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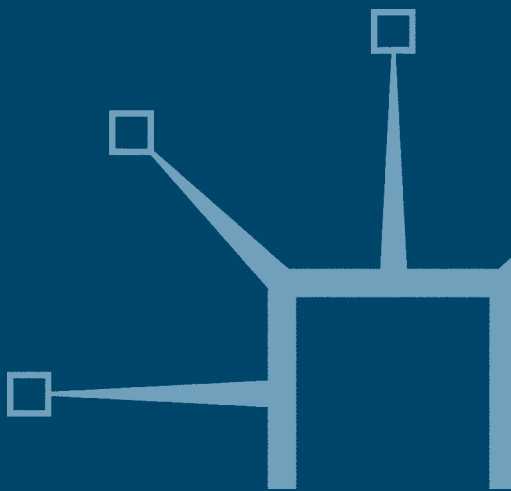
Cultures of Violence

Interpersonal Violence in Historical Perspective

Edited by

Stuart Carroll



Cultures of Violence

Also by Stuart Carroll

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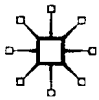

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Introduction

Stuart Carroll

In the beginning of human society there was violence. When Cain killed his brother Abel it was an immediate sign of man's fall from grace. And in the beginning too violence had its own distinctive aesthetic, part of what Patricia Palmer calls the 'troubling beauty of violence.'[1] God knows that Cain has committed murder because 'the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground'. The foundation myths of most religions have violence at the heart of their story: violent and fickle deities require propitious sacrifice in order to be appeased. According to Christians, The Passion is the ultimate act of sacrifice which redeems us all, substituting once and for all sacrifices for good deeds as acts of atonement. 'Mankind no longer has to base harmonious relationships on bloody sacrifices, ridiculous fables of a violent deity and the whole range of mythological cultural foundations.'[2] The violence of Christ's Passion is one of the most enduring symbols of Western culture, from the didactic role it played in Medieval and Baroque art, to the controversy over the visceral scenes of torture in Mel Gibson's, *The Passion of Christ*. The message that reconciliation with God no longer required blood did not, of course, bring an end to violence, and The Passion itself was open to interpretation. From the middle ages until the mid-twentieth century it became an endorsement of violence and cruelty against Jews. The world as a school of pain and suffering, necessary for spiritual rebirth, is central to Christian teaching.

In an age of religious revival, violence continues to be associated with the sacred not, as Bernd Weisbrod argues, because religions today are inherently violent, but rather because political violence has about it a quality akin to a religious experience.[3] For even where God was declared to be dead, the need for sacrifice was not negated. For in the beginning of nations too there is violence: their foundational myths, shrouded in

blood, resonate with the quasi-religious imagery of purity, unity and sacrifice. Nationalism is closely associated with the construction of the other: 'Let impure blood water our furrows!' exhorts the *Marseillaise*. In Germany, in particular, nationalism betrayed the original universal and democratic ideals of the French Revolution. The perversion of Enlightenment principles opposed the American or French model of the emancipation of a people with the integrity of the *ethnos*, which by the beginning of the twentieth century had attained crypto-religious significance. In the chaos of the post-Soviet world, religion, nation and ethnicity are forces for cohesion that appeal to unity and offer deliverance through the demonization of a common enemy.[4] Until very recently violence was pervasive in everyday life in more stable regions: the beneficial effects of beating children and the positive role of corporal punishment on character formation were taken as a given.

This collection of essays is timely. While there is an enduring fascination with war and state violence – shelf upon bookshop shelf are lined with the arcana of military history and degree programmes are now devoted to the study of genocide – historians have been more reticent about studying interpersonal violence, despite the huge role it plays in human affairs.[5] One explanation for this relative neglect is that violence was, according to an older tradition, a rhetorical rather than an analytical category, a moral problem that was always being tamed, overcome, or being consigned to the 'other'.[6] This changed after the Second World War when a more scientific approach to the social history of crime got under way. In many respects, however, the story was still one of control and repression; approaching violence from the point of the history of crime, identifies it with deviance, and the field was dominated by a quantitative methodology that was better at counting numbers than accounting for change. Changes in human behaviour it was thought could be mapped by charting the rise and fall of homicide rates, the expansion and bureaucratization of the forces of order, and the growth of the prison system. Even if we can depend on the figures, this approach can only take us so far. What constitutes violence and how violent a society is also depends on subjective criteria. Early modern England may have had lower levels of interpersonal violence than its European neighbours, but its judicial system was far more punitive and bloody. Do the low homicide rates of 1930s Germany and Japan lead us to the conclusion that these were non-violent societies? We feel that the Viking is a violent man because he wields a skull-splitting axe, but what of the architect of mass murder, or the pilot who eviscerates his victims from 30,000 feet?[7] This introductory chapter will confront these problems by discussing

the historiography of the subject, the ways in which other disciplines have influenced historical approaches, and, through case studies, outline the ways in which interpersonal violence has been used as a category of analysis to explore the culture of past societies. The field of analysis is confined mainly to the post-Renaissance West, the justification for which, I shall argue, being that the way violence and its control has been perceived is integral to the very idea of 'Western civilization'.

Violence periodized, defined and categorized

Though violence is a universal human experience, it is a protean subject and difficult to define because its meanings are various and are always shifting. Until recently, there was reticence about its suitability as a proper subject for historical research. It was only in the 1980s that historians and social scientists began to look at violence systematically as an analytical category. The reasons why the study of violence remained at the margins for so long, the genesis of the new history, and the ways in which historians and social scientists have collaborated to investigate the phenomenon requires elucidation.

Traditionally violence was something that required curing or taming. For John Stuart Mill, writing in 1836, 'It is in avoiding the presence not only of actual pain but of whatever suggests offensive or disagreeable ideas that a great part of refinement consists'.[8] During the professionalization of the discipline in the nineteenth century, history was essentially the story of the progress of humanity, and violence was an impediment to progress. But there is more at stake; for the founding fathers of professional history and, indeed of psychology, the control of violence that is, the move from expressive violence, derived from passion, to instrumental violence, based on reason, is ineluctably tied to the concept of 'modernity', and therefore linked to the creation of civil society and the rise of the West. During the nineteenth century, thinkers and historians preoccupied with the origins of modern civilization began to periodize history according to their concept of human progress, giving prominence to periods they termed 'the Renaissance' and 'the Enlightenment' in order to distinguish the new age of the discovery, of the world and of man, from the darkness of the 'middle ages' that had preceded it. In the onward march of civilization, medieval man is much farther back down the road in his development than we; a man of extremes, he is more prone to passion; his propensity for vengeance a sign of his innate barbarity. The implications for periodization are clear. The advance of civilization is to be associated with the period that follows, a period we now call the early

modern, during which the self undergoes a transformation with the dissemination of concepts of self-restraint and virtue.[9]

In the *Civilization of Italy in the Renaissance*, Jacob Burckhardt firmly established the essential juxtaposition between the 'child-like nature' of medieval man and his self-conscious descendants. Johan Huizinga's *Waning of the Middle Ages* (1919), one of the most influential works of history in the twentieth century, reinforced the chronological divide between medieval and modern, a divide that is cultural and mental rather than economic and social. Violence, and man's attitude towards it, is crucial to this dichotomy; the *Waning of the Middle Ages* opens with 'The Violent Tenor of Life.' Huizinga identifies violence with the passions, to which medieval man is enslaved; a man of extremes he is quick to anger and insensitive to the misfortunes of others. The modern self is contrasted starkly with the medieval self: the rise of self-restraint is ineluctably tied to modernity, and the advance of civilization is associated with the period that we now call the early modern, during which the self undergoes a transformation with the dissemination of Renaissance concepts of virtue and the more systematic inculcation of Christian moral principles, as a result of the Protestant and Catholic Reformations.

This logic had immense force in the nineteenth century because it dovetailed with the dominant role attributed to rise of the nation-state in history, in which a culture of vengeance is characteristic of a society with weak political authority that, as centralization and civilization progress, is replaced by the mechanism of state-directed punishment. Civilization connotes not simply a certain level of social and political organization but the end of an ongoing historical process in which a primitive society is transformed by the sublimation and control of violence. In an age of colonial expansion, where the suppression of 'barbaric' and 'primitive' behaviour had a moral and racial imperative, this was a seductive idea. In *Civilization and its Discontents* Sigmund Freud produced the most persuasive account yet for equating civilization with the ongoing process of repressing man's biological instincts: 'the inclination to aggression is an original, self-subsisting instinctual disposition in man … it constitutes the greatest impediment to civilization.' Freud identified the internalization of these drives as the cause of our present neuroses.

The problem of associating instincts with nature and the control of them with culture were made manifest by the barbarity of the twentieth century and by the descent of Germany, widely assumed (by intellectuals) as the most civilized nation in the world, into barbarism. Germany's divergence from the perceived European norm was the starting point for

Norbert Elias's influential thesis on the 'civilizing process', *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation*.[10] Elias also saw violence as a product of human nature, but he inverted the Freudian approach by showing that the psyche is moulded by society and history. Each phase of human social organization produces codes of behaviour that inhibits or controls behaviour, gradually social constraint is internalized into self-constraint. Refined manners predicated on sensitivity to others translated into greater vigilance of the self, one's emotions and impulses. Elias argued that the key stage in the civilizing process took place in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the transformation of the medieval knight into the courtier, the so-called courtization of the warrior nobility. Repression of aggressive instincts is integral to the civilizing process and it is the princely court which acts as a model for society through its ability to impose rigid standards of behaviour on the aristocracy, creating the conditions for civil society. In Elias's schema France is the model. It was here that civility first began to take on the connotations the term civilization enjoyed during the Enlightenment, denoting an ongoing historical process from barbarism towards a state of perfection through education and refinement. Elias adapted Freud's theory of psychic evolution by arguing that the human psyche is moulded by specific historical forces, such as social conflict, and political culture, such that each era of human social organization produced a body of manners, from medieval courtesy to the restraints on modern bourgeois man, that inhibited or controlled behaviour. Social constraints were gradually internalized over time and were absorbed into the subconscious, making control of the emotions and awareness of the boundaries of social etiquette second nature. The key transformation in the West occurred in the early modern period with the transformation of the nobility. Growing demands for polite conduct and civility meant that impulses and outbursts of emotions were increasingly controlled and that crude manners less tolerated. This is associated with state formation, since princely courts were arenas where new standards of behaviour were learnt and disseminated. Warriors were turned into courtiers; violent instincts were tamed and suppressed.

These concepts did not go unchallenged. In the light of the horrors of the First World War, Huizinga modified his views, rejecting Freud's biological reductionism, and underlining the role of ritual, and particularly chivalry, in limiting violence. The concept of medieval man as innately barbaric was less influential among constitutional historians who had always had a high regard for the role of law in regulating behaviour, or those who studied politics and viewed aristocratic violence, in

particular, in terms of limited and self-interested political motives; and these traditional pillars of the historical discipline were lent support by the emerging discipline of anthropology, when it found primitive societies that had developed social mechanisms for the control of violence, or where self-control and propriety were highly prized – a conclusion that is backed up by the findings of a number of chapters in this volume.

Recent incidents of ethnic cleansing and the recrudescence of religious violence have forced further reconsideration of the facile opposition between civilization and barbarity. To view violence as meaningless, irrational and senseless, as the 'antithesis' of civilization, creates a distance between us 'the civilized' and 'them' the savage, and has immense political repercussions. It has allowed certain Western leaders to stick their heads in the sand and avert their gaze from events that they would rather not contemplate. In 1993 John Major, the then British prime minister, stated that '[t]he conflict in Bosnia was a product of impersonal and inevitable forces beyond anyone's control'.[11]

Today we are less comfortable with the traditional distinction between war and violence. Whereas wars, based on the justice of a cause, made civilizations, and were indeed necessary for their advance, violence was meaningless, irrational and senseless, the very antithesis of civilization. Western culture had long attempted to define the rules of civilized warfare and, since the Age of Reason, cruelty had no place in the conduct of war. As the soldier and the battlefield became ever-more distant from civilians and technology made killing ever-more impersonal, so by the nineteenth century the concept of a 'civilized' war became possible. Professional history reflected this taming of warfare, and historians wrote from the point of view of generals, in a language that was divorced from the experience of killing and, with few exceptions, ignored its civilian victims. The modern way of war became rational, impersonalized and distant; it reduced killing to a science with rules which marked it off from cruelty and barbarity. Even after the First World War the reticence about talking about what war was really like continued, killing glossed or reduced to a convention, only inadvertently were the 'excesses' of soldiers alluded to.[12] The modern study of violence was born out of the destruction of these myths in the twentieth century and more specifically by the collapsing of the boundaries of war, barbarity and cruelty, in short, the re-imagining of violence in the wake of the Holocaust. Zygmunt Baumann has gone as far to suggest that the dispassion and rationality required by modernity does not repress violence, but merely *redeploys* it, removing it from sight and making

it invisible. Violence is turned into a bureaucratic technique that creates a distance between aggressor and victim and substitutes technical for moral responsibility. The Holocaust was not a reaction against modernity, but a consequence thereof.[13]

But the current interest in violence did not occur immediately after the Second World War. Why this should be so is not apparent. Boundless faith in the achievements of modernity continued into the 1960s and is still most apparent in the culture of the United States where scepticism about the civilizing mission of the West is less evident than in Europe. It was only in the 1960s that thinkers, prompted by the social conflicts around them, turned to the problem of violence; they were largely concerned with its legitimacy and relationship to political power. Most influentially, Hannah Arendt targeted Weber's famous maxim that the state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of political force within a territory.[14] For Arendt, there is an inherent danger in equating violence with political power, unless we accept the Marxist notion of the state as the weapon of the ruling class, since power is the essence of government not violence. The state, the *civitas*, is built on consensus as well as force. Violence is never merely an instinctual or instrumental phenomenon, it is culturally elaborated in such a way that through custom, ritual and ideology violence can be justified and normalized. Arendt's reference point was the culture of terror in totalitarian regimes. Whereas Arendt wished to divorce the study of violence from the issue of power, arguing that they had different roots, the New Left adapted Marxist ideas to the realities of advanced Western Capitalism, arguing that hegemony was maintained and reproduced by more subtle means than naked coercion. The radicals of the sixties suggested that violence was a language, a form of social action and communication. French thinkers like, Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault, built on the theories of Horkheimer and Adorno to elaborate the theory of 'symbolic violence', violence that is not physical, or even overt, but subconscious and even invisible. This indirect violence is ideological in that it seeks to perpetuate social order, a means for the bureaucratic ordering of society. For Foucault 'crime lurks within the confines of the law, now on this side of the law, now beyond it, above and below it; crime turns about power, at one time against it, at another time on its side'.[15] Following on from this, it has even been suggested that 'violence is an avoidable insult to basic human needs, and more generally to life', and 'that threats of violence are also violence'.[16] The concept of structural violence legitimizes acts of violence as a defensive reaction against state violence, or against 'imperialism'; 'it de-taboos violent acts'.

The problem with this notion is that it moves from a lower level of experienced acts to the Marxian notion of the 'mute pressure of [class] relations'.[17] Removing the idea of an act, replaces an analytical category with a metaphor, and leads to an inflation of the concept of violence. If every form of social structure is an act of violence, it becomes ubiquitous, and the concept loses its power of differentiation, preventing any sensible distinction and, if it is equated with force, lowers the threshold violence. A more pragmatic approach, and the one I adopt in this chapter, is to distinguish between the more 'general' terms of coercion and force and that of violence. In order to avoid confusion, violence must conform to the dictionary definition of it as an 'exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury or damage to persons or property; action or conduct characterized by this'.[18]

This restricted definition is good because it is easily understandable. However, we must be aware of its limitations. The English word 'violence' is much more limited than its equivalents in other languages and more restricted in its use than in other cultures. Moreover, how are we to interpret reports of the deliberate flushing down the toilet of a copy of the Koran by US soldiers at Guantanamo Bay?[19] This desecration is an act of violation, a word closely associated with violence, but it is moot whether in the strictest sense it is an act of violence. The question of language is not a linguistic cul-de-sac because it tells us that the English word 'violence' is culturally specific. Language shapes experience, and Anglophone scholars should be aware that our word 'violence', limited as it is to the application of physical force, can itself be a barrier to comprehension of other cultures: the French *violence* and German *Gewalt*, for example, are more differentiated and encompass notions of control and domination. In German, the word *Gewalt* can signify violence but also legitimate authority and power, for example *geistliche Gewalt* (priestly authority).[20] And meanings change over time. In the Middle Ages and early modern period *Gewalt* was used as a composite and had a diversity of meanings. In many cases it did not refer to an act but was a metaphor. At that time, the terms *gewaltsam* and *gewalttätig* were used to indicate corporeal violence, synonyms for the Latin *violentia*.[21] Likewise in pre-modern France, perhaps because the language of honour was metaphoric (honour is wounded (*blessé*) and requires repayment (*réparation*), insults were considered *violences* which required repayment in blood. In 1613, Charles de Sedières considered the insult that he was a 'knave who deserved to have his head mounted on a scaffold' as *violences* that required an appropriate response, in this case murder.[22] Finally, Alf Lüdkte has drawn attention to the ways in which praxis and discourse,

physical violence and 'symbolic' violence are linked, and how the relationship between them can change in a relatively short space of time. In traditional patriarchal societies the 'clip round the earhole' (*Ohrfeige*) was a means of imposing discipline on children and inferiors, and was accepted as legitimate if it was limited, in the same way as the 'rule of thumb' was applied to corporal punishment in England. Into the twentieth century the *Ohrfeige* was still a widely used form of punishment, but its meanings changed dramatically in two ways with the coming of Nazism. First, the 'clip round the earhole' as perpetrated by the supporters and functionaries of the new regime against its enemies was a threat of more to come. It was the first taste of terror. This form of everyday petty violence inverted the old rules because it had no respect for age and social status; it was a visible symbol of the new Germany and an excellent way of showing who was master (or mistress). Second, banal everyday physical violence was linked to industrial mass murder by constructing a new boundary against the alien 'other', those who did not deserve the respect reserved for Aryans. So behind the 'clip round the ear' lurked symbolic violence: it was a way of registering in an everyday fashion the concepts of *Gemeinsschaftsfremden* and *Untermenschen*.[23] People were not forced into acts of terror. Rather, Nazi rule afforded opportunities that had not existed before. Seen in this context violence was populist in that it enabled people to participate in the public sphere as a substitute for participation in (democratic) politics; it gave actors and spectators power, and in particular demonstrated who was friend and foe. For those at the bottom of the social hierarchy it could be an enabling and liberating experience.[24]

The debate over what violence is and means is not one of arid semantics. As this case study shows the basic question, what is violence, has enabled us to open new avenues of historical enquiry. In the modern West, interpersonal violence is always transgressive, and we abhor the sights and sounds associated with face-to-face violence. But what we consider illegitimate and abhorrent was not the case for our ancestors. Current research is dedicated to understanding how a society establishes the boundaries of legitimate and illegitimate violence, and how violence was perceived, represented, and, in regard to the enduring fascination with blood-taking from Homer onwards, how it was consumed. This interest in the boundaries of violence has been profoundly shaped by anthropologists who have argued that violence is culturally specific. Until recently, anthropologists, like historians, neglected the problem. Clifford Geertz's seminal work on Balinese culture, which had an enormous impact and inspired the 'New Cultural History', passes in silence over

the 40,000 plus deaths that occurred during political violence in Bali in 1965.[25] Crucial to the recent anthropology of violence is that it is 'perspectival'. According to David Riches, violence is 'an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses'.[26] Precisely because violence's legitimacy is contestable it is opened up for debate, and so rhetorical strategies are employed that persuade people of its acceptability, and reduce chances of a reply in kind. For example, violence is often represented as self-defence, or as pre-emptive, or as a pay-back, or getting even. As a result violence is a dynamic category that touches on questions of morality, the answers to which may make people change their views, or subvert their preconceived notions. Understanding the relations between performer, victim and witness will tell us a lot about the political and social environment within which the act occurs. For example, in early modern Ireland, the Irish practice of beheading one's enemies was to English observers indicative of savagery; English beheadings in contrast symbolized order and government.[27] We might add that the interpreter of the scene, historian or anthropologist, is, like the witness, not an impartial observer but brings their own cultural and political perspective to the act of interpretation, determining at which point, for example, a legitimate act of 'resistance' becomes illegitimate violence. In many acts of violence there is a performative element, and a strikingly dramatic gesture can dramatize ideas and transform the political scene and social environment. The Defenestration of Prague in 1618 and the storming of the Bastille in 1789 have lost the power to shock us as they did contemporaries, but like the events of 9/11 they turned the world upside down. These events unleashed huge upheavals and led to ever-greater levels of violence, demonstrating that there is unpredictability about violence; once a fragile consensus has been shattered, a chain of events are unleashed. Violence thus has a social and political potency because it can break norms and overturn consensus. It can transform the social environment sometimes for the better, sometimes for worse.

In recent years, historians too have begun to approach the problem of violence; their field of enquiry has expanded as their tools of analysis have become more sophisticated. The history of war, once distant, has become intimate, and since the 1960s we have become familiarized to its everyday cruelties on our television screens.[28] Social historians have long been showing that the crowd is not mindless and have underscored the purposive actions of groups, as they challenge the oppressive exercise of state authority. The rationality of the crowd has become a historical truism, in reaction to which some are beginning to question

whether crowds are always motivated by the high-minded principles attributed to them. In this volume, David Andress in Chapter 8 moves the debate on by differentiating between genuinely 'popular' acts of violence and the pretexts it provided for the new political class of the French revolution to enact a more systematic terror in the name of the people. And Andy Wood in Chapter 4 puts the rituals of rebellion in context, showing how in most cases ritual controlled violence but why at other times norms were transgressed, announcing the onset of violent disorder.

The problem is vast and the number of fields of research has multiplied accordingly, many of which have little relation to each other. The criminologist Jean-Claude Chesnais has suggested that we distinguish between interpersonal and collective violence, and divide these up further into distinct sub-categories.[29] The first category would include criminal violence and deviancy which in turn can be broken down further into fatal violence, such as murder and manslaughter, and non-fatal harm, such as assault and rape. Non-criminal violence would embrace suicide and accidental death. The second category, collective violence, entails both the violence of individuals and groups against the state in the form of riots, strikes and revolutions, and the power against the citizen in the form of state terror, execution and punishment. The final form of collective violence is war.

All of these now have their histories – much of the work done in the past twenty years. These divisions are both pragmatic and helpful, although the danger for the historian is that these rigid categories derived from a social science model may not be applicable to all societies in the past, since the farther back we go the boundaries are likely to become less distinct. Moreover, there are many acts of violence which do not fit easily into any of these sub-categories, such as blood sports and duelling. Is lynching racial murder or a form of inter-communal, collective violence? Must collective violence necessarily be related to state power?

