would treat the individual it stands for.

There are two aspects to the later point. First, it allows individuals to take a virtually limitless

degree of action against the victim. While the violence remains merely representational, on one

level, it nonetheless holds the capacity to shape memories and fabricate a felt shift in power

relations. Through abuse the victim is symbolically disempowered at the same time as the

aggressor ascends to a sense of dominance. In this moment the reality of memory and shared

impressions transcend the figurative nature of this ritualistic behavior. Secondly, in crowds, the

individual witnesses other aggressors abusing the image of the victim. This experience, perhaps

more than the last, is capable of leaving a powerful impression. For in the eye of the onlooker the

victim and the aggressor may be seen together. The scene is complete, in a certain sense: a tidy

moment and a compelling souvenir for the mind.

It is interesting to note, in connection with this line of reasoning, a rise in the number of

effigy burnings around the mid. sixteenth century. The French countryside was repeatedly host to

such scenes. Absentee heretics could not avoid having the impressions they inspired reconsidered

in the light of the ritualized attacks on their likeness. Along the same lines, Nichols points out that

effigy burnings allowed for the execution ceremony to be staged more than once, so as to

accommodate people living in different areas (Nicholls, *Theatre*, 54). This fact, I believe, should

be understood in terms of the above considerations. In so much as effigy burnings may be taken

as a form of the *theatre of martyrdom,* they represent another level of increased involvement and

greater control on the part of the agent-crowds. After all, onlookers could easily join in this

ritualized violence, and the victim had no choice but to play the part. In so much as effigy burning

may be seen as a purification ritual, it is not so much the victim being purified, nor even the town

or country, but the minds of those who invoke it. In all, the destruction of effigies is a form of

violence that operates primarily in mind of the aggressors. It is an attack on (their) impressions of

the victim. The proliferation of these rituals would have given agent-crowds added force in the

battle for the fields of memory.

iii. Cannibalism

The French wars of Religion played host to several separate episodes of cannibalism.

Interestingly, some cases involved multiple incidents. The final massacre of Huguenots fleeing

the city of Toulouse was one such circumstance. Greengrass notes that the "*capitaine de la santé*,

who was sent to identify and collect bodies, reported that he had found 53 half-eaten corpses on

the short stretch of road from the gates of the city near the *parlement* to the hamlet at Saint-Roc"

(Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 388). In some cases, such as those during the siege of Sancerre in 1573, it

seems that many ate human flesh out of sheer starvation. A diet of rats, rotten remains, boiled

shoes, belts, and horse feces would certainly bring some closer to transgressing this taboo (White,

Massacre, 486). There are, of course, modern Western cases of cannibalism by necessity, and the

reader will likely not be shocked by this behavior.

In other instances, however, including during the violence on Saint Bartholomew's day

and the following massacres, rioting led to an entirely different form of cannibalism. Carcassone

in 1561, Troyes in 1562, and Sens in 1562 played host to such events.[38] Protestants were also said

to have resorted to this level of violence. The body of Saint Fulcran was shot and eaten by

Huguenots at Lodève in 1573.[39] One of the most important witnesses to the acts of cannibalism in

sixteenth century France was the ethnographer and explorer Jean de Léry (1534-1613). Léry had

been to Brasil and seen the native cannibal tradition in person. This gave him a unique

perspective on the French context. As fate would have it, he would again become a first hand-

witness to these types of horrors, upon his return to France. Léry suffered through the siege of

Sancerre, as a Protestant, in 1573. This experience led him to devote some of his *Histoire d'un*

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[38] Davis, *Rites*, 83; cf. Bèze, *Histoire* i, 94; ii, 478 ; iii, 419-420.

[39] Davis, *Rites*, 83; cf. Le Roy Ladurie, *Les Paysans de Languedoc*, i, n.5 (Paris: Flammarion, 1969), 398.

Voyage fait en la terre du Brésil to the subject of these atrocities.[40] Discussing the rioting in Lyon

in 1572, Léry writes, "...among other acts horrible to recount, which were perpetrated at that time

throughout the kingdom, the fat of human bodies... was it not publicly sold to the highest

bidder?" (Whatley, *Voyage*, 132). "The livers, hearts, and other parts of these bodies," Léry

continues, "were they not eaten by the furious murderers...?" Describing the killing, in Auxerre,

of an individual named Coeur de Roy, Léry further remarks, "did not those who committed this

murder cut his heart to pieces, display it for sale to those who hated him, and finally, after grilling

it over coals - glutting their rage like mastiffs - eat of it?"

Michel Eyquem de Montaigne (1533-1592) charged the French cannibals with being

more barbarous than their American counterparts, for having eaten of men while they still lived,

rather than waiting until they had passed.[41] From Léry's perspective, there was, likewise, a

fundamental difference between the acts of the American natives and those of his French

compatriots. The former was a tradition, with well-established conventions and order. By contrast

he viewed the cannibalism in France as a breakdown in order. It was, according to Léry, not a

custom or a ritual in France, but a series of senseless acts. These words are reminiscent of the

position of David Nicholls, noted above. The extent to which we may, or may not, view these

actions as having a ritualized foundation remains unsettled. In any case, this perspective led Léry

to a harsher criticism of the French violence. Consider the following section.

"So let us henceforth no longer abhor so very greatly the cruelty of the anthropophagous - that is,
man-eating - savages. For since there are some here in our midst even worse and more detestable
than those who, as we have seen attack only enemy nations, while the ones over here have
plunged into the blood of their kinsmen, neighbors, and compatriots, one need not go beyond one'
own country, nor as far as America, to see such monstrous and prodigious things" (Whatley,
Voyage, 133).

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[40] Jane Whatley, trans., *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil* [Hereafter cited in text] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); cf. Jean de Léry, *Histoire d'un Voyage fait en la Terre du Brésil* (Genève: Droz, 1975).
[41] Whatley, *Voyage*, 244, n.4; cf. Donald M. Frame, trans., *The Complete Works of Montaigne* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1957) 158; cf. Michel Eyquem de Montaigne. "Cannibals," in *Essais* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969).

If cannibalism is the consumption of human flesh, then the treatment of people in a manner reminiscent of the handling of food is on the edge of such behavior. Certainly, at least, cases of such violence merit mention in the context of this investigation. In *Hidden Transccripts*, Greengrass uncovers the account of an anonymous Parisian Huguenot in 1567. While watching guard one night, the author recounts, "they found the skin of a man who had been frayed alive," recounts the author (Greengrass, *Transcripts*, 83). Along these lines, both White and Crespin include the story of a cook who ran a spit through a prostrate victim with his fork. The hands of this woman were later fed to the dogs (White, *Massacre*, 431). White also records that the account of one girl who, "after enduring unutterable barbarities, was covered with straw and roasted alive, as they would have scorched a dead pig" (White, *Massacre*, 232). Another man is said to have eaten his dinner, with flesh covered hands, while stating, "that is was an honor to him, because it was the blood of heretics" (White, *Massacre*, 436).

Davis quotes Montaigne, in his *Essais*, as saying that some of these Catholic acts of cannibalism were, "not for hunger but to represent an extreme vengeance" (Davis, *Rites*, 83). The nature of this vengeance is a point of interest for this present study. The experience of cannibalism is our point of entry. The challenge of sensitizing ourselves to the bodily experience of cannibalism is great. The basic nature of these moments will always rest beyond those who have never experienced them. Certain things can be said with certainty, however. For the victim, the experience would involve horror and agony - this hardly needs to be pointed out. Yet it would have also involved shock. This a natural part of the realization that one is on the verge of being treated in a way that is so fundamentally different from normal social relations. The shift to cannibalism involves a form of ontological transformation. In all these gruesome scenes of butchery, the victims were treated as if they more animal than human. They were debased to the

point of being consumed, digested, and excreted. Their remains could not become relics; they were filth. Their end was not sacred, but profane.

iv. Gauntlets

The gauntlet is another distinct type of abuse. In the history of this device it has found employment as a popular military punishment. In its most essential form, the gauntlet involves a line of assailants. The victim is forced to *run the gauntlet* by passing each assailant from start to finish. To ensure that the victim follows a straight path, to accommodate a greater number of assailants, or simply to intensify the torture, gauntlets often have two parallel lines. The punishment ranges from flogging to more critical damage, depending mostly on the weapons employed. It is characteristic of gauntlets that every assailant is afforded the opportunity to participate in the torture of the victim. As we shall see in our consideration of Huron methods of torture, the gauntlet also invokes issues of inclusion and exclusion.

Gauntlets were used on a number of occasions, during the French Wars of Religion. One example occurred within the walls of the Louvre, in the proximity of the King, at the time of the Saint Bartholomew massacres. A group of Huguenots were assembled and as Henri White notes, "as each man answered to his name, he stepped into the courtyard, where he had to make his way through a double line of Swiss mercenaries" (White, *Massacre*, 424). Armed with sword, spear, and halberd the troops made quick and violent work of their victims. The incident resulted in the death of every member of the group, and their bodies were pilled in a heap. Given the difference in numbers and weapons, as well as the level of organization, it would have been easy enough for the Swiss Guard to slaughter these Huguenots in an instant. The fact that a decision was made to have their final moments unfold in so ritualized a manner is significant. The Huguenots were

meant to endure the abuse of many in an ordered procession. They were to be killed when they could be construed as cowardly, trying to escape.

Another prominent example of this type of violence occurred during the incident at Toulouse mentioned above. As it seems, at different points in the conflict, Huguenots were again subject to run gauntlets. Théodore de Bèze speaks of captives having to endure "des coups de poing, de dagues, et de pierres" along the way to the prison and worse cruelties once they arrived (Bèze, *Histoire* iii, 1). Greengrass likewise suggests that inside the prison at Toulouse, Huguenots were forced to run a gauntlet "where they were stripped and beaten and their beards torn off" (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 379). Finally, on the subject of Toulouse, it should be noted that the way in which the religious rioting of the commoners outside the city walls materialized was itself comparable to a form of gauntlet. As a result of the fact that the Catholics were waiting along the paths to neighboring villages, and the Huguenots were desperately trying to reach these safe havens, they once again faced a line of assailants. In order to leave the city, the Protestants had little choice, Greengrass suggests, but to "run the gauntlet of enraged Catholic citizens crying, 'Vive la Croix!'" (Greengrass, *Anatomy*, 387). Many might have only flogged the Huguenots. Certainly others, however, took the violence to another level. It should be pointed out that in these scenes it is mostly commoners who organized the gauntlet killings. Seemingly unsatisfied with the conflict as it ended, agent-crowds completed the violence in a somewhat ritualized fashion.

It is interesting to note the tale of Henri de Navarre visiting Charles IX on his deathbed. The King had called Henri to the castle, but the Queen Mother arranged it so that he would have to pass through two lines of armed guards (White, *Massacre*, 491). Henri's hesitation at this moment is quite understandable, for the gauntlet is a most daunting obstacle. Once the victim enters the gauntlet, he or she is channeled past each aggressor. While perhaps difficult to

organize, the structure of this rite is most choice-worthy for groups seeking a significant and

somewhat uniform degree of participation. The way in which it ensures the involvement of all

those who comprise it makes the gauntlet quite dangerous. For the participation of all dilutes the

responsibility of each. Freed from the burden of individual action, assailants are prone to find

new levels of aggression. Gauntlets facilitate an escalation in violence, as they allow a sense of

culpability to down-spiral into detachment. This line of reasoning certainly seems supported by

the cases noted above. These considerations lead us to emphasize the volatile nature of gauntlets,

and the agent-crowds that employed them in sixteenth century France.

One final consideration should be included on the topic of gauntlets. The victim, as

mentioned, is forced to walk a straight line with peril on either side. This experience bears a

fundamental relation to that of the rope-dancer. Walking a high wire involves this same sense of a

procession through a channel of hazard. Death can come at any moment from either side, and

safety may only be found through a direct course to the end. It might very well prove significant

that rope-dancing was a common feature in France during the late Middle Ages and the early

modern period. "From the fourteenth to the end of the sixteenth century they were never absent

from any public ceremonial," writes Paul Lacroix of the rope-dancer, "and it was at the state

entries of kings and queens, princes and princesses, that they were especially called upon to

display their talents." "In the sixteenth century these dancers and tumblers became so numerous

that they were to be met with everywhere, in the provinces as well as in the towns," he adds

further (Lacroix, *France*, 229-230).

v. Mutilation

Much of what we have already discussed could certainly be considered mutilation. Yet

we should be wise to include a few isolated remarks on this topic alone. During popular rioting,

Huguenots were often dismembered, decapitated, or simply hacked to pieces. "To an eerie chorus of "strange whistles and hoots," writes Davis, "they were thrown to the dogs like Jezebel, they were dragged through the streets, they had their genitalia and internal organs cut away, which were then hawked through the city in a ghoulish commerce."[42] In fact, the great variety of forms of mutilation attested to during this period is rather astonishing. Our semiotic approach offers insight into the experience of this behavior. Each part of the body is taken here to be a sign. The removal of each sign is also a sign. Should we apply this method to Crespin's account of a woman having her hands chopped off during the Saint Bartholomew day massacres, for example, we are brought to see the hand as a sign of power and this act of mutilation as a sign of disempowerment. Paul Lacroix writes of the economic condition of *mortmain* in his account of the Middle Ages. "He who had not the power of going where he would, of giving or selling, of leaving by will or transferring his property, fixed or movable, as he thought best was called a man of *mortmain*" (Lacroix, *France*, 24-25). "This name was apparently chosen, writes the author further, "because the hand, 'considered the symbol of power and the instrument of donation,' was deprived of movement, paralyzed, in fact struck as by death."

One fact, above all else, is striking about the acts of mutilation that occurred during religious rioting: much of it occurred post-mortem. We have already seen how women of the court engaged in such behavior, but this case is hardly unique. Davis points us in a promising direction when she suggests that, "the bodies had to be weakened and humiliated further" (Davis, *Rites*, 83). Of course, in a *real* way they could not be weakened or humiliated anymore: they were dead. That is, of course, unless we take the perspective of the aggressor(s) as the primary plane of meaning. The memory of the victim survives the execution, sometimes in rather good shape. Sometimes it survives in the mind of the executioner, and it is here that it must be *undone*. The

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[42] Davis, *Rites*, 83; cf. Strange sounds: Crespin, *Martyrs* iii 681; cf. Dog feedings: Bèze, *Histoire* i, 421, 429, and Crespin, *Martyrs* iii, 693; cf. Selling corpses, Bèze, *Histoire* i, 978, and Bèze, *Histoire* ii, 846, and Crespin, *Martyr* iii, 713.

death of Admiral Coligny is a prime example of this sort of behavior. His death brings us to

consider the possibility that much of what went on *against* him was really *for* someone else.

Again, this line of reasoning requires a shift in our perspective. More than doing things to

Coligny, the people in this story were doing things to themselves. These actions may well have

terrified other Protestants, at the same time as they reassured Catholics. In the later sense they

may have also helped Catholics confirm their own identity. On another level, however, much of

the violence effected a religious transaction operating on the level of memory. A brief look at the

demise of Gaspard de Coligny will complement this investigation.

VI. Case Study: The *undoing* of Gaspard de Coligny

It is clear that Admiral Coligny was one of the main targets that fateful August evening in

Paris, 1572. The King may have feared his growing political ambitions and support from the

powerful body of Huguenot nobles. The House of Guise certainly wanted revenge, for his role in

the death of their kinsman. His demise would have also translated for them into more political

power as well as greater personal security. The Spanish likewise had reason to favor his removal.

Even the Queen Mother might have envisioned the world better without the Admiral. But to

simply state that he was killed the 23rd of August 1572 is to fail to appreciate the complex nature

of this episode. For the trial, torture, and death of Coligny unfolded in a quite unconventional

manner - it occurred in the opposite order.

The Admiral lay already injured, from the attempt on his life of the previous evening,

when the troops accompanying the Duke of Guise stormed his room in the hôtel on the Rue de

Béthesy. While the accounts of his death differ slightly, certain points seem relatively clear.

Coligny was stabbed in his sleeping chambers and thrown through the window unto the streets of

Paris. The Duke of Guise, waiting below, confirmed the deed. Protestant accounts suggest that

the he also stoned the Admiral's corpse, decapitated him, and had his head sent to the pope

(Crespin, *Martyrs* 667). Of course we must understand these accounts in light of certain notable

precedents in Christian history, and the interests of Huguenot martyrologists. To this we shall

return, for now it suffices to note that this marked the end of the life of Coligny. The violence

directed against him, however, was only beginning. Hours later, the popular attacks on his body

would begin (Davis, *Rites*, 63). When the mob discovered him, he had long since passed away,

and his head was missing. For whatever reason, though, they were not satisfied. The corpse of

Coligny was disemboweled and castrated. His hands were cut off, and his remains were run

through the sewers. Children were encouraged to play a prominent role. In the end, the mutilated

corpse of Coligny hung by the feet for three days (Crespin, *Martyrs*, 667).

The following October, Charles IX put to trial a few of the surviving Huguenot

'conspirators'. Among them was the memory of Gaspard de Coligny. The verdict was severe: his

legacy was sentenced to execution. As Garrisson notes, Coligny's coat of arms was to be defaced

(Garrison, *History*, 350). His possessions were to be confiscated. His family had their noble rank

removed. His portrait was to be broken and trampled by the public hangman. His estate,

Châtillon-sur-Loing, was to be burnt to the ground and the remains were to be salted for sterility.

We are reminded of David Nichols remarks on the execution of French heretics. "Guilty of the

ultimate religious and political crime of *lèse-majesté divine*, even their memory was meant to be

destroyed along with all physical evidence of their existence on this earth and in this polity"

(Nicholls, *Theatre*, 50).

Had he survived to be a witness, of course, the great Protestant leader would surely have

felt agony and humiliation. His assailants would have likely reveled in his misfortune. Yet even

in his absence, we might suggest, he was in some sense overcome. He was belittled in the minds

of those present. It may help to probe deeper into the experience of these acts of ritualized

violence. We shall appropriate a semiotic method fort this purpose. Such an approach to the human body allows us to understand it as a composite work of signs - as mentioned. All parts natural or artificial have an object, ground, and an interpretant. If the head may be seen as a sign of power, for example, then decapitation becomes an act of disempowerment. The removal of his hands may be seen in similar terms. His castration and disembowelment by the hands of children, worked against impressions of his strength, virility, and fertility. Notions of his nobility and wealth were confronted by the defacement of his family coat of arms and the confiscation of his property. The demolition of his castle, likewise, debased his status and heritage. The destruction of his likeness was a powerful sign, and a clear attack on the way that he would be remembered. Taken as a whole, the actions against Coligny may be seen as an attack on all that he was and had. The Admiral was systematically *undone*. Again we are approaching these scenes with an eye for the signs involved in each action and their impact on the realm of memory.

The extent to which he was tortured post-mortem is a significant facet of this violence. His *absence* should lead us to realize that these actions were taken more for the audience than against him. That is, while torture is always seemingly about people doing something to a victim, in a very real way it is also about people doing something to themselves and others. Coligny had previously, through a series of moments, impressed himself upon the memory of all those who knew of him. There were, if you will, the seeds of the myth of Gaspard de Coligny. This myth could have manifested itself on many levels, including one of the highest in the religious realm. His life had in many ways laid the foundation for his ascension to the level of martyr in the stories of the French Protestant community. Let us recall the Protestant claim that the body of Coligny was stoned and dragged through the underworld of Parisian streets for three days (Crespin, *Martyrs*, 667). Such accounts draw direct parallels with the lives of early Christian martyrs, such as Steven and the Christ himself. Along the same lines, the report of Coligny's head voyaging towards Rome invokes an association with John the Baptist, and casts the pope in the

role of Salome. In so much as the myth of Coligny-as-martyr threatened to enter circulation it was something very real that the Catholic community had to contend with. On the night of St. Bartholomew, agent-crowds took an active role in tarnishing the image of Coligny. They did much to disassociate him from positive elements, and thereby confront potentially powerful memories. In this way they worked to *undo* the myth-maker, Gaspard de Coligny.