Chesnais was writing at the height of the Cold War, a decade before the revival of religious and ethnic inter-communal violence. Since the Cold War there has been a fresh flurry of interest. Why this should be so is difficult to say. Is it to do with the end of conventional war, the revival of ethnic and religious tensions, or the rise of homicide rates in the modern West? It is perhaps significant that much of this interest in violence came out of newly unified Germany in the 1990s. With regard to the history of violence, Germany has more at stake than most nations. The Jewish refugee Norbert Elias, whose *Civilizing Process* had

been ignored on its publication in 1939, returned to his homeland to growing acclaim in 1978. Elias's dialectical opposition of aristocratic French *civilité* to backward and provincial bourgeois German *Kultur* had found its synthesis in the Franco-German European project, then at its height. However, within a decade Elias was coming under attack in Germany for marrying outdated history with bad psychology.[30] Elias's view of violence is pneumatic; it is driven by an *Angriffslust*, the will to aggression, an innate drive that requires taming. His neat distinction between instrumental violence, which is rational, and hostile or expressive violence, an emotionally satisfying end in itself, has also been called into question by historians. Acts of violence often contain elements of both, but even expressive violence is always about something more than 'anger'. In traditional societies where social capital is derived from honour and property, violence was often the easiest and the most rational way to defend or reclaim one's rights.[31] Anger is a constant, it is a human emotion we share with our ancestors. What is different across time and between societies is the social context within which violence occurs: whether an argument between two parties ends in violence depends as much on the expectations of others, and whether a resort to an act of violence would repair damaged integrity. Widely different forms of violence are governed by rules, prescriptions and protocols, of which duelling is the most obvious example. But ritual is not necessarily a form of social control that canalizes and represses violence, as Elias would have us believe; rather ritual makes violence more predictable. Ritual is a practice, like any other, that is dependent on circumstances and cultural environment. Violence is therefore a cultural category, whose idiom, meaning and discourse will depend on the context.[32]

Is it possible or even worthwhile to compare violence across time? To do so runs the risk of anachronism. I believe it is worthwhile if we recognize that in some respects our ancestors were little different from us: violence was no less structured and codified in pre-industrial societies than it is today, even if the means were different and resources lacking.[33] In the Middle Ages the laws of war were enforceable in the courts, and rituals, such as that found at the tourney or in the duel, codified violence. Beyond the social elite all kinds of everyday violence – squabbles over honour, wife-beating, masculine competition and initiation rites – were conducted according to socially agreed limits. Legitimate violence had its time and place. It was permitted at times of recreation, such as carnival, on certain feast days and holidays. Ritual combats and dangerous sports, from football matches to bull fights, provided an outlet for male competitiveness. In Renaissance Venice an elaborate culture evolved

around battles between different factions and fraternities for possession of the city's numerous bridges, whose rituals frequently broke down in mayhem, resulting in many deaths.[34] Violence was accepted as integral to the world of work and tailored to the male life-cycle. The youthful journeyman artisan was expected to take part in carousals, competitive drinking and fights with rival tradesmen; for the bonds created by a shared sociability of violence had to sustain him during the arduous years of his apprenticeship, which often entailed trudging from town to town across Europe. When he returned home and became a master he was expected to renounce the world of the tavern for domestic respectability. Ritual violence continued to mark the boundaries between groups, neighbours and faiths into the nineteenth century, providing social cement for the French peasants who indulged in pitched battles with each other in defence of their village's honour and prestige, and for the German student fraternities which promoted duelling as the ideal manly way to resolve affairs of honour. In these instances, violence contributes to the shaping of identities that are exclusionary and oppositional. In France, village identity was transmitted from father to son through the medium of violence, whether it was through the collective memory of political agitation or the exhortation to always act like a man towards hostile neighbouring communities.[35] In 1823, the *sous-préfet* of Figeac in Quercy observed that old men stimulated the resentment and the honour of their sons, telling them: 'We would never suffer that such and such a parish would dictate things to us! Your grandfather and your uncle were all victims in these fights. Don't let yourselves be beaten: uphold your reputation.'[36] In Paris, too, newly arrived immigrants obtained succour from their ancient solidarities, which also required hereditary enemies to be battled, and territory and neighbourhoods to be demarcated and defended.

For those who argue that 'modernization' is responsible for a reduction in levels of violence, the replacement of the social world of the artisan by factory discipline is indicative of modernity's opposition to violence as irrational and unproductive. Falling homicide rates do indeed correlate with urbanization and the social discipline associated with industrial society.[37] Whether this means that 'modern' societies are less violent rather depends on what is meant by violence. Suicide rates and accidents increase as society becomes more impersonal and technology spreads, and the claim that the incidence of war has been reduced by modernity is indefensible.[38] Societies that do not fit the modernization theory of development have to be explained away: Nazism is thus 'anti-modern' or represents a 'breakdown of civilization'.

Historians and homicide

Central to the new historiography is the notion that since violence requires legitimation, it is always closely associated with issues of power; and the shifting boundaries of illegitimate and legitimate violence are closely linked to the rise of the state, the role of the law, the relation between classes, and changes in the political landscape. Using violence as a category of analysis has enabled historians to look afresh at these staples of the old historiography, and as a result the traditional study of criminality and its punishment was replaced by one which privileged perpetrators and their victims as social actors. Violence is a particularly good category for comparative history because it is universal human experience that changes over time and because it is possible to make valid and useful comparisons between neighbouring societies. Space will limit my discussion to three overlapping themes that have recently sparked the most debate among historians. First, the history of homicide raises important methodological issues regarding the value and comparability of the statistical data. Second, I shall consider the duel, a phenomenon which is not only trans-national but subverts the neat demarcation of time between medieval, early modern and modern. These categories of violence can tell us much about how class and gender roles have changed over time, and in particular the ways in which masculinity is asserted and masculine values reproduced.

If homicide rates are taken as the measure of the level of violence in a society, medieval Oxford was one of the most violent societies ever recorded.[39] The pioneering work on measuring long-term homicide trends was first conducted in 1981 by Ted Gurr, who collated some thirty estimates on the homicide rate (measured in terms of deaths per 100,000 inhabitants) in England from the thirteenth to the twentieth century, plotting the data on a graph, the result of which indicated a long-term and steady downward curve in the homicide rate. Rates may have been as high at 20 homicides per 100,000 in the late Middle Ages, dropping to around 10 in 1600 and ending in the historically lowest rate recorded of 1 per 100,000 in the mid-twentieth century. According to these figures, we moderns run only 5 per cent of the risk that our medieval forbears had of being murdered. Gurr interpreted these trends as 'a manifestation of cultural change in Western society, especially the growing sensitization to violence and the development of increased internal and external control.'[40] In the intervening years, Gurr's approach has inspired much digging in the European and US archives, and the number of quantitative studies of homicide has grown hand in

hand with the improved sophistication of statistical analysis. In 2003, Manuel Eisner published a comprehensive view of this research, building a database from 380 estimates of pre-modern homicide rates in ten countries.[41] Taken together this data confirmed Gurr's observations of a massive drop in the homicide rate since the Middle Ages. The decline began first in North-Western parts of Europe and then gradually diffused to the rest of the continent. By the nineteenth century, homicide rates were lowest in the most modernized, literate and affluent regions of Europe, and highest in the rural periphery. The widest variation in the homicide rate occurred in those states which had both urbanized and commercially advanced regions and backward rural provinces. Paris in 1850 was far safer to live in than the Midi, let alone Corsica, which was the most dangerous place to live in France with a murder rate ten times that of the capital.[42] Italy was even more divided along North–South lines.[43] In 1861, the province of Naples (population 6.9 million inhabitants) was the world capital of crime with twice as much violent crime as England, France and Germany combined (90 million inhabitants). In Germany, too, there was a variation between the industrialized North and rural Bavaria. Even before the twentieth century, however, rates in the Southern Europe began to fall quite rapidly: the Italian homicide rate fell from an average of 13 per 100,000 in the three decades before 1880 to 2 per 100,000 in 1890. By about 1950 European homicide had converged at historically low levels, paradoxically at a time when the continent had just been the site of one of the greatest slaughterhouses in world history. Thereafter the figures have posted a small rise.

Eisner identified some clear patterns from the data. First, there is little change in the long run in the age and sex of violent offenders. Homicide has historically been a masculine phenomenon: killers are overwhelming men and their victims overwhelmingly male. Societies with a high homicide rate are characterized by high rates of male-to-male violence, usually resulting from clashes over honour. Second, interpersonal violence has declined significantly in the past six centuries with the fall possibly beginning as early as the fifteenth century, but with a well-documented decline from the seventeenth century. Third, this fall was highly differentiated in its rate of decline between region and social class. North-Western Europe started its decline centuries before the process began in earnest in the Mediterranean. And the fall in lethal violence is disproportionately related to the decline in elite violence. By confirming Gurr's initial study, Eisner has reinvigorated the debate about the reasons for the decline of interpersonal violence.[44] A number of historians and social scientists have argued that the data supports the

concept of the civilizing process, as Europeans learned to control their emotions and as manners became increasingly differentiated, refined and civilized. The greatest champion of this view is Pieter Spierenburg, and he has found support from among Anglo-American historians of crime, for whom Elias has attained 'the greatest respect of any single theoretician'.[45] Others have laid more stress on the judicial and social controls exercised by increasingly centralized state bureaucracies. Social disciplining by the state supported the efforts of religious reformers in the wake of the Reformation to purify society, and the state was increasingly disposed and capable of intruding into everyday life in order to regulate the conduct of its subjects. This Hobbesian vision of a coercive state imposing order through the subordination of disorderly subjects is one that has echoes of Elias's idea of the state. For Elias the external social controls exercised by the state gradually over time are internalized by individuals into self-restraint.

The major problem with these theories is that they explain everything and nothing at the same time. That is to say at the level of abstract generalities they may have some value, but they are very difficult to support convincingly with empirical evidence, a factor compounded by highly speculative assertions about the mental world of our ancestors and simplistic approaches to the relationship between agency and structure. No explanatory schema is mutually exclusive and the reasons for the decline in homicide rates may vary greatly in different eras and historical contexts. Elias's empirical work rested on early modern France: Louis XIV's Versailles, ordered by its Baroque rituals and fastidious manners, was the archetypal academy of social and self-discipline. It was in France that civility first began to take on the connotations that the term civilization enjoyed during the Enlightenment, denoting an ongoing historical process from barbarism towards a state of perfection through education and refinement. It goes without saying that, Elias's theory, written from the point of view of a refugee from Nazi terror, is not really relevant to the history of France at all, but Germany, which is an unfavourably compared 'other'. Recent research suggests that in most respects Elias was wholly wrong about the French scene, as Michel Nassiet makes clear in this volume.[46] French nobles, far from being transformed from uncouth warriors into scheming, foppish courtiers welcomed a strong monarch who could arbitrate their quarrels better and accommodate their political ambitions in royal service. As they had done since the Middle Ages, they continued to define themselves largely by the profession of arms, a profession that had long codified and structured interpersonal violence. Indeed, it was the collapse of traditional

chivalric values and the rise of duelling that significantly increased elite interpersonal violence in France during the second half of the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century. Louis XIV employed very traditional remedies to this problem, bringing renewed vigour to the kingly activity of peace-making and forbidding the issuing of challenges without the royal consent. Northern Italy in the seventeenth century provides further evidence that state-building is not a top-down, one-way process, and that peasants, who otherwise despised the agents of central authority, like tax-collectors, welcomed central interference when it upheld harmonious social relations through the provision of courts and arbitration, and they clamoured for help from the centre in curtailing the abuses of local lords and bandits.[47] The Ionian Islands in the early nineteenth century were also relatively 'backward' rural societies with high levels of interpersonal violence. This changed rapidly with the arrival of the British protectorate in the 1820s and its system of colonial criminal justice, a system that far from being coercive was cheap and accessible and proved to be remarkably popular among Greeks. The courts did not always work in the manner in which they were intended: in pre-industrial societies courts were annexes to the forum of honour where litigation had the purpose of vindicating honour; there reputation was on trial, not the truth. Nonetheless, courts help men to save face and satisfy honour without recourse to violence, and punishment supported the traditional role of the priest, village elder and landowner as arbitrators.[48] In the Ionian Islands the introduction of an efficient and accessible judicial system was in large measure responsible for the tumbling rates of assault, which dropped from an average 134 incidents per 100,000 in the first half of the nineteenth century to 27 in the 1880s.

Even if we accept that the sources upon which they are based are reliable, that levels of homicide are a true reflection of overall levels of violence, and that such variables as the level of professional medical care available to victims will only have a marginal impact on the figures, there is a further problem with interpreting the statistics.[49] Put simply, by comparing vastly different societies in terms of raw figures without any context runs the risk of anachronism. Both today and in the past young males figure disproportionately in statistics as the perpetrators and victims of homicide.[50] And yet the demographic profile of past and present societies is vastly different. In Western Europe about 1600 between half and two-thirds of the population was under 30, while today the figure is just over one-third. Of course, industrializing societies also had young populations: early nineteenth-century England had a low homicide rate and a young population. But this is precisely why

statistics need to be placed in their social and economic context. In pre-industrial Western Europe, population growth was controlled by a late age of marriage. On average men did not marry until they were 28 or 29, and as a result pre-modern Europe teemed with under-employed, young, unmarried males. In many trades and professions violence was an integral part of the life-cycle, a lifestyle that was renounced on marriage. Nineteenth-century England was an equally youthful society, but one with a very different life-cycle, where economic opportunity encouraged males to marry younger and granted them status in society as breadwinners and erstwhile patriarchs. It is not surprising that homicide rates fell most rapidly in England in the decades after 1660, coinciding with a period of commercial growth, emigration and agricultural innovation.[51]

The civilizing process is predicated on subtle changes in psychic controls over the long term; sub-conscious changes in manners leading to greater awareness of others and a growing sensitivity to violence. Yet, while the long-term decline in homicide rates is irrefutable, the incidence of significant short-term fluctuations gives the lie to the idea that this is in large measure attributable to improving manners. In Western Europe the very sharp increases in homicide rates at the end of the sixteenth century and the very sharp falls from the 1630s had much to do with political developments.[52] Some shifts are inexplicable. Indictments for homicide in the county of Cheshire soared in the 1620s and fell dramatically in the following decades. Did manners change dramatically in less than a generation? This surely asks too much of simple Cheshire folk, and there is no evidence of a campaign against disorderly alehouses and drunkenness.[53] The political and religious context caused rapid fluctuations in levels of violence: in colonial America the era of frontier violence which ended in 1637 with the consolidation of English control over New England saw homicide rates of around 100 per 100,000. For the next 30–80 years the figures of 7–9 per 100,000 was broadly in line with the English experience, but towards the end of the seventeenth century New England homicide rates reached levels of 1 per 100,000, rates usually associated with a heavily industrialized society. Clearly, intense protestant feelings and social discipline fostered very high levels of social solidarity, but we are a long way from the polished good manners and *civilité* required at the French court. More recently, between 1977 and 1997, the troubles in Northern Ireland have caused the homicide rate to average 5.6 per 100,000, five times the rate of the rest of Britain, but significantly lower than the 1972 peak of 24.6.[54] Some of the most dramatic falls in homicide rates in European history occurred in poor

and economically backward parts of the Mediterranean at the end of the nineteenth century, where the reduction in levels of violence had more to do with agricultural modernization and emigration than a psychic revolution. From the 1830s to the 1870s Athens had exceedingly low levels of violence. That changed dramatically in the 1870s and 1880s as poor young men flocked to the capital in search of employment. By 1890, Athens had become the murder capital of the world as the rustic culture of masculine honour was transferred to a city which had few jobs to offer and wretched living conditions. But by 1920, the Athenian homicide rate had once more fallen to one of the lowest levels in the world.[55]

There is a more fundamental objection to the simple formulation that pre-modern societies are more 'violent' than our own. Hardly a paper discussing homicide trends begins without the obligatory gruesome portrayal of an act of medieval barbarity, a trope meant to convey how casually brutal were our ancestors to their neighbours, how quick they were to anger, how little they cared for the feelings of others. The idea that medieval man is the barbarian 'other' to our civilized 'self', the child to our man, was popularized by Freud. For many modern thinkers the costs of the coercive and disciplinary efforts required by modern bourgeois self-restraint are too high. For Foucault, 'the life and time of man are not by nature labour, but pleasure, restlessness, merry-making, rest, needs, accidents, desires, violent acts, robberies etc'.[56] Following Nietszche, he wishes us to recapture this Dionysian spirit and with regard to civility, presupposes that we have lost more than we have gained. But was medieval man more prone to anger than we? The statistics seem to support the claim: in England, for example, the medieval homicide rate was between 10 and 20 times the modern level. However, it is worthy reflecting on how this figure is computed. Let us take a standard late-medieval town of 10,000, say York. In an average year two people are murdered. This translates to a homicide rate of 20 per 100,000, a very high rate by modern standards and probably a reasonable reflection of the situation at the end of the Middle Ages. While the good citizens of York may have been troubled by the deaths of two of their number, it is more likely that their concerns were overshadowed by more pressing problems of mortality: between a quarter and a third of the city's infants died before reaching their first birthday. The city was visited by at least four serious epidemics between 1485 and 1538 and further outbreaks of plague reduced the city's population by one-third in the 1550s.[57] Statistics alone cannot measure the impact of violence.[58] The good citizen of medieval York

knew that the natural world was a thousand times more life-threatening than his neighbour.

Masculinity and violence

The sources for pre-modern societies resound with the banality of everyday violence. In February 1547, Jean de Riencourt esquire, aged 20, told the following tale in his pardon: he was having dinner with his cousin François de Riencourt and other gentlemen in the château of Mailly in Northern France. As François took a cooked pear from a dish, Jean jokingly grabbed his hand and squeezed it. François in turn threw the squashed pulp at Jean's head and soiled his doublet. Angry that his clothes were messed up so, François called his cousin 'a merry fool.' Jean retorted 'if you mean that, I say you lie'. François responded by picking up a plate and hitting Jean on the head who in turn drew his dagger and stabbed his cousin to death.[59] The trained observer will note that this is a dispute shaped by the conventions of honour: Jean, a young gentlemen, is humiliated and insulted in front of other persons of honour; he does what a man must do in such circumstances and gives his cousin the lie, the most serious charge one gentlemen can make of another; François's resort to violence is inevitable and expected. The trained observer will perhaps also congratulate himself or herself that civilized society has advanced beyond such irrational puerility – a conceit that is both patronizing and unenlightening. In fact, criminologists and behavioural psychologists have found some surprising similarities between the pardon rolls of Renaissance France and the situations today in which homicide arises: sharp tongues, strong drink and quick tempers are predominant in every scenario of homicide.[60] In all societies that have been studied, men overwhelmingly account for the killers and their victims; the victim is often killed following a confrontation or altercation of seemingly 'trivial' origin, and alcohol plays a role in fuelling masculine bravado. Male-on-male 'homicide is not generally a one-sided event in which the victim plays a passive role, indeed he is often the initiator of the exchange. Murder is most commonly the outcome of a dynamic exchange between offender, victim, and, in many cases, bystanders'.[61] What may look like trivial altercations to the police officer, judge or historian may in fact be central to the actors' sense of masculinity: maintaining face, demonstrating character, not wanting to be pushed around, in short the requirement to defend one's honour and reputation. Even today in Britain, about two-thirds of male on male homicides can be 'characterized as spontaneous honour contests'.[62]

A large proportion of the homicides dismissed both today and by historians looking at the past as 'senseless', or 'mindless', or 'trivial' have to be understood as the consequence of the ubiquitous struggle of men for status and respect. Thus violence is, and was no less in the past, an emotional response tempered by assessments of risk. Violence may breed more violence, not because of legitimation, or because of imitation, or because of de-sensitization, or cultural conditioning, but simply because the risk of non-violence has been raised.[63] Furthermore, medieval and early modern sources are not transparent. French pardon tales, for example, tend to hide the ways in which violence was pre-meditated and calculated, for the simple reason that in law it was a legitimate defence to argue that one had acted through temporary loss of reason, due to 'hot anger' or drunkenness.[64] Was Jean Riencourt's jape really so innocent? The evidence from France suggests that much seemingly innocent tomfoolery was purposely designed to provoke a showdown with someone with whom one was already in enmity. Passion and rational calculation co-existed.

But we can go further than this in questioning how far undeveloped rural societies were characterized by banal acts of expressive violence. In an organic economy where resources are scarce and demographic pressures bulk large the right to pasture, to have access to water and to the commons, to glean, hunt, forage and collect wood are matters of life and death. Rights should not be disassociated from reputation: neighbours think twice before stepping on the toes of the local hard man. Recent research on early modern France, Italy and Germany has shown that a great deal of rural violence was generated by disputes over customary rights among peasants, between neighbouring villages and between landlords and their tenants.[65] In the Eifel region of Western Germany, there was a remarkable continuity in the character of rural violence between 1500 and 1800: property disputes remained throughout the period the main cause of contention.[66] And righteous anger sharpened the violence of peasant politics. In nineteenth-century Ireland, rural grievances sharpened anti-English and anti-landlord feeling that often exploded into violence at election time.[67] Upland regions remained unpacified for longer because states invested their policing and judicial resources where their tax base was concentrated, usually in areas of lowland arable. The very high levels of violence in early nineteenth-century Corsica (homicide rates of 26–64 per 100,000) are to be explained by the lack of central authority and the harshness of the landscape; here the stolen cow or the stray goat that ate one's crop were not trivial matters but deadly serious matters.[68] Whether people in pre-industrial

societies are more disposed to anger than us and have less self-control is impossible to know, what we can say for certain is that they had more to get angry about.

In the twentieth century, there was a modern society that experienced very high levels of interpersonal violence, levels that make Corsica in comparison seem a rather benign environment. In 1926, the Miami homicide rate reached 110 per 100,000, a rate which placed it on a par with medieval Oxford. The high and rising rates of homicide in the United States in the last two hundred years contradict the European pattern: 'this trend was the opposite of what conventional wisdom would have predicted – a rising level of homicides caused by industrialization and urbanization'.[69] The American experience gives the lie to the idea that theories of modernization or the civilizing process are universally applicable. The body count of this grim legacy may be as high as 1.4 million, a total which puts the relatively small figures we are dealing with in medieval and early modern European into perspective. While accepting that there are wide variations in rates between different states and between different ethnic groups, Eric Monkkonen has recently attempted to account for this American exceptionalism.[70] According to him, Americans have learnt to live with high levels of violence; they are more tolerant of it, and when things get too bad in the neighbourhood they are more disposed to solve the problem by moving away. Handguns are only part of the equation. Homicide rates were already high before gun ownership became widespread: nineteenth-century Americans did just as well with knives, clubs and axes. In America, the state is much more distant from most people's lives than in Europe: fragmented and de-centralized, law enforcement was historically lax in its attitude to catching and prosecuting felons.[71] And even when suspects are apprehended, juries are much more tolerant of people who resort to violence: the plea of self-defence is interpreted much more widely than it would be in England, a country with a similar legal system. Put simply, in the United States it is easier to get away with murder, the risks lower: in nineteenth-century New York only about half of murder suspects were arrested, only about half of these suspects were tried and only half of those tried were convicted. In the United States, violence is also more prevalent because, historically, it was the best way to obtain economic resources: not only did the expansion of the frontier and slavery make violence seem the natural order of things, its vibrant, ethnically charged, pork-barrel politics necessitated the intimidation of voters and political opponents.[72] The explosion of inner city violence in the second half of the twentieth century has to be seen in this context. The use of extreme

violence in the drug trade is a rational response in an unregulated market, where the risks of getting hurt or caught are outweighed by the vast profits to be made. For Monkkonnen, the American acceptance of high levels of interpersonal violence is ultimately to be explained by its special status as a nation of immigrants. Americans learned to tolerate more homicide (much of it imported by young men who brought the old world honour culture with them) than their European counterparts, for the same reasons that they tolerated ethnic and religious differences. People get used to violence; they come to accept it as 'normal'. By European standards the state is weak and less ideologically disposed to intervene in the lives of its citizens.[73]

High levels of violence cannot simply be explained by social deprivation, or capitalist individualism. For the followers of Durkheim, a peaceful society will be one where there is a high degree of social solidarity, fostered by the state and other organs of civil society.[74] The problem of applying this model to explain the decline of interpersonal violence is that social differentiation and economic inequality in England in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were growing at the same time as homicide rates were falling fastest. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, most London homicides conformed to the typical pattern of male-on-male violence, as men defended their reputation and integrity against challenges: physical and verbal. Fighting was a means of asserting manhood. Attitudes towards violence changed among all social groups, but particularly among the elite who even began to desist from carrying swords. In the commercial world of eighteenth-century London public displays of violence lost their social capital, for as commercial credit became regularized and institutionalized so the credit that accrued from honour was devalued, and economic success became the crucial indicator of a man's reputation. At the same time geographic and social mobility reduced the role of neighbourly opinion in shaping social reputation. While public spaces were pacified, however, domestic violence continued to be a private matter and wife-beating considered unworthy of public debate.[75]

The image of the English as 'a polite and commercial people' in the eighteenth century is seductive. However, the decline in interpersonal violence in England pre-dated its rise to economic and commercial dominance. The retreat of the gentry from public acts of violence was a much longer-term phenomenon, and the concept of honour underwent a much greater transformation in the century after the Reformation than it did during the Age of Enlightenment, as the traditional virtues of medieval knighthood gave way to wisdom, temperance and godliness.[76]

There is good evidence to suggest that homicide rates were lower in sixteenth-century England than they were on the continent, and this should not surprise us. States which are politically fragmented have weak claims to legitimacy and consequently higher levels of interpersonal violence. Before the eighteenth century, England was for most of its history the most centralized and efficiently run state in Europe. Whether this made the English state more benign is unlikely: for the English judicial system was for most of this time remarkably efficient in comparison to its neighbours in apprehending and executing felons. In the period from 1550 to 1630, when it joined the Western European trend of falling rates of public execution, the English state is estimated to have executed an astonishing 75,000 people.[77] Even during the reign of the 'bloody code' between 1770 and 1830, when there were over 200 capital crimes on the statute, there were a 'mere' 35,000 capital convictions, of which most were pardoned or deported, and 7,000 executions.[78] The gallows are a recurring motif in English culture, but the sight of the condemned criminal kicking and bucking at the end of a rope was a much more common experience in the Tudor and Jacobean age than in any other. English legal historians have yet to go beyond the clichés that compare the adversarial system, characterized by fairness and openness, with the 'continental' inquisitorial procedure, characterized by its secrecy and use of torture, which operated on the continent. The subject is a vast one, but a brief comparison with France is instructive.[79] The French judicial system had many problems, but the standards it set in terms of the rules of evidence, the strictness of its procedures and the search for the truth were probably unsurpassed in the early modern period. At the end of the sixteenth century, the chief French appeal court, the Parlement of Paris, received hundreds of appeals but confirmed on average only about 70 death sentences a year for a population more than twice that of England, and after 1635 the number of executions dropped by one-half. Since only about 2 per cent of those subject to torture in the Parlement's jurisdiction confessed, its use led to more acquittals than convictions. Excruciatingly painful it may have been, but there were strict rules governing the use of torture and the accused knew what they had to endure to get off. No wonder its utility was increasingly called into question during the seventeenth century. In England, the jury system was effective in involving members of the local community in the legal process and the result was a much higher rate of arrest for felonies; convictions depending much more on the nature of the accused's local reputation rather than on considerations of motive or evidence. This might result in a rough community or summary justice,

one that was both bloody and remarkably effective in its repression. The problem of the French judicial system was the opposite of that in England: its probity and complexity caused endless delays and allowed too many offenders to get off, the law was much less responsive to local needs and the result was that many communities were forced to take the law into their own hands, and lynchings were not unknown. In France, and elsewhere on the continent, contempt for the law was compounded by the fact that until well into the early modern period those with the resources could avoid corporal punishment by paying 'blood money' compensation to victims; punishment was disproportionately reserved for the destitute and the dishonourable.[80] In contrast, the English criminal justice system, perhaps because it offered the right of men to be judged by their peers rather than by professional judges, was not afraid to target malefactors from the social elite, and execute them if necessary. In early modern France, there was abhorrence for spilling blue blood compounded by the fact that the social elite was disproportionately responsible for acts of criminality and violence.

From the beginning of the early modern period the English criminal law was therefore both a better terror weapon and more effective at curtailing private violence because it was more responsive to the needs of the local community, or at least those who ran it. By the end of the eighteenth century, the legal tolerance of non-homicidal interpersonal violence was on the wane. The treatment of assault, for example, hardened so that by the 1820s imprisonment was replacing the custom of nominal fines. The Victorian offensive against immorality, with the aid of an expanded prison system, stigmatized and proscribed long accepted modes of male behaviour, and promoted a new manly ideal that prized duty to family and home above personal honour.[81]

The role played by the English working class in the 'civilizing process' is yet to be written; were it to be, it would occupy a privileged place. Changes to English manliness were not ordained from above. While the world's first industrial working class lacked the manners and refinement usually seen as essential to self-control, it was nonetheless a relatively pacific entity. Despite the tremendous upheavals consequent of industrialization and urbanization, the homicide rate in England reached historically low levels by the 1880s of 1 per 100,000. Boom towns were initially characterized by chaotic and squalid living conditions and prone to high levels of male-on-male interpersonal violence, especially among newly arrived immigrants. But it was not just the improved infrastructure of the Victorian city, or the spread of professional policing or the demands of factory discipline that led to tumbling homicide rates.

Poverty, hardship and economic and political grievances engendered strong neighbourly and community relations, built on enlightened self-interest that forged a remarkable social solidarity. Evangelical religion and notions of respectability were partly responsible for a more disciplined working class, but these factors were also present in the parts of the United States with its higher homicide rate, and drinking and fighting continued to be regarded as manly attributes in nineteenth-century English working-class culture. Likewise, the relative orderliness of the English pub at the end of the nineteenth century, in relation to the American bar, the French cabaret or the Italian Osteria can only partly be explained by the English preference for ale over stronger forms of liquor.[82] English working-class life in the nineteenth century increasingly revolved around all sorts of associations, political, religious and recreational, that underpinned social relations and made hitting out and grabbing each other less necessary and less acceptable. Reputation for working men no longer derived from toughness alone and could now be acquired in a trade, through the acquisitions of skills and by the obligation to provide for his family. Where Trades Unions existed the dignity of labouring men found a more overt political voice and an opportunity for articulating grievances in solidarity with one another.[83] It is likely that a bachelor sub-culture, away from parental and family concerns increases violence. So the English mining communities that developed high levels of social solidarity and self-regulation were in stark contrast to the overwhelmingly male, socially atomized, violent and lawless mining communities that mushroomed on the frontier in nineteenth-century Australia, South Africa and United States, even though the hardships they faced were comparable.

Historians are now agreed that a violent society is likely to be one where masculine status rests on the credible threat of violence. In many societies 'a shortfall in machismo is a social failing like poor table manners'.[84] Evolutionary psychologists go as far as to claim that male aggression is a biological imperative and that men are more conflictual in late adolescence and young adulthood, a life stage at which competitive striving to achieve status, resources and marriageability is essential. In addition, since in all known cultures men are sexually jealous, once they are married thoughts turn to the control of their wives. Male violence against women is in large measure proprietarial, and femicide the most extreme consequence of the attitude, 'if I can't have her, then no one can.' Women, in contrast, tend to kill only in self-defence against abusive husbands. Cuckold killing was legitimate in many societies and, until recently, adultery seen as a reasonable ground for provocation in law.

It was not until 1891 that the rights of husbands to punish or correct their wives using physical means were finally rejected in English law.[85] In pondering the issue of masculinity, Eric Monkkonen wondered if American men are simply meaner than their European counterparts. We might add that not only does America have historically high levels of murder; it has historically high rates of sexual assault too. Rape, not murder, is the true 'All American crime.'[86]

Duelling: a long-term phenomenon

Today one feature of modern homicide patterns is radically different from the past: the protagonists in most homicides today are overwhelmingly drawn from the lower social classes, in many cases the most marginal and disadvantaged. High homicide rates in the past reflected the propensity of the social elite to employ violence in pursuit of their political and economic interests. Until relatively recently, fighting was crucial to masculine identity across the social spectrum. Economic and political change has radically altered the masculine role in society, as status has become ineluctably linked to economic advantage: in contemporary society the man of means has left the arena of violence to the disadvantaged. The tripartite relationship between masculinity, class and violence is best viewed through the lens of the duel, a long-term historical phenomenon whose practice was widely disseminated throughout European society. The value of duelling as a category of historical analysis lies in its position 'at the interface between society and culture, the social system and the personality, and corporative coercion and individual freedom'.[87]

Duels were fought over the *point d'honneur*, which to our eyes are a trivial amalgam of slights, insults and petty transgressions, for which satisfaction is required. But honour is not simply a moral code regulating conduct, like magic or Christianity, it is a world view. 'Honour permeated every level of consciousness: how you thought about yourself and others, how you held your body, the expectations you could reasonably have and the demands you could make on others … . It was your very being. For in an honour-based culture there is no self-respect independent of the respect of others.'[88] Status in the group was the measure of one's honour. Reputation was conferred by no authority other than 'common opinion' as Louis Chabans put it in 1615.[89] Honour was thus public property, measured and conferred by one's peers. It was a deadly serious game, since you were in competition with your peers for honour and status was achieved at the expense of others: 'the shortest route to

honour was thus to take someone else's, and this meant that honourable people had to be ever-vigilant against affronts or challenges to their honour, because challenged they would be.'[90] Gentlemen were obliged to act honourably at all times commensurate with their status and to avoid the shame of losing face. As the comte de la Rochefoucauld put it in 1537 'better that [I] die than endure an affront and have my honour sullied.'[91] Duelling is not however an intrinsically pre-industrial or aristocratic phenomenon: the last recorded duel in France was fought in 1967. Down to 1914 honour continued to be the part of the currency of social exchange among the European bourgeoisie, and Republican democracies, like France and the United States, were not immune to the concept of gentlemanly honour. Since the practice of duelling survived the transformations of urbanization and industrialization, the move from early modern to modern, it is worth revisiting the tale of its rise and dissemination.

From their inception duels had to be legitimized, and from the medieval tourney to the Roman gladiator and David and Goliath, there were plenty of virtuous precedents. However, the modern duel marked a significant break with medieval forms of dispute settlement, such as trial by combat and the judicial duel. Frowned upon by the church, the latter were in any event very rare and, since the combatants heavily armoured, rarely fatal. Along with much else that we associate with Western civilization, the origins of duelling can be traced to Renaissance Italy. The duel is a quintessentially Renaissance phenomenon because it combined two high ideals: the triumph of virtue and the essential equality of all men of honour. Fighting without armour evened up the playing field, and the defence of one's reputation no longer required hugely expensive amounts of equipment and a train of support staff. In this sense duelling is democratic: the field of honour was open to all comers who had the leisure time to learn how to fence, and not just a narrow class of knights. And this leisured class was expanding from the fifteenth century in the wake of economic expansion and social mobility. Technological advances in Northern Italy made swords lighter and stronger and placed greater emphasis on dexterity rather than on brute strength: the association of fencing and dancing was born, and the agility required of the fencer fitted well with the grace and nonchalance prized by the Renaissance courtier. Not only did rapiers become fashionable accoutrements, they were relatively cheap and widely available in relation to the other trappings of nobility, such as a sumptuous residence. They were an immediately recognisable claim to status. Anyone who challenged that status was likely to be immediately disabused at the point of a sword.

From Italy the duel spread in the sixteenth century to England, France and Spain, but not, it seems, to the Holy Roman Empire. Duelling quickly developed its own rituals, with the employment of seconds whose quasi-juridical role ensured fair play, and the rules governing the challenge and the combat became more elaborate as practice was codified in written form. When Italian fencing masters moved to the North they carried this knowledge along with their new techniques and styles. Duelling satisfied the requirement for satisfaction without the spilling of blood, and taking part was more important than victory, for simply by entering the lists one had proved that one was a man of honour. On these grounds, so it is claimed, the rituals of the duel canalised and tamed violence. But while ritual makes violence more predictable, it does not necessarily reduce it. The next shift in the transformation of the duel from its Italian origins into a quintessentially French phenomenon, which occurred at the end of the sixteenth century, shows that the duel is not always a civilizer. Indeed, in the classic age of the swashbuckling swordsman, immortalized and romanticized by Dumas and Hollywood, the duel was responsible for a huge escalation of elite violence, in which tens of thousands died in the century before 1660.

In Italy, England and Spain, duelling was fought according to rigid rules of the game and usually to first blood – fatalities were rare. In France, despite intermittent royal crackdowns, the principle of fighting to the death was quickly established and made worse by the involvement of the seconds in combat and the growing penchant for using first daggers and later pistols in what often turned into mini-battles. Italian commentators were shocked at what had happened to their civilized *duello*: 'They do not [fight]', the Venetian ambassador explained at the turn of the sixteenth century, 'as usually is the case in Italy to the first or second drawing of blood, with seconds who separate them when time is up'. Instead they fought to the 'bitter end'.[92] This was in large measure due to the political and religious upheaval caused by the 36-year-long Wars of Religion, which was in turn aggravated by social change. In France, the gentlemanly ethos continued throughout the early modern period to be defined principally with relation to the profession of arms, and consequently the social mobility of a new class of officials, lawyers and tax collectors was dependent on their ability to defend their honour with recourse to violence. Even judges were occasionally constrained to fight duels. But there was more than social pressure in operation: though snobbery and social distinction were ubiquitous in early modern France, they were less in evidence on the field of combat. In Paris, in

1612, it was possible for one Monget, an illiterate soldier, to kill his rival in love, the baron de Termes.[93] Violence sanctified social mobility and duellists won fame and fortune, while men of high status accepted this fact, and in the seventeenth century even princes willingly stepped into the arena and on occasion forfeited their lives.

Louis XIV refused to tolerate the duel as a means of social and political advancement, but was unable to eradicate it. The duel continued during his reign and into the eighteenth century – it was particularly deadly in the 1740s when it may once again have become associated with political factionalism – but it was now increasingly unacceptable in public and in polite society and increasingly identified with the newly created officer corps. Louis viewed the establishment of a professional officer corps as a school for social as well as military discipline, but it was in his attempts to reform immoral and violent behaviour in which Louis would have least success: the culture of the evolving officer corps was to be a libertine one, and the campaign against duelling was particularly resisted in the army, where the squabbles over honour were the currency of everyday existence, and the defence of the honour positively encouraged in order to foster manly courage. So the creation of something resembling a modern officer corps under Louis XIV did not in itself reduce interpersonal violence. But there is reason to believe that in one crucial respect it made a substantial contribution to wider social change among the social elite. A structured career could now be built on promotion, and as transfers between regiments became more common, so a more diverse geographic mix among officers was created. Esprit de corps was built around a regiment and loyalty owed to it rather than to one's kinsmen or patron. Young noblemen were removed from civil society for long periods, to frontier garrisons or barracks far from their homes and their kin; their disputes were likewise far removed from the requirements of local politics, in which the vindication of honour through violence was a means of political control and social advancement. Outside the web of local social relations into which he was born, honour for the young cadet became a more individual affair, less tied to the requirement to take revenge on behalf of kith and kin. The French officer of the eighteenth century was the precursor of that class of deracinated junior officers dissected in the novels of Lermontov and Joseph Roth.[94]

In the eighteenth century, French culture and values became the benchmark for civilized behaviour throughout Europe, and the concept of the army as a structured profession in which honour was acquired in service to dynasty and regiment became a keystone of aristocratic

identity. With the adoption, and in many cases improvement on the French model, the military academies of Berlin, Vienna and Saint-Petersburg cultivated the *point d'honneur* as the cynosure of gentlemanly conduct. During the Enlightenment, the Christian opposition to the duel was joined by attacks on the practice as irrational and outmoded. But from its very inception in the sixteenth century, its supporters, steeped in neo-stoic thought, had argued that the duel represented the triumph of reason over anger, a base emotion associated with the lower orders, and that it was an indicator of the self-discipline required of gentleman, and thereby associated with his right to command. Duelling was an extension of chivalry and fostered fraternal recognition; once the challenger accepted his foe as worthy of affording satisfaction, the participants were already engaged in a game whose ultimate goal was reconciliation. Women, whose honour derived from sexual chastity, and the plebs, who lacked self-restraint, were unable to take part. These ideas continued to have immense force in the nineteenth century. For Goethe: 'What does one human life matter? A single battle costs thousands of lives. It is more important that the *point d'honneur*, a certain safeguard against brutal acts of murder, is kept alive.'[95] Duelling permitted the increasingly confident European bourgeoisie to assert its social credentials and, with the advent of mass culture, for the gentleman to affirm his individuality, and doing so became safer for the non-military man as swords gave way to pistols, which were highly inaccurate, fired at extreme ranges.[96] As Steven Hughes highlights in Chapter 10 in this volume, the rise of liberal-democratic politics even saw a recrudescence in the role of the duel in political sparring. In France, the glorification of chivalry was to a large extent the work of liberals who wished to appropriate for themselves the traditional warrior ethic of the French nation. Journalists, writers, and politicians settled insults with pistols, which reached a pitch of intensity during the fevered political atmosphere of the Dreyfus case. It was France's crushing defeat in 1870–71 that raised the discourse of chivalry to higher levels of visibility and the soul-searching that it provoked laid renewed emphasis on the cultivation of manly courage. From the 1880s, Republican France underwent a revival of interest in the duelling with swords, which was seen as distinctly 'French', and there were perhaps as many as 300 duels per year in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, mostly between civilians, few of which were fatal, at a time when other democratic states, like Britain and the United States, viewed the practice as a relic of a feudal past.

In the bourgeois age, it was in Germany, however, that the duel found its most widespread appeal. Since the eighteenth century in Prussia,

Württemberg and Saxony, where the army was a state within a state, dedication to the cult of the *point d'honneur* helped to maintain the officer corps as a distinct estate apart from civil society. Liberal opposition to the power of the military in society was blunted by the astonishing success of Prussian arms in 1870–71, and with the creation of the Second Reich the Prussian military code was imposed on the whole of Germany. Any officer who failed to uphold his honour was suspect: not only did any sign of cowardice mean 'social death', but he ran the risk of being shamefully drummed out of the service. The virtues of bravery and manliness were also promoted in civil society by the student fraternities that proliferated in the numerous German universities. In the early nineteenth century, the traditional fraternal drinking clubs were transformed by the ideals of nationalism and the student passion for the *point d'honneur*, which rhymed with the desire of the Romantics to energize the spirit and rise above vulgar materialism in pursuit of freedom, honour and patriotism. Duelling was not confined to reactionaries, far from it: Marx (1836) and Heine (1841) both fought duels, and in 1864, Ferdinand Lasalle, a founding member of the Social Democrats, was killed in one. By the 1890s, there were approximately 8,000 student duels per year in Germany and, although many of these were fencing bouts fought with protective clothing which had the sole intention of acquiring a fashionable scar on the cheek, there were sinister undercurrents to the craze. Fatalities seem to have been higher in Germany than in France, Italy and Austria-Hungary.[97] And new defences of the practice were mounted against the cries from Catholics, who saw it as unchristian, and the Left, which saw it as frivolous and neo-feudal. In an age concerned with the onset of racial degeneration and, with the advent of standardized mass production, the effacement of individuality, the duel was a test of character that fostered masculine courage against the dangers of 'femicization'. In fin-de-siècle Germany the duel, once berated as elitist, illegal and old-fashioned was embraced by the middle class as an antidote to the social and cultural ills plaguing society. Middle-class Jews took to duelling with aplomb to demonstrate they were not *satisfaktionsunfähig*, claiming their equality with other men of honour. The tone was set from above. Emperor Wilhelm II was in sympathy with the cult of the duel as a school of virility:

> the brave man who in defence of his honour and that of his [student] corps has faced his opponent with a naked sword in his hand without flinching will, in later life, also remain loyal to his fatherland to the last drop of his blood.[98]

By the time that Wilhelm arrived to watch the climax to the First Battle of Ypres at the end of October 1914, the ill-trained reserve divisions, including thousands of student volunteers, had already been decimated by casualty rates of up to 60 per cent. The powerful emotional resonance caused by the *Kindermord*, or 'massacre of the innocents', which quickly gained mythic status, was much exploited by Nazi propaganda. On the eve of the First World War, therefore, the paradox of duelling that had been evident from its inception was still in force. Devised to contain and tame the spirit of aggressiveness, it also fostered that spirit: 'it controlled violence and canonized it' at the same time.[99]

Social exclusivity was only one reason for the longevity of the duel. After all, it was not an absence of snobbery that prevented the English from indulging in swordplay to the same degree as other Europeans. The demands of a Protestant conscience only partly explains English reticence: duelling had first been forbidden by the Catholic Church in 1564, and in nineteenth-century Germany it was Catholics who were among its most vociferous critics, while devout Protestants like King William I of Prussia saw no conflict between their intense faith and their support for the *point d'honneur*. The English gentry had been the first to develop an honour code that prized service to God and nation above individual worth, but by the nineteenth century this notion was common currency in the rest of Europe. Throughout Europe the mobilization of nations and the expansion of the armies during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars had spread military values throughout civilian life. And so too in Britain, and for a brief while after 1815 the *point d'honneur* was a feature of military life, but by the 1840s the opposition to duelling in Parliament and elsewhere led to its eradication when the army, the last bastion of aristocratic values, had its Military Code modified. As we have seen, the English legal system was prepared to be more punitive in general and less deferential to miscreants of high social rank, and consequently the legal battle against the duel much older and more effective than elsewhere in Europe. As Andy Hopper and Richard Cust show in Chapter 7 in this volume, already in the 1630s the High Court of Chivalry was acting to replace challenges with prosecution and fines. Where tribunals of honour existed elsewhere they were rarely punitive, either playing a mediating role as in Ancien Régime France or, as in the Prussian army, actually arranging fights and punishing those who refused to respond correctly to an affront. In England, perhaps as early as the reign of James I, there was no shame in the notion that an insult should be paid for in cash rather than in blood. By contrast, in nineteenth-century Germany duelling was invested with metaphysical properties and

there was scorn for the English concept of punishing affronts with fines, which was associated with 'mere' commerce and cold inhumanity.[100] This explains why the popularity of the duel in the age of industry cannot be reduced to social constraint. Settembrini, Thomas Mann's free-thinking humanist in the *The Magic Mountain*, fights a duel for existential reasons: 'Whoever is unable to offer his person, his arm, his blood, in the service of the ideal, is unworthy of it; however intellectualized, it is the duty of a man to remain a man.'[101] The emasculation of the Englishman was something that profoundly troubled Edwardians too and historians have noted an English version of militarism and a cult of chivalry in the years before the Great War. But by this date the English had long since developed a distinctive concept of manliness, one that rested on an understanding of honour that was distinctively rooted in the origins of English civil society; it being universal and not necessarily applied to any caste or class. As Martin Wiener makes clear in Chapter 11, by the end of the nineteenth century the 'rights of Englishmen' were extended throughout the Empire to social and racial groups hitherto marginalized. The law, supreme arbiter of civil society, had a reach and legitimacy it lacked elsewhere in Europe, 'the law was seen as that unifying principle which joined men to men, classes to classes, together in civil society. No one was exempt from its mandates; no one could hope to escape its punishment. The Law, like the Old Testament Jehovah, demanded that no other laws be obeyed, no other gods worshipped.'[102] If gentlemen were permitted to kill each other on the field of honour, what convincing reason could there be for the hanging of a thief. In the early nineteenth century, the evangelical revival reminded men of the dangers of the sin of pride and the honour they owed to God, Utilitarians questioned what the practice of duelling contributed to the common good, and radicals smelt the evils of privilege and class immunity. But long before social credit was tied principally to economic advantage, the English gentleman was aware that ignoring an insult or an affront did him no harm in public life, and his honour remained intact if he sued for defamation or libel.

The role of women in duels was not a passive one. Women are always on hand to make sure that their men act like men and protect female honour. And from its inception there was a lot of nonsense spoken by its enthusiasts about the duel as an institution for upholding virtue and righteousness. Although disputes over women accounted for a large proportion of duels fought in seventeenth-century France, many were nothing more than bawdy house squabbles. Duelling was closely

associated with sexual prowess: the gallant dedicated to the pursuit of sexual adventure was not only prepared for but encouraged challenges from rivals and husbands. Ute Frevert has uncovered a similar pattern in Wilhelmine Germany, where a preponderance of duels involved squabbles over women, or were arranged where women were in attendance, a form of male competition whose aim was to flatter women.[103]

Its supporters would have scorned the idea that beneath the veneer of politesse lurked male proprietariness over women and sexual jealousy. These base sentiments were beyond the gentleman and indicative of the 'angry' brawls of the lower classes, where there were no rules, no honour and no principles at stake. However, where historians have good records for plebeian violence they are finding that the distinction between all-in fighting and the civilized duel is too crude. In many fights in nineteenth-century Italy distinction was drawn between mere *risse* (brawls) and *duelli rusticani* (plebeian duels).[104] In his study of knife-fighting in nineteenth-century Greece, Thomas Gallant found that such popular duels were very common and revolved around issues of honour, but did not result in much loss of life, for once daggers were drawn custom took over and the combatants followed a known script. The aim was not to kill or maim, but to scar the opponent, and as soon as blood was drawn onlookers intervened to separate them. What mattered to participants most was that they had publicly upheld their reputation, and fights were wholly distinguished from the much rarer instances of blood revenge, which were characterized by assassination and dispensed with any sense of fair play. This has echoes of plebeian violence in seventeenth-century France where fights took place in the streets, not only so that honour could be vindicated in public, but also to show that no one had been taken unawares or at a disadvantage, and to ensure that there were limits, the audience intervening before things got out of hand.[105] In the Mediterranean, the ethic of honour persisted until well into the twentieth century, while levels of interpersonal violence, measured in terms of the homicide rate, declined dramatically. The anthropologists who first identified male codes of honour with a Mediterranean culture found a variety of ways in which status and reputation were contested but without a high incidence of interpersonal violence: 'the marked decrease in masculine violence was not associated with a shift from an ethos of honour to something else.'[106] Thus before industrialization and urbanization honour, whether among the English gentry or Greek peasants, was a malleable concept and though linked to violence, it did not necessarily make for a violent society.