VII. French Social Views of Death and Dying

The scenes noted above arise out of another context that merits further consideration. These acts of aggression were perpetrated within a culture with its own social views on death and dying. A brief word on this topic will compliment our assessment. Commoners of the late Middle Ages had a familiarity with death that contrasts greatly with our own. Food shortages, disease, climatic catastrophes, and war had made death a relatively common occurrence during this period. This hardship had an enduring impact. "The scars which the fourteenth century had inflicted upon popular sentiment had by no means faded away," writes Janine Garrisson. "Anxiety about death and about life after death weighed heavily on Christians in search of solace for their inward uncertainties," she adds further (Garrison, *History*, 71). The extent to which death was on the mind of the sixteenth century French is reflected in the prominence of the *danse macabre*. Garrisson points out that, "the dance of death that, without respect of persons, led all to their inevitable end, was one of the most pervasive images of the ages: some 54 examples survive from the fifteenth to the sixteenth centuries, while preceding ages had not produced any" (Garrison, *History*, 73). Greengrass maintains that a "delight in the macabre" was a prominent characteristic of the Valois court, well known to, and frequently denounced by, the Protestants (Greengrass, *Henri*, 21). The tragedies of this period, discussed above, surely accentuated this trend.

French Christian perceptions of the afterlife likely had an impact on their experience of religious torture and rioting. We have already discussed how anticipation makes moments meaningful in the way that they are for human beings. Both Catholics and Protestants alike, viewed death as marking a transition from the physical to the spiritual realm. The contrast between these two groups can be seen in their conceptions of life after death. Penny Roberts discusses these differences in here study on French Catholic and Huguenot burial systems and related beliefs, "Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth-century France."[43] "According to Catholics," writes Roberts, "death... resulted in the passing of the soul into Heaven (Rarely), Limbo (for the unbaptised few), Purgatory (most often), or Hell (only for the most ungodly) according to an individual's behaviour on earth (Roberts, *Contesting*, 133). The possibility of moving within these categories was largely dependant upon intercession. This allowed the exchange between generations to continue. Friends and family members could pray or buy indulgences on behalf of the dead, the former was likewise believed to be capable of aid the living. Ultimately this led to a system of measuring deeds akin to the ones used in towns of the time for space, money, labor, and goods. "The invention of Purgatory, on which the system of indulgences rested," writes Garrison, "led to the kind of spiritual balance-sheet on which the merits of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints were set against the punishments due for sins" (Garrison, *History*, 71). It is in this light that she sees the "luxuriant growth of the cult of the saints" during this period, as well as the fact that the cult of the Virgin, "grew ever stronger and took on new forms" (Garrison, *History*, 72).

Yet the doctrine of the priest did not always match the feelings of the villager. As has been so often the case in the history of Christianity, there appears to have been a significant divergence between personal or family piety and orthodoxy in French Catholicism of this period.

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[43] Penny Roberts, "Contesting sacred space: burial disputes in sixteenth-century France" [Hereafter cited in text], in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

This difference can be seen in the Catholic perceptions of the dead during this period. "It was

popularly believed," writes Roberts, "that the soul stayed in the vicinity of the body for the first

month after death" (Roberts, *Contesting*, 133). Along these lines, in "Spirits seeking bodies:

death, possession and communal memory in the Middle Ages," Nancy Caciola writes, "Many

believed that certain shades of the dead might remain displaced for some time."[44] Interestingly,

these beliefs were often understood to relate to the way in which someone died. Caciola adds

further that it was, "particularly the ghosts of those who had died a 'bad death' that was sudden or

violent," who were believed to linger in this way. This notion of a 'good' or 'bad' death is

important. Caciola maintains that it was a "conceptual category of some significance throughout

the Middle Ages" (Caciola, *Spirits*, 75). Caciola's work brings us to realize the close connection

between the identity of the individual and the nature of their demise. "Thus the precise manner of

one's death, as much as the moral quality of one's life, had bearing upon one's fate in the

afterlife," she writes further.

Caciola's study posits a wide spectrum of cultural beliefs concerning the dead and dying.

In this world, collective superstitions could surpass church orthodoxy in certain areas without

consciously giving way to schism. This is a world of smaller groups with shared memories and

experiences. In this world, spirits could command a considerable degree of power. "In many

communities," writes Caciola, "it was the human dead that dominated the local supernatural,

rather than beings of an entirely different essence, such as angels and demons" (Caciola, *Spirits*,

83). Much of Caciola's focus in this study is on possession, and the nature of possessing spirits.

In a similar way to our own study, she emphasizes the role memory. For Caciola, "the procedure

of identifying the possessing spirit is an act of collective memory." "Collective memories of (bad)

deaths would linger as a mental apparition that could become vividly present," writes the author

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[44] Nancy Caciola, "Spirits seeking bodies: death, possession and communal memory in the Middle Ages" [Hereafter cited in text], in *The Place of the Dead: Death and Remembrance in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Bruce Gordon and Peter Marshall (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 66.

further (Caciola, *Spirits*, 84). This point is in line with our own conception of myths related to

victims of religious torture. We shall return to this point below. "The recent deaths of family

members haunted the imaginations of survivors," adds Caciola, "as the bad dead haunted the

thoughts of a town more generally."

Huguenots rejected the notion of Purgatory, siding instead with Calvin and the belief in

an immediate encounter between the Christian soul and its creator. This is the doctrine of *artes*

moriendi. Judgment would not wait until the coming of the Kingdom of God. Yet this did not

mean that Huguenots were free from the same local superstitions noted above. Rather, the

Protestant doctrine all but sets the foundation for such beliefs. As Penny Roberts points out, "the

Protestant emphasis on the immediacy of the beatific vision for the saved arguably made the need

for a 'good death' even more crucial in their eyes as a sign of divine grace" (Roberts, *Contesting*,

134). Many Protestants likely had a strong sense of this conceptual category. We have discussed

the significance of Huguenot martyrdom above and this will, no doubt, become relevant again.

Let us add another consideration. The notion of immediate judgment has been seen as a part of a

changing awareness of death as an individual venture. Garrisson suggests that this attitude arose

in the urban milieu and she sees it reflected in the shift from communal graves to individual

tombs. "It was the towns," writes the author, "that gave birth to the more individual relationship

with the sacred" (Garrison, *History*, 74). It remains to be seen how religious torture played into

this dynamic.

On another level, we might note how changes in Huguenot burial practices impacted their

relation to the larger community. Penny Roberts has suggested that these developments fueled

religious tensions in sixteenth century France, and created an affront that transcended sectarian

lines as well. "The Huguenot rejection of the Catholic rituals of the laying out of the corpse, the

offices of the dead, and the elaborate funeral procession and burial service," writes Roberts,

"caused offense not just on religious grounds but could be interpreted as a snub to the community, a rejection of the gestures of 'collective piety' which brought the community together at the death of one of its members" (Roberts, *Contesting*, 137). Interestingly, Roberts points out further, "the request for a simple funeral had been interpreted as an act of extreme piety and self-abnegation before it became associated with Huguenot practice." In any case, Huguenot burial customs were a source of controversy.

Among the many manifestations of this tension was the tendency for Catholic rioters to unearth Protestant corpses and subject them to further abuses. In some cases, the legs of dead Huguenots were slashed with knives, others were defiled with urine and feces.[45] This rift also led to the Protestant exclusion from Catholic cemeteries. Many were buried in village ossuaries. In the later half of the sixteenth century separate Huguenots cemeteries gradually became more common. One consequence of this development was that it kept Protestants from joining their ancestors in burial, creating a family divide. Instead they were associated with those traditionally laid separately to rest: stillborn and unbaptised infants, panhandlers, and the diseased (Roberts, *Contesting*, 139). If segregated cemeteries weakened the Huguenot link with family, it may have also increased their sense of individual death. It is with these considerations in mind that we will turn to the situation in North America, at this time. It is our hope this study will add new light to these findings.

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[45] Roberts, *Contesting*, 132; cf. Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS Dupuy 698, fols. 107-8r.

Chapter 4
The North American Context

I. <u>Introduction</u>

While our focus remains in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, there are notable differences in the way our research will operate in this context. This discontinuity is inevitable, given the nature and number of sources available to modern researchers in this field. It is important to reflect on some of the main concerns, not only for the purpose of qualifying the following study, but also as a part of an attempt to overcome major limitations. Subsequently, we will attempt a succinct anthropological reconstruction of Native life in Northeastern North America from an earlier period to, and including, the contact period. This brief exploration will allow us to consider the degree of cultural continuity and establish a background capable of placing the violence to be considered in proper perspective.

For the purposes of placing reasonable limits on this work, we shall concentrate almost entirely on the Iroquoian groups located in an around the Saint Lawrence Valley, including especially the Huron people. The motivation for such a consideration is two-fold. First, the fact that these groups established an extensive system of contact and trade with the French makes them a rather special group for the comparative purposes of this present study. This is no truer than with the Huron. We revel in the opportunity to compare these distinct peoples with a history of interaction, at a common point in time. The second motivation stems from the first. One of the enduring facets of the French-Huron relation is a notable body of early French accounts. These records will greatly facilitate our consideration of the nature of native groups in the contact period.

II. The Question of Sources

Studies of Native North American peoples in the pre-modern period inevitably confront a

number of significant obstacles, not the least of which is the Western perspective. The great

artistic, military, and technological achievements of European society have given rise to a long-

standing sense of superiority. This deep-rooted self-understanding has translated into a bias on the

state and nature of indigenous groups. It is a prejudice capable and proven to manifest itself in a

variety of forms. Some of the most obvious and most often noted examples arose during the early

contact period. Many Europeans viewed the wretched state of the American *sauvage* as reason

enough to import Western customs, ideas, and supremacy. "What the first missionaries saw,"

writes Maureen Korp, "was what they expected to see - the living embodiment of a late medieval

myth, the wild man, a subspecies with a needy soul."[46] The records of this period testify to the

many abuses and indignities brought upon these peoples, as well as to the near guilt free complex

of many of those who inflicted them. Explorers, conquerors, and settlers alike may be counted

among those whose Western perspective allowed them to operate in such a manner.

The history of North American archaeological theory reflects the persistent nature of

Western prejudice. Early research in this field was characterized by a notable lack of scientific

discipline, and often colored by racist assumptions. Poorly substantiated conjecture proved to be a

long-standing approach. In fact, the *Speculative Period* of North American archaeology is now

considered to have lasted from the inception of this field, in the late fifteenth century, all the way

up to the mid nineteenth century.[47] Pervasive views served as a lens by which new archaeological

data was filtered. Attempts were made to synthesize the existence of Amerindians with Biblical

[46] Maureen Korp, "Problems of Prejudice in the Thwaites' Edition of the *Jesuit Relations*," *Historical Reflections* 21
(1995): 271.
[47] Gordon R. Willey and Jeremy A. Sabloff, ed., *A History of American Archaeology* [Hereafter cited in text] (New
York: W. H. Freeman and Company: 1974), 12.

accounts. Theories on the origins of native groups have variously portrayed them as a

degenerated form of a previously isolated Western population (Willey and Sabloff, *Archaeology*,

18). At times, theorists labored to conform archaeological findings to contemporary perceptions

of Native peoples. Well into the nineteenth century, growing evidence of a sophisticated mound-

building culture in North America continued to be used as proof that indigenous groups had, in

fact, displaced a once more refined civilization (Willey and Sabloff, *Archaeology*, 26).

Underlining these ideas was a deep-rooted bias, a European ethnocentrism, which

challenged not only the sophistication of North American peoples, but also their capacity to

change.[48] Worse still, some archaeologists questioned the very biological status of aboriginal

groups. The Papal Bull of Pope Paul III in 1537 reflects the fact that the humanity of Amerindians

had been affirmed by enlightened minds at a relatively early date. Yet the persistence of theories

of cultural evolution into 1870s, evidence the fact that archaeological thought operated with racist

assumptions for much of the modern period (Trigger, *History*, 145). In speculation based on

models of unilinear evolution, native groups were seen as merely a lower - and, therefore,

outdated - link in a chain of progression.

"Anthropology itself," writes Trigger, "began as a study of peoples who were thought to

lack history and hence were doomed to disappear as a result of the spread of European

civilization."[49] Of course, Amerindians did lack a tradition comparable to the historiography that

arose in Europe. While Mesoamericans did preserve some historical records, they did not share

the same concern for writing as the Europeans (Willey and Sabloff, *Archaeology*, 12). The

situation in North America is even more distinct. There are no historical accounts of this region

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[48] Bruce Trigger, *A History of Archaeological Thought* [Hereafter cited in text] (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 69.
[49] Bruce G. Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's "Heroic Age" Reconsidered* [Hereafter cited in text] (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University, 1989), 48.

before the sixteenth century. The absence of such a record has adversely affected the perception

of North American peoples and favored rampant and bias speculation about their past. That is to

say, that the problem of academic prejudice stemmed from not only an inherent cultural racism,

but also a notable lack of evidence. There was, of course, a native oral tradition that continued

through the contact period, but it is often difficult to measure the impact the encounter with

Western peoples had on this source.

Using methods of stratigraphy; lithic, ceramic, and skeletal analyses; and with reference

to linguistic theory, comparative ethnology, and oral tradition - not to mention the continual

process of scholarly debate - contemporary anthropologists have been able to formulate some

general ideas concerning the nature of Native North American groups in the prehistoric period.

Even a truncated summary of the research into this field, however, would take us well out of our

range of focus. A concise reconstruction of the prehistoric period will be sufficient to establish

the background from which the prisoner of war execution ritual arose.

The problem of an entrenched Western perspective may no less affect the written records

of the early contact period, although scholars disagree on the extent to which this fact can

undermine contemporary attempts at a history of the Native peoples. In *Amerindian Views of*

French Culture in the Seventeenth Century, Cornelius J. Jaenen has argued that the early episodes

of contact effectively reinforced a "Eurocentric view of history."[50] He writes further that "the

inability to understand behaviour and thought as conceived by various Amerindian cultures was

the greatest barrier to French appreciation of native civilization, and it remains a formidable

challenge to the modern historian who attempts to explain and evaluate the contact experience"

(Jaenen, *Views*, 104). Yet Jaenen also emphasizes the potential insight of these early accounts. As

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[50] Cornelius J. Jaenen, "Amerindian Views of French Culture in the Seventeenth Century" [Hereafter cited in text], in *Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History,* ed. Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988), 104.

participants in that which they observed, Jaenen suggest, early European authors on Native North American peoples held a "distinctive advantage over today's social scientists who are deprived of the experience of being eye-witnesses and participants" (Jaenen, *Views*, 104). In short, despite intentions or bias, these accounts may preserve something of an authentic record of native ideas or behavior.

Michel Despland has reflected on the corpus of early French accounts in "The Indians of the Saint Lawrence Valley and their religion: An essay on four centuries of scholarship in French."[51] "What we read," writes Despland, "are texts produced by Europeans who traveled, met new people, lived with them, observed them and came back home and wrote what they considered to be of interest to the people at home and for which there was some demand" (Despland, *Indians*, 462). These works should not be mistaken for historical scholarship in the modern sense, but they may be, Despland suggests, "rich sources from an ethnographic point of view" (Despland, *Indians*, 462). For students of the History of Religions, they offer some particularly valuable insight and information. To varying degrees, the authors all address the question of indigenous religious beliefs or practices. In all, Despland remains optimistic that, "the trajectory of materials compiled by these different authors allows a critical reading" (Despland, *Indians*, 467).

One of the earliest ethnographic accounts comes from the pen of the great French explorer and cartographer, Samuel de Champlain (1570?-1635). In 1603, he produced *Des Sauvages*. This work reflects Champlain's attempts to reconcile his experience of native North American peoples with Western stereotypes. "All his sources told him that, at the edge of the known world, there lived hairy wild men," writes Despland, "but the people he met had less hair

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[51] Michel Despland, "The Indians of the Saint Lawrence Valley and their religion: An essay on four centuries of scholarship in French" [Hereafter cited in text], *Sciences Religieuses* 32/4 (2003): 461-484.

than he" (Despland, *Indians*, 462). Gabriel Sagard, similarly, attempts to address Western

misconceptions about the indigenous people in his 1632 composition; *Le grand voyage du pays*

des Hurons.[52] As Despland notes, Sagard spends a notable amount of time trying to establish the

fact that the natives have what may be called a religion. While the modern reader may easily

accept this claim, it certainly would not have been obvious to someone with a Western

perspective at that time. In all, as Despland suggests, Sagard "offers a more nuanced assessment."

The fact that he spent the bulk of his time with the Huron makes his account invaluable to the

present study. But Sagard, the Franciscan, was not the only French missionary to record his

impressions of the indigenous groups of native North America.

Jesuits, such as Jean de Brébeuf, Paul Lejeune, and Pierre Millet, produced one of the

most extensive early European accounts of the Native peoples of North Eastern North America.

The *Jesuit Relations* is a multi-volume composition and an important source for historians of this

period. Maureen Korp has attempted to illustrate some of the concerns with this work,

particularly with the Thwaites commentary and translation, in "Problems of Prejudice in the

Thwaites' Edition of the Jesuit Relations."[53] The main issue is one of bias. Korp has described

this work as a collection of "administrative letters reporting upon and justifying actions and

decisions made in the field," which, taken together, "represent a 'lived experience'" (Korp,

Problems, 263). For all that this work offers, however, it also presents us with a number of

problems. Much of the information reported by these French clerics appears to have been tainted.

Korp describes the Jesuit authors as "ignorant" with a perspective indicative of a "Eurocentric

racism." She also speaks of a "locked-in prejudicial mind set" (Korp, *Problems*, 266). In all, Korp

characterizes the work as "a minefield of misinformation, perhaps disinformation, concerning the

indigenous peoples of North America" (Korp, *Problems*, 261). The version in question, a popular

[52] Gabriel Sagard, *Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons*, comp. Réal Ouellet (Québec: Bibliothèque Québecoise, 1990).
[53] Maureen Korp, "Problems of Prejudice in the Thwaites' Edition of the *Jesuit Relations*" [Hereafter cited in text], *Historical Reflections* 21/2 (1995): 261-276.

source for modern scholars, appears to compound the problem by adding "misunderstanding of the text and inappropriate scholarly annotation and commentary." This fact has led Korp to challenge the idea that Thwaites' edition allows for an "up-to-date, culturally sensitive hermeneutic study" (Korp, *Problems*, 262).

Despland has taken a less critical perspective. He emphasizes the efforts of the Jesuits to understand their subjects and thereby produce meaningful accounts, as well as the value of their work. He notes that they were "assiduous in learning the languages, sharing the lives and observing the ways of the people they hoped to convert." "While their intention was to convert the natives to Christianity," Despland notes further, "they first accultured themselves to the native ways."[54] Trigger has likewise emphasized the value of these accounts. *"The Jesuit Relations* are especially valuable," writes the author, "because they represent a study in depth of Huron culture."[55] He is careful to point out, however, that, "it is a mistake for the anthropologist to picture Jesuits too much in his own image." These authors had a markedly different agenda from our own, as is reflected in the fact that they remain relatively silent on the topic of Huron warfare.[56] "It is important to note," Trigger continues, "that all our major sources of the information about the Huron… were works of propaganda first and works of history only second." It should be pointed out, however, that the Jesuit report may actually appear to the modern reader to be more bias at times than was at originally intended. "That the Jesuits called the Indians *sauvages* should not mislead us," notes Despland, the word does not mean savage, but untutored" (Despland, *Indians*, 464). This designation would put the natives on common ground with other commoners, rather than distinguish them as being exceptionally uncivilized. Citing the

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[54] Depland, *Indians*, 464; cf. Axtell 1985: 71-90.
[55] Bruce G. Trigger, *The Huron: Farmers of the North* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 5.
[56] Trigger notes that, "the Jesuits say practically nothing about Huron subsistence activities and very little about trade and warfare, except in so far as the latter activities provided them with the opportunity for making contact with other tribes." Trigger, *Huron*, 5.

work of Dominque Deslandres, Despland suggests that, "missionary-minded priests and lay persons saw no difference between rural Frenchmen and the indigenous people of America."[57]

Roger Célestin considers Western accounts of aboriginal peoples from the Renaissance to contemporary times, in *Cannibals to Radicals: Figures and Limits of Exoticism*, brings us to reflect on the historical literature of the North American contact period.[58] This work represents an attempt, according to its author, "to effect a *displacement*" of the traditional conceptualization of Exoticism, as " a lyrical celebration of all things tropical or Oriental" (Célestin, *Cannibals*, 3). Célestin points towards a tension between exoticism as "a subjective distantiation, a break" and exoticism as "a mode of representation" (Célestin, *Cannibals*, 2). While the former represents a movement away from home - a means of escaping, even - the latter is understood as a return. It is seen as a step back towards Home in so much as it attempts to translate the exotic for the audience, to represent the once unknown in familiar ways. Célestin writes that "there is something intrinsic to exoticism as a mode of representation, namely, its positing and elaboration of (a beckoning) *outside* (in texts that constitute *returns*), that lends itself to a questioning of the basis and workings or representation itself, namely its connection to what, for now we will also summarily call *power*" (Célestin, *Cannibals*, 4). It is in this way, Célestin suggests, that exoticism becomes "a means for the subject of a powerful culture to *counter* that culture in the very process of *returning* to it" (Célestin, *Cannibals*, 3). In so much as these texts force the audience to consider its own situation by way of its relation to an*other*, they hold the capacity to challenge established social relations and norms.