Towards a comparative history of violence

The cliché of hot-blooded Mediterraneans quick to anger and take offence is of recent origin.[107] As Martin Blinkhorn demonstrates in Chapter 9 in this volume, the reality of the Mediterranean bandit is very different to the image that prevails in contemporary popular culture. The bandit's use of violence was largely instrumental; his resort to it based on an assessment of risk. Before the rise of civility in the seventeenth century, and the move to scientific rationalism with which it was closely associated, the prevailing belief that the properties of the bodily humours controlled emotions tended to privilege the Southerner over the Northerner. For Jean Bodin, circumspection was a Southern trait, the Northerner given over to melancholy and brutish passion. Scipion Dupleix, a magistrate from Condom in the south-west of France thought that 'the reason why Northerners are more given to duelling is that they are more barbarous and uncivilized'.[108] The inversion of this myth by the nineteenth century tells us much about the wider role played by understandings of violence in the configuration of Western culture.

The discussion thus far has emphasized the continuities between the early modern and the modern, and the importance of a comparison between societies for the better understanding of the modalities of violence and its transformations. Violence is especially open to comparative analysis, because it is a concrete act that has both causes and consequences.[109] Each of the chapters which follow is concerned, in some measure, with exploring the boundaries of violence, and they will help students understand better how and why the boundaries of violence have shifted over time. Boundaries in another sense also mark out this collection. It is a feature of the new approach to the history of violence that it employs the insights and approaches of other disciplines, not for the purpose of supporting one or other concept or model but as tools to construct interpretative historical narratives. Violence cannot be studied from the point of view of the state alone or solely in terms of the advance of civilization, since violence reveals what it means to be human. As John Carter Wood makes clear in Chapter 3, by uncovering the discourses and practices of violence, elucidating its social meanings, we get closer to the mentalities of any given society. And by looking at the problem over the *longue durée* we are better able to make comparisons and identify what is unique about a given society, to highlight continuities and transformations. While its conceptual and intellectual ambition is bold and wide-ranging, the volume's geographical and chronological field of focus is much narrower, namely the West in the

post-Renaissance period. This is partly because effective comparative history requires a discrete geographic and chronological framework. It is fitting however that a collection of essays on violence should begin with the Aztecs and end with the Nazis. It was the discovery of the New World that produced the consciousness of a distinct and superior European civilization in opposition to the cruel and barbaric customs of backward peoples. Caroline Dodds's Chapter on the role of gender in Aztec society underlines the role that ritual violence has in the construction of social order and authority. Violence lurks at the heart of all civilizations, but rarely has a civilization been so entirely structured around ritual violence, and the unique cruelty of Aztec ritual practice places their society at the extreme end of the spectrum.[110] The superiority of Europeans and their values was shaken by the First World War and finally destroyed by the Second World War. In Germany, the experience of the Great War, rather than reducing the level of bellicosity in society actually raised it. This is not to be explained simply as the result of defeat and descent into civil war. In the 1920s, fascist rhetoric delighted in violence, cherishing its victims and describing street violence in military terms. Even on the Left postwar political language and comportment was militarized, and political violence also tolerated in bourgeois circles.[111] The excitement of street violence for young men recalled the comradeship and emotional intensity of the trenches, as described in Ernst Jünger's *Im Stahlgewittern*. Bernard Rieger shows in Chapter 12 that German representations of air combat contrasted in significant ways from that in England, demonstrating that even before the rise of the Nazi's there was little regard for the chivalric ethos and even a certain amount of fascination with the aesthetics of violence in the air.

Finally, as the study of violence becomes mainstream in contemporary historiography, a note of caution. Civility is not the same as humanity and empathy. The civilizing process may well make us less tolerant of violence, more squeamish, but it does not necessarily make us more empathetic to our fellow men. The greatest of Renaissance thinkers, Michel de Montaigne, an acute observer of the new cult of manners, was the first to identify the superficiality of the polish and the shallowness of contemporary civilized values which, with the discovery of the New World, were consciously defined in opposition to the barbaric customs of 'savages'. Montaigne had little time for etiquette: 'Kings and philosophers shit: and so do ladies'.[112] The virtues of the compassionate, moderate and contemplative self that Montaigne espoused were beyond most of his contemporaries. Civility merely required the banishment of all that was indecent and ugly from one's gaze. For John Stuart Mill this was to be

equated with 'civilization', when 'the spectacle, and even the very idea of pain, is kept more and more out of sight of those classes that enjoy in their fullness the benefits of civilization'.[113] As Vic Gattrell has argued, the end of public executions in Britiain had little to do with the respect for the criminal's humanity and more to with an elite sensibility that was increasingly squeamish about face-to-face violence and feelings of shame engendered by their voyeurism. The desire for retribution in mid-Victorian England was still strong, but it was not seemly for the horrors of judicial killing to be publicized. Although the end of public executions with their agonizing deaths and rowdy crowds was an advance in terms of civility, Gattrell reminds us that civility is not an accurate measure of changes in the human psyche for: 'a civilizing process may redeploy, sanitize, and camouflage disciplinary and other violence without necessarily diminishing it.'[114] Anthropologists have confirmed this pattern: revenge is not a condition of pre-modernity, but general to all human societies; it is closely associated with justice and punishment, and the legitimacy of the modern state is founded on its ability to effectively carry out retribution on behalf of its citizens.[115] Today, the language used by criminologists is changing too, where once they talked about male violence in terms of 'altercations or arguments over money' or 'business or drugs dealings', they now use the word 'revenge'.[116]

If capital punishment were put to the vote today in Britain, its restoration would be assured. And in our fascination with violence we show ourselves to be more like our ancestors than we imagine. The heightened emotional intensity of violence produces excitement in all human societies, from the spectacle of the gladiatorial arena to *Gladiator* the film. The challenge for the historian in uncovering our violent past is in not effacing the humanity of actors in their researches, particularly the helpless victims of violence. There has been a tendency in some quarters, especially when the micro-histories of individuals are culled from the archives, to tell tales of rape and murder in such a way that has more to do with titillation than enlightenment, book sales than scholarship. The good historian will take into account the ethics of his craft when resurrecting the pain and suffering of people in the past.

Notes

1. See Chapter 6, p. 129.
2. René Girard quoted in T. Gorringe, *God's Just Vengeance: Crime, Violence and the Rhetoric of Salvation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 68.

3. See Chapter 2, p. 64.
4. B. Schich, 'Nationalismus, Rassismus und die Wiederkehr der Gewalt in Europa', in P. Hugger and U. Stadler eds, *Gewalt. Kulturelle Formen in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Zürich: Unionsverlag, 1995).
5. For a recent synthesis on the early modern period see J. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
6. W. Miller, 'Getting a Fix on Violence', in his *Humiliation, and other Essays on Honor, Social Discomfort and Violence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
7. Ibid.
8. Quoted in M. Mazower, *The Balkans* (London: Phoenix, 2001), p. 150.
9. For this and following: S. Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), introduction.
10. It was not fully translated into English until 1982 as *The Civilizing Process,* 2 vols, trans. E. Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell).
11. Mazower, *The Balkans*, p. 147.
12. A. Lüdtke, 'Gewalt als Sprache' in R. Brednic and W. Hartinger eds, *Gewalt in der Kultur: Vorträge des 29. Deutschen Volkskundekongresses*, 2 vols (Passau: Passauer Studien zur Volkskunde, 1994), pp. 63–7.
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Part I
Conceptual Perspectives

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1

Female Dismemberment and Decapitation: Gendered Understandings of Power in Aztec Ritual Violence

Caroline Dodds

Between about 1350 and the 1520s, the Aztecs flourished in the basin of Central Mexico.[1] From their island city of Tenochtitlan, they dominated much of the surrounding region until, in 1519, their vibrant world was challenged by the destructive incursion of the Spanish *conquistadors*. At first sight, the Europeans were awed by the great city rising from the water; this 'enchanted vision' was a model of ordered architecture and activity.[2] On entering the city, however, a difficult anomaly to this sophisticated impression emerged. Human sacrifice was far more widely practiced by the Aztecs than by any of the other indigenous peoples of the New World, and their brutal religious zeal was apparent in the spectacular displays of violence that shaped the lives of the men and women of Tenochtitlan.

From the moment of the first encounter, understandings of Aztec culture have been haunted by apparitions of death and violence and, in recent years, the subject of human sacrifice has proved a notorious obstacle to the understanding of Aztec culture. The brilliance of the Aztec warriors and the spectacle of sacrificial death have held powerful possession over the minds and imagination of modern scholarship and society, just as such vivid dramas preoccupied the Spanish conquistadors and chroniclers who first encountered them. The vibrancy of Aztec ritual and practice and the 'otherness' of their existence has provided tempting ground for colourful and often imaginative accounts of the fatal focus of their culture, as witnessed and interpreted by spectators and intellectuals. Reacting to this tendency, some academics have attempted, in recent

years, to distance themselves from the controversial and potentially sensationalist field of sacrifice and, despite the discovery of compelling archaeological evidence, even to deny the existence of human sacrifice.[3] But to attempt to consider Aztec culture in isolation from this most famous of their practices is a fundamentally flawed endeavour. Although an objective view should not overemphasize the significance of ritual bloodshed, the fact remains that violent death formed a frequent and organized element of the life of the Aztecs and can provide a key to their perceptions and practices.

The male role is well established in the history of this spectacle of violence. As glorious warriors and pious executioners Aztec men have peopled the pages of history, myth and fiction. Women, however, have remained largely silent in this story of sacrifice. Ciphers standing by; mere witnesses and victims of the bloodshed which characterized their culture. In reality, however, ritualized violence formed a central focus of the life of every Aztec and women's roles in this field were diverse and significant. As victims particularly, women fulfil a range of functions and it is in a small group of ceremonies which involve the decapitation of women that their unique significance becomes particularly clear. The exceptional spectacle of female beheading can provide fascinating insights into the necessity of the elaborate performances of violence upon which Aztec religion centred. Although they were very rare amongst the frequent ceremonies of oblation, instances of female decapitation provide key moments of contact to the mythical and cyclical history which pervaded Aztec understandings of the world. This cluster of rituals, therefore, illuminates the importance of human sacrifice for Aztec culture, and sheds light on the manner in which ritual violence served to link their physical, spiritual and political worlds.

The obligation to provide blood was a duty rooted in the mythical and spiritual past of the Aztecs. Humanity was tied into a reciprocal relationship with the gods regarding mutual nourishment and creation. In stories of the creation of humanity, male gods let blood from their penises to give life to the dough from which humanity was formed. Thus, the reciprocal 'blood debt' was established, whereby the Aztecs were constrained to nourish and nurture their deities with blood in return for the blood which was let in order to bring about their own birth. Aztec conceptions of time were cyclical, believing that patterns of time and events were repeated and mirrored, and, in the unremitting duty of sacrifice, the Aztecs supplied the blood that sustained their gods and permitted the continuity of the world. For the Aztecs, deities embodied every aspect of their existence, and the necessity to glorify

the benevolent and appease the malevolent was a fact of daily life. All were worthy of exaltation, even whilst they might also merit fear and foreboding. The earth was universally acknowledged as a place of suffering and affliction and the harsh realities of life were revealed to children from birth. Myth and fact, past and present, were inextricable in Aztec thought and, through a perpetual round of ceremonies the realities and imperatives of this religious order were brought home to the Aztecs; awareness of the necessity to appease and feed the gods was ever-present.

In the regular round of the Aztec religious calendar, human sacrifice was practised at frequent intervals, using a variety of different methods, victims and locations. One particular detail is evident and intriguing, however – in all instances involving the decapitation of living victims, the victim is female. The extensive existence and archaeological survival of *tzompantli* skull racks and early accounts testify to the widespread practice of posthumous dismemberment, as an element of Aztec practice, but it is the instances in which decapitation is the cause of death, and occurs as a feature of visible sacrificial ritual, with which this study is concerned.[4]

In many of the principal sacrificial ceremonies, the focal victims were *ixiptla* or 'impersonators' of the gods – individuals who embodied the deity which the ceremony was intended to honour. There are two festivals in the Aztec calendar at which *ixiptla* of major goddesses were decapitated: the festival of Ochpaniztli (the sweeping of the roads), and the festival of Uey tecuilhuitl (the great feast of the lords).[5] The summer festival of Uey tecuilhuitl saw the beheading of an *ixiptlatl* of Xilonen, the goddess of the young maize. Ochpaniztli was also associated with the crops, and took place at harvest time in September, and saw the beheading and flaying of an impersonator of Toçi (or 'Our Grandmother'), an extremely powerful founding deity, and perhaps the most inclusive of the personifications of the earth goddess.[6]

These two sacrifices are marked out as unique not only by the inclusion of decapitation in their process, but also by the broader manner of the sacrifice itself. In the majority of other sacrifices, the ritual took a standard form. The victim was stretched backwards over a stone or altar, each limb extended by a priest and the chest stretched high toward the heavens.[7] A fifth priest would strike open the chest with an obsidian knife, excise the heart with knife and hands and raise this fertile offering to the impassive gods. Unusually, in the rituals of Ochpaniztli and Uey tecuilhuitl, the woman was laid, not upon an offering stone, but upon the back of a priest, who bore her weight whilst her head was severed. This extremely rare and even quite intimate form of sacrifice is even

accorded a particular word – it is called *tepotzoa*, which means 'it has a back', according to Sahagún and his informants.[8] If this translation is correct, the term seems to suggest almost a unification of identity between the priest and the victim as if they are fused at the moment of death. This would be particularly fascinating if the priest who adopted the goddess's identity after her death, as I will discuss below, was the *tepotzoa* participant. If this is the case then there is a sense in which the energy, and perhaps even the being of the goddess, may have been embodied in the pair during the *tepotzoa* and transmitted at the point of decapitation. Unfortunately, the evidence to confirm or deny such a supposition is lacking. The unusual *tepotzoa* deaths of the *ixiptla* during Ochpaniztli and Uey tecuilhuitl form elements of wider festivals which possess diverse and complicated connotations, honouring the gods associated with harvest and nature. The sacrifices themselves also have numerous underlying implications, particularly allied to female associations with the earth forces.[9] However, it is the fact that decapitation itself is uniquely female-identified which is itself particularly revealing in the context of this study of gendered violence.

There is widespread evidence for a pattern of female dismemberment in sacrifice, sculpture and story, and the great Coyolxauhqui Stone is one of a number of striking examples of female decapitation and dismemberment in Aztec art and archaeology.[10] This colossal image (Figure 1.1) was discovered lying at the base of the Templo Mayor by electrical workers digging a Mexico City street in 1978. Carved in high relief, the disk is a dynamic image of the goddess Coyolxauhqui ('she with the bells on her cheeks'), ritually attired and clearly dismembered. This arresting monument carries very specific associations, evoking an important incident in Aztec legend: the birth of Huitzilopochtli ('humming bird on the left').[11] The guide of the Aztecs in their migration to Tenochtitlan, Huitzilopochtli was their patron deity, and closely identified with the being of the state itself, as well as being associated with the Sun, war, sovereignty and power.

According to the legend, Coatlicue ('snake skirt'), an important aspect of the earth goddess, was performing her religious offices one day, when a ball of feathers descended from the sky. Gathering them up, Coatlicue miraculously became pregnant with the being of Huizilopochtli. Unaware of the supernatural nature of the conception, Coatlicue's daughter Coyolxauhqui was outraged at what she saw as her mother's shameful pregnancy and, filled with rage, she incited her brothers the Centzonuitznaua, 'the four hundred' gods of the southern stars, to go to war against their mother.[12] Arrayed for battle, this formidable force

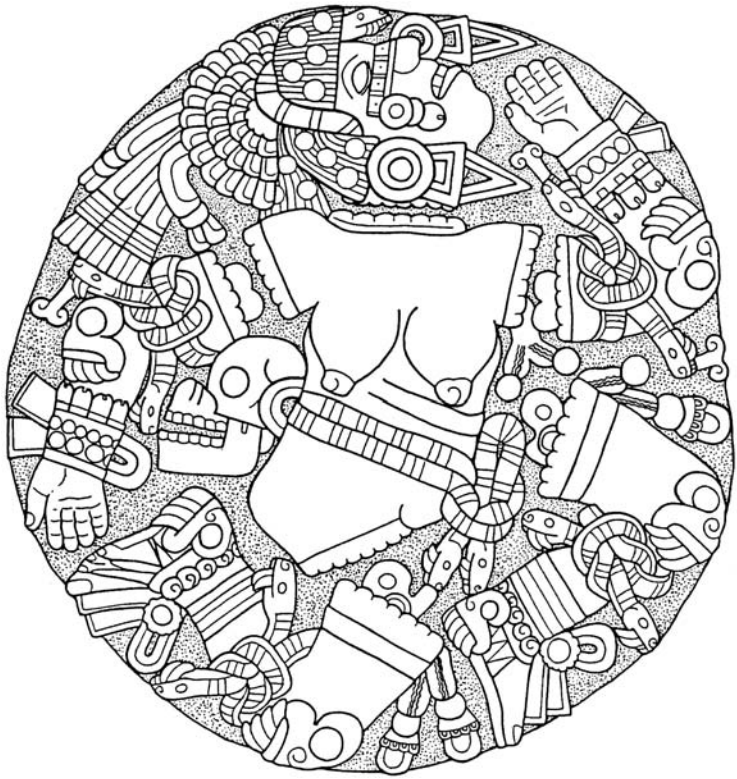

Figure 1.1 Drawing by Emily Umberger of the 3.25 m diameter Coyolxauhqui Stone, now in the Museo del Templo Mayor, Mexico. I am indebted to Emily Umberger for providing the image and for her permission to reproduce it.

approached Coatepetl ('snake mountain'), where Coatlicue waited in fear. But, just as they reached the mountain, Huitzilopochtli was born. Miraculously, he was born already matured and dressed for battle and, after a great struggle, he succeeded in vanquishing his siblings and defending his mother. It is here at Coatepetl that we see the earliest origins of female beheading, in Huitzilopochtli's great symbolic struggle with his sister.

> Then he pierced Coyolxauhqui, and then quickly struck off her head. It stopped there at the edge of Coatepetl. And her body came falling below; it fell breaking to pieces; in various places her arms, her legs, her body each fell.[13]

Dismembered and defeated, Coyolxauhqui and her brothers were vanquished, and the greatest god of the Aztecs triumphed over the first threat to his power and pre-eminence. As the mythical founder of Tenochtitlan, Huitzilopochtli was synonymous with the success of the Aztec state and, in many senses, its very existence, and his first action in asserting his supremacy was to decapitate a woman. The details and personalities of this shifting myth sometimes vary, but the dismemberment of a female figure is a consistent element, and it seems reasonable to associate the sacrificial practice of female beheading with this mythical original; the assertion of Aztec supremacy was demonstrated by the ceremonial execution of an enemy.[14]

The Coyolxauhqui Stone provides a dramatic reminder of the fate of those who defied the Aztecs. The Templo Mayor at Tenochtitlan symbolized the mountain of Coatepetl, a looming reminder of the mythical past, which dominated the cityscape and, forming a focal point for religious life, reinforced awareness of the symbolic triumph of the state over challenge. At the summit, twin temples stood, the presence of Huitzilopochtli's shrine (alongside that of the god of water Tlaloc) reminding of the founder god's dramatic triumph. The Coyolxauhqui Stone lay at the base of the staircase leading to Huitzilopochtli's temple, as Coyolxauhqui's dismembered body had lain at the foot of Coatepetl. By the time of the Spanish conquest, almost every victim who mounted the temple steps had become implicated in this cycle of legend.[15] In the latter years of the Aztec empire, we see the fall from Coatepetl and ritual decapitation, albeit after death, established as a pervasive element of human sacrifice. Victims first had their hearts removed, then their bodies were cast down the steps of the temple. Finally, they were decapitated, and their heads placed on the ubiquitous skull racks which so shocked the Spanish.[16]

By the sixteenth century, therefore, decapitation had become a pervasive element of Aztec myth and ritual, but recent work by Emily Umberger has demonstrated the more specific importance of the Coyolxauhqui tradition in the fifteenth century when the Aztec empire was at the height of its expansion.[17] In 1473, the Aztecs were engaged in a civil war, as the Tenocha attempted to suppress their junior partners from the twinned city of Tlatelolco. The roots of this conflict are debatable, but the eventual Tenocha triumph is well-established. The Tenocha *tlatoani* (or ruler) Axayacatl killed Moquihuix, the Tlatelolca ruler, and cast his body down the steps of the main temple at Tlatelolco. The parallels with Coyolxauhqui's fate are clear and it is certain that Axayacatl was aware of the figurative significance of his actions: in both

cases, a threat to official authority was vanquished in a similar fashion. Extending this analogy still further, it is even possible to suggest that the mythical tradition was deliberately employed in 1473 in order to reinforce Tenocha influence, attempting to demonstrate a cyclical inevitability in their victory.

Although the exact dating of the Coyolxauhqui Stone is complex, the sculpture clearly dates to the approximate period of the civil war. By means of a date plaque, the IVb platform on which it was mounted was dated to the year 3 House, 1469, and as the monument was installed after the building of the platform, this dates it to the reign of Axayacatl (1470–81). Umberger suggests that the sculpture was created before the war, as part of a series of inflammatory actions, but this is harder to verify.[18] Regardless of the exact year, the sculpture clearly dates to around the time of the civil war, indicating an increased focus on this particular legend at a key moment of political instability and reinforcing notions of state triumph over challenge. Umberger's recent work goes still further in this analysis, however, contending that the stone was intended to be interpreted literally as the figure of the defeated Moquihuix. To the north of the Coyolxauhqui Stone, two archaizing Toltec urns were discovered together and the archaeology suggests that they were buried at a later date than the installation of the monument.[19] Umberger makes a circumstantial case that the cremated human remains in these urns belong to Moquihuix and his lieutenant Teconal.[20] Thus it is possible that, in the symbolic placing of these funerary vessels, the sculpture of Coyolxauhqui was understood as a likeness of the defeated Moquihuix, unifying these enemies of the Aztecs in defeat.

This extremely literal interpretation of the stone's meaning is rather hard to verify and I might suggest a more metaphorical reading of some of the statue's implications, but the fact of its production in this period demonstrates the importance of mythical history and the cyclical perceptions of time which were central to understandings of human sacrifice. Although it contained complex and shifting metaphors, the Coyolxauhqui Stone served as a constant reminder to enemies of the legendary fate of those that opposed the Aztecs and it seems reasonable to associate the sacrificial practice of female decapitation with the mythical original. In the Aztec cycle of history, the increased focus on the legend of Coyolxauhqui's defeat and decapitation at a moment of threat to the state emphasizes the symbolic application of this mythical history. Certainly, the stone would have conveyed a poignant message to the victims who had to pass it on the way to their sacrifice at the summit, displaying the fate of those that challenged the Aztecs' authority.

In the Coyolxauhqui myth, we see the assertion of Aztec supremacy through the decapitation of a female enemy and, returning to the festivals of Ochpaniztli and Uey tecuilhuitl, we can confirm the association of community well-being and state security with female decapitation. As part of the intricate ceremonies surrounding these sacrifices, both festivals incorporated elements designed to emphasize state authority. Uey tecuilhuitl saw the distribution of food and drink to the masses, sharing prosperity and encouraging obedience. This was also the occasion for the execution and punishment of criminals who had infringed social boundaries of behaviour by such offences as drunkenness and concubinage.[21] Ochpaniztli was the occasion upon which young warriors were first arrayed in their arms and insignia, preparing them to act in the service of the state which Huitzilopochtli's victory had secured.[22]

Great care must naturally be employed in the analysis of legendary history and it is a distinct possibility that legends which support the decapitation of women were developed in the fifteenth century to justify an existing practice. Although it is possible that such legends were symptomatic of an underlying gender bias or even more sinister motives, however, they still endow the practice with an unaltered significance. Cecelia Klein, accepting the death of Coyolxauhqui as a symbolic triumph of the Aztec state over treachery, extends the analysis to incorporate the suggestion that Coyolxauhqui represented a danger to the state because she had 'stepped outside the bounds of ideal femininity to enter and to challenge the world of men'.[23] Umberger's interpretation of the Coyolxauhqui tradition also places the legend into a gendered framework, identifying the female personification of a defeated enemy as a manifestation of 'gender inversion'[24] that reveals negative ideas associated with femininity.