[57] Despland, *Indians*, 468; cf. Dominique Deslandres, *Croire et faire croire: les missions Françaises au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).
[58] Roger Célestin, *Cannibals to Radicals: Figures and Limits of Exoticism* [Hereafter cited in text] (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

It is along similar lines that Despland suggests, "the educated French public liked

Lahontan and his vision of the Amerindians as *hommes de la nature* and used this vision to teach

a lesson to Ancien Régime France, giving powerful impetus to the ideology that led to the French

Revolution" (Despland, *Indians*, 468). European representations of foreign peoples held the

potential to greatly undermine domestic power structures - surely an enticing idea for some

authors. The impact this fact may have had on the primary sources, of which this present study

will rely, is a matter of concern. Even accurate accounts of Native North American views held the

power to confront European norms. In *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural

Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, Cornelius J. Jaenen suggests, that many

Europeans were not prepared for the way in which they were perceived by their Native hosts.[59]

"To Frenchmen who thought that they had a well-ordered and disciplined society, a reasonable

way of life, and a civilized community," writes the author, "it came as quite a shock to be

reproved by unsophisticated aboriginals whom they sometimes regarded as deprived of right

reason and right religion, for their injustice, their improvidence, and their inequality" (Jaenen,

Friend, 85). Despland adds that, "the consideration of Amerindian ways fed visions of ways

better than those dominant in France."[60] It will be part of our task to un-cook these meals, and

read European accounts with an eye for the raw ingredients.

Our primary goal, as mentioned, is to reconstruct the prisoner of war execution ceremony

in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Finding a balanced perspective may prove

challenging. Korp notes a tendency in Western historical scholarship to overemphasize the

brutality and adverse consequences of the wartime practices of indigenous groups. Work of this

sort has typically, "stressed the horrors of internecine warfare among the native populations,

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[59] Cornelius J. Jaenen, *Friend and Foe: Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* [Hereafter cited in text] (Toronto : McClelland and Stewart, 1976).

[60] Despland, *Indians*, 468. The advocate of a theory on the cultural diffusion of forms popular participation in ritualized violence will likely be intrigued to find this quote in the context of this study.

writes the author, "and downplayed the concomitant, or rather predominant, effects of European-introduced disease" (Korp, *Problems*, 273). According to Korp, this tendency continues into the present. She warns that, "the image of the native populations as warring peoples who contributed mightily to their own demise persists" (Korp, *Problems*, 274). Noting the fact that France had itself witnessed similar forms of violence in the sixteenth century, Despland brings us to consider things differently. Speaking generally of the French accounts, he suggests that, "these early historians and ethnographers remain cool in the face of the different war practices (which some might label atrocities), such as scalping and the killing and eating of enemy warriors taken captive" (Despland, *Indians*, 467). While we cannot accept any of the early French accounts unequivocally, they remain some of the only records of the Huron people in this period. It will be the aim of this author to take these issues into consideration, as we evaluate the nature and frequency of the execution ritual. Finally, on the subject of our use of primary sources, it should be noted that this study of the North American context would not have been possible without the work of Bruce Trigger, Cornelius J. Jaenen and Roland Viau.

III. Prehistory of the Native Groups in Northeastern North America

Little is known of the earliest modern human inhabitants of the New World. The first populations appear to have left scant traces of their existence as they spread quickly across the continent. A number of early sites have been found, but the evidence of human remains is typically limited, and the dating is not always conclusive. A general scholarly consensus holds that a wave of Paleo-Indian groups moved across the Bering land bridge sometime during the late Pleistocene. Dental analyses and Mitochondrial DNA comparisons also seem to support this hypothesis.[61] These early pioneers may have reached the Northeastern coast of North America by

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[61] Brian M Fagan, *People of the Earth* (University of California, Santa Barbara: Longman, 1998), 178; for Dental analyses see Christy Turner (Arizona State University: 1984); for Mitochondrial DNA see Andrew Merriweather (Rose, 1996).

about 12,000 B.C., although some scholars have argued for a much older migration of around 40,000 YBP. In either case, it is important point out, the meeting of Native American and European groups in the early contact period marked the end of an extended age of independent development. These encounters effectively broke the seal on tens of thousands of years of cultural divide.

There is sound evidence pointing towards a general continuity between the groups that first lived in Northeastern North America and those that graced these lands during the historical era. Trigger notes a consistency in the economic and social lives of these peoples from the Paleo-Indian period forward (Trigger, *Natives*, 76). Archaeological evidence more firmly establishes this continuity, beginning in the Middle Woodland period (c. 500B.C.-500A.D.). Linguistic research is able to establish the origin of Iroquoian languages in the North, as Trigger points out, using "the principle of least moves" (Trigger, *Natives*, 82) Over time, the aboriginal population of the Saint Lawrence Valley would transform from small hunting bands into the larger and more sophisticated communities of the sixteenth century. Although this was a gradual transition, it was marked by at least on dynamic period.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (The Middle Iroquoian period) were a time of dramatic change for the aboriginal peoples of the Saint Lawrence Valley. Substantial population growth was made possible, in part, by an intensification of the horticultural trend discussed above. Villages swelled. The Draper site in Ontario, to name but the most extreme example, may have had as many as 2,000 to 3,000 inhabitants (Trigger, *Natives*, 101). At the same time, smaller groups appear to have begun to come together. Trigger notes widespread evidence of "neighbouring and hitherto autonomous settlements clustering close to one another to form 'tribes.'" This age was also marked by significant innovations in material culture and changes in stylistic motifs, as well as developments in social ritual. Of interest is the rise of the *Feast of the*

Dead - a ceremony characterized by the procession of ancestral remains. Bones were exhumed, cleaned and treated ritually, then once again interred.

Changes in the nature and frequency of organized violence are also of primary concern. The earliest evidence of cannibalism in the Saint Lawrence Valley has been found associated with this period. Citing skeletal analysis, Trigger points out that, "some of the bones exhibit signs of having been cut, cooked, and split open to extract the marrow" (Trigger, *Natives*, 97). It appears that this trend continued to escalate throughout this period, culminating in the sixteenth century.[62] Warfare also became increasingly common during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. This was perhaps the most significant change. In fact, Trigger suggests, the gravity of this conflict may be reason enough to explain virtually all other developments. This fact should be seen in the light of our rather impoverished understanding of the earliest contact between Native and European groups. It is to this that we shall presently turn.

IV. The Contact Period

The contact period generally refers to the time of early relations between European and Native North American peoples. While practical for the purposes of discussion, it should be noted that a lack of clear range makes this a rather nebulous term for historical studies. That the earliest encounters occurred off the Eastern seaboard seems likely, but of the date and nature of these meetings little is known. From the *Vinland Sagas*, compiled in Iceland, we learn that Vikings under the charge of Leif Erikson and Thorvald (the sons of Eric the Red) sailed southwest of Greenland and found land as early as 1000 A.D.[63] The *L'Anse aux Meadows* site off the tip of Newfoundland appears to confirm the early presence of Scandinavians in North America. The

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[62] Trigger, *Natives*, 103; cf. Wright (1966:91).
[63] James A. Williamson, *The Cabot Voyages and Bristol Discovery under Henri VII* [Hereafter cited in text] (Cambridge: Published for the Hakluyt Society at the University Press, c1962), 6.

Norse accounts claim contact with indigenous groups living in the area. Trigger suggests that

these people may have been either Inuit or Beothuks (Trigger, *Natives*, 119). As would be the

case with later Europeans in North America, the Scandinavians recorded an interest in hunting,

fishing, and the exchange of goods for fur. After a time, the relations with native peoples seem to

have soured dramatically. Thorvald is said to have died in armed conflict, and the Vikings

eventually abandoned their North American site(s) (Williamson, *Cabot*, 6). While these early

meetings are significant, there is a lack of evidence for sustained contact or significant cultural

diffusion in either direction. Perhaps as a result of this, the contact period more commonly

designates the era of regular convergence between European and Native North American peoples

beginning in sixteenth century.[64]

When Native North Americans began to encounter Europeans in the early modern period,

their impressions were colored by religious convictions. Native groups had long associated the

ocean with the supernatural. At first, it seems, the white men who ventured from this region may

have also been seen in this light.[65] It was only a matter of time before the citizens of North

America and Europe became acquainted with one another. Expanding populations on both sides

of the Atlantic, in the thirteenth an fourteenth centuries, fueled a common need for substantial

food sources, or at least a common capacity to search extensively for them. The Gulf of the Saint

Lawrence and the Atlantic coast of Canada were particularly abundant in marine life at this time.

Both Huron as well as French groups were drawn to this area for economic reasons. Hunting and

fishing expeditions were mounted from the East and West. Discussing the natives of the Saint

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[64] We shall follow this trend, but not without a certain hesitation. The dramatic changes, noted above, in Native societies of North Eastern North America during the thirteenth and fourteenth century occurred several hundred years after the establishment of a Viking settlement in what is now Canada. We take little comfort in the fact that no other archaeological evidence exists for contact between European and North American peoples until the historical period. In the event of a new discovery, scholarly consensus may well one day redefine the margins of the 'contact period' to include the this pivotal Middle Iroquoian period.

[65] For a discussion of the Native North American perception of the ocean, see Trigger, *Natives*, 125-126; of Europeans, see Ibid., 224-225;cf. Jaenen, *Views*. See also Cartier's account of the Stadaconans asking him to *lay hands* on the sick, see Jacques Cartier, *Voyages au Canada* (Montréal: LUX, 2002), 88.

Lawrence valley as far back as the Early Iroquoian period (c. 900-1300A.D.), Trigger notes that

they ventured "as far east as the Gaspé Peninsula each summer" (Trigger, *Natives*, 92). English

fisherman began to exploit the waters off the Northeastern coast sometime in the late fifteenth

century. Trigger suggests that it may have been as early as the 1480s (Trigger, *Natives*, 122).

Ships leaving from the English ports of Hansard, Bristol, and Breton were lured to the generous

supply of fish (especially cod) in the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.[66] Native groups living in

coastal regions would have encountered white men at fish processing stations, on land. Fishing

parties also began to happen upon their European counterparts. While fisherman sought their

bounty, explorers also searched for a Western passage to the orient. John Cabot reached Cape

Breton in Nova Scotia by 1497. The Portuguese and French, likewise, explored these seas, as did

the Spanish - further south.

It would not take long for Europeans to penetrate the continent, and make themselves

more familiar to the indigenous peoples. The mighty Saint Lawrence opened the lowlands to

large ships and commerce. "The likelihood that European whaling, fishing, and casual fur trade

were already under way at or around Tadoussac by the middle of the sixteenth century should not

be ruled out," writes Trigger (Trigger, *Natives*, 139). The early rise of casual exchange between

Europeans and the aboriginal peoples of North America is well attested. When a group of natives

were captured by the Portuguese Corte-Real expedition, at the beginning of the sixteenth century,

they were found to be aware of this practice. Trigger notes that they had with them "a piece of a

broken gilt sword and two silver rings of Venetian origin."[67] Along these lines, it should be noted

that Jacques Cartier (1491?-1557) knew to bring trinkets for the natives he would encounter.

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[66] Carl Ortwin Sauer, *Sixteenth Century North America: The Land as seen by the Europeans* [Hereafter cited in text] (University of California Press, 1971), 11-12.
[67] Trigger, *Natives*, 127; cf. D.B. Quinn (1979, 1:151)

Cartier's encounters with native peoples in 1534 suggest that they had already had a notable degree of contact with Europeans. In *Voyages au Canada,* Cartier describes a few early Amerindian sightings. "A celuy cap (le cap Sauvaige) nous vint ung honme qui couroit apres nos barcques le long de la coste qui nous retournissions vers ledit cap."[68] Later, he adds, "à ladite pointe dont il sauterent et dessandirent à terre ung grant nombre de gens quelx fessandirent ung grant bruict et nous fessoint plusieurs signes que nous allisions à terre nous montrant des peaulx sur des bastons" (Cartier, *Canada*, 41). Cartier's account reflects a native society already familiar with European trade. In fact, there is reason to believe that native groups at this time were quite familiar with the habits of white seamen. In a later encounter, Cartier relates that, "ilz demenerent grand joye et se prindrent tous les homes à chanter et danser en deux ou troys bandes faisant grant signe de joye de nostre venue." If the men had reason to be excited about the possibility of European trade, the behavior of the women seems to reflect a different experience. "Maiz ilz fait fouyr toutes les jeunes femmes dedans le boys fors deux ou troys qui demeurent" (Cartier, *Canada*, 46). The difference in reactions here is likely telling.

Trigger has described the pelt trade as "the main link" between these peoples - emphasizing the prominence of this enterprise, "almost from the beginning" (Trigger, *Natives*, 127). It is interesting to note, that above and beyond showing an interest in acquiring animal skins, early *New World* explorers felt free to take the people they encountered into their possession. What is clear from the beginning is that indigenous peoples of North America were being abducted and brought back to Europe. Corte-Real took what were likely Beothuks to Portugal in 1501. Gomez brought Algonquians back to Spain in 1523 (Sauer, *Sixteenth*, 299). The English and French likewise claimed natives as if they were exotic goods. Many were put on display during festive ceremonies or paraded around the royal courts of Europe, along with other foreign souvenirs and ornamentation. We should not be surprised, then, to read Cartier, on his

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[68] Jacques Cartier, *Voyages au Canada* [Hereafter cited in text] (Montréal: LUX, 2002), 38.

second voyage (1535-1536), casually make mention to "les deux sauvaiges que avyons prins le

premier voyage" (Cartier, *Canada*, 63). In contrast, there is no evidence, as far as I am aware, of

any Native North Americans capturing Europeans for any reason other than torture and execution.

This fact should be recalled when one considers the Amerindian practice of scalping (see below).

It has been assumed in the past that the contact period had little effect on Native ways. It

has, no doubt, been easier for Western minds to imagine that indigenous groups existed in the

same state in the prehistoric period as they did after the *discovery* of the New World, than to

accept a measure of responsibility for having upset the balance of a once healthy civilization.

Bruce Trigger reflects on the impact of this encounter in *The Road to Affluence: A Reassessment

of Early Huron Responses to European Contact*.[69] In this work he challenges the claim that Huron

culture was only slightly altered by the exchange of European goods in North America. At the

same time he undermines the notion that the French accounts produced between 1616 and 1650

offer a reflection of native society, as it existed in the prehistoric period.

Before the contact period, trade in the Huron nation appears to have been limited to the

casual dealings with native groups, including especially the Nipissing and other Northern

Algonquin tribes. This practice was based upon the exchange of excess supplies. While the Huron

had greater agricultural resources, their trading partners depended more on hunting and gathering.

Surplus produce was used to acquire fur and meat.[70] Huron peoples in the lower St. Lawrence

Valley witnessed a slow but steady rise in trade with the French. "Already in the first half of the

sixteenth century," writes Trigger, "Small amounts of European goods seem to have been passing

from one group to another this far inland" (Trigger, *Affluence*, 90). A system of direct trade with

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[69] Bruce G. Trigger, "The Road to Affluence: A Reassessment of Early Huron Responses to European Contact," [Hereafter cited in text], in *Out of the Background: Readings on Canadian Native History*, ed. Robin Fisher and Kenneth Coates (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1988).

[70] Gabriel Sagard, *Le Grand Voyage du pays des Hurons* [Hereafter cited in text] (Québec: Bibliothèque Québecoise, 1990), 10; Trigger, *Affluence*, 91.

the French was established at the beginning of the seventeenth century. In exchange for fur pelts,

the Huron showed an interest in European metal works, including kettles and axes. From casual

trade developed a well-organized network of exchange, which reached deep into North American

society. Of course, as Trigger points out, the distribution was not always even. Groups living on

or near the point of contact had greater access to, and therefore quantities of, European supplies.

Conversely, he notes, that other communities might have had little to no access to these items.

Trigger has emphasized the element of prestige associated with these goods. This is a

significant point. Amerindians recognized European tools as technologically advanced. The

novelty of these items would have also added to their market value. Along these lines, some

commodities, including especially glass beads, were taken to have supernatural force (Trigger,

Natives, 224). The acquisition of such goods must have been a source of pride and distinction for

the traders of this time. Trigger has proposed a simply dichotomy of native relations that adds

significance to this discussion. "All recorded Iroquoian societies in the seventeenth century,

including the Hurons, viewed war and trade as alternative forms of intertribal relations," writes

the author. He goes on to add that, "neighboring tribal groups were either at peace and traded

with each other or engaged in blood feuds of varying intensity" (Trigger, *Affluence*, 89). When

considered in this light, it becomes clear that access to European trade held the capacity to affect

native social structure as well as political relations. For the individual as well as the community

these goods were intimately related to status. As early as the late sixteenth century, some

Iroquoian groups appear to have relocated in order to gain greater access to areas with a higher

concentration of beavers (Trigger, *Affluence*, 93). It seems that European trade was already a

primary concern for these people.

The cause of the disappearance of certain Iroquoians peoples living in the St. Lawrence

region, including those that Cartier encountered around Montreal and Quebec, has been the

subject of scholarly debate. P.G Ramsden has used pottery analysis to argue that the Huron

displaced these groups (their trading partners in this area) in order to gain direct access to

European goods (Trigger, *Affluence*, 92). Conversely, Trigger has argued that the Five Nation

Iroquois ousted these groups in order to "cut the trade route running up the St. Lawrence, along

which the Algonquins were supplying the Hurons living in the Trent Valley with European

goods" (Trigger, *Affluence*, 94). Accordingly, Trigger views the subsequent relocation of all

Huron groups into clusters around the Simcoe County region in terms of their desire to maintain

these trade relations. Regardless of whether they resorted to warfare or opted for a peaceful

settlement, this migration must have involved a change in Huron relations with the people

previously inhabiting this area. In this way, the introduction of European trade can be seen as a

cause of social and political change in Huron society in the protohistoric period. Trigger suggests

that, "new alliances, possibly new forms of economic competition, and the continuing search for

individual prestige created new conflicts with all of the tribes of the Five Nations" (Trigger,

Affluence, 95). While Trigger sees the influx of material goods as cause for elevated tensions,

Cornelius J. Jaenen has thought more in terms of the (negative) influence of European culture.

"There is evidence that the first contacts added a new element of violence and disturbance to

Amerindian societies," writes Jaenen, who also notes that Nicolas Denys linked this phenomenon

to the substance abuse and immorality of white fishermen (Jaenen, *Friend*, 85).

Initially, it seems, the relocation to the area between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay, in

Southern Ontario, was a tremendous economic success for the Huron people. The great Huron,

Ochasteguin would establish direct trade with the French in 1609 (Trigger, *Natives*, 175). In the

years that followed, they amassed unprecedented wealth through a network of trade based on

access to European goods. Huronia may have had of 20,000 villagers at the height of its success

(Trigger, *Huron*, 1). Trigger notes that a period of relative stability from 1615-1629, "helped

(peace) chiefs to regain their prestige at the expense of the war chiefs" (Trigger, *Affluence*, 97).

The extent to which this fact challenged war chiefs to compensate is a point of interest. By 1629, external forces would again cause Huron hostilities to flare. When English forces effectively displaced the French from Quebec, as Trigger notes, it "disrupted Huron trading relations and led to a period of renewed crisis in intertribal relations in Eastern Canada" (Trigger, *Affluence*, 98).

The return of French peoples five years later would spell disaster for the Huron. A dramatic increase in the ambition of Iroquois war parties was coupled with the rise in a lethal European import: disease. The influx of European pathogens wreaked havoc on all levels of the indigenous North American population. While Iroquoian groups had always been prone to the effects of European disease the results had never been so devastating. The list of ailments that made their North American appearance at this time is shocking: measles, whooping cough, smallpox, influenza, typhoid, diphtheria, colds, chicken pox, scarlet fever, tuberculosis, and strep infections (Jaenen, *Friend*, 98). Speaking generally of the North American population, Maureen Korp suggests that, "'the overall mortality from the 1616-1619 and 1633-39 epidemics was no less than 86 percent of the Indian population." "In some localities," she continues, "it was much higher, reaching 95 percent or more for this twenty-three year period'" (Korp, *Problems*, 273). Trigger claims that by 1640 these epidemics "had halved the population of Huron and of neighboring peoples" (Trigger, *Affluence*, 98). Jaenen leads us to envision a more widespread phenomenon occurring over a larger time frame. "The comments of seventeenth-century writers," Jaenen suggests, "lead one to conclude that the early fishing contacts resulted in widespread epidemics among the Atlantic coastal tribes prior to 1600" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 99). Indeed, the grim violence of this era worked with disease to decimate Native North American peoples. The Huron would never fully recover from the population crash of this period.