The feminist perspective would probably perceive female decapitation and dismemberment as indicative of an innate patriarchal and misogynistic aggression, masculine violence manifesting itself in the most visible and violent manner. June Nash identifies an innately patriarchal trend in the growth of the cult of oblation itself. She claims that, in the bloody saturation of the sacrificial stone, the Aztecs acted out a sacred mission of conquest which 'glorified a cult of male dominance'.[25] María Rodríguez-Shadow has also distinguished a fundamental misogyny in Aztec society, claiming that mythical violence against women was designed to condone the subordination of female power and importance to masculine authority following the settlement at Tenochtitlan. She claims a deliberate diminution of the importance of fertility and femininity in the fifteenth century in order to promote the warrior cult.[26]

The physical decapitation of women possesses layered and intricate implications: mythological concepts concerning the defeat of enemies interacted with ideas of dismemberment and physical deformity which, in turn, reflected and were related to ideas of history and reciprocity. In highlighting the ominous overtones that were frequently associated with feminine influence, however, there is frequently a danger of evoking established ideas of good/evil dichotomies. Sometimes regrettably for the autonomy and individualism of Aztec women, the existence of such figures as Coyolxauhqui and their associations in Aztec consciousness evoke perceptible traces of the notion of the threatening nature of feminine sexuality which pervaded medieval and early modern Europe, affecting expectations of women's lives and behaviour.[27]

The ceremonial and allegorical dismemberment of women might certainly be perceived as symptomatic of an inherent patriarchal tendency but, in and of itself, this trend does not necessarily seem to be indicative of the existence of a contemporaneous animosity towards or subordination of women. Although such ritual violence against women might be associated with negative assumptions, this does not appear to have been the case in Aztec culture. Far from being diminished, women in Aztec culture were highly valued, respected and influential. They held tangible authority within the community as figures of economic and administrative importance, and were valued both as workers and as mothers, possessing the same rights and recourse under the law as their male counterparts.[28] In recognizing female identification with threatening forces and figures, there is a danger of conferring upon women a sense that they were peripheral and inferior, but this does not appear to have been reflected in their everyday experience. The influence and value of women and the importance of their participation in household and communal activity in collective societies are well-established, a pattern to which Aztec culture was no exception, and the limited group of individuals who were subjected to beheading seems to indicate a more targeted intention than simple misogynistic aggression.[29] The women who were decapitated were representatives not of womankind, but of specific goddesses, who were all associated with the powerful, and female-identified, earth force.

This association with the earth originated in women's procreative role. During the act of childbirth, a woman was possessed by the being of the earth goddess, a deity possessing a variety of primal aspects, but perhaps best known in her guise of Cihuacoatl ('Woman Serpent'), a potent goddess whose power was considered so great that her mere presence was a perilous force. Female Aztecs were invested with an innate

and ominous power by this association through childbirth with the potent earth force and its deities, and this gave them access to energies which were at once powerfully creative and potentially destructive. The energy of this goddess infused a woman during the act of parturition and a woman who died giving birth became frozen in this state, her body dangerously imbued with the power and presence of Cihuacoatl.[30] This connection to nature and to the earth is a theme which pervades Aztec understandings of femininity and which conferred upon them sense of threat, but at the same time placed them in a position of considerable respect and reverence.

In some senses this appears to accord women a special significance, placing them in a uniquely identified role. If such a position is verifiable, then this accords to Aztec women a great 'natural' or innate influence, but such an exclusive attribute brings with it associated difficulties. In suggesting the association of women with nature and natural authority, we implicitly open the door to a set of assumptions and arguments which have characterized recent debates regarding the boundaries between nature and culture.[31] Feminist debate has often laboured to break the nature/culture model, fearing that women's association with nature inevitably produces a separation from the concept of 'culture' which causes women a sense of alienation and exclusion from the social advantages and structure which 'culture' offers. In suggesting that a distinctive relationship between women and nature existed in Aztec civilization, we are not necessarily acquiescent in these assumptions, and there is no indication that the Aztecs perceived an exclusive relationship between these two concepts. Throughout Aztec practice and ritual, natural allusions and imagery were explicit. Glorious warriors adorned themselves with feathers and stones, evoking the splendours of their environment and the people of the Valley of Mexico lacked the Judaeo-Christian perspective of man as established 'over' nature. They were integrated with their entire world and did not set themselves above, or apart from, its values and realities. The connection between femininity and the earth is one of the fundamental expressions of this symbiotic society. In this context, it is not possible to explore fully this association, which forms a ubiquitous element of Aztec ideology and practice, but it is clear that female connections with the earth and nature carried far more positive attributes than in Judaeo-Christian civilizations.

Women possessed tangible esteem and practical authority and, returning to the ritual calendar, the festival of Ochpaniztli itself provides a powerful example of the strength and depth of the creative/destructive duality which typified women's existence. This was a comprehensively

female festival, encompassing women from all walks of life in ceremonies emphasizing femininity and fertility. Young and old women, maidens, midwives, physicians and courtesans, all played their part in the celebrations, and the young woman adorned in the likeness of Toçi stood amongst them. At dusk, a complete silence fell over the city, as she was swiftly borne to the temple. There, she was stretched on the back of a priest and decapitated. Her head and body were then flayed, and a leading priest donned her skin and proceeded to embody the goddess in various ceremonies throughout the night. At daybreak, Toçi, for so the priest was personified when he wore the flayed skin, sacrificed four captives.[32] As a principal identity of the earth goddess, Toçi was revealed during the festival of Ochpaniztli in her aspect as the potential devourer of humanity, disclosing to the Aztecs the potential power for harm which stood in conjunction with female generative energy. In the sacrifice itself, the bloodlust of Toçi was displayed and satisfied, but through the ceremonies which surrounded it, female importance and influence were vigorously and visibly promoted. The earth was both the giver and receiver of life, and this dual power was perceived to be embodied in human women, just as it characterized female deities. Therefore, whilst one might argue that figures such as Coyolxauhqui, and the ideology which they perpetuated, were reflective of an ingrained cultural misogyny, the *tepotzoa* rituals possess more specific, even though at times ambiguous, significance, intended to satisfy the thirst of the devouring earth, mitigating the threat at the same time as reasserting state stability and security. In supplying the human hearts and blood necessary for the gods' survival, the Aztec ensured the continuing strength and support of their tutelary deities.[33] Certainly, if we were to stop our analysis of ritual violence against women with the Coyolxauhqui legend, then one might subscribe a the negative view of femininity as inherently associated with threat. Far from this however, what the decapitation ceremonies show is that, in this latter period of Aztec influence, the connection between femininity and the powerful earth forces was being visibly glorified in sacrifice. Women were certainly objects of awe, but not necessarily of fear.

At the most basic level, to attribute the practice of sacrifice to an expression of superiority or hostility is to misunderstand the nature of victimhood in Aztec culture. Sacrifice clearly possessed important social associations, providing for a system in which hierarchy and status were based in military privilege. It also carried significant religious implications – the terror of Aztecs at the solar eclipse substantiates their professed fear that the world would end if they failed to sufficiently

sustain the Sun with blood. But even in a deeply devout culture, such religious and functional imperatives hardly seem sufficient to allow for the development of a society which could accept without question so many bloody deaths. It is not the intention of this chapter to question all of the many potential motivations and justifications for a culture of human sacrifice, but one aspect in particular requires clarification. Death on the stone was an honourable and even, in some ways, a desirable fate. For not only the Aztecs, but also their foes, sacrifice ensured perpetual glory and spiritual survival. Victims were honoured in life, particularly the *ixiptla* who were revered as the gods they 'impersonated', and at times lived a privileged and luxurious existence leading up to the time of their death.[34] The priests heralded warrior victims: 'You will die here but your fame will live forever'; and the tangible honour of facing death with fortitude was supported by the promise of a privileged and glorified afterlife for victims, a far cry from the dark miseries of Mictlan, the land of the dead into which the majority of humans passed.[35] Victims were powerfully implicated in a cultural framework that ensured their glorification in life and death as well as in the afterlife.

Therefore, whilst the treatment of women in sacrificial contexts sometimes seems to suggest essential apprehensions and negative preconceptions concerning women, evoking parallel notions of dangerous female sexuality and identity in Western society, we should not necessarily subscribe to this tempting comparative model. Obviously it is impossible for us to draw an unequivocal conclusion regarding Aztec preconceptions and perceptions of women, but we can try to refrain from projecting a modern political or ideological agenda onto the Aztecs' far more practical concerns. It is fascinating that the Aztec construction of women's influence as evil or threatening concurs so closely with Judaeo-Christian ideas of the potentially malign female force, despite the lack of the cultural memory which projects the 'temptress' persona onto feminine figures. However, similarity does not necessarily equal analogy. The sheer strength of female influence in Aztec metaphorical and metaphysical philosophy seems to carry necessarily negative connotations, but the overtones of practically all sources of power in Aztec thought were dangerous. Strength was found in perilous forces, including those deities identified as malevolent; providing and personifying power, such divinities preoccupied Aztec culture with the requirement for their constant sustenance through human blood. By and large alien, unapproachable, and far from benign, a far cry from the ostensibly benevolent father figure of Christian conception, Aztec gods were usually to be appeased, not appealed to. Thus women, as much as men, were

inevitably sometimes associated with threat. The basic natural sources of power and authority were, if not evil, then certainly threatening and hence, in the possession of primal strength and generative force, women were necessarily tainted with the dark shade of their sacred patrons and counterparts. Decapitation and its associated themes might therefore be characterized as a gender-related, but not necessarily a gender-specific, tendency.

This is a far from comprehensive assessment of the notions associated by the Aztecs with female decapitation, but the importance and coherence of such rituals are clear. Unfortunately, however, it seems almost impossible to break the cycle of Aztec history and pinpoint the exact origin of the associations between women and dismemberment. The Ochpaniztli and Uey tecuilhuitl rituals concern issues of fertility and the harvest, and although clearly evoking questions of state security, these are not the principal features of these festivals, nor are these the only occasions on which female decapitation (if we accept that is linked to the assertion of Aztec authority) would have been either possible or appropriate. It is impossible to trace the specific roots of these ceremonies, and it seems likely that multiple layers now overlie a ritual which may originally have carried very specific connotations. This is a question which may be doomed to remain unresolved. Certainly it is clear that decapitation was a female-identified ritual and that the Coyolxauhqui legend had become a pervasive element of Aztec perception and practice, ensuring that some of these overtones would have been visible to observers of *tepotzoa*, even if the *ixiptla* themselves died for more positive purposes and were promised more positive fates than the conquered Coyolxauhqui. Aztec women do not appear to have been diminished in status by their association with such ideas, and the practice of dismemberment may be explained in the fifteenth century by its association with prominent female figures in foundation myths and concepts of the pantheon. Such associations also appear comprehensible in terms of the powerful, but ominous, natural forces with which women were frequently associated, but it is impossible, and probably unhelpful, to try to trace the reason for the original association of women with such threatening influences. One might choose to see in such principles an innate patriarchal desire to subordinate women, but if this was the original motivation, it does not appear to have prevailed during the fifteenth century. The Judaeo-Christian and 'Western' principles of negative femininity to which these ideologies bear such strong resemblance should be rejected as anachronistic interpretations displaying modern preconceptions. To make such associations is a false logic, as it confers

upon the tradition allusions which it did not possess for contemporaries. It is clear that, by the time of the Spanish conquest, such ideologies of decapitation, authority and fertility were central and accepted aspects of Aztec religion, investing women with a powerful significance which sprang from their complex status. For the Aztecs, the decapitation of women marked key moments of their spiritual experience at which enduring notions of power were perpetuated, as religious, mythical and political prerogatives combined to create the brutal reality of Aztec ritual violence.

Notes

I would like to thank Nicholas Davidson for his support and guidance during the early stages of this research, and David Andress, Malcolm Gaskill and Emily Umberger for their careful and thoughtful advice on the drafts of this chapter.

1. Throughout this chapter, the term 'Aztec' refers particularly to the inhabitants of Tenochtitlan, the only group to which the derivation from a mythic migration from Aztlan reasonably applies. I will also make occasional use of city-specific terms such as Tenocha and Tlatelolca where appropriate, in order to increase the exactitude of information and accuracy of conclusions.
2. B. Díaz, *The Conquest of New Spain*, trans. J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin, 1963), p. 214.
3. Some of the most persuasive of this archaeological evidence has only been uncovered in the past few years and has not yet been the subject of extensive academic publication. Some recent discoveries are surveyed in M. Stevenson, 'A Fresh Look at Tales of Human Sacrifice: Mexican Digs Confirm Grisly Spanish-Era Accounts', *MSNBC* (January 2005), www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6853177/ (21 March 2006). One notable challenge to the existence of human sacrifice is the book by P. Hassler, *Menschenopfer bei den Azteken? Eine quellen-und ideologiekritische Studie* (Berne: Peter Lang, 1992).
4. In surveying the rituals which structured the spiritual lives of the men and women of Tenochtitlan, this study takes as its starting point the second book *The Ceremonies*, of B. de Sahagún, *Florentine Codex, General History of the Things of New Spain*, trans. and ed. C. E. Dibble and A. J. O. Anderson, 12 books in 13 vols, 2nd edn (Santa Fe, NM: University of Utah Press, 1950–82). Hereafter *Florentine Codex*. To prevent confusion between different editions and enable cross-referencing to alternative versions, references are given in the form of book: chapter: page number. (Page references are to the revised edition where applicable.) Although there are also alternative sources for the sacrificial calendar, the use of this single source permits us to reduce the possibility of confusing duplications. *The Ceremonies* details the annual sequence of rituals which structured the spiritual lives of the men and women of Tenochtitlan. This comprehensive record is a practical point to commence any investigation of sacrificial practice; an extensive and well-structured document, the thorough investigation of the Franciscan friar and scholar Bernardino de Sahagún provides an unparalleled source. This is not the place to rehearse the arguments

concerning the reliability of the *Florentine Codex*, which have been the subject of considerable study. For my own approach to Sahagún's work see: C. Dodds, 'Warriors and Workers: Duality and Complementarity in Aztec Gender Roles and Relations' (PhD thesis, University of Cambridge, 2004). For more general discussions see: M. S. Edmonson ed., *Sixteenth-Century Mexico: The Work of Sahagún* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974); L. N. d'Olwer, *Fray Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590)* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 1987); M. León-Portilla, *Bernardino de Sahagún: First Anthropologist* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

5. *Florentine Codex*, 2: 30: 118–24, particularly 120; 2: 27: 96–107, particularly 105.
6. The exact dates of the festivals, which were associated with the 12 *veintenas* (20-day months) vary by a day or so according to different interpretations, but they are broadly well-established. Ochpaniztli took place 1–20 September and Uey tecuilhuitl 3–22 July.
7. In the absence of a suitable alternative, I will use the terms 'priest' to refer to the men who dedicated themselves to the temple and the service of the gods.
8. *Florentine Codex*, 2: 27: 105. It is also possible to translate *tepotzoa* as 'the owner of a back', 'he/she/it makes use of his back', or perhaps even 'he/she/it is the possessor of a hunched back'. (I am indebted to Frances Karttunen, R. Joe Campbell, John Sullivan and John F. Schwaller for their suggestions and guidance in this interpretation.)
9. B. A. Brown, 'Ochpaniztli in Historical Perspective', in E. H. Boone ed., *Ritual Human Sacrifice in Mesoamerica: A Conference at Dumbarton Oaks, October 13th and 15th, 1979* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984), pp. 195–207.
10. The colossal statue of the decapitated Coatlicue is perhaps other most famous example of this tradition. See, for example, E. H. Boone, 'The "Coatlicues" at the Templo Mayor', *Ancient Mesoamerica*, X (1999), 189–206.
11. Many alternative versions of this myth exist. Based on the generally most representative sources and the frequency of the occurrence of different versions, I have prioritized the popular mythical version of this history, in preference to more politicized versions in which followers of the deities Huitzilopochtli and Coyolxauhqui broke into two conflicting factions. Three prominent accounts of this myth may be found in: *Florentine Codex*, 3: 1: 1–5; D. Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, ed. D. Heyden (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), pp. 26–8; Don D. de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, *Codex Chimalpahin, Society and Politics in Mexico Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Texcoco, Culhuacan, and other Nahua Altepetl in Central Mexico: The Nahuatl and Spanish Annals and Accounts Collected and Recorded by Don Domingo de San Antón Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin*, ed. A. J. O. Anderson and S. Schroeder, 2 vols (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), I, 83. Hereafter *Codex Chimalpahin*.
12. The identity of Coyolxauhqui is one of the most unstable elements of this myth. Usually recorded as Huitzilopochtli's sister, in the *Codex Chimalpahin* she appears as his metaphorical mother.
13. *Florentine Codex*, 3: 1: 4.
14. This story is also frequently interpreted as a battle between the Sun (Huitzilopochtli) and the Moon (Coyolxauhqui), a dimension which I do not have space to explore fully here. In view of the close association of the Sun

with the Aztec state, and the threat presented by eclipse and darkness, as well as antagonism between the two established in the creation myths, this reading is consistent with the assertion of state supremacy through the legend. See, for example, S. Milbrath, 'Decapitated Lunar Goddesses in Aztec Art, Myth, and Ritual', *Ancient Mesoamerica*, VIII (1997), 185–206.

15. Eduardo Matos Moctezuma has claimed that all sacrifices performed at the Templo Mayor commemorated this 'primordial fratricidal act'. L. López Luján, *The Offerings of the Templo Mayor of Tenochtitlan* (Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1994), p. 95.
16. Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, pp. 339–40; A. de Tápia, 'The Chronicle of Andrés de Tápia' in P. de Fuentes ed., *The Conquistadors: First Person Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993), pp. 41–2.
17. E. Umberger, 'Aztec Kings [*sic*] and the Codex Duran', paper delivered at the British Museum, Aztec Art and Culture: An International Symposium, 23 March 2003, in connection with the exhibition 'Aztecs' at the Royal Academy of Arts, London (unpublished paper, 2003); E. Umberger, 'Verbal Metaphors and Aztec Art: Human Images of Victory and Defeat' (unpublished draft, 2003); E. Umberger, 'The Metaphorical Underpinnings of Aztec History: The Case of the 1473 Civil War' (unpublished paper, 2006). I am indebted to Emily Umberger, who was the first to identify the parallel between the denouement of the Tlatelolco war and the Coyolxauhqui myth, for providing me with drafts of these papers.
18. E. Umberger, 'The Metaphorical Underpinnings of Aztec History', p. 20.
19. Ibid., p. 21.
20. Ibid., pp. 21–4.
21. *Florentine Codex*, 2: 27: 102, 106.
22. Ibid., 2: 30: 123–4.
23. C. F. Klein, 'Fighting with Femininity: Gender and War in Aztec Mexico', in R. C. Trexler ed., *Gender Rhetorics: Postures of Dominance and Submission in History* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1994), p. 120.
24. E. Umberger, 'Verbal Metaphors and Aztec Art, p. 2.
25. J. Nash, 'The Aztecs and the Ideology of Male Dominance', *Signs*, IV (1978), 359.
26. M. J. Rodríguez-Shadow, *La mujer azteca* (Toluca: Universidad Autonomia del Estado de México, 1991), pp. 75–84.
27. Huitzilopochtli's elder sister Malinalxoch, a malevolent sorceress, is another key female figure in Aztec history. She features in another episode in which Huitzilopochtli was required to assert his authority and ensure the well-being of the tribe. For two, amongst many, accounts of this incident see *Codex Chimalpahin*, pp. 77–85; Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, pp. 20–33.
28. See, for example: E. M. Brumfiel, 'Weaving and Cooking: Women's Production in Aztec Mexico', in J. M. Gero and M. W. Conkey eds, *Engendering Archaeology: Women and Prehistory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), pp. 224–51; L. M. Burkhart, 'Mexica Women on the Home Front: Housework and Religion in Aztec Mexico', in S. Schroeder, S. Wood, and R. Haskett eds, *Indian Women of Early Mexico* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), pp. 25–54; S. Kellogg, 'The Woman's Room: Some

Aspects of Gender Relations in Tenochtitlan in the Late Pre-Hispanic Period', *Ethnohistory*, XLII (1995), 563–76.

29. F. Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, ed. E. B. Leacock (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1972 [1884]), p. 137; L. Paul, 'The Mastery of Work and the Mystery of Sex in a Guatemalan Village', in M. Z. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere eds, *Woman, Culture, and Society* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1974), pp. 281–99.
30. *Florentine Codex*, 5: 11: 186; 6: 29: 162.
31. Although this debate has ranged across disciplines and decades, fundamental readings spanning the various aspects of dispute may be found in Rosaldo and Lamphere eds, *Woman, Culture and Society*. For a more recent analysis, see C. MacCormack and M. Strathern eds, *Nature, Culture and Gender* (Cambridge: Cambride University Press, 1998).
32. *Florentine Codex*, 2: 30: 118–24.
33. For further analysis of the ambiguous importance of the female earth deities, particularly Cihuacoatl, see C. F. Klein, 'Rethinking Cihuacoatl: Aztec Political Imagery of the Conquered Woman', in J. K. Josserand and K. Dakin eds, *Smoke and Mist: Mesoamerican Studies in Memory of Thelma D. Sullivan*, Part I (Oxford: BAR International Series, 1988), pp. 237–77.
34. See, for example, J. Soustelle, *Daily Life of the Aztecs on the Eve of the Spanish Conquest* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), pp. 99–100.
35. Durán, *The History of the Indies of New Spain*, p. 157; *Florentine Codex*, 3, appendix: 1: 41–6.

2

Religious Languages of Violence. Some Reflections on the Reading of Extremes

Bernd Weisbrod

'Shock and Awe', this is not just the name of a military strategy which was recently employed in the US-led war against Iraq, it can also be taken as a key to understanding one of the fundamental questions in our world experience which was so dramatically changed by the Al Qaida attack on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001: how extreme forms of warfare in the twentieth century might relate to the resurgence of religious fundamentalism in our time and in which way religious experience might be involved in extreme forms of violence. Modern historians tend to disregard religion, but at least they should take note of some of the recent developments in the literature on fundamentalism, ethnocide and religious terrorism in order to open up some new avenues of discussion in their way of dealing with the outrages of violence in the 'short' twentieth century.[1]

The pamphlet entitled 'Shock and Awe' was published in 1996 by a group of military experts – mostly from the First Gulf War – and Harlan K. Ullmann, one of the new 'defense intellectuals' who are the darlings of the American neo-conservative establishment.[2] Ullmann is the typical post-cold war Dr Strangelove: he completed 150 combat missions in Vietnam, commanded a destroyer in the Gulf, taught at the National War College – among his students was Colin Powell – and now works as a senior associate at the Center for Strategic Studies. His strategic ideas about fighting a war of 'rapid dominance', not of attrition, is full of the high-tech hype which worked so well on an enemy which, as far as we can see, was neither the presumed weapons-of-mass-destruction threat for the free world, nor a real match for the US military. Ullmann's strategic revolution is little more than a computerized re-run of the *Blitzkrieg*

concept of old, and – more importantly in our context – a reminder of the psychological effects involved in excess violence in asymmetrical warfare. As Ullman's scandalous remarks about the appropriateness of an equivalent to Hiroshima make clear, overwhelming fire power, rapid deployment and total control of battlefield operations are but the prerequisite for the ultimate goal: to affect and shape the adversary's will. 'Shock and Awe', therefore, is the military projection of political deterrence to the point of unconditional compliance even without surrender by show of an overwhelming level of might. The ultimate proof of this strategy, so the argument runs, is in the 'brilliance' of the violent performance, a proof which is normally associated, maybe, with miracles, but not with the messy business of war. The title – 'Shock and Awe' – therefore, is a give away. It reminds us of the contagious proximity of violence and religion, which will be addressed here from a number of different vantage points.

To be fair, Ullman is not a scholar of fundamentalism. Otherwise he might have come across an excellent piece of scholarship by the political scientist David C. Rapoport with a title from Kierkegaard not dissimilar to his: 'Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions'.[3] Rapoport argues, by looking closely at ancient forms of religious terrorism – the secret Hindu assassination cult of the Thugs in India, the public murders of the Muslim Assassins in the Arab world and the religious insurrectionism of the Zealots in Israel – that modern analysis of terrorism is wrong about the alleged technical and/or tactical preponderance in outrageous acts of recent terrorist violence. In his historical examples 'holy or sacred terror' is characterized not just by millenarian ideology, but particularly by the performative quality of extreme acts of violence:

> The holy terrorist believes that only a transcendent purpose which fulfils the meaning of the universe can justify terror, and that the deity reveals at some early moment in time both the end and means and may even participate in the process as well.[4]

The means of murder employed in these classical cases – the silent strangulation and dismembering of corpses, the cutting of throats like in animal sacrifice and martyrdom in suicide – all speak of a religious ritual which was firmly rooted in the respective belief systems of redemption and purification. The act of violence and of excess cruelty was itself the revelation, it worked the miracle, it disregarded life, even one's own life, as a performative act of divine will. According to Rapoport,

the *fedayeen*, through such acts, were consecrated for paradise when thus demonstrating religious truth, and they hastened the coming of the *Madhi* who would cleanse Islam in *jihad*. Violence thus works as the harbinger of sacred time. In another example the Biblical Holy War against the Canaanites also designated a sacred sphere where ordinary standards do not apply. As such, Holy War is considered a war without limits and eventually even as the war to end all wars which no one can hope to escape.[5] The desired effect is 'Fear and Trembling' in the presence of God, and the same words are used in Catholic teaching for the *ecclesia triumphans*, which is built on the real power of its worldly realm and on the imaginary power of miracles. The might of God is in its show of force – *tremendum et fascinans* – the 'shock and awe' of all true believers in the ambivalent encounter with the sacred.[6]

This is not to confuse these different approaches of sacred terror and Holy War, the teachings of which we find in all Abrahamic religious traditions, not just in Islam, nor is it to diminish the potency of religious language in the reborn Islam of the events of 9/11.[7] But there seems to be a common trait in the self-fulfilling prophecy of religious excitement and violent strategies embraced by Christian, Jewish or Muslim fundamentalists in the past decades as a sign and proof of 'strong religion'.[8] Most of these fundamentalist movements – as reported by the 'Fundamentalism Project' undertaken by the American Academy of Sciences in the 1990s – share 'family resemblances' as 'militant and highly focussed antagonists of secularization'.[9] Therefore, it would be wrong to identify Islam as *the* host religion of modern fundamentalism. In fact, most Islamic cases do not fit the pure model of fundamentalism; their syncretic fundamentalism is peculiar in combining religious with ethno-national and anti-imperialist tendencies.[10] This may lend itself to a particular marriage of religious ends and violent means, but the 'enclave culture' of all these religious movements and the cosmology of messianism and millenarianism comes in many guises and the recourse to violence speaks of terror in the mind of many gods.[11]

It is possible, therefore, for the 'Fundamentalism Project' to settle for a violence-free definition of fundamentalism as 'a discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled "true-believers" attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of the religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors.'[12] In this analysis violence only comes into play if and when apocalyptic urgency changes the 'world transforming' mode of fundamentalism into the 'world conquering' mode, especially in the case of ethno-religious confrontations where redemption is sought in the theatre

of cruelty as a strategic option for self-sacrifice and self-transcendence in demonstrative acts of religious heroism.[13] But neither does religious fundamentalism as such lead to these extreme forms of violence, nor are they fully to be explained in terms of their religious justification. Modern fundamentalism as such may be the step-child of the secularized modern nation-state, the scientific revolution and cultural globalization, but the kind of fundamentalist violence which is so shocking to us, speaks of a religious experience that seems to have been lost in translation in the modern world.

It may well be asked whether this is little more than an aberration from the pure model of fundamentalism under particular circumstances, especially in view of ethno-religious struggles in the Middle East; or whether there might be a religious logic in fundamentalist violence which could be abstracted from such historical constellations. At first sight, as self-willed, communal or political violence it may simply be 'a response to government oppression and/or to the growth and empowerment of social groups deemed threatening to fundamentalist interests'.[14] But if 'strong religion' is identified with the sense of endangered religious purity, the ultimate certainty of decontamination may rest not in the enforcement of rituals of life in self-defence but even more so in the rituals of violent death for religious – and national – revival. For that very reason, the contamination of the sacred in self-martyrdom can be carried over, so to speak, from the religious Hamas to the secular Fatah movement, and vice versa, or from vigilante traditions of violence to excess cruelty in the humiliation of the religious enemy, as in the Gush Emunim and the Kach movement in Israel, respectively.[15] So, for whatever religious or political reasons might be given, and whatever strategic use violent excesses may be put to, the ultimate recourse to violence does not necessarily flow from the 'violence a religion contains', but also from the religious meaning violence itself may contain.[16] In terms of purification and self-sacrifice violence seems to speak its own religious language, which may be spelt out in particular vernaculars that can be heard – but in no way always understood – even across time and different cultures. This is so, it seems, mainly because of the performative religion involved in these expressive acts of extreme violence, their 'sign value' over against their 'use value'.[17]

This can be studied at first hand in the ritual character of self-styled religious violence itself which, according to Rapoport, 'is almost guaranteed to evoke wild and uncontrollable emotions', so much so, that those involved in and attracted to it 'may be so intrigued by the experience of perpetrating terror that everything else is incidental'.[18] Very often,

violence is an expression of the excitement generated by a religious rite like, for example, in the self-flagellation of the Shiites in the Ashura festival of the martyrdom of Husayn at Karbala, but it may also be the excitement of violence which can produce religious meaning and experience. Competing claims to holy sites may also trigger ritual violence, especially when someone symbolically takes possession, such as Ariel Sharon in his demonstrative inspection of the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, or when sectarian violence is played out on the spot, like in the case of the destruction of holy places in Ayodhya in India. But this self-propelled passion is not just a matter of bygone religious fervour or of modern religious fundamentalism. The violence trigger also comes in secular form and demonstrates a readiness to burn the bridges which we tend to make the true test of modern revolutions. The revolutionary 'Furies' of the French and Russian revolutions, for example, exhibited the same ritual obsession with bringing about the new order by killing off the old. The revolutionary 'Furies' were 'fear-inspired, vengeance driven and, religiously 'sanctioned', particularly when change was blocked and resisted with bloody battles by the powers in place, as Arno Mayer observed.[19] Modern terrorism ever since the *Narodniki* in Tsarist Russia also bore the ritual mark of self-victimization and sacrifice, without any need for religious legitimation.[20] In their public assassination attempts it was more important to fulfil the pledge than to get away or to achieve a particular political goal. 'Propaganda by deed' was spectacular enough not just for anarchists. But it often went out of hand even within most disciplined and highly articulate organizations simply because actions speak louder then words.

The modern mastermind of this violence for violence's sake is certainly Georges Sorel, who in his *'Reflexions sur la violence'* of 1907 drew on the vital power of political violence in order to do away with any practical considerations or – in this case – socialist legitimation. His revivalist revolt against reason married Bergsonian vitalism with a strange desire to tap the resources of religious fervour and sacrifice for the great myth of the general strike. But what mattered most to Sorel was *la volonté de délivrance*, the readiness to be enlightened by violence, not just about the goals but also about the self-empowerment of those involved in these acts of violence.[21] Sorel's *apologie de la violence* in effect severed the ties between ideology and violent action, between reason and experience. He asked for the worship of the 'Myth of Violence' which was called upon to produce miracles in the struggle for world revolution by Lenin, for fascist revivalism by Mussolini or for anti-colonial liberation struggles by Frantz Fanon.[22] His is a particularly interesting case because

the praxeology of violence which Fanon expounds in *The Wretched of the Earth* of 1961 feeds on the kind of conversion experience which sets the raging body free in the Manichean world of anti-colonial struggle. He might never have used the prefix holy, but, according to Perinbam, his sense of the scorched inner landscape of the colonial mind reaches out for 'violence-beyond-violence' as a matter of faith and necessity, rather than of knowledge: 'a violence which was creative beyond belief, and frightening beyond comprehension, compelling and dangerously powerful, irresistible and fearful to approach, easy to comprehend, yet mysterious, terrible and sacred'.[23] These secular apostles for political violence were not simply asking for 'violence for violence's sake', as is often argued. Rather, they were trying to establish a life force in the brotherhood practice of violence which would imbue radical goals with the 'shock and awe' of an intrinsically religious performance: the violent act as an act of self-transcendence.[24]

Of course, the reality of political violence was and is much more complicated than the concepts of political mysticism and the dreams of rebirth. It may even be argued that such forms of secular fundamentalism as in modern nationalist or revolutionary movements are only pseudo-religious because no eternal rewards are waiting for their heroes, as in monotheist religions.[25] Secular utopias can, however, produce the same apocalyptic urgency which spurns the necessity for performative self-transcendence through violence as a mystical experience, not just by the deed itself, but also by association. Such violence is thus productive of a 'state of grace' if and when it is perceived as making men 'whole' again. The centrality of the violent act for the revolutionary saints of the twentieth century, therefore, harks back to the hidden agenda of religious fundamentalism: its 'logic' is, maybe, in the 'Mind of God', as Mark Juergensmeyer argues, but its myth is founded in the real and atrocious violence to which it subscribes. Juergensmeyer, a sociologist of religion and disciple of Reinhold Niebuhr, gives a clear reading of this 'performance violence' in modern fundamentalism which, he concludes, is not meant 'to achieve a strategic goal but to make a symbolic statement'.[26] He found a common pattern in all his case-studies – the backwoods Christian Identity killers in the United States, the Hamas-suicide bombers in Palestine, the messianic and murderous Zionism of Rabbi Kahane, the 'fire and sword' propaganda of militant Protestantism in Northern Ireland, the Sikh militants' spree of indiscriminate killings and the Aum sect's version of Armageddon in the Tokyo subway. In all these cases violence is the currency for a statement about God's presence in the world. But clearly, the 'dark alliance between religion

and violence'[27] is not one-way only. It needs a particular culture of violence, a time and place in history and above all a world-view which transforms the faithful fundamentalist into a violent agent of 'cosmic war'. The audience of his, or as can be seen more recently, at times even her self-destructive acts of violence is not just the public, friendly or not; it is the deity itself. At funerals of Hamas suicide bombers sweet coffee is drunk as if for marriage rites, not bitter coffee as for funerals.[28]

But at the same time, the religious contamination of violence also works the other way. This is why these violent acts can never fully be explained in terms of either religious necessity, global capitalism or male frustration, although they all certainly set the historical stage and play a vital role in the 'theatre of terror'. For in effect, it is the violent act itself which is the holy performance and symbolizes religious meaning. It has its own end in precisely this form of empowerment as the self-willed miracle of self-transcendence and speaks of the presence of sacred in the world. It is true, religious traditions of all kind provide a reservoir for these 'rites of violence'.[29] But it is the violence itself that spreads 'shock and awe' and this is why its 'brilliance' is more important than any tangible political gains or even compromise. Acts of bloodshed are 'executed in a deliberately intense and vivid way' as if 'designed to maximise the savage nature of their violence and meant purposely to elicit anger'.[30] These acts of deliberately exaggerated violence are the whole sacred drama. As such they do not 'mimic' religion, they 'represent' religion.[31] The deed has to be done properly, just as in the repeat operations of the World Trade Center bombing or the Oklahoma city bombing, after the first attempts had failed to produce the intended result of total 'shock and awe'.

Juergensmeyer takes issue in his comparative study of fundamentalist terrorism with René Girard's famous theory of the scapegoat which, is at the centre of most recent thinking about the relationship between violence and the sacred.[32] From ancient mythology Girard draws the conclusion that at the bottom of all religiosity is the *sacrificium*, the ritual form of purifying violence which allows the mimetic desire for the same object between rivals to be deflected onto a surrogate victim, the sacred scapegoat. The argument here is that in cases of sacrificial crisis vengeance can no longer be kept in check by the sacrificial process and violence looses its 'transcendental effectiveness'.[33] Only in its sacrificial form, Girard argues, can violence develop its unique generative force which he qualifies as religious. If that taboo is broken, however, the contaminating process of impure violence leads to a flooding of violence which can only be purified again by ritual. Thus, he concludes, 'violence is the heart and the secret soul of the sacred'.[34]

Girard's surrogate victim theory seems particularly appropriate in cases of social breakdown in which the struggle is no longer about the objects of desire and their intrinsic value; instead desire is attracted to triumphant violence which alone confers eternal values: 'Desire clings to violence and stalks it like a shadow because violence is the signifier of the cherished being, the signifier of divinity.'[35]

Girard thus offers not only an explanation of the paradoxical control of violence through violence, he also accepts the divine essence of triumphalist violence, the holy powers of which, however, can only be seen to have worked in hindsight. This is a dilemma which seems to confuse ritual and history but which puts a premium on the performative quality of violence.[36] Also, the identification with the sacrificial victim, which for Girard makes Christianity unique among the monotheist religions, does not seem to explain the longing for the triumph of the sacred order as such. Rituals of sacrifice are, therefore, not just about the control of mimetic desire; they are – in Juergensmeyer's definition – also 'enactments of cosmic war between order and disorder'.[37] As mentioned above, the politics of fundamentalism can be seen as the violent enactment of a drama of cosmic proportions. In effect, as David Rapoport remarks, the reasons given by Girard for making violence the core of religion could be considered to be 'the same ones that we offer for linking violence to the state'.[38] Not just because of the ritual control of violence, but because violence inspires total loyalties, just as religion does – whether in sacralized nation-states or in modern political religions.

But before following up this suggestion about the transformative power of violence let us look at the most recent, and in many ways most intriguing reading of 'sacrifice as terror' – the Rwandan genocide.[39] It may be argued that the mass slaughter of Tutsi by Hutus in 1994 was a far cry from the deliberate forms of political fundamentalism studied by Juergensmeyer, like Christian Identity or Hamas, but it appears that a similar 'mythic logic' may apply in cases of genocide as well. According to the American anthropologist Christopher C. Taylor who had to flee the killings with his Tutsi wife, there was a 'total systemic collapse', very much resembling a 'sacrificial crisis'. This led to a politically well-planned and deliberate victimization of the privileged Tutsi minority, an ethnic group of cattle breeders who had been credited by the colonial power with northern descent, superior intelligence and, remarkably, unparalleled beauty in their women. But such ideologies of difference are not enough to legitimize terror, as Taylor observes:

> Beneath this level of rational decision making lurks the eerie irrationality that one million people could be eliminated in only a little

> over three months, not by gas chambers, but by the hands of youthful militia members and ordinary citizens wielding knives, machetes and clubs. Yet even amidst this irrationality there lurked a certain kind of order in that many of the techniques of cruelty were mythically and symbolically conditioned – they followed meaningful forms, a 'mythical logic'.[40]

The point to be made here is this: it was the killing itself, the kind of cruelty employed, which ritualized the sacrifice. It signified more than the usual Tutsi-baiting and scapegoating when the Hutu rampage cut open the bodies of their victims 'in a massive ritual of purification'.[41] In the Rwandan cosmos of terror, bodies were cut open at numerous roadblocks and corpses floated down the river. Taylor, who had studied the rituals of popular medicine in Rwanda, saw in this wild blood-letting a ritual intended to purge the nation of obstructing beings, just as the sacred functions of the former king were defined by his ability to unblock the flow of life. Apparently, excess cruelty like emasculation and impalement was required for the resacralization of the body politic just as, according to legend, kings were sacrificed whose bodies failed the test of holy conduit.[42] Interestingly enough, ethnicity was only a rough guide in this violent drama. Hutu and Tutsi lineages were far from clear, although the bureaucratic label stuck. But quite apart from the frequent claim by the Hutu militia, that they knew their neighbours, a great number of Hutus were killed when they were suspected as traitors by sexual association or descent.

In effect, the killing, and the particular way of killing, eventually defined these cases as Tutsi, in spite of all the potential deceptiveness of the ethnic body of both the victim and the killer. It was the only way to establish 'dead certainty', a ritual knowledge of order which required a kind of symbolic body map.[43] When we think of religion – as the anthropologist Arjun Appadurai has done – in terms of doubt, uncertainty and indeterminacy, establishing order becomes a matter of survival. Ethnic violence of the kind experienced in Rwanda, he argues, identifies 'matter out of place' (Mary Douglas) by using the body as a site of violent closure in situations of categorical uncertainty:

> This sort of brutality belongs to the theatre of divination, sorcery, and witchcraft. It literally turns a body inside out and finds proof of its betrayal, its deceptions, its definite otherness, in a sort of pre-mortem autopsy ... which, rather than achieving death because of prior uncertainty, achieves categorical certainty through death and dismemberment.[44]

In this reading, the horrific and often sexualized violence in ethnocide is ritualized not just because of the particular kind of violent performance; the bloody body rituals play out a test of 'real' identity. Against all impostors and traitors it is the ultimate verification of the ethnic self. The mutilated body thus not only replays the symbolic sacrifice of the king, as a way of purification, it becomes the site for resolving uncertainty through brutal forms of violation, dismemberment and disposal. It makes identity holy. [45]

Obviously, there are different codes of religion in each of these cases in which the 'religious language of violence' itself is spoken, from the 'shock and awe' as the military equivalent of the miracle to the 'performative violence' in fundamentalist cosmic war, the 'holy violence' of revolutionary saints, the sacrificial ritual as 'generative violence' of all religion and, finally, the body ritual of cleansing through extreme violence as a way of achieving 'dead certainty'. But in all these cases, it appears that the kind of violence involved is characterized by extreme brutality, almost total relentlessness, just as in asymmetrical warfare. And all cases tend to point beyond a merely technical or even rational-choice explanation of violent excess, be it in terms of personality structure, rules of engagement in violent confrontations or the socialization of fear in groups of male bonding, as the social science approach to extreme violence might suggest.[46] There is logic in terrorist violence, but it is doubtful whether this can be seen as the end of a self-conscious learning process which after having exhausted all other political options eventually spreads through the media by way of terrorist contagion.[47] This explanation of violence, it seems, severely underrates the degree to which religious contagion actually takes place through violence itself.

This also is a case in point in much of the recent historical debate about whether or not to confer the status of 'political religion' on National Socialism and fascism more generally. Hans Mommsen has argued that all the paraphernalia of the Nazi cult were really a simulation of religion only, while Michael Burleigh has hinted at the 'gnostic sixth sense' of 'real lethality' in Nazi politics. Emilio Gentile has deconstructed the fascist spectacle as a religious performance, and Hans Maier and others have pointed to the apocalyptic boding of evil in the Voegelin tradition.[48] Even in the most recent and most illuminating study by Sven Reichardt of the organisation of youthful violence in the *squadri* and stormtroopers, there is this reluctance to address the holy touch of violence. They may have been driven by an excess of national ritual and male posturing out of a sense of humiliation and despair, but the violent release of these tensions spoke in the terms of 'shock and awe'.[49] Theirs was the kind of reputation which comes with the extra-ordinary

performance of violence and which is at the heart of holy charisma. Trench mythology may have coined the language of violence and created the aggressive mentality and anger in the supportive networks, but as Reichardt rightly points out, it was the practice of violence, not ideology or ritual, which conferred charismatic status on redemptive nationalism.[50] Violence was not an end in itself, as is often said by way of explaining the fascist destruction of politics: it set free a mythical power by symbolically performing rebirth through destruction. This is why the fervent revivalism at the bottom of all political religions cannot be sufficiently defined by their political ritual or religious language alone, but also by their search for a renewed contact with the sacred source of violence.

Just as in the performance violence of fundamentalism, so also in political religions: it is not the violence that is in the religion, it is the religious experience that is in the violence! The question is not whether and under what circumstances we have a 'violent religion', but what a 'religion of violence' does when the killing is done. Fundamentalists not only establish themselves in a religious field by fighting the gatekeepers of religion, they establish a religious field of their own by reaching out to the ultimate religious act, self-transcendence in excessive violence as ritual sacrifice.[51] Whoever, therefore, is dealing in the currency of violence is trading in a piece of religious evidence, a self-willed miracle of 'shock and awe'. As Mark Juergensmeyer puts it:

> Not only have religion's characteristics led spiritual persons into violence, but also the other way round: violent situations have reached out for religious justifications. The two approaches are not contradictory: extremism in religion has led to violence at the same time that violent conflicts have cried out for religious validation.[52]

Looking at the religious language of violence itself one can, maybe, go one step further: Violence is the ultimate religious validation. Acts of sacred violence may, therefore, well be regarded as irreligious in the modern world or the teaching of world religions, yet they may also constitute a religious experience of their own. Violent acts which may be judged to be immoral or politically counterproductive may still produce a genuine religious experience.[53] It is not just the 'ability of religion to inspire ecstasy' which stands behind 'the distinctive logic of religious violence'.[54] It is the ability of violence to call up the ecstasy of self-transcendence which gives it a religious meaning of its own. Violence in this sense is the leap of faith in which 'one abandons oneself

to the divine, daring an existential leap into the unknown'.[55] It is imbued with the ultimate conversion experience which, according to William James, is at the heart of the religious experience of the 'twice born' who aspire to saintliness.[56] It is true, William James does not acknowledge violence as a possibly religious experience. But demonstrative violence does show a totalized 'will to believe' (William James) which may offer a passionate experience beyond any religious legitimation, a way to self-transcendence which is – just like in religious conversions – self-evident for its total submission and, at the same time, its ultimate command. It also stipulates leadership which is – just as in war – charismatic for bringing the extraordinary into the real world, as Max Weber has argued.[57] Fundamentalist violence, therefore, for all its diverse constellations and tactical uses is at core simply 'revealed truth' for true believers, but for all those stirred with political excitement through self-victimization and hatred there is also a sacred truth in the show of violence itself which seeks to confer holy status on not so holy men.