Our consideration of the contact period has produced a few significant conclusions. First, it appears that trade played a prominent role in the relations between Amerindian and European

peoples from the onset. Secondly, it seems that the demand for these items undermined traditional

Huron social structure and may have created intertribal political tensions. The prestige of

accomplished traders challenged, and in some cases usurped, the power of hereditary chiefs

(Trigger, *Natives*, 208). Along the same lines, the interest in French trade during the historic

period was so great among the Huron, that one tribe could not control it. This too represented a

change from the established Huron system. As we shall see, European trade relations also

impacted the nature and frequency of armed conflict between Iroquoian peoples inhabiting

Northeastern North America.

V. A Brief History of the Iroquoian Wars

During the historical period, the Huron along with their trading partners, the Algonquin

and the Montagnais, were involved in a bitter war with the five Iroquois nations. The French who

traded almost exclusively with the former group also aided them in this conflict - directly and

indirectly. Champlain was the first French leader to participate in an attack with the Huron and

their allies against the Iroquois. Conversely, the English and the Dutch both traded and supported

the Five Nations alliance. In an interesting way, however, the French and the Mohawk Iroquois

shared common interests. Trigger points out that both of these two parties sought to prevent the

Huron, Algonquin, and Montagnais from trading with the Dutch. "Such trade," writes Trigger,

"would have put the prosperity of the French and the security of the Mohawks at serious risk"

(Trigger, *Natives*, 183). The Huron would continue to wage war on the Iroquois until their demise

in 1649. It seems that Iroquois scalping parties had much to do with the final days of Huronia

(Trigger, *Huron*, 2).

There is strong evidence suggesting a tradition of blood feud and inter-tribal conflict

existed in the prehistoric period. The archaeological record suggests that many Huron villages of

this period, as in historic times, had palisades and situated in locations strategic to warfare

(Trigger, *Affluence*, 89). Trigger maintains that by the late sixteenth century, the Montagnais and

Algonquin were engaged in conflict with the Mohawks and Oneidas. At the same time, the Huron

battled the three Western Iroquois tribes, including especially the closest of these peoples, the

Seneca.[71] The Huron, it seems, would only later join the war against the Mohawks and the

Oneidas, perhaps as a result of interests in European trade. Tracing back in time, we might note

that the archaeological record suggest that armed conflict became increasingly common in the

thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Why this occurred, however, is not known with any

reasonable degree of certainty. What does seem likely is that this violence affected, if not initiated

major developments in Iroquoian society. "Evidence suggests that increasing warfare may have

played a key role in the changes that were occurring at this time," writes Trigger (Trigger,

Natives, 96).

Popular misconceptions have previously held warfare to be endemic to Amerindian

society. The Native North American has often been portrayed as an inherently belligerent figure.

But the archaeological record undermines stereotypes of this sort. The peoples of Northeastern

North America have not always lived in conflict. While evidence seems to suggest that native

groups of this region increasingly came into contact with neighboring bands during the Middle

Woodland period (500B.C.-500A.D.), as Trigger suggests, "there is relatively little archaeological

evidence of blood feuds or warfare among hunter-gatherers in the St. Lawrence lowlands," at this

time (Trigger, *Natives*, 76). There exists an equally dangerous tendency to view Native religious

beliefs as static. Yet again such assumptions find little support in the archaeological record.

Despite increased evidence of Native warfare, the Early Iroquoian period (c. 900-

1300A.D.) witnessed a notable decline in the number and frequency of material artifacts

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[71] Trigger, *Natives*, 182; cf. Trigger, *Huron*, 43.

associated with graves. This would appear to suggest a shift in Native perceptions of death or the afterlife "The paucity of grave goods in Early Iroquoian burials," writes Trigger, "reflects the diminution of burial ritualism that had played such an important role from Late Archaic times into the late Middle Woodland period" (Trigger, *Natives*, 91). While Trigger proposes that the year-round occupation of villages, beginning in this period, may have "reduced the need for these rituals to express band solidarity," this line of reasoning is rather speculative. Surely other possibilities abound. Greater band solidarity in village life, for example, may have given rise to a more uniform, and therefore more compelling, oral tradition. Such a development could, in turn, have been found to be sufficiently capable of ensuring the status of the dead. For now it will have to suffice to note that the evidence supports a dynamic view of Native North American military and religious culture.

Finally, it should be noted that while Native North American peoples were engaged in warfare prior to the establishment of European trade relations, the introduction of these goods - or these people - was mirrored in some areas by an escalation in conflict. Of particular interest, for our present purposes, is the periodic rise in tensions between Huron and Five Nations Iroquois. It is likely that this era witnessed a rise in the frequency of prisoner of war execution ceremonies. In what ways these developments impacted the formal structure of this ritual, as it is disclosed to us through seventeenth century sources, is difficult to determine. As we shall see, there is reason to believe that some of the major elements were carried forward from an earlier period. We shall also consider some of the ways the Huron appear to have resisted change to the structure of armed conflict, during the historical period. A look at the forms of violence in Huronia during this period in question will bring added understanding.

Chapter 5
The Forms of Violence in Huronia

I. Hunting

A small note on the issue of hunting in Huron society might help set the foundation for

the following study. Generally speaking, the more Native groups were able to exploit other

available resources, the less they needed to rely on big game hunting, the more sedentary their

lifestyle could be, and the more populated they could become. By the Middle Woodland period,

Trigger notes that, "the increasing use of pottery appears to reflect a less migratory pattern of life

than had prevailed hitherto" (Trigger, *Natives*, 77). In the historical period, the Huron subsistence

economy was largely based on agriculture. "From the ethnohistoric sources," Conrad Heidenreich

suggests, "it is apparent that corn constituted at least 65 percent of the Huron dietary intake, and

fish was eaten more than meat."[72]

Part of the reason for this pattern was the relative lack of game in the region. "By and

large, meat was considered a feast food because of its scarcity," writes the author (Heidenreich,

Huronia, 291). The association between meat eating and ceremony is notable. "The results of a

successful hunt were shared and often precipitated some sort of festive occasion," Heidenreich

continues. Huron women appear to have taken a dominant role in the production of food crops.

Hunting and fishing were primarily the concerns of men. It should be noted, however, that larger

parties on extended expeditions often included women and children. Huron boys were expected to

learn the art of hunting, without exception. In all we might say that the Huron were familiar with

hunting, although they were limited in this enterprise - first by natural constraints, and secondly

along lines of gender and experience.

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[72] Conrad Heidenreich, *Huronia: A History and Geography of the Huron Indians 1600-1650* [Hereafter cited in text] (McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1971), 289.

I. <u>Warfare</u>

i. A Matter of Definition

Archaeological methods such as pottery and skeletal analyses give us insight into the military history of Amerindian peoples prior to the contact period. The narrative accounts of European explorers and missionaries present us with a picture at the time of contact. As we shall see, armed conflict was remarkably different in this part of the world than it was across the Atlantic. Many early Europeans were struck by the frequency of these armed conflicts. Yet to assume that Native North American groups were perpetually engaged in the kind of battles that were waged between hostile nations in Europe, for example, is to greatly misunderstand their practice. Differences in the frequency of engagement coupled with contrasting views on the conduct of battle gave warfare a notably different shape in these two contexts. "Pourtant, les guerres que menaient les Iroquoiens ne se ressemblaient en rien aux batailles rangées que se livraient les armées européennes et coloniales en Europe ou en Amérique," writes Roland Viau.[73]

Early modern European military engagements were often quite systematic affairs. French Kings, in particular, had done much to develop the strategies of warfare in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern periods.[74] Of course, as noted above, soldiers could still prove difficult to control at times - especially when they were not being put to use. On the whole, though, war operated in a relatively methodical manner during the sixteenth century. Troops were organized with a notable degree of sophistication. Industrial advances certainly played their part in this development. Combatants were equipped with a comparatively high level of technology. Newly developed arms operated with great efficacy, despite their relative simplicity, and demanded little

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[73] Roland Viau, *Enfants du néant et mangeurs d'âmes* (Montreal: Boréal, 1997), 106.
[74] Thomas H. Greer and Gavin Lewis, ed., *A Brief History of the Western World* 6th ed. (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992), 311.

in the way of training. Whether warfare was motivated by political ambition, economic interests, or racial concerns troop movements were strategically geared towards the attainment of certain landmarks. To this end the conflict often continued, until it was clear whether said goals could or could not be achieved. Historically we may say that this was true, in many cases, nearly regardless of the number of casualties. It is important to realize that much of the violence was carried out with the express purpose of terminating enemy soldiers, or otherwise eliminating them from the military equation. Enemy troops were often seen as a strategic obstacle. Native North American warfare, on the other hand, may well have been quite different. This is not to suggest that European warfare was entirely free form ceremony or ritual. Indeed, notions such as chivalry and gallantry point us in a different direction. Yet I believe there is nonetheless a contrast to be made here, and it is one that is reflected in some of the early European accounts of Native North American battle.

Newcomers to North America surely viewed Native conflicts in the light of their own experiences. Perhaps for this reason, many Europeans appear to have been far from impressed by the scale and sophistication of the warfare they discovered. Jaenen writes, "the French believed the Amerindians fought only skirmishes, had no master plans for attack, were undisciplined in supplying their expeditions, failed to carry through in campaigns to achieve their objectives, and were bestially inhuman in their treatment of prisoners of war" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 131). Champlain recognized differences in the Native approach, during his first North American military encounter, although he seems to have failed to appreciate them. His narrative contains some interesting observations of a conflict he called a battle next to a lake he named after himself, in 1609.[75] He accounts for the unwillingness of his Native allies to follow French tactical command and the surprise his line of attack creates, in terms of ignorance. Along similar lines, he explains away the efforts of his enemy towards an abrupt and premature disengagement in terms of

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[75] Marcel Trudel, trans., *Champlain* (Montréal: Fides, 1956), 164-166.

cowardice. Yet, for reasons that will become increasingly clear as this study proceeds, it may not

have been a fear of dying that drove the Iroquois away. They were, perhaps, more prepared for

this end than the Europeans realized.

Instead, we may look towards Champlain's assumptions on the nature of Iroquoian

warfare, as well as the threat the changes he introduced posed to its meaning. It seems likely, as

Trigger writes, that he "thought he was participating in a war similar to those in Europe" (Trigger,

Huron, 42). Champlain describes the Iroquois as astonished by the sudden death of their war

chiefs. But for his contempt for Native peoples, we may well have read of his own sense of

wonder that this task could have been accomplished with the ease with which it was. Both sides,

it seems easy to imagine, were taken back by the early and abrupt exit of these high-ranking

military leaders. Yet while the French likely saw this as a tactical lapse, Native warriors may well

have seen different shortcomings to this end. Champlain's account of the voyage home provides

us with a footing for understanding the contrast in their perspectives. The poor treatment of a

prisoner of war prompts the French explorer to protest. "I pointed out to them that we did not

commit such cruelties, but that we killed people outright, and that if they wished to shoot him

with the harquebus, I should be glad to do so," writes Champlain.[76] His request for expediency

was at first denied. "They said no; for he would not feel any pain," the author remarks.[77]

It seems clear that inflicting pain was prioritized over the simple elimination of enemies.

Yet the behavior of the Natives in this scene seems to also reflect the primacy of their experience

over that of the victim. "When he was dead, they were not satisfied; they opened his body and

threw his bowels into the lake. Afterwards they cut off his head, arms and legs, which they

scattered about; but they kept the scalp, which they had flayed, as they did with those of all others

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[76] "Ie leur remonstrois que nous n'vsions point de ces cruautez, & que nous les faisions mourir tout d'vn coup, & que s'ils vouloyent que ie luy donnasse vn coupe d'arquebuze, I'en serois content," Trudel, *Champlain*, 102-103.
[77] "Ils dirt que non, & qu'il be sentiroit point de mal," Trudel, *Champlain*, 103.

whom they had killed in their attack."[78] If Champlain was surprised to see Natives tormenting the dead, it was despite the fact that comparable events had occurred in France during his lifetime. "The story of a Huguenot corpse being subjected to abuse, disinterment and unsavoury burial," as Roberts notes, "could be replicated several times from contemporary sources."[79] The preceding considerations will hopefully illuminate this possibility further.

Trigger has taken a closer look at the nature of Huron war and its impact on society. His consideration paints a rather intriguing picture. In traditional Iroquoian military engagements, Trigger relates, "both sides had lined up in the open and had shot arrows at each other until one side had given way" (Trigger, *Natives*, 217). Thatched armor and shields offered Iroquoian warriors a great deal of protection against this type weapon. "A few losses, in the form of deaths or prisoners being taken," Trigger notes further, "usually signaled the end of such combats."[80] It is clear that the Huron typically avoided extended battles. Along these lines, Trigger notes, that they "generally retreated before Iroquois reinforcements arrived from other settlements" (Trigger, *Huron*, 45). Similarly, Iroquoian conflict operated according to seasonal patterns. Neither the Huron nor the Iroquois conducted military campaigns at times when the trees were without leaves, perhaps because this would have greatly diminished their cover. In all it seems that the Huron favored a perpetual cycle of violence, with low mortality rates, over the kind of large-scale encounters that would have settled their conflicts more decisively.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the introduction of metal tips made Iroquoian arrows dramatically more effective against traditional armor and shields. This would have resulted in a significant rise in the number of wartime casualties. Around the same time,

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[78] "Aprés qu'il fut mort, ils ne se contenterent pas, ils luy ouurirent le ventre, & ietterent ses entrailles dedans le lac: après ils coupperrent la teste, les bras & les iambes, qu'ils separerent d'vn costé & d'autre, & reseruerent la peau de la teste..." Trudel, *Champlain*, 103.
[79] Trudel, *Champlain*, 103; Robert, *Contesting*, 132.
[80] Trigger, *Natives*, 217; cf. Biggar (1922-36, 2:96-101, 3:66-79).

however, the Huron and Iroquois began to shy away from this form of encounter. Trigger

suggests that by 1620, these groups "preferred to raid each other in scattered groups that could

remain hidden in the forests until they were able to surprise small numbers of the enemy and

engage them in hand to hand combat" (Trigger, *Natives*, 218). Along these lines, Huron warriors

also attempted covert assaults on enemy settlements. "At night more daring individuals would

sneak into Iroquois villages," writes Trigger, "where they tried to kill some of the inhabitants and

set fire to the houses" (Trigger, *Huron*, 45). Similarly, citing the Jesuit account of Jouvency,

Jaenen points out that some Montagnais and Iroquois groups were so concerned to avoid a full

fledge military engagement that they "had agreed to settle their difference by single combat

reminiscent of European medieval duels or jousts."[81] This is an interesting remark and it brings us

to question to our terminology. Can Huron military engagements of this period appropriately be

considered warfare? At the very least, we may say that the upsurge of raids and other forms of

indirect military conflict during historical times reflect fundamental differences between the early

modern European and Native North American practice of war. As the weaponry became more

sophisticated, the Huron, like other Iroquoian groups appear to have adjusted their tactics so as to

continue capturing and killing a small sum of enemy warriors, all the while minimizing

casualties. It is difficult to avoid the impression that they were content with these results and saw

little need to engage in high-risk warfare.

ii. Ritual Conflict

Hostilities were thus renewed in an almost ceremonial manner. This may have been

difficult for many early modern Europeans to recognize or understand. Some seem to have

struggled to find the reason behind Iroquoian conflicts. Jaenen reminds us that Thévet had "some

difficulty... in explaining how tribesman, whom he described as having no possessions, living in

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[81] Jaenen, *Friends*, 131; cf. Reuben Gold Thwaites, trans., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York: Pageant Book Company, 1959), 1:269.

perfect equality, and demonstrating neither ambition nor desire for power, found motives for warfare" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 128). There is good reason to believe that the quarrel between the Huron and the Iroquois did not essentially concern land rights. Trigger points out that, "even if Iroquois attacks may have compelled some of the Huron tribes to settle in Huronia, their abandoned territory was not occupied by the Iroquois but remained part of the hunting territory of the Huron confederacy" (Trigger, *Huron*, 43). While this fact must be viewed in light of the abundance of fertile soil in this area, it does nonetheless point to a rather significant difference between war in Northeastern North America and in Europe. War chiefs led their men to battle, just as European generals, but their behavior may have been motivated by entirely different reasons. Cornelius Jaenen points out that "much aboriginal warfare was non-economic and non-political in motivation." "The long-range and protracted imperial wars remained a mystery to the aborigines," the author adds further (Jaenen, *Friend*, 130). Instead, he suggests, "inter-tribal warfare was part of the normal pattern of the aborigines' existence" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 128). These considerations lead us to begin to see the ritualized nature of Iroquoian warfare.

Iroquoian warfare may well reflect deep-rooted social and religious concerns. Trigger maintains, that Huron culture was so "profoundly influenced by the warfare that prevailed among Iroquoian tribes" that it affected nearly all aspects of society, including "subsistence patterns, social and political organization, and religious beliefs" (Trigger, *Huron*, 42). Trigger has argued that battle was a primary means for individuals to distinguish themselves in Iroquoian society. "Every man was expected to be a warrior," writes Trigger, and "boys were trained to use weapons from an early age" (Trigger, *Huron*, 44). "Since there was no rule of primogeniture," the author continues, "brothers and cousins competed with one another for (the offices of war or peace chief) by trying to show themselves to be brave warriors, good hunters, clever traders, generous hosts, and good speakers" (Trigger, *Natives*, 93). This line of reasoning has led Trigger to view the rise in warfare, in this region during the fourteenth century, as related to the increasing social

insecurities of Iroquoian men. "The men may have felt threatened by the growing importance of horticulture, since it was a female concern," writes the author (Trigger, *Natives*, 99). Citing native opinions in historical times, the author adds, "Iroquoians universally agreed that the most important (way by which a man could win acclaim) was valour in warfare" (Trigger, *Natives*, 99). In short, Trigger suggests that, "it is possible that warfare increased as it became the principal means by which a young man could win individual prestige" (Trigger, *Natives*, 98).

Taken together the above considerations shed a peculiar light on Iroquoian warfare. What emerges is a type of ritualized violence, structured so as to allow young men to establish their status, without risking heavy casualties. This would account for the confluence of the advancements in weaponry and the rise of indirect conflict. So also would it explain, the fact that military victories did not always translate into territorial expansion. For it was not their landholdings, according to Trigger, that Iroquoian warriors sought to enlarge; it was their reputation. Consider, in this light, the Huron tendency to let enemies escape discretely, if the option presented itself, in cases where the right of recognition for the capture was disputed (Sagard, *Grand Voyage*, 120) Examples of this sort make it hard to think otherwise. Yet it is not without difficulty that we come to see warfare in these terms. This line of speculation demands a shift in our focus. While European military engagements essentially concerned the thorough and systematic elimination of military units, armed conflict in Northeastern North America focused on their ritual production. While soldiers were killed in early modern European battles, warriors were born in the Native wars of the Late Iroquoian period. This is not to say that there wasn't a certain glorification of death on the battlefield in Europe, but that in Northeastern North America the conflict appears structured for this purpose.

Huron warfare may well have found its end in the glory of a few combatants. Yet there is something unsettling about this account. The experience we are here describing lacks dimension.

I suspect that there is much more to the practice of ritualized warfare than the fulfillment of the triumphant warrior and the disappointment of the inept. Beyond this, there is the communal experience of going to war, the impact of the return, and the life of all concerned in the wake of this violence. For when a warrior leaves to seek acclaim, so does a piece of all who know him - just as he too takes with him a piece of all who remained. We may well understand the situation more thoroughly if we see the way communities give acclaim to their heroes at the same time as they revel in it themselves. And of taking acclaim, does it not also involve giving? We may well see that receiving praise often involves sharing it. Let us recall, after all, that history has not known a self-loathing culture. While warriors may well have been motivated by individual concerns, their lived experience should be seen in the light of those who lived with them. Mothers and sisters, grandparents and children: they lived with war, lived through war, lived for war; and they, no doubt, left their mark on it. No less did it leave a mark on them. When warriors fell and were known to be tortured, was not a piece of them tortured as well? At the base of this way of thinking is the realization that the warrior is also the helper and the helped; the lover and the loved; the past, present, and future of all who knew him. We will need to probe further, if the experience of Huron warfare in the sixteenth century is to be appreciated.