Notes

1. This is a think piece which follows on from my essay on: 'Fundamentalist Violence: Political Violence and Political Religion in Modern Conflict,' *International Social Science Journal*, CXXIV (2002), 499–508. It was first published in A. Lüdtke and B. Weisbrod eds, *The No Man's Land of Violence. Extreme Wars in the 20th Century* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006), pp. 251–76.
2. H. K. Ullmann and J. P. Wade, *Shock and Awe. Achieving Dominance* (Washington, DC: National Defence University Press Book, 1996), unfortunately no longer available on the Internet under the Pentagon address: www.dodccrp.org/shockindex.html.
3. D. C. Rapoport, 'Fear and Trembling: Terrorism in Three Religious Traditions', *The American Political Science Review*, LXXVIII (1984), 658–77.
4. Ibid., p. 659.
5. Ibid., p. 670.
6. On *tremendum* and *fascinans* as the two sides of *'das Numinose'* see R. Otto, *Das Heilige: Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, 12th ed. (Gotha: Perthes, 1924 [1917]). See also R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation*, ed. Carnegie Commission of Preventing Deadly Conflict (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), pp. 28–9.
7. B. Lincoln, *Holy Terrors: Thinking about Religion after September 11* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
8. See the companion volume to the 'Fundamentalism Project' of the 1990s: G. A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby and E. Sivan, eds, *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism around the World* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003); see also the concluding chapter: 'An Interim Report on a Hypothetical Family', in M. E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby eds, *Fundamentalism Observed*

(Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991) (i.e. Fundamentalism Project, volume 1).
9. Almond et al., *Strong Religion*, p. 2.
10. For the typology of fundamentalisms see ibid., pp. 104–12.
11. M. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). For the peculiarities of Islamic fundamentalism see B. Tibi, *The Challenge of Fundamentalism: Political Islam and the New World Disorder*, 2nd edn. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
12. Almond et al., *Strong Religion*, p. 17; cf. also Appleby, *Ambivalence*, p. 86.
13. Almond et al., *Strong Religion*, pp. 199ff.
14. Definition according to ibid., p. 235.
15. D. C. Rapoport, 'Comparing Militant Fundamentalist Movements and Groups', in M. E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby eds, *Fundamentalism and the State* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 429–61 (i.e. The Fundamentalism Project, volume 3).
16. Rapoport, 'Comparing', pp. 446–7.
17. Lincoln, *Holy Terrors*, p. 17.
18. Rapoport, 'Fear and Trembling', p. 675.
19. A. Mayer, *The Furies: Violence and Terror in the French and Russian Revolutions* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. xvi.
20. W. Mommsen and G. Hirschfeld eds, *Social Protest, Violence, and Terror in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Macmillan, 1982).
21. G. Sorel, *Réflexions sur la violence*, 8th edn. (Paris: Riviere, 1936, [1907]), p. 24 (in the introductory letter to Daniel Halévy). See also I. L. Horowitz, *Radicalism and the Revolt against Reason: The Social Theories of Georges Sorel* (London: Routledge, 1961).
22. On the religious dimensions in Fanon's praxeology of violence see B. M. Perinbam, *Holy Violence: The Revolutionary Thought of Frantz Fanon: An Intellectual Biography* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1982).
23. Ibid., p. 14.
24. On the life surge in the practice of violence according to Fanon and Sorel see also H. Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1970), pp. 67ff.
25. Almond et al., *Strong Religion*, p. 15.
26. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 123. Cf. also M. Juergensmeyer, 'The Logic of Religious Violence', in D. C. Rapoport ed., *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), pp. 172–93.
27. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. xi.
28. Ibid., p. 166.
29. As in N. Z. Davis, 'The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France', *Past and Present*, LIX (1973), 51–91.
30. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 119.
31. Against Rapoport who argues that there is not only a violent streak in all religions, but also that terrorist acts have a symbolic side 'and in that sense mimic religion', ibid., p. 125.
32. R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), cf. also the debate about his sacrificial foundation of all violence in M. Juergensmeyer ed., *Violence and the Sacred in the Modern World*

(London: Frank Cass, 1992) (i.e. special issue of *The Journal of Terrorism and Political Violence*, III (3) (1991)).
33. Girard, *Violence*, p. 23.
34. Ibid., pp. 24 and 31. Walter Burkert's *Homo necans* suggests, however, that there may be multiple origins of sacrificial ritual, when he argues that the ritual act of slaying the sacrificial animal was the 'most profound experience of transcendent reality in ancient Greece'. According to R. D. Hecht, 'Studies on Sacrifice, 1970–1980', *Religious Studies Review*, VIII (1982), 253–9 (quoted on p. 256). See: W. Burkert, *Homo Necans: Interpretationen altgriechischer Opferriten und Mythen* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972).
35. Girard, *Violence*, p.151.
36. Cf. M. R. Anspach, 'Violence against Violence: Islam in Comparative Context', in Juergensmeyer ed., *Violence*, pp. 9–29 (quoted on p. 25).
37. M. Juergensmeyer, 'Sacrifice and Cosmic War', in Jürgensmeyer ed., *Violence*, pp. 101–17 (quoted on p. 106).
38. D. C. Rapoport, 'Some General Observations on Religion and Violence', in Juergensmeyer ed., *Violence*, pp. 118–40.
39. C. C. Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).
40. Ibid., p. 29.
41. Ibid., p. 101. It may be important, as in reprisal pogroms, that the Hutus who fell victim to genocidal events in Burundi in 1972/3 suffered the same sort of de-humanizing violence: 'impaling men from anus to head or mouth, impaling women from vagina to mouth, cutting foetuses from the mother's wombs, forcing parents to eat the flesh of their children, forcing a parent and child to commit incest be roping them together in a sexual position prior to killing them'. According to L. H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1995) quoted in Taylor, *Sacrifice*, pp. 104 and 146.
42. Taylor, *Sacrifice*, p. 126.
43. A. Appadurai, 'Dead Certainty: Ethnic Violence in the Era of Globalization', *Public Culture*, X (1998), 225–48.
44. Ibid., p. 232.
45. Ibid., p. 242.
46. This is the assumption in most of the essays collected in W. Reich ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
47. M. Crenshaw, 'The Logic of Terrorism: Terrorism as a Product of Strategic Choice', in Reich ed., *Origins*, pp. 7–24 (quoted on p. 11). Probability theory also seems of little help: M. I. Midlarsky, M. Crenschaw and F. Yoshida, 'Why Violence Spreads: The Contagion of International Terrorism', *International Studies Quarterly* XXIV (1980), 262–98.
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49. S. Reichardt, *Faschistische Kampfbünde: Gewalt und Gemeinschaft im italienischen Squadrismus und in der deutschen SA* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002). On the socialization of violence see also Reichardt, 'Vergemeinschaftung durch Gewalt. Das Beispiel des SA-"Mördersturms" 33 in Berlin-Charlottenburg zwischen 1928 und 1932', in H. Diercks, 'Entgrenzte Gewalt: Täterinnen und Täter im Nationalsozialismus', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der nationalsozialistischen Verfolgung in Norddeutschland*, VII (2002), 20–36.
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52. Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 161.
53. Appleby, *Ambivalence*, p. 30.
54. Ibid., p. 91.
55. Ibid., p. 117.
56. W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (New York: Longman, Green, 1903); cf. also C. Taylor, *Varieties of Religion Today: William James Revisited* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); K. Oatley and M. Djikic, 'Emotions and Transformation: Varieties of Experience of Identity', in M. Ferrari ed., The Varieties of Religious Experience. Centenary Essays, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, IX (2002), 97–116.
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3

Conceptualizing Cultures of Violence and Cultural Change

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Over the past two decades of crime historiography, violence has been increasingly approached as a cultural issue. Undoubtedly, the complexity of attitudes towards violence in our own time is obvious, whether one considers the equivocal relationship between the perception and reality of crime rates or recurring discussions about the appropriate levels of force which, for example, may be used by homeowners against burglars or by parents against children. More directly, of course, the trend towards cultural methodologies has had professional causes, including the broader 'cultural' and 'linguistic' turns in the humanities as well as debates about the reliability of statistical data on violent crime. In their wake, historians have mined new sources and reconsidered familiar ones in order to draw out the social meaning of violence in the past and establish a better qualitative context for quantitative data. It is now apparent that concerns about violence have fluctuated dramatically, as particular forms of violence have rapidly gained public attention and then faded from view. However, we have also learned enough to question the extent to which such fears have reflected alterations in actual violence. A 'culture' may move from seeing violence as a result of individual moral failure towards viewing it as a product of social forces or psychological imbalance in the absence of any dramatic alterations in the real nature or prevalence of violence itself.[1] Cultural emphases and professional interest may shift from one category of victim to another without corresponding variations in actual patterns of victimization.[2] Thus, changes in 'cultures of violence' and changes in (real) violence are two different things. The expanding amount of cross-cultural data on violence also raises doubts about the extent to which culture is an independent force in its history. How much can culture explain if some patterns in violent behaviour appear across 'cultures'? To what

extent does culture reflect forms of social or economic organization? Is culture related to enduring human psychological preferences? The balance between 'nature' and 'nurture', tensions between continuity and change and the relationships between society and individual are not, of course, issues unique to the topic of violence. Nonetheless, violence's prominent place across disciplines, its centrality in modern debates and the rapid growth in its historiography make a conceptual discussion about the connection between violence and culture all the more relevant and necessary.

My own research has led me to reconsider some common assumptions about violence and culture. In particular, I have become increasingly interested in perspectives on violence which are influenced by 'evolutionary psychology'. Some of this work has been sharply critical of cultural approaches to violence. Nonetheless, I am convinced that cultural, sociological and psychological methodologies can coexist in ways which are mutually beneficial, thereby providing a broader framework and agenda for future work. However, this will mean reconsidering what 'cultures of violence' are, what they do and how they change. For example, it is clear that violence is always understood through narrative, a distinctly 'cultural' process.[3] However, if, as an evolutionary perspective suggests, the human mind is a 'narrative machine', appreciating how it functions (and why it works in the manner that it does) will be crucial to comprehending the cultural forms it produces.[4] In what follows, I will discuss the concepts 'culture' and 'violence' before moving on to describe two key functions of culture with regard to physical aggression: identifying and controlling violence. These topics form the basis of a subsequent consideration of cultural change. My overall interest is to explore ways of anchoring understandings of culture in enduring psychological motivations, material realities and forms of social organization, a topic to which I shall return in my conclusion.

'Culture' and 'violence'

The terms 'culture' and 'violence' are invoked to cover a wide variety of phenomena. It may, for instance, be impossible to propose a universally applicable definition of 'culture': in the early 1950s, two anthropologists identified at least 164 definitions of the term, and subsequent intellectual trends have, if anything, made matters even more complex.[5] Although one common denominator among cultural studies has been identified as an interest in meaning and symbolic representation, this focus should remain allied to the reconstruction of patterns and causal relationships

in actual behaviour.[6] Culture is not only what people think, it is also what they do. Ideally, cultural explanations would also strive to be mutually non-contradictory with relevant approaches from the social and natural sciences. This means taking into account both the nature of the individual mind as well as the dynamics of social interaction. Thus, 'cultures' should be understood as historically accumulated collections of beliefs and practices which are socially produced and aimed at meeting psychological needs. I would like to think that most elements in this definition are uncontroversial; nonetheless, as recent debates suggest, the nature of the relationship between culture and society remains a sensitive subject among historians.[7] The suggestion that culture serves 'psychological needs' may need more explanation, implying, as it does, human nature, a concept which is not universally welcomed. Without being able to do justice to a much wider debate about an enormously complex topic, I would like to briefly sketch out what I mean.

Evolutionary psychologists have made a convincing case that the human mind has been subject to selective, evolutionary processes which have resulted in a particular structure of psychological adaptations.[8] The resulting mental mechanisms are variable and flexible; however, they are not infinitely so, creating cross-cultural regularities in human social behaviour. Cognitive psychology and behavioural genetics have explored the mental prerequisites which not only allow the generation of culture but which also shape its resulting dynamics.[9] However, despite the optimistic ring to the term 'psychological needs' and the notion that culture 'meets' them, neither they nor it are a recipe for peaceful coexistence or individual happiness. Some psychological mechanisms arose in prehistoric contexts at odds with what has come to be seen as desirable, acceptable or even 'rational'. Some needs conflict with others. Others may not even be consciously apparent in individual decisions. Nevertheless, what the psychologist Steven Pinker has called the 'long reach of human nature' is relevant to the modern cultural history of violence, as predispositions shaped by the evolutionary past have confronted rapidly changing social contexts over the last several centuries.[10] People are no more 'programmed' to be violent than they are to be considerate, but 'selection thinking' – considering how evolutionary processes have shaped human psychology – can contribute to the cultural analysis of violence.[11] Culture, after all, is not a free-floating force or a realm (e.g. defined by text or language) existing independently of psychology or material reality. It is, first, produced within an individual psyche with its own in-built predispositions.[12] Second, each psyche is possessed by an individual who is positioned within a series of specific

relationships with other people. Some of these relationships are consensual and equal; others are less so. Culture, although it cannot 'do' anything on its own, provides a framework through which people are motivated to act. Subsequently, incidents of violence are individually and socially understood through narrative, that is, through the stories which are developed by participants, observers and the institutions which deal with them (such as the courts and media). These narratives, in turn, can express motivations or justifications for further violence or, alternatively, for its avoidance or suppression.

Positing a 'nature' which is stable (at least with regard to historical time) does not preclude seeing cultures as complex and consequential. Evolved mental mechanisms can be highly sensitive to local conditions. While it is true that evolutionary psychology tends towards 'universalizing' the human psyche (in identifying a psychological apparatus possessed by all normal brains), it is not contradicted by cultural diversity and change. Indeed, evolutionary psychology helps to more concretely define what a 'culture' actually is, by explaining where it is located, how it emerges and some of the parameters within which it functions. Reconstructing a 'culture of' some social behaviour (whether, for example, eating, sport or violence) means identifying and explaining patterns in belief and action shared by a particular group of individuals. However, such cultures are rarely homogeneous, static or clearly bounded. Not all members of a group observe all cultural prescriptions, or they interpret them idiosyncratically. Cultural patterns are dynamic, full of tension and variable over time. It is often difficult to identify where one 'culture' ends and another begins. Furthermore, any conceptualization of culture makes (perhaps unspoken) psychological assumptions. Arguing, for example, that culture is driven by 'power' presumes that people are interested in pursuing certain kinds of influence over others. Explicitly incorporating the perspectives of evolutionary psychology means viewing the relationship between culture and mind in a particular way. 'Culture', in the sense of the accumulated beliefs and practices of a defined group, is actively processed by the individuals confronted by it, that is, remoulded and remade from a personal perspective according to cross-culturally valid mental processes and in relation to individuals' position within a particular social figuration. The result is a 'private culture' reflecting a personal reassembly of surrounding cultural information.[13] It is a function of an interaction between genetic inheritance and 'environmental' factors such as social structure, group pressure and the contingencies of individual experience. Collectively, such private cultures form shared group cultures, which remain riven by

internal tensions and smaller subdivisions with distinct attitudinal and behavioural variations. A particular 'culture' is thus a provisional result of psychology, social structure and accumulated prior culture.

As with 'culture', there can be many definitions of 'violence'. Many of those used by historians have aimed more at clearly delineating a specific area of study (e.g. distinguishing physical from mental violence) than explaining what 'violence' actually is. As with 'culture', the impression can easily arise that 'violence' is a distinctive thing, a sort of universal substance which erupts – in greater or lesser quantities – in different social settings and historical moments: despite resulting from different intentions, taking place within different contexts and having dramatically different consequences, phenomena as diverse as schoolyard bullying and genocide can be labelled as 'violence'. In my view, the perspectives of cognitive and evolutionary psychologists are helpful in developing a differentiated conceptualization of what violence is, and some of them are compatible with historical theorizations and evidence. For example, Pinker concludes that violence

> is not a primitive, irrational urge, nor is it a 'pathology' except in the metaphorical sense of a condition that everyone would like to eliminate. Instead, it is a near-inevitable outcome of the dynamics of self-interested, rational social organisms.[14]

I think that a critical application of this definition is useful for the cultural history of violence. Initially, there is a useful focus on individuals and the relationships among them as foundational to society and culture, a common feature of evolutionary psychology. Furthermore, behind the phrase 'near-inevitable' lurks a reality familiar to those who have studied violence in any particular society: some violence – or its latent threat – is always present. Nonetheless, the 'near' is important, and even though homicide can be seen as 'the ultimate conflict resolution technique', its use is variable and subject to the availability of alternatives, such as legal action.[15] Here, as elsewhere, characteristic patterns of human psychology – and the various goals towards which they are directed – need to be taken into account. Importantly, from an evolutionary perspective, 'self-interested' does not always mean 'selfish', as cooperation can also serve individual interests.[16] Moreover, 'rational' does not always mean 'reasonable' or sensibly calculated, as people often react according to unconscious or competing motivations and on the basis of incomplete information, but it usefully suggests that behaviour within groups tends to be coherently patterned. Pinker's definition is useful in

highlighting violence as a variable outcome of social dynamics and signalling what culture is actually doing to violent behaviour: shaping it according to particular kinds of social arrangements and psychological needs. Evolutionary perspectives emphasize violence's source in 'normal' social relationships, a point increasingly noted by historians. As V. A. C. Gatrell has argued, 'even in stable times, violence is immanent', and, as I shall discuss, the nature of most cultures of violence contributes to concealing that fact.[17]

Violence is one of the reasons why, although culture evolves to meet human needs, not all people in a given society will have all their needs met. Some needs – such as for sustenance, status or security – cause conflicts themselves, as individuals (or groups) may have (or perceive that they have) different interests. Self-interest, dominance, hierarchy and inequality have featured in all societies, and psychology frames the priorities and preferences recognizable in all cultures. 'Culture' is thus meaningful in itself, but is ultimately located in the psyche and shaped by social interaction. Much everyday violence, rather than a form of pathology, is a more-or-less predictable, culturally mediated strategy to deal with some of these interactions. Many forms of violence emerge from the ways in which the (extremely long-term) stabilities of the human evolutionary past meet the (short-term) instabilities of social change. Culture plays an important role in managing this relationship.

The functions of culture

For some, the foregoing may seem an unwarranted limitation of culture to a mere 'reaction to' certain social structures or evolutionary imperatives. This is not my intention, and while seeing culture embedded in psychological and social structures may limit its *independent* force, it neither denies cultural diversity nor underestimates the complexity of what we might see as culture's emergent properties or internal workings. It can, however, provide an explanation of how certain kinds of important cultural phenomena, such as narrative, function and, furthermore, why they have come to exist in the first place.[18] Despite the variety and intricacy of cultures of violence, many of their underlying functions are cross-culturally similar. I will focus here on two of the most important of these functions: the identification and shaping of violence. Violence is made visible by culture, as the boundaries of legitimate physical force are drawn and the sources of violence are identified. Violence is also shaped through culture, which channels aggression into socially tolerable (and possibly even socially useful) forms.

If the history of violence has shown us anything, it is that 'violence' is a phenomenon in the eye of the beholder, a historically defined notion dependent not only on physically aggressive acts but also views of justice, attitudes towards cruelty and notions of public and private space, among other things. The boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate forms of physical aggression, a fundamental distinction, are established and maintained culturally. As part of defining 'violence', ideas about who is responsible for it also take shape, relating violence to social arrangements such as class and gender as well as to attitudes towards the self, morality and psychology. Normative standards, however, do more than simply differentiate right from wrong: they fundamentally affect perception and memory. Is a particular physically forceful act legitimate or illegitimate? Is it a direct threat to individual, group or social interests? Does it offend moral standards, or, to the contrary, does it enact them? Cultures of violence help individuals to answer such questions, providing guidance in navigating social relationships. Their cultural functions are universal; their specific parameters vary, but they rarely do so in arbitrary ways.

As a recent sociological study of male-on-male violence in Germany succinctly points out:

> not all violent acts are perceived and talked about to the same extent. Certain forms of violence are so normal in men's lives that the men themselves do not perceive them as violence and therefore have only limited memory of them.[19]

Elizabeth Stanko has focused on similar elements in the relationship between culture and violence. Pointing out the state's limited notion of what 'violence' is – specific legally defined acts which are reported to the police and which they decide to treat as violence – she notes:

> violence in the home, bullying at school or in the neighbourhood, courtship violence, gay bashing, racial harassment and crime, sexual harassment and intimidation, 'fair' fights between adolescent men or women – little of which comes to the attention of the police or any official agency – are commonplace and rarely classified within the narrow boundaries of the criminal law.[20]

As a result, 'victimization … appears to be an aberrant event, piercing the harmony of normality', while in actuality, 'for a sizeable proportion of the population – both women and men – encounters with violence are a part of their daily lives'.[21] The ubiquity and prosaic nature of many

kinds of violence have been increasingly noted by historians; however, the fact that so much violence remains unperceived in contemporary European societies, which are relatively highly sensitized to violence and whose victimized groups are better organized than at perhaps any time in history, makes Stanko's critique all the more striking. It also emphasizes the historical importance of violence's visibility (or, more specifically, invisibility) in times when it was more broadly tolerated.

Indeed, the development of attitudes towards violence over the past few centuries has been fundamentally one of making violence more visible, partly through expanding its definition. As Martin Wiener has detailed, the growing visibility of violence against women in nineteenth-century England – that is, a tendency towards seeing hitherto acceptable 'disciplinary' acts *as violence* – was important in courts' increasing willingness to protect abused women and to control men.[22] Previously tolerable (or even laudable) behaviour was redefined as unacceptable. Importantly, visibility does not necessarily refer to the actual openness of behaviour such as violence to observation. The relative invisibility of violence against women did not always depend on it taking place within a materially isolated private sphere: an imagined privacy helped to ensure that some public violence was ignored, making outside intervention less likely. Seemingly paradoxically, spousal abuse became increasingly 'visible' as a social issue as the domestic sphere was, in some ways, becoming more enclosed.[23] There is, moreover, no inevitable historical trend towards greater visibility. Prohibited behaviour can, through growing acceptance or simply increasing prevalence, cease to be as visible as it once was. This would be the case in processes of *de*-civilization associated with, for example, social and state collapse.

Along with allowing violence to be seen, the second main function of culture is to control it. No society has ever comprehensively banned all interpersonal physical force: some level of aggression is always legitimate in certain contexts, and cultures of violence are less aimed at ending violence per se than in channelling and shaping it. Having drawn lines of legitimacy around some kinds of force, of course, a society wages war against those sorts which remain. However, 'controlling' violence means much more than prohibition; it involves not only the negative condemnation of illegitimate force but also the positive support (or even celebration) of legitimate force. Seeing violence as 'socially useful' sits uneasily with the modern truism that 'violence never solved anything'; however, violence's social functions arise from its sources in psychology and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. If violence is 'near-inevitable' in some of these relationships (in contrast to it being merely

culturally learned), it is socially useful to provide a structured cultural form which allows it to be used while also being contained. Two relevant examples are ritualized male fighting and the notion of vengeance.

The main form of public violence in most societies involves inter-male antagonisms, and much of it has historically been ritualized.[24] Martin Daly and Margo Wilson suggest that there is a cross-cultural 'logic' to male conflict, arguing that it has been the rule rather than the exception across human history.[25] Typically, men's altercations are seen as socially legitimate by at least a large subsection of the population, for whom they are a way of managing the distribution of masculine status. This legitimacy is typically conditional upon adherence to rules ranging from complicated combat rituals to less elaborate assumptions about where, when and how disputes can be settled, honour defended and manhood proven. The social function of such fighting cultures is twofold, enabling a public arena within which masculine honour can be won and defended while enclosing those conflicts within socially acceptable boundaries. The logic of male fighting is rooted in evolutionary psychology, but it is also a question of social structure; physical force is a means by which hierarchies of power are negotiated, and 'violence between men, as a solution to an argument or to save face or status, is most prevalent among working-class, poor, and disenfranchised young men'.[26] Particularly for poor young men, the resort to violence can be a rational strategy to gain status. Cultures of violence provide restrictions on how such conflicts should play out; although the 'rules' can be broken, prevailing cultural codes give people a coherent framework for evaluating their own behaviour and that of others.

The social value of limiting violence is clear; however, what about another – from our modern perspective less pleasant – function: enabling violence? What, for instance, is the social value of legitimized vengeance? The risk-taking and obsession with honour which characterizes many male social interactions are often seen as products of social dysfunction, and retribution has a particularly bad reputation in light of its association with emotions we have been taught to despise and political forces which many find distressing. However, vengeance has been a legitimate motive (to varying degrees) for physical aggression in all societies, at least in part because it has proven to be useful. It has been argued that an ingrained sense of injustice – a perception of a moral debt which needs to be paid as a result of a wrong – is the product of a fairly straightforward psychological imperative 'to reckon justice and administer punishment by a calculus which ensures that violators reap no advantage from their misdeeds'.[27] While vengeful violence sometimes eliminates those

who have seriously violated social norms to their own advantage, its mere threat aims at deterring such violations in the first place. The precise calibration and forms of punishment have, of course, varied, with the 'calculus' of vengeance (like the limits of 'self-defence') enmeshed in cultural notions of justice and the respective ranking of various misdeeds. Vengeance is often regarded as bloodthirsty and anarchic, and out-of-control feuds or vendettas can indeed pose a serious threat to the local social order. This is why most states have sought to suppress extra-judicial retribution whenever capable of doing so. Nonetheless, however unpalatable, the social utility of retributive violence should not be ignored, particularly in unpoliced or lightly policed societies which are particularly reliant upon forms of individual or community self-policing. Such violence codes are far from ancient relics, and they tend to reappear whenever state justice is (or is seen as) inadequate. Elijah Anderson has argued that a retributive 'code of the street' in modern American inner-cities is 'a cultural adaptation to a profound lack of faith in the police and the judicial system – and in others who would champion one's personal security'.[28] This phenomenon is not confined to the Philadelphian streets that Anderson took as his topic of study. I would suggest that it is universal.

Perhaps part of the modern unease about vengeance relates to a complicated tension: although most people are probably happy to relinquish personal responsibility for vengeance, the state's use of this power remains unsettling, particularly due to the vast imbalance in power between the state and the targeted individual. Similarly, the relationship between public violence and masculinity has become more tenuous than in earlier periods. However, as they remain, inter-male competition and retribution have been important parts of all cultures of violence. This does not mean, of course, that there is an automatic link between these motivations and violence per se (nor does it mean such violence is 'natural' and should be simply accepted). When given the opportunity to gain honour or to deter social disruption through other means, most people often do so. Sometimes, however, the underlying psychological motives are untouched. As Thomas Gallant has found, the decline in public fighting rituals in the Greek Mediterranean did not destroy the local culture of honour, which was merely maintained in a different form through the courts.[29] Nonetheless, the difficulty in reforming cultures of violence emphasizes the ways in which violence is not simply an explosion of atavistic brutality, but can also be analysed according to its psychological value and social logic. These topics are also important to understanding how cultural change influences violence.