Roland Viau has recognized the ritual nature of Iroquoian combat. The overt focus on capturing prisoners over military conquest has led him to call these conflicts, "la guerre de la capture." In *Enfants du néant et mangeurs d'âmes*, Viau suggests that, "L'objet primordial des combats était la capture de l'adversaire et, à défaut de le prendre vivant, on prévelait son scalp."[82] This drive to capture enemies was balanced by a deep-rooted concern to avoid apprehension. The strength of this concern is reflected in the fact that it was seen to extended to all allies, dead or alive. "Si un raid avortait," writes the author, "on préférait mourir les armes à la main plutôt que d'être prisonniers ou d'abandonner des compagnons blessés sur le champ de bataille" (Viau,

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[82] Roland Viau, *Enfants du néant et mangeurs d'âmes* [Hereafter cited in text] (Montreal: Boréal, 1997).

Enfants, 109). "La réussite d'un raid ne se mesurerait pas essentiellement au nombre de captifs et de scalps ramenés, mais également à l'habileté du leader guerrier à éviter les pertes de vie parmi ses effectifs" (Viau, *Enfants*, 87). While resisting it at every turn, Huron Warriors were all too aware of the likelihood that they would one day be caught. Viau emphasizes the extant to which this fact was culturally ingrained into Iroquoian men. "Les hommes étaient sensibilisés *dès l'âge le plus tendre* à l'idée que leur destin eventual serait de mourir sur le champ de bataille ou d'être captures par l'ennemi, puis probablement immolés sur l'échafaud" (Viau, *Enfants*, 124). The warrior knew his role, one might say, in a fitting turn of phrase. "Every (Huron) man was expected to be a warrior," adds Trigger (Trigger, *Huron*, 44). The work of Roland Viau brings us to closer to understanding the dramatic element in Iroquoian warfare. In a way at once reminiscent of the words of David Nicholls, Viau speaks of the "théatre d'un raid" (Viau, *Enfants*, 119).

iii. The Dog Feast

Even a slight shift in focus can be enlightening. As we strive to appreciate the dramatic nature of Huron warfare, a broader picture begins to emerge. A search for the beginning and end of this *theater of raid* reveals certain difficulties. For the very characteristics that distinguished warfare from ordinary life in Huronia may be seen to extend well outside the observable limits of this particular phenomenon. Moving outwards, we may see a continuation of ceremonial behavior on the march to as well as away from battle. In Huron tradition, these voyages linked armed conflict with two grand rituals. The sun would set just as it arose, sort to speak. The relation between these rites and the military engagement they bracket is a point of interest. A closer look may well provide us with an enlightened framework for understanding the experience of Huron warfare. The decision to go to war effectively began an extended process highlighted by the

extremes of violence and emotion, as well as the prominence of ritualized behavior. As we shall see, the latter played a communicative role from the onset.

No sooner than the decision to go to war was made, did the war chief signal his intentions by striking the war pole - a material representation of his enemy. "S'il avait un rêve ou une vision," writes Viau, "il retournait parmi les siens et frappait de son cassetête (*kadgikk8a*) le poteau de guerre (*gäondonté*) dressé au milieu du village, symbolisant l'ennemi (*haguiaderioch*) ou celui qu'on méprisait (*dediatadech8ahens*)" (Viau, *Enfants*, 88). While symbolic, this gesture was nonetheless powerful. In so much as the pole stood as a sign of the enemy, the actions taken against it were a clear signal. In one stroke, the chief expressed his desire for war. The cognitive impact of this ritual is of primary concern for this study. It is important to realize that this signal would have also invoked the mental and emotional associations of the pre-war, war, and post-war ritual, in the minds of those present. In this way, warriors were reminded of their identity (as such), of the expectations of their community, as well as of their own related ideas and impressions. Others, no less, were drawn to recall past moments and associated feelings. This *re-experience* set the foundation for armed conflict.

The pre-war ritual was a time to remember ancestors and allies lost in battle, as well as their enduring significance, and the sense of responsibility that accompanied their loss. "Le maître du festin prenait d'abord la parole," writes Viau, "pour rappeler encore une fois aux guerriers leurs responsabilités vis-à-vis des défunts devenus des Ancêtres" (Viau, *Enfants*, 90). Women played a particularly prominent role in recalling the "césure dans leur vie sociale et spirituelle," (Viau, *Enfants*, 91). These impressions, it should be pointed out, were born in the wake of fallen friends and family members. An obligation to fight was, in this way, built out of a renewed sense of loss and the felt need to preserve the memory of dead relatives and companions. A ceremonial war dance preceded the feast. At this time, Huron warriors would act out future

strokes of violence while singing of that which they hoped to accomplish. Following the lead of

their chief, each warrior sang and swung clubs, "comme si on était réellement aux prises avec

l'énnemi," Viau continues. In these moments, song came together with dance, as purpose met

potential. The confidence and emotional associations of enacting these scenes of battle in the

presence of those who cheerfully approved was united in memory with the physical act of

conflict. In this way, the Huron laid the groundwork for a successful military campaign. Huron

warriors ritually produced the very moments they would need to succeed. These memories

needed only be re-actualized in order to bare fruition. More will need to be said on this point

during our consideration of the use of effigies. For now it will suffice to note the emphasis on

setting memory during the pre-war ritual.

As neighboring groups gathered, a lavish meal was prepared. In Huronia, the pre-war

ritual featured the *erhar 8ahasko* (the Dog Feast). The work of Roland Viau brings us to closer to

seeing the degree to which this ritual prefigured the cannibal meal, the *gagarihaton* (Lit.: eat

many slaves).[83] The basic structure of both rites is the same: allies came together, a celebration of

violence ensued, and a *sacrifice* was made and eaten. The ritual distribution of meat underscores

this point. In the former ceremony, Viau points out, "il donnait la tête cuite du chien aux guerriers

réputés pour leur vaillance." While in the latter, the Huron "reproduisaient ce comportement,

mais avec les têtes de prisonniers suppliciés qu'on offrait aux chefs de guerre," (Viau, *Enfants*,

92). Viau dwells on the symbolic connotation of the Dog Feast, and it brings him to recognize the

fundamental similarities between these two rites. Yet his interpretation of the equation of slaves

with dogs may lack focus. Viau sees the common treatment of prisoners of war and dogs, as the

ultimate form of debasement. Calling the latter, "parasites des campements humains," he suggests

that, "Par consequent, réduire le prisonnier asservi à l'état de chien, c'était le placer au plus bas

de l'échelle des êtres vivants" (Viau, *Enfants*, 93). This perspective, I will contend, overlooks a

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[83]Viau, *Enfants*, 93; J. Bruyas (1862), 45.

rather significant aspect of this rite. In order to understand the complex nature of the Dog Feast it will be necessary to set aside certain modern Western constructs. The field of taxonomy, and the sense of detachment it lends to perspectives on the natural world rank among the most notable obstacles. A more pantheistic conception of the relation between humankind and our animal brethren will certainly bring us closer to grasping this ceremony as it was experienced in Huronia during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. Looking ahead, we might point out, the souls of dogs were thought to travel to the village of the dead, same as their masters (Trigger, *Huron*, 104).

The pre-war feast was an opportunity for neighboring tribes to share in commensality. It was a chance to express group solidarity. On occasions such as these, however, the lines of inclusion and exclusion were redrawn: the meal came at the expense of the lowest ranking members of the group. For a society with a deep-rooted belief in their place in the natural world, dogs may well be described as such. Dogs were in many ways members of the Huron community. They were provided for but they also provided for others. They shared sleeping quarters with their human companions, no doubt sharing heat as well during the long winter months. They played a part in the hunt. Being quick to detect raiding parties, they were also useful for group security. Of course they were maltreated on occasion, and subject to some scorn. It is not incongruous to think of them as almost akin to slaves, as Viau suggests.[84] Yet, we should see their low ranking for the way that it reflects their inclusion in Huron society. On the occasion of the Dog Feast, I believe, the group reveled in the sudden exclusion of one of their own: a *known* being. Perhaps there was even an element of purification to such an experience of social expulsion. During the feast of their appellation, dogs crossed that volatile line from companion to consumable, from subject to supper. Looking ahead, if the pre-war ritual truly prefigured the

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[84] "Dans les mentalités comme dans la réalité, l'esclave et le chien faisaient qu'un," writes Viau (Viau, *Enfants*, 93).

prisoner of war execution ceremony, it is not absolute degradation we can expect, but sacrifice.

The key to this ritual, may well lie in the element of integration prior to the act of expulsion.

iv. Ritual Procession

The way in which the march to battle appears as a continuation of the pre-war ritual

merits further discussion. "Au sortir du village," writes Viau, "le chef de guerre continuait

toujours à chanter sa chanson de mort" (Viau, *Enfants*, 96). Citing the missionary Pierre-Joseph-

Marie Chaumont, Viau adds that Iroquoian warriors took elaborate steps to signal their intentions

along the way to war. " Quant ils vont en guerre et qu'ils veulent informer du parties, ceux qui

pourroient passer sure leurs routes, ils dépeignent lanimal de la famille dont ils sont avec une

hache qu'il tient dans la patte droite, quelque fois un sabre ou un casse-teste," writes Chaumont.[85]

"Le tout sur un arbre dont ils lèvent l'Ecorce et c'est lanimal de la famille qui est maîtresse du

party qui est toujours le premier," the author adds further. These considerations lead us to

emphasize the communicative element in the Huron pre-war ritual. But we must also recognize

the ceremonial character. "On days of important business and rejoicing, as well as when they

went on the warpath," writes Elisabeth Tooker, "the Indians wore a kind of plume, most of them

around the head standing up like a crown and others sloping down like a moustache..."[86] Much

could be said of this crown, but for now it will suffice to note that ornamentation was employed.

Huron warriors would proceed on the warpath in an ordered line. "Ils offraient ainsi une

cible moins facile à une ennemi embusqué, minimisant les risques d'être encerclés ou anéantis, et

pouvaient se retrancher plus efficacement si la situation le commandait" (Viau, *Enfants*, 101). It

has often been assumed that this was done for tactical reasons. Yet we may appreciate the

[85] Viau, *Enfants*, 96-97; cf. P.J.M. Chaumont, *Mémoire concernant la nation irokoise; ce qu'elle est et comment elle est composé*, [1666], (Ottawa, Archives nationale du Canada), MG1 C11A, vol.2, f° 165, 396
[86] Elisaabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians 1615-1649* (New York, Syracuse University Press, 1991), 30.

dramatic element of this custom, no less. Dressed in elaborate costumes, carrying flags or

banners, and singing their songs of war, Huron men marched in a distinctly ceremonial manner.

After all, the Huron did not always operate according sound tactical principles. At times,

Iroquoian warriors seem to have abandoned what some might consider prudent military reasoning

all together. On the way to battle, a more ritualized and distinctly religious approach found favor.

"À proximité du campement, *tournée du côté où l'on [voulait] aller*," writes Viau, "les guerriers

iroquoiens étalaient des objets porte-bonheur, lesquels pouvaient être une griffe de hibou, une

peau de serpent ou un fétiche en forme de poupée" (Viau, *Enfants*, 102). Referencing Charlevoix,

Viau suggests that for an hour in the evenings, "ils demandaient assistance à ces amulettes."[87]

Having performed said ritual, and perhaps much to the shock of their European allies, the Huron

warriors would sleep without a single man standing watch. Champlain's account contains similar

observations.

The trip home was no less ritualized or dramatic. In fact, the presence of captives surely

added to the drama. The march away from battle began with a great cry. The opportunity to claim

a few scalps and do away with victims unfit for the voyage home was also commonly seized, at

this time. Captives played a most significant role in this theater. Accordingly, they were expected

to play their part. As the march proceeded, they were required to sing their war song, all the while

enduring acts of torment and abuse. But there was depth to their character. Prisoners were known

to build false trust, fake sickness or injury, or even try to incite jealousy between their captors by

falsely crediting one with their capture. Beyond the gear used to restrain them and prevent their

escape, prisoners were dressed for their role. "Dans la main gauche," writes Viau, "on leur mettait

un bâton blanc revêtu de plumes de cygne [Cygne siffleur], (*Cygnus Columbias*)," (Viau, *Enfants*,

128). Interestingly, they also had their heads shaved, and in the case of European captives, their

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[87] Viau, *Enfants*, 102; P.-F.-X. de Charlevoix, *Histoire et description génerale de la Nouvelle-France avec le journal historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du roi dans l'Amérique septentrionale*, (Paris:1744), vol.3, 236.

beards as well. It will be important to recall this point when our consideration turns to the practice of scalping. Along similar lines, their faces were painted red, black, or red and black. "C'était comme si les couleurs appliquées exprimaient le destin qui attendait le captif," adds Viau.[88] In this way, victims were ritually ornamented with powerful signs.

The final moments of the post-war procession enfolded in much the same way as the voyage outward had begun. Tradition held that the war party would revisit the very place they had stopped to carve out the mark of their intentions for war (Viau, *Enfants*, 127). This time, however, they crafted signs detailing the outcome of their experience. The symbols they produced signaled such things as the presence of captives, casualties or injuries, at the same time as they described the family of whom it concerned. It is important to view this concern for the production of symbols in the light of an otherwise hasty return. It is along similar lines, that Huron warriors signaled their return. When the war party approached home, several warriors were sent ahead and instructed to let out a call for every combatant that had fallen in battle. This signal largely decided the nature of their welcome into the village. Once again, the ritualized behavior in question appears to have had a strong communicative capacity.

It may be said then that Huron warriors enacted something of a procession to and from war. These ritualized movements may be seen as meaningful interludes between the pre-war ritual, armed conflict, and the prisoner of war execution ceremony. In this light, the battle appears as the central drama in a five-part proceeding. Referring back to our assumptions on human experience, we might emphasize the unitary nature of these moments. The experience of each part involved an expectation of the whole. These considerations bring to mind an elaborate rite and they lead us to see religious torture with an eye for the role of memory and anticipation. The

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[88] Viau notes that black signaled death for the captive, red meant that he/she might be left to live, and black and red indicated that a decision had not yet been made (Viau, *Enfants*, 126).

element of continuance is noteworthy. The reader will recall the way the popular rioting in France

during the sixteenth century appeared to extend scenes of ritualized violence. To the extent that

we can accept the ritualized nature of Huron warfare, and see it for its relation to a series of

events, beginning with the declaration of war and ending in the final moments of the cannibal

meal, we move towards our consideration of the fundamental experience of the Huron prisoner of

war execution ceremony with an eye for the way in which it relates to the aforementioned work

of French agent-crowds. We shall now turn our consideration towards the former.

III. Village Violence: The use and abuse of prisoners

i. Reparation, Slavery, and Adoption

     While captive Iroquoian warriors could expect to be ritually executed, not all prisoners of

war received such treatment. Indeed, the Huron were known to resort to slavery, or even

adoption, when the conditions were deemed suitable. A brief consideration of these practices will

place the execution of prisoners in proper perspective. In *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians*

1615-1649, Elisabeth Tooker has taken a closer look at Huron wartime behavior and beliefs. She

maintains that some Iroquoian groups may very well have had economic motives for going to

war.[89] We have already seen how this view contrasts with that of Cornelius Jaenen, and it not so

much the place of the present study to resolve this tension, but Tooker's study does offer the

potential for new insight. Further, there may well be more common ground between these two

authors than is immediately obvious. Tooker points out that the most common reason given by

Hurons for the instigation of armed conflict, during the early sixteenth century, "was the refusal

of a group, after they had killed a member of another nation, to give the necessary presents, the

restitution required by their agreements" (Tooker, *Ethnography*, 28). Such behavior, notes the

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[89] Elisabeth Tooker, *An Ethnography of the Huron Indians 1615-1649* [Hereafter cited in text] (New York, Syracuse University Press, 1991).

author, was often "interpreted as a hostile act, and the entire country, particularly the relatives of

the deceased, felt obliged to raise a war party to avenge the death"[90]

What interests us here is the sense that a communal loss needed to be made right. The

first and, perhaps, most common way to compensate for this loss was the exchange of goods.

While Tooker takes this to illustrate the economic motives of Native peoples, we might see it in

different terms. The exchange of goods relates to the field of economics, for certain, but goods

may be received for essentially non-economic reasons as well.[91] It is important to dwell upon the

fact that material restitution, prisoner adoption or slavery, and the execution of prisoners in some

way resolved, or at least concluded, the Huron drive for war. They stood at the end of – or cut

short - an extended process, perhaps both routine as well as ritual. Their relation may well

provide us with the key for understanding all four. While the first three may clearly be taken for

the way in which they represent economic gains, the latter may not. In fact, executing prisoners as

opposed to treating or trading them as slaves actually amounts to something of an economic loss.

It is not until we shift our attention to a more foundational level that things become clearer. As we

shall see, gift giving, like slavery and adoption, involves a significant gain in the realm of

memory. If common ground is to be found between these practices it might very well be on this

plane.

In so much as it was known to forestall armed conflict, gift giving held the power to

make amends. The real strength of its capacity to do so arises from the fact that it can in some

sense compensate for that which was lost. In some cases this may have been achieved directly. If

a husband provided warmth, for example, so too could a new coat. If a brother hunted well, a

supply of stock may partially fill the void left by his departure. A good slave or adoptee could

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[90] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 28; Twaites, *Relations,* 10:225; 17:11.

[91] As some modern Western civil suits may well have shown us, taking away from others can sometimes be more about psychological or emotional profit than the very real monetary gain.

likewise do much to replace a fallen family member. Yet what we have here characterized as replacement may also be seen differently. Gifts bring ease to the mind, where a memory of loss once caused concern. That is to say that good gifts displace bad memories. Painful moments may be pushed to the edge of the mind. In this way, gift giving facilitates forgetting. Minds may be set to rest, and disturbing memories appeased. This sense of reparation is greater still in the case of slavery. The slave who replaces a family member on one level, also helps expel the haunting memories of the latter created in the wake of their departure. Along these lines, an adoptee may do even more. In fact, it may be that nothing appeases the memory of a lost child better than the acquisition of a new one. We are speaking here of mental reparation. These practices share the capacity to help defuse problematic reminiscences. It is from this angle that we shall approach the Huron prisoner of war execution ceremony.

Our quest for a deeper appreciation of this ritual has to come to terms with the way the adoptee, the slave, and the victim were all forced to take on the role of a deceased community member. Upon returning from battle, Huron warriors would promptly give their captives to a family that had suffered just such a loss. Nearly regardless of whether they would be executed, sold, or integrated, the prisoner was made to take on the name of the departed.[92] "The prisoner symbolically replaced the lost relative and served to dry the tears of the bereaved," writes Trigger (Trigger, *Huron*, 49). A couple of notes should be made here on the wording of this statement. To begin, more will need to be said of this process of drying tears. Crying as a public event is deeply related to group memory. Speaking of the role of these 'adoptive' parents, Viau suggests that "la presence de ces pleureuses dont *la tête coiffée était d'un linceul* venait précisément nourrir dans la mémoire des vivants le souvenir du parent ou du proche décédé" (Viau, *Enfants,* 162). The

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[92] Viau, *Enfants*, 167. The parallels between the process of integrating slaves and the execution of prisoners merit further study, but this issue falls outside the reasonable scope of this study.

intensity of their crying, Viau suggests, was ritual testimony to the importance of the deceased. In this way, the crying ritual was a social expression of the power of enduring memories.

What Trigger has here termed symbolic may have also been quite real on some level. Indeed, these newcomers could do much to replace lost loved ones. Interestingly, a prisoner's ability to take on this role largely determined their fate. If done well, the captive's life would be spared. "Under these circumstances," writes Trigger, "the constant treatment of the prisoner as a lost relative must have encouraged him to identify with this role as his best chance of survival" (Trigger, *Huron*, 49). Highly successful prisoners of war might even earn a notable degree of acceptance within the community. Along these lines, it should also be noted that second generation slaves were naturally emancipated and accepted as equal members of Huron society. In the collective mind of the community, however, it was not so much the life of the enemy captive that was given continuance, as it was that of the dearly deceased. This often involved assuming names: titles and responsibilities. Integrated captives would even be expected to wage war against their former people. The extent to which the new comer was able to fill in for the recently departed should not be understated. I believe this is the foundation on which an understanding of the Huron prisoner of war ceremony should be constructed. It is to this that we shall presently turn.

ii. The Prisoner of War Execution Ceremony

The prisoner of war execution ceremony was a violent and elaborate ritual common to the Iroquoian peoples of Northeastern North America. The earliest evidence of this practice in this region is dated to the Middle Iroquoian period (1300-1400A.D.). As noted above, this was a time of dramatic cultural change and increasing warfare. A number of fragmented bones found in middens at the Uren site, in Ontario, can be dated to this period. This represents the first evidence

of cannibalism in the region (Trigger, *Natives*, 96). As Trigger suggests, the archaeological record indicates that the torture of prisoners and the reburial of the remains of dead Hurons in village ossuaries, also occurred at this time (Trigger, *Affluence*, 89). From the Middle Iroquoian period forward, the archaeological record reflects the growing frequency of these practices. In short, the prisoner of war execution ceremony appears to have been common to this region in the period preceding sustained contact with Europeans and European goods.

There is good reason to believe that the development of this ceremony in Northeastern North America came by way of cultural diffusion from the South. "Certain key elements, including the use of prisoners, the removal of the heart, the killing of the victim on an elevated platform and in view of the sun, and finally the cooking and eating of all or parts of his body," writes Trigger, "connect this Northern Iroquoian ritual with ones practiced in the Southeastern United States and in Mexico by the Aztecs" (Trigger, *Natives*, 97). The fact that some major produce is widely believed to have diffused in this direction, also strengthens this connection. The Iroquoian tradition did, however, have some of its own distinct elements. Differences in social views on death and dying also led to minor variations within this group.

The execution ceremony itself was characterized by an extended series of torture and abuse. A number of devices were employed to torture the victims; including the use of fire and water, gauntlets, diverse forms of mutilation, and perhaps even psychological manipulation. While they were known to converse openly with their victims, the Huron did not use torture for the purposes extracting information (Trigger, *Huron*, 49). The role of the victim was rather clearly defined in the Huron prisoner of war execution ritual. The warrior was expected to behave valiantly, sing, and endure the abuse. In a way reminiscent of the *amende honourable*, discussed above, the prisoner was also asked to make *Athataion*, a farewell speech, before the final scenes of torture (Thwaites, *Relations* 13: 55). The *theatrical* nature of this ritual is beginning to emerge.

On occasion a Dog Feast directly preceded the execution ceremony (Trigger, *Huron*, 49).

Even without, prisoners were typically well fed and looked after by the community, including

especially by the adoptive family. A mood of celebration accompanied this otherwise grim ritual.

Periods of intermission, wherein the prisoner would be allowed to regain strength, were used to

extend the abuse. Following these intervals, writes Trigger, " the Huron redoubled their efforts to

make the prisoner cry out as much as possible" (Trigger, *Huron*, 51). That is to say that the

torture seems to have proceeded with the express intent of making the victim plead for mercy.

The Sun had an important role to play in this ceremony. As a god of great significance,

the Sun was given glory for Huron military victories (Jaenen, *Friend*, 123). To this end, the

torture was often extended until day break, and completed on a raised scaffold (Thwaites,

Relations, 13:77). The significance of the sun is also reflected in the fact that the Huron were said

to believe that the sacrifice of prisoners would promote the growth of crops in the fields (Trigger,

Natives, 99). In the end, a knife was used to decapitate the victim. It appears to have been

important to the Huron that demise occurred as a result of this instrument and not the hours of

preceding abuse (Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:79). The corpse was subsequently divided into a

number of parts, pieces were allotted, and the cannibal feast began.

The impact of the European encounter on the nature of this ritual is difficult to determine.

We have argued for a dynamic view of Huron culture and beliefs. We have also considered the

way in which European trade forced the transformation of Huron society. Yet we have also seen

evidence of the Huron resistance to European imposed change in the warfare ritual. It seems

likely, as mentioned, that such major elements as torture and cannibalism were introduced to

Northeastern North America during the Middle Iroquoian period. We will assume with a measure

of qualified certainty that by the late sixteenth century the basic nature of this rite was sufficiently

similar to what we may deduce from our seventeenth century sources that a meaningful

comparison with the contemporary violence in France may be effectuated.

We say this despite the fact that European trade goods were likely appropriated as tools

of torture at some point, and perhaps with increasing frequency, during the contact period. While

such items may well have altered the efficiency of certain techniques, it likely did not have a

major impact on the essential structure, or central drama, of this ceremony. Much of the abuse

involved means unrelated to European exchange, such as fire and water. The general continuity

between North and South American cannibal rites, noted above, lends itself to this sort of view.

This being said, we in no way intend to dismiss the possibility that so many of the delicate details,

which make this comparison intriguing, were introduced during the Late Iroquois (c. 1400-

1550A.D.) or the early historic period. It is with these considerations in mind that we will proceed

to a more in depth look at the nature of the religious violence in Huronia during this time.

iii. The Role of Women and Children

The Huron community played a major role in the prisoner of war execution ritual. In fact,

there was a strong emphasis on group participation. The chief's request that all abstain from

sexual activity on the night of the execution may be understood in these terms (Trigger, *Huron*,

50). Huron women did their part to incite warfare, and they joined war parties on occasion, but

they were especially active in the torture captives (Viau, *Enfants*, 100). While, "everyone

tormented the prisoner as he (or she) wished," as Tooker suggests, there appears to be reason to

make certain generalizations based on gender.[93] For one, Huron women displayed an advanced

understanding of the human nervous system. Jaenen speaks of their "delicate tortures."[94] Along

[93] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 33; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 15:173.
[94] Jaenen, *Friends*, 143; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 30:243; 31:45.

similar lines, Montagnais women employed a "refined and ingenious brutality."[95] At times this involved exploiting sexual parts. As particularly sensitive, external, non-vital organs, male genitalia were vulnerable to intense and extended abuse. Yet if bodily anguish was a product of this treatment, it was not always an end. In one incident, if not many, testicles were tossed around like balls.[96] This is a rather distinctive form of violent behavior: a blend of (playful) malice and (morbid) delight.

The shedding of tears also appears to have been largely the duty of Huron women. "Le commandement et l'avertissement donnés, toutes unanimement commencent à pleurer et se lamentent à bon escient, et femmes et filles, petites et grandes (et non jamais les hommes...) et pour plus facilement s'émouvoir et s'y exciter, elles répètent tous leur parents et amis défunts, disants" «Et mon père est mort, et ma mere est morte, et mon cousin est mort, et ainsi des autres»; et toutes fondent larmes, sinon les petit filles qui en font plus de semblant qu'elles n'en ont d'envie, pour n'être pas encore capables de ces sentiments. " (Sagard, *Grand Voyage*, 290). This account again underlines the relation between the Huron crying ritual and the invocation of memories.

It is clear from Sagard's account that Huron women could become bothered by the memories of deceased friends and relatives. "Quand on vient à toucher cette corde et qu'on leur reproche que quel-qu'un de leurs parents est mort, ils sortent alors aisément hors des gonds et perdent patience de colère et fâcherie, que leur apporte et cause ce ressouvenir... et c'est en cela, et non autre chose, que je leur ai vu quelque-fois perdre patience" (Sagard, *Grand Voyage*, 291). The role of Huron women should not be understated. "C'étaient elles," Viau reminds us, "qui transmettaient la parenté et qui avaient l'importante responsabiliité d'apaiser les âmes des morts"

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[95] Jaenen, *Friends*, 143; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 5:51-53.
[96] Jaenen, *Friends*, 143; cf. Arthur T. Adams, ed., *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis: Ross Haines, 1961), 20-21.

(Viau, *Enfants*, 77). It is perhaps not surprising then that they also played a major role in the

deciding the end of the prisoner of war execution ritual. "Ces femmes ou mères de clans, qui,

étaient à l'origine de la formation de la plupart des expéditions guerrières," the author adds

further, "décidaient en derniere en dernière instance du sort des vaincus qu'on leur confiait"

(Viau, *Enfants*, 132).

Children were expected to participate in the execution ceremony. The degree to which

they were involved in the violence is significant. There is no evidence, however, of young Hurons

needing to be coerced into a violent role. They appear to have joined in willfully. In fact, it seems

that Huron children often explored the creative side of ritualized torture. This behavior, we might

add on an aside, appears to have stirred the indignation of some European newcomers. "The fact

that the children as well as being taught stoicism in suffering and adversity were taught refined

cruelty towards captured enemies aroused the humanitarian sentiments of the French," writes

Jaenen (Jaenen, *Friend*, 137). While, as we have seen, French children were likewise involved in

a great deal of violence during this period, there were differences. In one account, the Jesuit,

Radisson, describes children having their heads bathed in the blood of captives.[97] This marks a

significant divergence from the French context. While French Catholics soaked Huguenot

children in the blood of their victims, the Huron dealt with their own offspring in this manner. If

Huron children were ritually treated during these violent scenes, they also engaged in a ritual

manner. "Tous les enfants," writes Gabriel Sagard, "se trouvent pour avoir quelque petit bout de

boyau qu'ils pendent au bout d'une baguette et le portent ainsi en triomphe par toute la ville ou

village en signe de victoire" (Sargard, *Grand Voyage*, 242). The significance of this ritual was not

lost on the Franciscan. The children were not carrying a piece of intestine, so much as a sign of

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[97] Jaenen, *Friends*, 143; cf. Arthur T. Adams, ed., *The Explorations of Pierre Esprit Radisson* (Minneapolis: Ross Haines, 1961), 20-21.

victory. It will be important to recall this point when turn to consider the practice of scalping and other forms of representational violence.

While Huron women and children participated in the ceremonial execution of prisoners, during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, they were also the victims of this violence. Of course, male warriors were the most likely to be tortured and killed. Along these lines Viau has argued that Native women and children were often spared. "Généralement, lorsque les guerriers iroquoiens retournaient dans leur pays, ils ne maltraitaient pas les enfants et ne brutalisaient pas les femmes" (Viau, *Enfants*, 120). And yet, how strange it seems to state this claim in positive terms. We might easily rephrase this point. Women and children were brutally tortured and executed by the Huron, on occasion. This pattern seems to have been common amongst Iroquoian groups. "Some children," Jaenen suggests, "were crucified by the Iroquois and by the Sioux" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 138). In all, we might say, Huron women and children were involved in the violence of this period. They were active assailants and potential victims. It is important to point out one final facet of the violence pertaining to women in the North American context. Sexual assault had no place in the Huron execution ritual. Sexual organs were exploited for the sake of torture, as mentioned, and women were susceptible to have their distinctive parts abused in this way, but there is no indication that women were raped. "There is no record whatever, despite rumours among English and French, of women prisoners being sexually molested in captivity" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 144).

III. The Types of Violence in the Huron Prisoner of War Execution Ceremonies

i. The use of Water and Fire

The Huron made extensive use of fire and water during the torture of prisoners. Quite often both were used for the purposes of burning the victim. "The Huron took prisoners in war to

burn and then eat," states Tooker sharply.[98] The placing of searing brands into open wounds was

one particularly common form of torment.[99] Hot ashes and fire were often used to burn victims

severely. The same was often achieved by pouring scolding hot water or sap over the heads of

victims. "Et tous ces genres de tourments et de morts sont si cruels qu'il ne se trouve rien de plus

inhumain, car... ils leur lèvent la peau de la tête avec la chevelure et après ils mettent du feu et des

cendres chaudres, ou y font dégoutter d'une certaine gomme fondue" (Sagrad, *Grand Voyage*,

241). Vociferous captives might have the inside of their mouth burned out (Viau, *Enfants*, 176).

Water was also used to revive victims who had lost consciousness.[100] In all, the Huron, like other

Iroquoian groups, used water and fire, freely and creatively, to inflict inconceivable pain on their

victims.

It should not be implied, however, that these elements were used without restraint. In

fact, Iroquoian groups had complex beliefs about fire and water, their relation to the natural

world, and the impact of their co-mingling with other elements. "Ils croyaient notamment que si,

à la chasse ou à la pêche, les os et les arêtes des animaux et des poissons étaient jetés aux chiens

ou au feu, ou si leur graisse tombait dans le feu, les autres animaux et poissons de la même espèce

l'appranaient et ne se laissaient plus prendre."[101] The Huron were careful of what they allowed to

contact fire. According Iroquoian beliefs, Viau suggests, the careful treatment of fire and water

could serve a warrior well. Tobacco was thrown into the fire or water, to gain the favor of the sky

or calm the lake.[102] "C'est aussi la raison," adds Viau further, "pour laquelle on avait coutume de

sacrificier un chien à la divinité Agreskoue avant d'engager un combat."[103] Looking ahead to our

consideration of Huron social view on death and dying, we might add that fire played a prominent

role in helping appease the dead. If a Huron drowned or froze to death, writes Triggers, "some

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[98] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 31; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 19:81.
[99] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 31; cf. Twaites, *Relations* 10:227; 15:173, 187; 17:65, 109.
[100] Viau, *Enfants*, 176; cf. Tooker, *Ethnography*, 33-34.
[101] Viau, *Enfants*, 76; cf. Tooker, *Ethnography*, 67.
[102] Viau, *Enfants*, 77; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 26:308-310.
[103] Viau, *Enfants*, 77; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 21:160-162; 23:172.

young men, chosen by relatives of the deceased, cut up the body and threw entrails into the fire"

(Trigger, *Huron*, 104). Likewise, Trigger continues, "If a Huron died outside of Huronia, his body

was burned and the bones extracted to take back to his native village."

ii. Scalping

From as early as 1000A.D., Europeans explorers showed an interest in trading for North

American furs. During the later contact period this enterprise would develop into a well-

organized network of exchange. The European interest in fine pelts stemmed from the textile

industry. The skins of small mammals were thought to make fine clothes and ornamentation.

While Amerindians also used furs for clothing, the proliferation of pelt hunting at this time may

only be understood in terms of the European trade demand. For their part, Natives looked to

acquire European tools and imported supplies. The efficiency of beaver hunting, in particular,

may also be seen as one of the reasons why this enterprise became as common as it did.[104] Trigger

notes that by the 1620s, somewhere between 12,000 and 22,000 pelts were exported every year

from Tadoussac (Trigger, *Natives*, 182). The prominence of the fur trade in North America during

the contact period would, in turn, color popular European perspectives of the *New World* and its

people.

It is not known precisely when the practice of scalping arose in Northeastern North

America, but there is good reason to believe that it did not become common before the contact

period (Jaenen, *Friend*, 122). During historic times, the stereotype of the scalping *sauvage* would

arise alongside that of the native warrior. "Scalping was a practice that was soon associated in

European minds with Amerindian warfare," writes Jaenen. "By the seventeenth-century," the

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[104] Trigger notes the relative efficiency of beaver hunting. "On average beaver meat yields seven times the number of
calories that must be expended to capture it. While this is far less than the 24- to 40-fold yield from moose, it is much
greater than the negative 0.7- to 0.1 yield from other animals with fancy furs."
Trigger, *Natives*, 136; cf. Feit (1973).

author adds further, "it was a sufficiently widespread practice to be considered a characteristic

expression of native cruelty, ambush and perfidious raiding" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 122). In reality,

Europeans may have had a more significant relation to this practice than many realized. It is quite

interesting to think that the dramatic increase in fur trading during the early historical period may

have been mirrored by the rise of ritual scalping in Northeastern North America. We shall turn to

consider a couple general features of the experience of scalping, with this fact in mind.

From the perspective of the assailant, the experience of scalping has much in common

with the work of collecting animal pelts. Of course, both involve the physical act of removing

another's skin or hair by force. Huron warriors involved in both practices must have noticed the

similarities. The most significant difference seems to stem from our perception of the victim. To

the extent that individuals can be brought to see other humans on the same plane as animals,

however, scalping is comparable to skinning. The way in which scalps were treated in the

moments that followed their removal surely reinforced this connection. It is known with a good

deal of certainty that the Huron used scalps in a decorative manner. Citing the Jesuit accounts,

Jaenen records that scalps were sometimes "hung around the neck." We are told, further, of native

women scrambling to the seashore to receive warriors, in the flesh, in the hopes of obtaining a

scalp to decorate their cabins, "as a token of the warrior's generosity."[105] While the Jesuits were

clearly contemptuous of this behavior, we should not let this fact dissuade us from a balanced

perspective. The way in which scalps were received is at once reminiscent of the treatment of fine

furs. [106] Citing Cartier, Jaenen details the account of Donnacona showing the French explorer,

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[105] Jaenen, *Friends*, 124; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 9:253.
[106] Many of the women of France, no doubt, would have also rushed to the port and shown some skin to obtain a fine fur, if European traders had been willing to part with their goods in order to express favor. On an important level the difference may be merely a matter of cultural perceptions of beauty. Along these lines it should be recalled that the Native North Americans allotted little value to gold.

"skins of five men's heads stretched on pieces of wood, like parchment skins."[107] In connection

with this point, it should be noted that Iroquoian groups appropriated other human remains for the

purposes of dress. Le Jeune suggests the Iroquois used severed hands as tobacco pouches.[108]

Consider also in this light the fact that the English and French began to request and purchase the

scalps of their enemies (Jaenen, *Friend*, 127). In this way human scalps came to have value in the

fur trade.

In Champlain's account of his 1603 voyage, *Des Sauvages,* he notes that Montagnais

warriors would put on their finest furs when preparing, ceremonially, for battle. "Premier que

lesdits Montagnais partissent pour aller à la guerre, ils s'assemblèrent tous, avec leur plus riches

habits de fourrures, castors et autre peaux, parés de patenôtres et cordons de diverses couleurs, et

s'assemblèrent dans une grande place publique"[109] Elsewhere he notes that a group of natives

brought scalps from a minor skirmish with a group of Iroquois (Champlain, *Sauvages,* 175). The

scalps were the only material record of the success of these native warriors and they would be

kept as a reminder to all of this accomplishment. Further, Champlain relates, they would be

incorporated in post-war celebrations. In a ceremony that also involved smashing dogs on the

ground Champlain recounts, "ils commencèrent à danser, en prenant les têtes de leurs ennemis,

qui leur pendaient par derrière… ils faisaient cette réjouissance pour la victoire par eux obtenue

sur les Iroquois" (Champlain, *Sauvages,* 97-98). Taken together these records point towards the

communal experience of scalping. In ceremony the fine furs of the warrior may have represented

his prowess as a hunter. They could be adorned as a visual reminder to everyone present of his

past moments of accomplishment. In situations where small groups operated away form the larger

community - a common occurrence in native society - these scalps may have been the only

[107] Jaenen, *Friends,* 123; cf. Société littéraire et historique de Québec, *Voyages de Découvertes au Canada, entre les années 1534 et 1542* (Québec: 1843), 49; cf. Bruce T. Trigger, "Trade and tribal Warfare in the St. Lawrence in the Sixteenth Century," *Ethnohistory* IX (1962), 240-256.
[108] Jaenen, *Friends,* 124; cf. Twaites, *Relations,* 5:130.
[109] Samuel de Champlain, *Des Sauvages* [Hereafter cited in text] (Montréal: TYPO, 1993), 176.

material reminder of their success. If we can bring ourselves to see human and animal pelts in the

same light, these considerations lead us to emphasize the relation between scalping and memory.

To be in the position to scalp someone is to stand in a moment of total domination. If the

hair is taken, the possibility of claiming any part is equally present. With a knife drawn and ample

time to act, the victim's body discloses itself as a composite of pieces - each with their own

function and related significance. This fact should lead us to consider the significance of the parts

chosen. "Sometimes legs and arms were brought back as trophies," writes Jaenen, "and

occasionally ears were taken along with the scalps" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 124). Hands, as mentioned,

were also claimed on occasion. Legs and arms may be seen as instruments of mobility, as the

principal defense of a warrior, and as indispensable tools of survival in the harsh North American

climate. Sagard notes the Huron tendency to cut off fingers, as well as the impact of form of

abuse on the victim's ability to draw a bow. "Premièrement," writes the author, "ils leur arrachent

les ongles et leur coupent les trios principaux doigts, qui servent à tirer de l'arc" (Sagard, *Grand*

Voyage, 241). Ears represent another line of defense, but we might also see the way they signify a

link between the warrior and his society. Our consideration of the French context has already

brought us to see the hand as a symbol of power. If these parts may be as signs, it is in a similar

light that we should view the acts that resulted in their removal. This approach brings us to

appreciate the communicative element of Huron violence. In this light, scalping and other related

acts of dismemberment appear as powerful signs of debasement and disempowerment. In line

with Amerindian beliefs, Jaenen claims, scalps were viewed as "not only proofs of courage but

also as signs of power over their enemies" (Jaenen, *Friend*, 125).

It is interesting to consider a very comparable practice to scalping in the Huron pre-war

ceremony. Huron warriors would ritually skin the bark off of trees (Jaenen, *Friend*, 126). This

appears to be a case of representational violence. The skinning of trees prefigured the scalping of

enemies. As in scalping and pelt hunting, the *victim's* outer layer was taken off. The skin of men, trees, and beavers, may all be associated with elements of beauty and defense. By adorning these items, a warrior could also associate himself with that which they signify. From the victim's perspective this was, no doubt, a horrific experience, and a powerful form of debasement. Even for those fortunate to survive, it was not without indignation and agony. Scalping not only robbed them of their beauty, but it left them susceptible to septicaemia, meningitis, or necrosis (Jaenen, *Friends*, 126). Scalping was an acute form of disempowerment.

Beyond scalping their victims, Huron warriors were known to claim whole heads. Roland Viau has argued that the head itself was the real prize (Viau, *Enfants*, 110). Such behavior had obvious parallels within European history. Jaenen has drawn an association between scalping and the more widespread practice of ritual decapitation. "This cult of the skull," writes Jaenen, "had important religious or spiritual connotations, not entirely absent in Christianity" (Jaenen, *Friends*, 125). Indeed, the practice of taking head-trophies was not entirely foreign to European culture. The Christian tradition could look as far back as John the Baptist. The French would have been quite familiar with this practice in the context of public executions. "Europeans were accustomed to seeing the heads of criminals publicly displayed," adds Jaenen further. The way in which scalping was understood as a satisfactory compromise at times when circumstance inhibited the proper execution of prisoners is also quite significant. The scalp represented the captive in some significant way. In the absence of the latter, the former could be ritually treated. These considerations lead us to emphasize the relation between the scalp and the effigy.

In both practices we can see a form of representational violence. In France, the destruction of the symbol became the creation of a powerful sign. Agent-crowds assaulted effigies and, by rule of agreement, debased target individuals. In the case of scalping, violence again played a role in the production of signs. There is, moreover, a religious dimension that

should not be ignored. "Et on peut croire," writes Viau, "que la chevelure humaine et les rayons du soleil devaient également être étroitement imbriqués, car tous deux représentaient un vecteur privilégié d'énergie vitale" (Viau, *Enfants*, 117). Thus scalps may well have been seen for their relation to the Sun - a figure of tremendous importance in the Huron religious scheme. As our ongoing consideration of the prisoner of war execution ritual will show, the Huron appear to have worked towards ritually acquiring valued attributes from enemy warriors. Scalping may well be seen in similar terms. We have here another form of ritualized violence that allowed assailants to empower themselves as they debased their victims. Removing a sign of the victim's vital energy was, in a very real way, akin to obtaining such power.

iii. Cannibalism

The question of cannibalism in Huron society is fairly resolved. By every indication it occurred, during the prisoner of war execution ceremony. Evidence of cannibalism in this region dates back to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Trigger, *Affluence*, 97). As mentioned, the Huron likely adopted this tradition through cultural diffusion from the South. The Mesoamerican roots of the cannibal meal seem relatively clear. Near the conclusion of the Huron execution ritual, the victim was cut into pieces and consumed. Although some parts surely suited the Huron palate more than others, taste does not appear to have impacted participation or factored into the distribution of meat. While some Huron may have enjoyed eating human flesh, others participated reluctantly. "Some ate the body with horror," writes Trigger.[110] This is a significant observation, and one that has led the Anthropologist to suppose that this was an act "primarily of religious significance." The fact that this practice appears to have been restricted to ceremonial occasions is consistent with this position. "There is no evidence that cannibalism was accepted outside a religious context," writes Jaenen (Jaenen, *Friend*, 145). Instead, there is

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[110] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 39; BTH, 51; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 10:229; 15:173; 17:99; 18:31-33; Sagard, *Grand Voyage*, 242.

evidence of Iroquoian groups experiencing notable hardship, in the form of food shortages,

without resorting to this form of subsistence.

This does not mean, however, that the Huron viewed all human parts equally in the

cannibal meal. The heart, for one, appears to have been particularly prized. Notably brave

captives could expect their hearts to be eaten by young warriors. The Huron described this as a

means of acquiring the courage of their victim.[111] Despite the indignation of early European

voices, this practice had comparable precedents in European culture. "Had Frenchmen closely

examined their own cultural beliefs," writes Jaenen, "they would have discovered a parallel

religious belief in transubstantiation whereby they professed to acquire grace through eating the

flesh and drinking the blood of their Saviour."[112] It is, perhaps, along similar lines that we should

view the practice of ritual transfusion. Again, the Huron saw this as a manner of leaching

attributes, or essence even, from the prisoner. "Since the enemy's blood had mingled with his

own," writes Tooker, "he would never be surprised by the enemy, no matter how secret that

knowledge might be."[113] These considerations underscore the complex nature of the ritual meal.

A different approach to the Huron cannibal ceremony may reveal further complexity.

A semiotic method allows us to appreciate the communicative nature of ritual

cannibalism. As discussed above, in this system the parts of the body signify ideas beyond the

physical realm. The act of consumption is also taken as a sign, and understood in relation to the

parts consumed. On this level, the heart may be seen as a sign of courage. Young warriors could

communicate their courageous intentions or self-confidence by taking the heart. Communities

could likewise communicate their hopes and expectations, through this ritual, by giving the heart

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[111] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 39; cf. Twaites, *Relations* 10:227; cf. JF, 17:75.
[112] Jaenen, *Friends*, 145. The victim-as-saviour motif offers an intriguing angle on the Huron execution ceremony. Ultimately, however, it is one that cannot be adequately addressed within the reasonable limits of this study.
[113] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 39; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 10:227-229.

to young men. Our study of the practice of scalping has brought us to consider the sense of the

head as a trophy, and a sign of the victim or the act debasement. As such the head is a sign that

communicates power relations. In line with this reality, the allocation of the head during the

cannibal meal, as much as its consumption, reflects the power structures of the community. The

tendency to give the victim's head to a figure of importance may understood clearly when the

head is seen as a sign of social or political power. Consider also in this light, the fact that the

common people ate from the victim's torso (Jaenen, *Friend*, 145). The poetics of language reflect

this line of thinking, no less, for the *head* of the community leads the *body* of people. As was the

case during the Dog Feast, the head of the victim was promised and delivered to a deserving chief

or honorary community member. We have also seen how victims, like dogs, were at least

partially integrated before their execution. In these ways the Dog Feast prefigured the cannibal

meal.

The extent, to which captive warriors were expected to play their part, and in this way

participate in their own execution, should not be underemphasized. To this end, the Huron were

known to feed prisoners pieces of their own flesh (Trigger, *Huron*, 51). For the captive, the

choice between self-consumption and refusal is, in some sense, the final step on a long road

leading to compliance, with a sense of tacit approval, on one side, and resistance, with a sense of

repudiation, on the other. As we shall see, Iroquoian prisoners appear to have recognized their

capacity to effect the ritual construction of meaning, by successfully preserving a character of

valiant indifference through the completion of this ceremony. The act of self-consumption may

well be seen as something of a final test. More will be said on this topic as our study proceeds.

iv. Gauntlets

The gauntlet was an important part of the Huron prisoner execution ceremony. Upon

returning from battle, as mentioned, prisoners were assigned a new family. This often meant that

they were brought to neighboring villages. "As they approached each village," writes Trigger,

"their captors led them slowly between two lines of villagers, who delighted to torture them with

clubs, thorns, knives, and firebrands." All the while, the victims were expected to play their part:

to sing, and to endure the abuse bravely " (Trigger, *Huron*, 49-50). This was only the first

gauntlet captives would have to endure. As the execution ceremony commenced, the victim was

forced to run the length of a long house all the while receiving burns and gashes to his legs. The

floor was typically blanketed with smoldering ash. In the event that the victim could not conjure

the strength to finish, they were carried over the coals.[114] It is interesting to note how the structure

of the Iroquoian longhouse lends itself to this form of torture. The community, brandishing

searing brands and pieces of burning hot bark, lined the inside walls, and tortured the captive as

he passed.[115] Even the strongest warriors had little choice but to run from one length of the house

to the other. In cases were the torture continued for extended period of time, as was common, the

victim might be forced to repeat this ritual.

The work of Camille Tarot points us in an interesting direction. In "Don et Sacrifice,"

Tarot suggests that we think of the total incompatibility of the gift and the sacrifice.[116] Where the

first involves alliance, the latter amounts to an exclusion or rejection. In the gauntlet ritual of the

Natives of New France Tarot saw a form of immediate vengeance, which excluded the victim and

moved towards sacrifice. Only alliance, in the form of adoption or slavery, could postpone this

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[114] Tooker, *Ethnography*, 33; cf. Twaites, *Relations*, 15:173; 18:31.

[115] Trigger, *Huron*, 50; cf. Tooker, *Ethnography*, 33; cf. Sagard, *Grand Voyage*, 241.

[116] Camille Tarot, "Don et Sacrifice" [Hereafter cited in text], (paper presented at the annual Colloque, Collége Superieur, Lyon, France, 2001).

expulsion. "Dès que altérité est jugée altérante ou dangereuses," writes Tarot, "nous nous retrouvons devant le choix ou de la chaser ou de l'intégrer" (Tarot, *Sacrifice*, 111). Yet the "sauvegerie" of sacrifice is really symbolic, Tarot suggests, "meme si elle se termine par une mort bien réelle" (Tarot, *Sacrifice*, 109). The victim, as the *other*, represents the cause of group harm. "A l'intrusion du mal sous la figure de l'autre," adds the author further, "on oppose le sinister contre-don de la torture, auquel le prisonier répond, s'il est courageux, par le défi et la surenchière, ce qui transforme cet étrange échange en *agôn* de la souffrance" (Tarot, *Sacrifice*, 109).

So the fate of victims was dependant on what Tarot calls an absolutely necessary fact, they had to find a place in symbolic system of the group. "Il faut qu'il trouve une place dans la système de pensée ou de culture de la tribu," writes Tarot, "polarisé entre les deux seuls extrêmes possibles de tout système symbolique dans la traitement de l'Autre: ou l'expulsion ou l'alliance" (Tarot, *Sacrifice*, 110). "Cette nécessité d'imposer une grille aux grille échanges humains," the author maintains further, "est inhérente à ce que nous appelons le symbolique." Paradoxically, Tarot suggests, this system has to symbolically reabsorb what it actually excludes. "Car l'anthropophagie est l'amorce à peine métaphorisée d'une intériorisation de celui qui a été exclu et une façon de donner un statut intime au mort" (Tarot, *Sacrifice*, 109).

v. Mutilation

Our study has already considered how Huron warriors effectively removed signs of power, mobility, beauty, defense, and the like, from their victims. It has been assumed that acts of violence are charged with meaning. The same may be said of the acts of mutilation that occurred during the Huron prisoner of war execution ritual. Each stroke was a sign. In so much as every part of the human body has significance; mutilation is also a process of removing or distorting

signs. It is a communicative process, capable of challenging identity and reflecting shifts in power

relations. We have also seen how prisoners were expected to play their part, and demonstrate

bravery to the point of defiance in torture. But there is another facet of this violence that must be

addressed. Huron torture methods maximized the pain one individual could endure. This point is

twofold. First, we may say that the torture techniques reflect and exploit an advanced

understanding of the human nervous system. Secondly, the structure of the execution ritual seems

to have allowed captors to prolong a state of agony. Captives were tortured in a highly effective

and meticulous manner, seemingly until the violence was deemed sufficient. In this way, the

Huron method of torture specialized in breaking the victim.

IV. Case Study: The *undoing* of 'Joseph' the Iroquois

Le Jeune's account, in *The Jesuit Relations*, provides us with a passionate description of

the execution of an Iroquois captive name 'Joseph,' in Onnentisati, Huronia, during the fall of

1637.[117] This work allows us to take a closer look at some of the more significant details of the

Huron ritual. Two aspects of this violence appear to have struck the author above all else. The

first concerns the element of the integration, discussed above. The captive was in many ways well

received and treated with honor. He was pleasingly fed and clothed. "They continued to give him

something to eat, such as fruits or squashes," writes the missionary.[118] "He was dressed in a

beautiful beaver robe and wore a string of porcelain beads around his neck, and another in the

form of a crown around his head," he adds further.[119] "I will say here that, up to the hour of his

torment," the author continues, "we saw only acts of humanity exercised towards him."[120] As was

the custom in Huronia, the captive was given to a bereaving family for adoption, and accepted as

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[117] Twaites, *Relations*, 13:37-83.
[118] "On luy donnoit toufiours quelque chofe à manger, comme quelques fruicts ou citroüilles." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:47.
[119] "Il eftoit reueftu d'vne belle robbe de caftor, il auoit au col vn collier de pourcelleine, & vn autre en forme de couronne autour de la tefte." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:37.
[120] "ie diray icy que iufques à l'heure de fon fupplice nous vifmes exercer en fon endroit que des traicts d'humanité." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:39.

the recently departed. "You would almost have said that he was her own son, and I do not know

that this creature did not represent to her him whom she had lost"[121] On one level, we might note

how this approach certainly worked to build a false sense of hope in the victim. Le Jeune records

an adoptive relative stating, "My nephew, thou hast good reason to sing, for no one is doing thee

any harm; behold thyself now among thy kindred and friends."[122] Despite this amicable

beginning, there is reason to believe that all the while these captors held malicious intent. "All

those who surrounded him, with their affected kindness and their fine words," adds the Jesuit,

"were so many butchers who showed him a smiling face only to treat him afterwards with more

cruelty."[123]

Le Jeune saw in this approach a subtle form of psychological manipulation. "What was

most calculated in all this to plunge him into despair, was raillery," notes the European further,

"and the compliments they paid him when they approached to burn him."[124] The original text, I

believe, is even more telling. Thwaites' translation overlooks a critical distinction. It is not that

which was most *calculated*, but rather, that which was most *capable* of putting the victim in a

state of despair. The missionary is here describing results, not intentions, and it this that concerns

us as well. "One thing, in my opinion, greatly increased his consciousness of suffering," suggests

Le Jeune elsewhere, "that anger and rage did not appear upon the faces of those who were

tormenting him, but rather gentleness and humanity, their words expressing only raillery or

tokens of friendship and good will.[125] A sense of false hope would have done much to undermine

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[121] "Vous euffiez quafi dit que c'euft efté fon proper fils, & ie ne fçay fi cét objet ne luy reprefentoit point celuy quel [*sc.* qu'elle] auoit perdu." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:55.

[122] "Mon neueu tu as bonne raifon de chanter, car perfonne ne te faict mal, te voilà maintenant parmy tes parens, & tes amis." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:41.

[123] "Tous ceux qui eftoient autour de luy auec leur douceur eftudiée, & leurs belles paroles eftoient autant de bourreaux, qui ne luy faifoient bon vifage que pour le traitter par apres auec plus de cruauté." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:41.

[124] "Ce qui eftoit capable parmi tout cela de le mettre au defefpoir, c'eftoit leurs railleries, & les complimens qu'ils luy faifoient quand ils s'approchoient de luy pour le brufler." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:69.

[125] "Vne chofe à mõ aduis accroiffoit de beaucoup le fentiment de fes peines, en ce que la colere & la rage ne paroiffoit pas fur le vifage de ceux qui le tourmentoient, mais pluftot la douceur & l'humanité; leurs paroles n'eftoient que railleries ou des tefmoignages d'amitié & de bienvueillance." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:67.

the victim's resoluteness. It is not difficult to imagine how the harsh actions of a friendly face would have also worked against the brave warrior on an emotional and psychological level. Yet we must also recognize the way this scene mirrors the Dog Feast, discussed above. In both cases the victim is effectively made to be an insider. If dogs were included in village life, only to be later excluded and sacrificed, so too were the prisoners of war.

The second facet of this violence, that seems to have made a firm impression on the author, concerns the disposition of the victim. Le Jeune's account testifies to the strength of this Iroquois captive. " Instead of being disquieted from fear and apprehension of his approaching death, and of such a death," notes Le Jeune, "said to him in our presence that the Father had baptized him, "haiatachondi;" he used this expression as showing that he was very glad thereat."[126] At times, he displayed remarkable courage and mental toughness. "Before the feast began, he walked through the middle of the cabin and said in a loud and confident voice, "My brothers, I am going to die; amuse yourself boldly around me - I fear neither tortures nor death."[127] The Jesuits were clearly taken back by the conviction of this brave warrior. His strength appears to have even bolstered their faith and brought them comfort in these disconcerting moments. "One thing that consoled us," writes Le Jeune, "was to see the patience with which he bore all his pain. In midst of their taunts and jeers, not one abusive or impatient word escaped his lips."[128] When told that he would be executed by fire, the victim replied, "That is well, that is well."[129] In all, the victim's behavior reflects an astonishing degree of resolution. This man was a

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[126] "Au lieu de fe troubler dans la crainte & l'apprehension de la mort prochaine & d'vne telle mort; luy dit en noftre preference que le Pere l'auoit baptifé, haiatachondi, il vfa de ce terme tefmoignant en eftre bien aife." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:53.

[127] "Auant qu'on commençaft à manger, il paffa au milieu de la cabane; & dift d'vne voix haute & affeurée, mes freres ie m'en vay mourir, au refte ioüez vous hardiment autour de moy, je ne crains point les tourmens ny la mort." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:57.

[128] "Une chofe nous côfola de voir la patience auec laquelle il fupporta toutes ces peines, parmy ces brocards, & fes rifiées, iamais il ne luy efchappa aucune parole iniurieufe, ou d'impatience" Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:71).

[129] "Voilà qui va bien, voilà qui va bien." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:55.

brave and powerful warrior, and he attempted to hold on to these attributes throughout a most challenging ordeal.

This was the role of the warrior victim, after all, and it was one - it is important to point out - that his captors encouraged. Along these lines, he was expected to sing his war song, right through the ceremony.[130] Beyond this, he was encouraged directly. Le Jeune includes the following quote: "Come now my nephew, be of good courage; prepare thyself for this evening, and do not allow thyself to be cast down through fear of the tortures."[131] We may see how the Huron insisted on a certain performance. And while the warrior was supposed to play his part in this ritual, so too was the community. The emphasis was on group participation. "Before he was brought in," notes the Jesuit, "the Captain Aenons encouraged all to do their duty, representing to them the importance of this act, which was viewed he said, by the Sun and by the God of war."[132] The Huron were active in this ritual. It was the sun that played the role of the passive audience. Le Jeune's account testifies to the felt importance of this format. The Huron showed concern to preserve their victim until the sun could witness the final moments of the execution. "After he had reposed a short time upon the embers, they tried to make him arise as usual, but he did not stir; and one of these butchers having applied a brand to his loins, he was seized with a fainting fit... But the Captains prevented them from going any farther, and ordered them to cease tormenting him, saying it was important that he should see the day-light."[133]

The Jesuit account underscores the dramatic element in this ritual. Three distinct characters operated in concert. The victim strove to remain steadfast and brave. The assailants

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[130] "Cependant il ne laiffoit pas de chanter à diuerfes reprifes." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:47.
[131] "Sus dõc mon neueu aye bõ courage, prepare toy à ce foir, & ne te laiffe point abbatre par la crainte des tourmens." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:55.
[132] "Auant qu'on l'eut amené." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:61.
[133] "Apres s'eftre repofé quelque peu de temps fur la braife, on voulut le faire leuer à l'ordinaire, mais il ne bougea, & vn de ces bourreaux luy ayant appliqué vn tifon aux reins il tomba en foibleffe... mais les Capitaines les empefcherent de paffer outré, ils ordonnerent qu'on ceffaft de le tourmenter, difans, qu'il eftoit d'importance qu'il vift le iour." Thwaites, *Relations*, 13:65.

played a sinister role, mixing elements of amity and abuse. The audience (the Sun) remained passive but present. If this was a *theatre of execution*, the drama climaxed in the final moments of the victim's life. Much had been done to reduce him to a lowly state of supplication. The assailants had played their part, but the prisoner largely determined the ending. As the sun came up, like a curtain on the final scene, the warrior stood defiant or defiled. Power was at stake in those final moments.

V. Huron Social Views of Death and Dying

Early European explorers and missionaries were quick to profess Christian beliefs and practices to the Native groups they encountered. History has taken note. Native groups were likewise notably communicative on the subject of religious views and traditions. A lack of native accounts from the early contact period, however, has made it difficult to assess their efforts to initiate such discussions. Nonetheless, the early Europeans reports give us a window of insight into Huron perspectives in the pre-historic period. Samuel de Champlain was given insight into the depth of Huron views on death and the afterlife. In *Des Sauvages*, he writes, "Ils croient l'immortalité des âmes et dissent qu'ils vont se réjouir en d'autres pays avec leurs parents quand ils sont morts" (Champlain, *Sauvages*, 112). Indeed, the Huron were clearly willing, if not eager, to profess their understanding of death and the afterlife. This early account testifies to the extent to which these issues were of concern to Huron society, and not just to the European writers who made record.

At the time of early contact, Huron peoples did not practice what we might call an ancestral cult.[134] They were, however, highly reverent towards the dead. "If a fire broke out in a village," notes Trigger, "the first efforts were directed toward saving the cemetery" (Trigger,

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[134] Trigger, *Huron*, 102; cf. Tooker, *Ethnography*, 14.

Huron, 103). The Huron treatment of the deceased is among the most distinctive elements of their

tradition. The Feast of the Dead was a ritual characterized by the reburial of ancestral remains.

This - perhaps the most important Huron ceremony - was a uniquely Ontario Iroquoian tradition,

not practiced by Native groups of New York State (Trigger, *Huron*, 102). Part of the reason such

importance was placed on this ritual stems from the Huron conception of the afterlife. "Most

Huron believed that (one of their souls) remained with the body after the Feast of the Dead,"

writes Trigger. "The other soul," he continues, "left the body (at the Feast of the Dead) and

traveled to a village of the dead located in the West" (Trigger, *Huron*, 103). Facilitating this

voyage and the life of the departed soul once it arrived was a responsibility of the living.

Iroquoian groups of Northeastern North America shared a great deal of culture in the

period leading up to the sixteenth century. Huron social views on death and dying developed in

this context. Perhaps the most important consequences of this fact, for this present study, pertain

to the perspectives of captors and captives. Shared views on death, dying, and the afterlife, would

have translated into a related understanding of the significance of war, torture, and execution.

This, in turn, likely had a profound impact on the behavior of both groups in the pre-war, war,

and post-war ceremonies. Captors and captives shared a related view on the stakes in this deadly

ritual. As we shall see, their efforts may be characterized in terms of a competition that

transcended mere survival, from the instigation of armed conflict to the final moments of torture

and mutilation.

Speaking generally of Iroquoian peoples, Viau writes, "ils croyaient que si le corps d'un

guerrier, mort en combatant, demeurait entre les mains de l'ennemi, son esprit serait malherureux

dans l'autre vie."[135] The Huron displayed a particular fear for unhappy souls, but a shared belief

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[135] Viau, *Enfants*, 109; cf. F. de Barbé-Marbois, "Voyage chex les Onéidas, 1784, addressé à Mademoiselle d'Alleray," In *Avec La Fayette chez les Iroquois*, ed. H. de Montbas (Paris: 1929), 71-72.

in the inability of such spirits to travel to the land of the dead made all Iroquoian people anxious

about violent deaths. "Le sociétés iroquoiennes, faut-il encore rappeler, croyaient que les âmes

des individus ayant connu une fin violente se voyaient refuser l'accès au pays des morts," writes

Viau. Moreover, these spirits were felt to be of an immediate danger. "Elles pensaient également

que l'âme d'un défunt qui avait perdu son corps pouvait tenter d'échapper à son malherureux

destin en essayant d'envahir le corps d'un vivant," the author continues.[136] These were the stakes

for captors as well as captives in the Huron prisoner of war execution ritual.

While victims had the ability to ascend to the status of dangerous spirit, and torment their

captors in the afterlife, the latter was not without recourse. The solution lay in their capacity to

break the spirit of the victim - sort to speak. Viau maintains that this end was pursed with vested

interest. "L'incapacité des vainqueurs à briser sa résistance morale avant de le mettre à mort

tranduisait, par extension, leur impuissance à neutraliser l'âme qui habitait son corps," notes

Viau. "Dans ces circonstances, supplicier et immoler un captif de guerre, c'était encore s'exposer

aux représailles d'un esprit agressif et rusé" (Viau, *Enfants*, 126-127). There was power to be

had: for victims, if not assailants. The work of Roland Viau does much to support our

understanding of the essential religious transaction involved in these scenes of ritualized torture.

It becomes clear that social views on death and dying brought added significance to the

execution ceremony. Shared views on the result of this ritual pitted captor versus captive in a

struggle for power in the afterlife. While we have spoken of breaking the victim, we might also

describe this process differently. Bravery and resolution were among the most prized attributes of

an Iroquoian man. They were also signs of his strength as a warrior. In Huronia, this translated to

power. It was power on the battlefield; it was power in social and political relations; and, as we

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[136] Viau, *Enfants*, 116; cf. G. Friederici, "Scalping in America," in *Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution*, (Washington: 1906), 433-434.

have just seen, it was power on a spiritual plane. In the execution ritual, much of the torture and

abuse effectively worked to remove sign of power, in one form or another. It is perhaps in this

light that we should view the Huron's refined technique of torture. In order to avoid the creation

of a dangerous spirit, the warrior had to be completely *undone*. A spirit of bravery and resolution

were the greatest signs of the power of a warrior, and often the last battlefront in the process of

his *undoing*.

Chapter 6
Conclusion

I. Comparison and Assessment

"In no country in the world," writes Paul Lacroix, "was dancing practiced with more

grace and elegance than in France." "Foreign dances of every kind were introduced, and," the

author continues, "after being remodeled and brought to as great perfection as possible, they were

often returned to the countries from which they had been imported." In the mid sixteenth century,

one of the new dances introduced to the French court was the *dance des sauvages*, and it "excited

great merriment." "So popular did (some of these new dances) become," Lacroix adds further,

"that with a little modification they were soon considered essentially French" (Lacroix, *France*,

245). These remarks cast an interesting light on the preceding consideration of ritual behavior and

cultural interface in France and New France.

Our study of some of the religious violence in the sixteenth century has produced a

number of interesting ideas. In the following section we will attempt to address some of the more

significant points, while comparing the situation in France to the events that occurred in

Northeastern North America at roughly the same time. It is not our intention, however, to gloss

over the differences. These were unique affairs involving markedly distinct peoples. Much of the

contrast has already been made clear, by this study and others.

It can be seen as the difference between a tradition of ritual violence and an outbreak of

carnage involving the use of ritualized forms. This position is reflected in the work of Michel de

Montaigne and Jean de Léry, as well as that of David Nicholls, among others. We have

considered the episodes of French public disorder in the light of established Huron customs of

warfare and execution. Yet we have also qualified these views. The violence in France may have

been more of an outbreak, than a breakdown, of ritual forms. What's more, we must account for

the fact that in at least one extreme case Huguenot-hunting went as far as to become legal during

this period.[137] We have also seen how difficult it is to assess the impact of the European encounter

on Native traditions in Northeastern North America. We have argued for a dynamic view of

Huron culture and beliefs, and found the contact era to have been a particularly transformative

period.

We may likewise note the differences in the relation and degree of familiarity between

assailants and their victims in the French and North American contexts. The Huron were

relatively well informed of the culture of their enemies, and they shared much in common. Yet

they clearly lived apart. We say this, but at the same time we must recognize the efforts made to

integrate prisoners in the moments leading up to their execution. We have addressed this issue,

above, but it remains in many ways open to future scholarship. The situation in France was

different- at least on the levels we have considered. Although there were many foreign

(particularly Swiss) Protestant ministers at this time, and perhaps even more foreign Catholic

soldiers, the Huguenots essentially arose out of French Catholic communities.[138] Religious lines

cut across families and villages. In effect this meant that many French assailants were quite

familiar with their victims. Scenes of popular rioting frequently afforded individuals the

opportunity to settle personal grievances. To complicate matters, though, there remains the

possibility that both the French Catholics and the Huron thought of their victims as fundamentally

different- as an *other*.

Other differences abound. Let us recall that Huron women washed their own children in

the blood of their captives, while some French Catholics saw to it that Huguenot infants were

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[137] See above, p.28; cf. Greengrass, *Henri*, 5.

[138] Owen Chadwick notes that, "Between 1555 and 1562 Geneva supplied at least eighty-eight pastors to the Huguenots, and Berne and Neuchâtel supplied others" (Chadwick, *Reformation*, 156).

bathed in the blood of their Protestant parents. If the former group sought to acquire the attributes of their victims, the latter may well have been attempting to purge the community of them. Continuing along these lines we should point out the fact that we have been here dealing with considerably different religions. The Huron, for example, believed that the Sun god watched over their battles, and it was to this deity that they sacrificed their prisoners (Viau, *Enfants* 101). Across the Atlantic, it had been 1300 years since *Sol Invictus* gave Constantine his decisive victory. The faith and practices of French Catholics and Huguenots, at every level of society, differed dramatically from those of the Iroquoian groups they were beginning to encounter. Yet it is in part for these reasons that this comparison may be meaningful. It is because these situations are so different, and have so often been treated in this way, that a look at the common ground they share offers the potential for insight. It is with these considerations in mind that we may effect a comparative conclusion.

The background sketches have shown these moments arising out of complex and changing worlds. In both the French and North American contexts, major social and political factors threatened existing power structures. In France, the Huguenots challenged Catholic authorities in the church and state. Meanwhile, in New France, contact with European goods had begun to destabilize Huron society. French traders and their preferred partners began to circumvent traditional Huron rules of exchange. The rise in trade and the prestige of traders also undermined the authority of war chiefs. Yet while the religious violence in Europe can be associated with these changes, the situation in Northeastern North America is not as clear. Wherein the former case we discussed developments in the nature of the execution ritual, in the latter we did not, and may have no grounds to do so.

In the French context we found individuals becoming more actively involved in the violence that surrounded them. French execution audiences became agent-crowds, often

extending this *theatre* and seizing a more active role. Our study repeatedly underscored the significance of individual and group memory. In a similar vein, we discussed how rioters appropriated ritual forms, and the way in which they structured the violence. This work has attempted to show the fundamental similarity between active audiences at execution ceremonies and religious rioters in public places. We move to designate both these groups, agent-crowds, for the way that they were involved in these structured scenes of violence. In contrast to these developments, ordinary members of Huron society did not assume a larger role in the bloodshed of this period; they already had a notable degree of participation. In Huron executions, the role of the audience was played by the Sun. This part was of central importance.

The evidence also suggests relative continuity in the structure of Iroquoian execution rituals from the thirteenth and fourteenth century into the historical era. The presence of European trade goods may have amplified hostilities between Native groups in this region, but it does not appear to have had much effect on the ceremonial manner in which the Huron disposed of their victims. That is to say that prisoner of war execution rituals may have become increasingly common during the historic period, but there is good reason to believe that they remained relatively traditional in form. Yet not all forms of Huron violence remained constant during this period. Rather a few significant changes occurred. As early as Champlain, Iroquoian warfare was impacted by the introduction of European weapons, military strategy, and ambition. A common theme throughout our study of the North American context has been the ritual nature of Huron violence. We have seen how the prisoner of war execution ceremony relates to the prewar feast, the processions leading to and from war, and the combat itself. We have also considered the ritual, even theatrical, nature of these events. An understanding of Huron warfare as the central rite in an elaborate ceremony has emerged. The forces of change that impacted this rite, may have also affected the larger ceremony.

The rise in scalping is another notable exception to the continuity in Huron religious violence. Here we may again note change associated to this period. We have discussed the ways in which this behavior is related to the larger prisoner execution ritual. We have also seen how the European presence in Northeastern North America coincided with a dramatic increase in the frequency of this practice. Of interest to this present study is the fundamental similarity between the scalp and the effigy. Attacks on these items may be seen as forms of representational violence. Both practices became popular, in their respective contexts, during this period. The possibility that Huron scalping may be considered to be a form of popular religious rioting is intriguing. In the rise of scalping in Huronia and effigy burnings in France we can see small groups developing ritualized attacks, offshoots of their execution ceremonies, which allowed individuals to take a more active and direct approach to their enemies on the plane of memory. The relation between the latter form of abuse and the fur trade also merits the attention of religious scholars.

A great deal of the preceding study has been devoted to the types of violence we have found in both contexts. Our consideration has shown that it may be divided into a number of distinct categories, including the use of water and fire, gauntlets, acts of mutilation, cannibalism, as well as the practices of scalping and effigies attacks discussed above. Our reflection on these forms further highlighted the role of memory. It has underscored the communicative nature of this behavior, and brought us to reflect upon the way religious violence addresses the needs of the assailants. Further, it has made clear the involvement and heightened participation of a great variety of French and Huron peoples.

Much of the motivation for this work stems from the presence and participation of ordinary members of society. Non-clerical, non-governmental agents were deeply involved in the religious violence of the sixteenth century. We have found a wide spectrum of people participated

in these scenes, including commoners of all sorts: men, women, and children. We have attempted to provide a historical foundation for this study. In France we have found a peasant class that was ever more exposed to forms of violence from which they were also in certain ways excluded. The commoners saw the nobility celebrating the hunt, but they were prohibited from taking game. They witnessed heretics being ritually executed, as foregoing processions met them in public places. Yet they were expected to play the relatively passive, although compliant, role of the audience. They saw military conflict throughout the countryside, but they were forced to resolve their own disputes in court. They were also increasingly subjected to the ravages of war, including abuse at the hands of foreign soldiers. At the same time, religious leaders stirred their indignation from the pulpit. In many ways, the commoners were drawn into the violence of this period.

In Huronia, we found that all members of society were actively involved in the bloodshed. Those that played a limited role in the prewar feast, the procession to war, as well as armed conflict - such as women and children - appear to have been more active in the procession home and the postwar ceremony. Never were any members of Huron society entirely free from the reality or the consequences of the violence that occurred, though. As was the case with hunting, the killing gave way to social gathering and ceremony. The social element in both contexts is significant. Our drive to understand the experience of religious torture and abuse necessitated an adequate understanding of popular views on death and dying.

As the sixteenth century progressed, social perceptions of death began to change in France. People became more aware of their individual nature and the lonely passage to the grave and beyond. The Huron seem to have also seen death as an individual venture. Like French Catholics they called on the living to intercede on behalf of departed friends and family members. The bones of highly revered ancestors were also treated with distinction by both peoples. French

Catholics kept the sacred relics of saints and martyrs, while the Huron periodically exhumed friends and relatives in the Feast of the Dead. These groups likewise illustrated a tendency to have the remains of their enemies excluded from village cemeteries. Our study of Huron social views of death and dying has highlighted a concern for menacing spirits. A look at popular piety in French Catholic communities has illustrated a similar anxiety.

Our study has shown that French Christians of the sixteenth century, Catholics and Protestants alike, held concern for the manner of death. This interest drew added significance to their final moments. We have also seen that Iroquoian peoples derived comparable meaning from the way in which someone died. In both contexts there was this sense that a 'good death' was desirable. For Huguenots it was a compelling moment, a sign with testimonial force. For Catholic and Native groups in Northeastern North America it translated into power or status in the afterlife. Along the same lines, we have found a shared belief in the potential of 'bad death' to give rise to power of a different sort. For the Huron, these sorts of moments produced menacing spirits. These beings were thought to be capable of negatively affecting the living community. French Catholics joined them in this belief, often attributing misfortune and possession to the works of these lost souls. As we have seen, such notions were especially common at the level of popular religion.

Of course, the manner of death was often a matter of interpretation. Victims of a 'bad death' could haunt one community, at the same time as they inspired another. One of the ways that they could do so was on the level of popular discourse. Huguenot martyrs and the myths they generated have been of central concern for this present study. We have here taken myth to be simply those stories about the victim that enter into circulation, or risk to do so. It is a product of the collective memories of a community. We may also see it as a manifestation of the mental apparitions, discussed above. The importance of these accounts should not be underestimated.

The significance of myth-makers for the French Protestant community is reflected in some of the ways that they parted from the theology of martyrdom in the Ancient church. While Huguenots envisioned themselves as in line with this tradition they differed in a few notable ways. Huguenots moved away from directly identifying their casualties with Christ, the prototypical Christian martyr. Instead they expressed their sense of victimization, by drawing parallels between their experiences in sixteenth century France and the biblical account of Herod's slaughter of helpless children. Protestant martyrologists took up this tradition, casting themselves as innocent targets of religio-political persecution. In the process they did much to develop the modern notion of the victim. Their myths gave form and legitimacy to this sense of innocence. Yet they also had testimonial force. Early Christians had kept relics. They practiced ceremonial burials, and ventured on pilgrimages to the resting places of notable martyrs. These sacred places and things served to remind the living of the significance of those associated with them. Huguenot memories had no material stimuli, other than the written word. The myth became the only lasting reminder of the martyr: the only way to invoke memories, and continue producing impressions.

Martyrs endured on this level in a positive way for the Huguenot community. For others, however, the myth of the martyr was a dangerous threat. Such Protestant accounts threatened to be no less menacing to Catholic communities than the spirits of 'bad deaths'. The testimonial force of these accounts challenged Catholic convictions and authority. It has been assumed throughout this study that myths have varying degrees of force. We have taken the myth of the martyr to be among the most powerful and influential in France at this time. One of the products of this discussion is the idea that through meaningful torture and abuse assailants are able to diffuse potentially powerful myths. At stake in the manner of death was the capacity of the group to generate meaningful accounts.

Much of our work in this essay has been devoted to understanding religious torture and abuse in terms of a process of *undoing* the victim. We have been speaking of the way by which meaningful elements may be disassociated from the individual. Part of our concern has been to consider the impact of this behavior on the standing of the injured party in the memories and accounts of related individuals and groups. If we have followed the work of Roland Viau, throughout much of this study, there has come a point where we must diverge. "La torture iroquoienne," writes Viau, "n'avait rien de commun avec celle qui se pratiquait dans les sociétés dites complexes ou specialisées de l'Occident medieval et moderne, dont l'effet recherché, pour paraphraser Lévi-Strauss, était l'avilissement de la victime en violation de toutes les règles morales, et non la sanctification selon les normes admises par la culture de l'effort fait pour surpasser" (Viau, *Enfants*, 179). Regardless of the intentions of either group, or the moral norms of their society, we have found European and Iroquoian torture to share common ground on the level of method and effect.

In both the French and North American contexts, we have found actions that effectively thwarted the possibility that victims could be remembered in a menacing way for the community of assailants. The execution of 'Joseph' the Iroquois provides us with a detailed account of some of the ways by which this could have been achieved in Huronia in the early seventeenth century. I believe our case study of the death of Gaspard de Coligny has shown that comparable processes were at work during the French Wars of Religion. The relation between these two scenes of religious violence lies at the heart of our study. The *what* and *how* of torture and killing has been shown to impact the construction of religious identity and myth. This study has brought us to reflect on what symbolic territory the war is waged. For religious scholars, I believe, these issues should be of fundamental concern.

II. Epilogue

The reader will likely be brought to reflect upon the angle from which we have approached these scenes of religious violence. Our characterization of the experience of agent-crowds began on the plane of memory, and returned to it as a primary plane of meaning and activity. This should not be taken, however, as an argument against the spiritual existence of the individuals in question. We are not here to assess Christian faith claims regarding the afterlife of martyrs. Nor has it been our intention to address the religious validity of Iroquoian belief systems. What we do suppose is the fundamental importance of memory, and the enduring reality of the victim on this plane. The myth operates on this level, and it is here that we have seen the impact of so much of the religious violence during this period.

Yet the preceding consideration may only be convincing for those who conceive of the field memory in our terms. We have here imagined a plane of meaningful bundles. What was Gaspard de Coligny in the mind of a French Catholic commoner? If he can be seen as a composite of signs, then his death may be understood as an experience of *undoing*. We have emphasized how actions taken against victims were, in some fundamental way, actions taken by aggressors on themselves. At the base of our position is the notion that there is some fundamental element in the act of giving that is itself of the nature of receiving. We are speaking of the production of moments: units of memory, held in the mind by virtue of their relative significance for the carrier. On this plane, the aggressors gain as the victims lose. In some of the cases, noted above, we have seen how acts of violence may be received as moments imbued with powerful feelings, religious ideas, and the dynamic capacity to generate reaction.

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