Culture, violence and change

Specific cultures of violence are indeed 'constructions' which have meaning because the people living in a given society agree that they do rather than as a result of some fixed genetic programming. Unlike natural laws, they are neither universal nor deterministic. Moreover, attitudes about physical aggression are influenced by other cultural phenomena, such as attitudes towards sport, gender, fairness, public space, drinking, property or politics. A decline in the acceptability of 'brutal' sports may have a broader effect on attitudes towards violence, just as a greater insistence on public propriety more generally will diminish the acceptance of street-fighting. Such patterns may be based on a crucial aspect of psychology: as John Corbin has suggested, 'Concern for coherence is a basic engine of human action'.[30] We can see this 'engine' at work when attitudes towards violence seem to take on a life of their own, as efforts are made to reduce or remove apparent contradictions within them. Revulsion towards 'cruelty' or an emphasis on civilizing 'humanity' can initially have limited aims or be intended to mainly protect a particular group in society. However, once established, new instances of cruelty are identified, contradictions in the culture of humanity can be recognized and sympathies can be broadened.[31] As such notions are successfully expanded, their deployment can become increasingly subtle. For example, the notion that an attack on a 'helpless' victim was the characteristic of a 'brutal' assault could, in the nineteenth century, extend from women and children to include various categories of 'defenceless' men.[32]

Another area in which 'culture' is especially important relates to education, including not only institutionalized learning but also all of the means through which attitudes and beliefs are passed on across generations. Here, culture has had a great impact on violence, not least because – if one accepts that there is a social 'logic' to violence – it is less remarkable that physical aggression occurs than that cultures of violence have been able to contribute to its long-term decline.[33] Gatrell has stressed the powers of social learning in reshaping affective relationships over time:

> Recommended by a culture's prophets and teachers and internalized by dominant groups, shifts in affective patterns develop their own momentum as rules are elaborated. Although some reactions operate automatically, the feelings associated with them are intellectually mediated and highly socialized.[34]

The historically specific intellectual mediation of such automatic reactions, urges or predispositions makes up a large portion of what we understand as 'culture'. The seeming independence of culture also appears to be demonstrated by the shifting relationship between the objective reality of physical aggression and the attitudes towards it, wherein the latter appear to be almost limitlessly variable. What is more, few complex societies possesses a single, all-encompassing culture of violence, rather, it is likely that there will be multiple and competing cultures of violence.

However, while cultures of violence are social constructions, they are not arbitrary ones. As I have described, they serve similar functions in all societies: identifying violence, clarifying who is violent and attempting to contain violence by establishing rules for its legitimate deployment. Rather than an amorphous force detached from the social structure, culture is produced among individuals who are positioned within particular relationships with one another. Violence related to trespasses of social boundaries, honour and possession is ubiquitous.[35] The nature and stability of these boundaries – and the security of honour and possession – will, in return, be decisive in the formation of cultures of violence. Thus any analysis of how cultures of violence change requires attention to such basic issues as security and fear. Fear can, of course, be artificially manipulated, and studies of crime 'panics' have shown how suddenly the perception of violence can outstrip actual threats.[36] Nevertheless, attention to such extreme cases should not overshadow the possibility that most people are able to evaluate everyday, local dangers with some accuracy. As in the case of the 'code of the street' identified by Elijah Anderson, the actual degree of physical security in a particular network of social relationships will have a profound effect on the culture of violence which emerges from it. More generally, comparatively high levels of intolerance towards defensive violence will be unlikely in societies characterized by constant threats to individual security, and it is improbable that increasing sensitivities will develop amidst material and social breakdown. In the same way, personal vengeance and ritualized violent dispute settlement will be more acceptable in societies with weak and/or distant state authorities than in those with well-functioning courts and police forces. The specific form of rituals or the precise calibration of vengeance codes will, of course, vary; nevertheless, they will have recognizably similar functions, and the extent to which they change will be tied to the nature of local social relationships. Cultures of violence are not only products of past tradition but also of present need.

This is one of the reasons why cultures of violence are so often resistant to change, such as the imposition of new forms of state authority over populations committed to personal vengeance. Although Norbert Elias's theory of the 'process of civilization' might superficially appear optimistic about the possibility of controlling physical aggression, one of its strengths, in my view, is its emphasis on the immense shifts in 'social power' which are essential to 'civilized conduct':

> Classes living permanently in danger of starving to death or of being killed by enemies can hardly develop or maintain those stable restraints characteristic of the more civilized types of conduct. To instil and maintain a more stable super-ego agency, a relatively high standard of living and a fairly high degree of security are necessary.[37]

While individuals or certain social groups might advocate reforming a culture of violence that no longer serves their interests, making that leap may be relatively challenging for those in other classes or groups. Being the first to refrain from violence (or its threat) entails risks as long as older understandings still hold sway. Assuming that a demonstrated willingness to resort to violence is itself a weapon, it is difficult to be the first to 'disarm'.[38] Such forms of relative domestic social disarmament are possible, as the past several centuries in Europe have shown. The evolution of authorities which have taken unto themselves (and jealously guarded) the power to settle disputes and to mete out retribution on behalf of wronged individuals – thereby relieving them of the responsibility of doing so themselves – changed social relationships. This meant a concurrent 'cultural' shift; however, it was not only driven by a growth in sympathy or an abstract sense that less violence is better or more 'civilized'. Reductions in violence have been hard won, the outcome of long-term processes of state building, new levels of material security and profound changes in interpersonal relations. Such broad shifts were the preconditions for the historical agency which 'civilizing' reformers have undoubtedly enjoyed. In combating cultures of honour (a task which, one must note, continues), Europeans have relied upon state compulsion, the provision of alternatives to violence and the production of a social reality in which, for most people, the resort to violence is usually more damaging to status than its avoidance. Here again, society and culture interact with psychology: social pressures to refrain from using violence can only be effective if exerted upon people with psychological means of self-restraint, predispositions towards social conformity and a concern for status. The provision of alternative forms

of dispute settlement have to satisfy the need for security and the calculus of 'justice'. 'Respectability' is not merely a cultural notion, but also involves the distribution of economic resources, one's place in a social hierarchy and a psychology of social recognition. Social organization, psychological mechanisms and culture are mutually interactive, and cultural change is not simply about culture.

Conclusion

Cultures of violence are important, as they are the frameworks through which physical aggression is understood, justified, condemned and controlled. Cultural trends such as a growth in 'sensibility' or 'humanitarianism' in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are evidence that increasing numbers of people accepted the new narratives on pain and suffering which were being generated. However, to see such developments purely in cultural terms would underestimate the importance of social figurations, institutional change and evolved psychology. 'Cultures of honour' are more likely to develop in some kind of socio-economic contexts than others, and the reactions and attitudes which compose them have a physio-psychological basis.[39] If economy, society and psychology have been crucial in building such 'cultures', then it is also likely that they have been (and will be) elements in their decline. Those historical developments which have engaged with the most effective 'levers for humane social change' in human nature seem to have had the largest impact on cultures of violence.[40] Understanding this topic will require interdisciplinary, 'vertically integrated' explanations on different levels.[41] As Daly and Wilson argue,

> the concept of natural selection explains behavior at a distinct level complementary to the explanations afforded by motivational theories. A psychologist might be satisfied to explain the behavior of two men fighting a duel in terms of self-esteem or status or face. An evolutionary psychologist will also want to clarify why the human psyche should be such as to value intangible social resources enough to risk death over them.[42]

Because cultural historians, like psychologists, tend to be interested in more immediate levels of explanation does not mean that other levels are inconsequential, especially if they want to make explanatory judgements which extend beyond a specific time and place.

Although the diversity of cultural responses to violence suggests that the number of social forms which can serve psychological predispositions towards personal security, family life, the formation of hierarchies or sexual competition is large, it is not infinite. Arising out of a variety of social relationships – all of which are shaped by aspects of power[43] – violence is a common resource for dealing with distinct kinds of interpersonal tensions and social contexts. The positive side of the process of civilization has been the extent to which these tensions have been reduced or have proven capable of alternative means of settlement; however, a careful consideration of this process also highlights the enormous long-term economic, political and social effort involved in producing civilizing effects, the extent to which they have been resisted and the tenuous nature of the resulting social and psychological arrangements. The relative pacification of most of contemporary Europe may obscure the 'fragile construct' of civility, and despite the general containment of 'collective passions',

> there have always been fractures through which violence recurrently breaks free. Come a collapse in the structures of authority or in the material rewards which sustain our social collaborations, and repudiated instincts are easily unleashed.[44]

The process of civilization is constantly dynamic; it is thus always potentially reversible:

> The armor of civilized conduct would crumble very rapidly if, through a change in society, the degree of insecurity that existed earlier were to break in upon us again, and if danger became as incalculable as it once was. Corresponding fears would soon burst the limits set to them today.[45]

In a seeming paradox, cultures of violence are both robust and fragile. On the one hand, they influence some of the most fundamental beliefs of large numbers of people, thereby playing a role in shaping countless individual conflicts and, alternatively, enabling and repressing many kinds of serious and petty cruelties. However, on an almost daily basis, the contemporary world confronts us with evidence of how rapidly the intricate rules and prohibitions imposed by such cultures can break down. Cultural historians of violence would do well to keep such lessons in mind.

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Part II
Early Modern Perspectives

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4

Collective Violence, Social Drama and Rituals of Rebellion in Late Medieval and Early Modern England

Andy Wood

Rituals of rebellion, protest and resistance deserve a book-length study.[1] This would be a demanding enterprise. The author of such a work would need the skills of a folklorist, an ethnographer and a social historian; and the work would have to transcend traditional chronological divisions between the medieval, early modern and modern periods.[2] This need to break down conventional periodization stems from the widespread recognition amongst historians that some rituals of rebellion persisted over long periods. These included, for instance, the rituals of inversion known to the French as charivari, or in the English West country as skimmingtons, in which men dressed as women and marched in rowdy processions while other members of the crowd beat pots and pans in what was known as 'rough music'. This particular ritual form endured in some villages into the early twentieth century. Such rituals were intended to indicate that the social or moral order had been infringed or transgressed in some way – such as common land being enclosed, or men being beaten or scolded by what were regarded as inappropriately assertive wives. Some skimmingtons might end in a collective assault upon the transgressive individual.[3] Following Max Gluckman's classic thesis, we might therefore argue that 'by allowing people to behave in normally prohibited ways', skimmingtons 'gave expression, in a reversed form, to the normal rightness of a particular kind of social order'. Thus, such rituals had the effect of 'stating moral principles by reversal'.[4] Similarly, annual perambulations of parochial boundaries during the ritual of Rogationtide, or the more infrequent perambulations

of manorial boundaries, sometimes provided a legitimating cover for the destruction of enclosures and for the assertion of collective rights over common land.[5]

Rituals of rebellion, then, are often presented as disorderly, festive occasions, in which crowds broke some rules in order to reassert others. For instance, in a society in which 'quitetude' was synonymous with order, noise was often a key element in collective disorder. In one Northamptonshire village in 1611, a land dispute led to crowd demonstrations in which the throng formed up 'with bagg pipes playeing & ringing of bells by the space of one whole daye and a nighte w[i]th halloweinge and throwing upp of hatts from the top of the [Church] Steeple'.[6] Kett's rebels marched into Norwich through St Augustine's gates 'with a drum before them'.[7] Festive culture provided rioters with a set of norms, symbols and rituals; football matches, themselves about the display of collective, youthful, playful, masculine violence sometimes provided the opportunity for enclosure riots or rebellions.[8] Other local customs also fed into crowd violence; in the Derbyshire village of Ashford in 1604, a local gentleman was assaulted by the young men of the community, who beat drums as they marched down upon him; in their answer to this allegation, the young men denied the assault, saying that they marched through the town because it was Whitsunday, and that it was the custom that the 'yo[u]ng people' went 'amaying' after evening prayer 'as they many times doe in that c[o]untrey.' Prior to the alleged assault, one of their number had suggested that they should go to Churchdale, where the alleged assault took place, 'to make merry & to drinke … as hath bin a long tyme accustomed of yo[u]nge people'.[9] Enclosure riots were about the ritualized transgression of closed space, and the reassertion of collective property; they were also about the delight that rioters might take in their sudden collective power. During riots in Gillingham forest (Dorset) in January and July 1644, the tanner John Phillipps rode on horseback amongst his fellow rioters, riding into enclosed land 'from one close to another' crying out 'I Ride in, and I Ryde out, of these Grounds at my pleasure'.[10]

In contrast to the emphasis upon inversive, festive crowd actions, this chapter looks at the presence of order within disorder, focusing upon case studies of two ritual forms which helped to control violence, structured the behaviour of crowds, and (in the second case) enabled rioters and rebels to communicate with their governors. No pretence, in other words, is made towards any overall coverage of rituals of rebellion. First of all, the chapter looks at the meaning of the military-style organization, rituals and behaviour which sometimes influenced the behaviour of rebels and rioters. Thereafter, it develops an interpretation of a ritual

through which negotiations between rebels and rulers were conducted, focusing upon the ways in which this ritual form inhibited rebel violence. It concludes by looking at one particular moment in which collective violence resulted from the deliberate transgression of that ritual. Throughout, the objective is not only to describe and catalogue these ritual forms, but also to analyse them. To that end, Max Gluckman and Victor Turner's different interpretations of rituals of rebellion are invoked, and their applicability to late medieval and early modern England scrutinized. Ritual is here understood as 'peformative: [rituals] … are acts done … they are codified, repeatable actions'. As Edward Muir has put it, 'A ritual is a formalized, collective, institutionalized kind of repetitive action'. This may seem clear enough; but as Muir goes on: 'Rituals are inherently ambiguous in their function and meaning. They speak with many voices.' As he concludes from this: 'Ritual then is basically a social activity that is repetitive, standardized, a model or a mirror, and its meaning is inherently ambiguous'.[11] This chapter starts by developing Muir's first insight – that ritual can be about order and known roles – but it closes by expanding upon his second proposal: that the meanings of ritual are open to contestation, manipulation and transgression.

* * *

Early modern historians have recognized that legal procedures and forms of local government organization strongly influenced the behaviour of rebels and rioters.[12] The same realization is starting to be made by historians of late medieval rebellion.[13] Especially important was popular involvement in law enforcement, militia organization and local government. The nature of rebellion and riot was often influenced by rebels' prior experience of such organization. In the 1381 Peasants' Rising, the rebels on the Isle of Thanet (Kent) raised the hue and cry in order to gather their forces together.[14] Almost two hundred years later, in the course of a dispute over a farm in Hazelbadge (Derbyshire), the tenants of a nearby village were grouped into bands which bore a close similarity to militia companies; they hid amongst the 'mountaynes & rockes' until their leaders displayed an 'ensigne or Flagge, or that by a certen kynde of watche worde or lureinge theye sho[u]ld be called to rescue, yf nede req[ui]red'. At the watchword being spread, and the Flag displayed, a crowd of 60 people assembled with weapons, 'arrayed in warlike man[ne]r'.[15]

Forms of militia organization, in which every man aged between 16 and 60 was legally required to take part, strongly influenced popular protest. In 1600, a dispute over coal mining rights in Wendesbury (Staffordshire) culminated in riots, in which 200 men were organized into

'companies' led by 'guides or Capteynes … under captaines lieuten[a]nts or officers' and preceded by a piper. They marched around the town of Wendesbury, threatening to kill the lord of the manor.[16] About 1593 the Derbyshire magnates Bess of Hardwick and William Cavendish mobilized their tenants against their local opponent Francis Leake; the crowd was arrayed as if 'it had bene in time of warr or as if they should have gone to the winning of some great force or the fighting out of some bloddie battell'.[17] In 1578, the tenants of Wrockwardine (Shropshire), were driven from their common land by the inhabitants of the neighbouring village, who arrayed themselves 'in battell arraye and marched upp and downe', striking and gesticulating with their weapons.[18] In the course of a dispute over the enclosure of Thorpe Moor in Kirkbyshire (Yorkshire) in 1607, the local gentlemen Fabian Heywood and Tristram Duffield, who were 'termed Captaynes and Justices', led a 'greate companye of men', numbering 400, which they divided into three troops, onto the disputed land; the men were armed with staves and witnesses explained that they 'seemed to be as great a Companie as if it had beene to have gone to a muster'. Nine years earlier, the Earl of Derby complained that the inhabitants of Kirkbyshire had broken down the enclosures he had made upon their commons; the Earl explained that they were 'sett and appointed in battale arraye with wards and wings against anie resistants'.[19] A letter sent by the inhabitants of Mere (Wiltshire) sent in April 1643 to their neighbours in Gillingham (Dorset) made clear the influence of militia experience upon rioters' behaviour. The letter informed the people of Gillingham that the inhabitants of Mere intended to break down enclosures in Gillingham Forest on the following day, and requested that their neighbours meet them 'when you heare oure drummes and Musketts, and every man to come Receive his place, w[i]th theire Captaine or Captaines'.[20] Jack Cade's rebellion of 1450, like the Pilgrimage of Grace of 1536, was organized through the rituals of militia organization. Scribes drew up orders for the mustering of men which messengers delivered to local constables, who gathered men together at traditional muster grounds.[21]

Mirroring this militia-style organization, leaders of popular risings sometimes took the ironic title of Captain: Jack Cade was variously known as the 'Captain of Kent' and as 'Captain John Amendalle'.[22] Robert Kett was 'Captain Kett'; the leader of the Kentish and Sussex rebels in 1549 was 'Captain Commonwealth'; the northern rebels of 1536 and 1537 were led by 'Captain Poverty'; likewise, when asked who was their leader, representatives of the rebels at Lavenham in 1525 replied 'that Povertie was their capteine, the which with his cousine

Necessitie, had brought them to that dooing'.[23] Enclosure rioters in Kirkbyshire (Yorkshire) in 1607 were led by a local woman, Dorothy Dawson, 'termed and comonly called for her bould and audacious attemptes *Captaine Dorrothie*'; food rioters at Maldon (Essex) in 1629 were led by 'Captain' Anne Carter; the Midland rebels of 1607 were led by a man known as 'Captain Pouch' (who took his *nom de guerre* from a pouch which he carried, within which he claimed was a royal warrant authorizing the destruction of enclosures; when the pouch was opened, it was found to contain 'onely a peece of greene cheese').[24]

Rebels' use of militia organization was only one element within the format of late medieval and early modern popular protest. Probably the most prominent form of rebel organization was that based upon local government networks. As Michael Bush observes, at Louth (Lincolnshire), where the 1536 risings began, the rebellion 'was organised exactly in accordance with the normal administration of the region, with the rebels divided up into the wapentakes from which they came and with each wapentake captained by its leading gentlemen'. Rebels were organized by mustering to the sounds of church bells; those assembled then swore an oath of allegiance to the commons. This standardized format was spelt out in one rebel letter, which advised its recipients to follow this strategy.[25] The sound of church bells called men to arms and thereby became a symbol of popular rebellion; one of the 1381 rebels' letters by which the insurrection was spread stated that 'Jon Balle gre[e]tyth [y]ow wel[l]e alle & do[th] [y]ow to understande he ha[th] rungen [y]oure belle'; 'to ring awake' became a synonym for popular insurrection. As Stephen Justice has observed, 'the bell of the parish church, which issued summonses and alarms [was] the public voice of the village's self-policing'.[26] The everyday forms of village organization fed into insurrection in other ways too: in 1536 and in 1549, rebel forces were maintained by public subscriptions, organized on a parochial or township basis. At a muster of rebels in Richmond (Yorkshire) in 1536, 'every company was divided into parishes with the inhabitants of each parish electing four captains to direct the rest'.[27] Key local officers were caught up in the organization of rebellion: wapentake bailiffs, manorial bailiffs and urban bailiffs all played important parts in the organization of the 1536 risings. One rebel letter was addressed to the bailiffs and constables of the manor of Furness Fells in October 1536, commanding them to muster men in support of the rising.[28] Both in 1450 and in 1549, the Hundred was the key unit of rebel organization.[29] Rebel leadership also assumed the forms of manorial organization: Robert Pulleyn and Nicholas Musgrave, the leaders of one of the Yorkshire rebel hosts

in 1536, were advised by a council that was organized 'like a manorial court' including 'twenty-four quests. In its proceedings it consulted village constables … it met frequently to formulate policy and even to make "new laws" '.[30] The key point here was that this behaviour was not any simple mimicry of governmental patterns: rebels did not simply copy forms of local administration and law enforcement; instead, in invoking local government and militia organization, they fell into known roles. Rebels were, in other words, demonstrating their capacity for self-organization. For, as Jim Sharpe has emphasized, in this period the law was a part of popular culture.[31]

The rituals of popular rebellion drew upon manorial, parochial, hundredal and borough forms of organization because these represented the authentic forms of popular self-government. Obviously, there was a pragmatic function to rebels' appropriation of such forms: mustering forces by ringing church bells drew men of military age together; snatching hold of local government networks enabled rebellion to be spread over a large area at speed.[32] But there was also an important *symbolic* meaning to the use of these organizational mechanisms. In adopting these forms, rebels were able to spell out a central aspect of their ideology of popular protest. In plebeian rebels' bottom-up vision of the late medieval and early modern English state, the commons were considered to represent the foundation of legitimate authority. This was most visible in moments of rebellion: as Bush notes, 'Central to the [1536] uprising … was an outraged, independent and self-conscious commons urgently demanding redress'.[33] The autonomous political authority of the commons was linked to that of the crown: this was displayed in the oaths which new recruits to the rebel cause swore in order to bind themselves into the insurrection: in 1381, the rebels would ask 'With whom haldes yow?' To which the correct answer was 'Wyth Kyng Richarde and wyth the trew comunes.' The 1536 rebels' oaths similarly situated the King alongside the rebellions commons. Thus, in their oath the rebels swore 'to be true to God and to the King and to the commons'.[34] Militia-style organization represented a ritual demonstration of this view of the polity; as Bohna suggests, 'the institutional basis of Cade's revolt suggests the legalism of the rebels' political worldview'.[35] It was therefore not only in the *moment* of rebellion, but also in its *organizational rituals* that the popular political culture of late medieval and early modern England was revealed with greatest clarity.

* * *

It was not only collective violence and demonstration that took ritual forms. This could also be true of the way in which rebellion ended: both

negotiation between ruler and ruled and the conclusion of protest in the interests of the former sometimes finished with plebeians abasing themselves: kneeling or lying on the ground; crying out declarations of allegiance to the monarch; or assuming the dress of penitents or felons – wearing nightshirts, and placing halters about their necks.[36] Shakespeare depicted one such scene towards the end of *Henry VI Part Two*, in which Jack Cade's rebels, seeking a pardon, appear before Henry VI 'with halters on their necks'. Upon the king pardoning them, the rebels cry out 'God save the King! God save the King!'[37] The historical reality of Henry's grant of pardon was rather more degrading for the rebels than in Shakespeare's reconstruction. Henry was greeted at the rebels' muster grounds at Blackheath by thousands of former insurrectionaries, 'prostrating themselves before him naked to the waist and with cords tied around their necks'. Likewise, before Henry would grant a pardon to the Sussex rebels, they were required to 'prostrate themselves to the ground, stripped to the waist' in the streets of Chichester.[38] These ritual humiliations prevented the pardoned rebels from becoming the victims of royal retribution during the winter of repression that followed Cade's rebellion, a bloody sequence of hanging, drawing and quartering which one Kentish man described as a 'harvest of heads'.

In 1497, following the end of Perkin Warbeck's rising, Henry VII visited Exeter to dispense justice upon the captured commotioners. As in 1450, at first, the king oversaw a sequence of executions. But after a while, due to the large numbers involved, Henry had the prisoners assembled in the churchyard of St. Peters, 'where they all appeared bare-headed, in their shirts, and with halters about their necks'. Observing the prisoners from a window constructed for the purpose in the city treasurer's house, Henry looked down upon the defeated rebels, 'who shouted and cried for pardon. At length, when the king had paused, hee made a speach unto them, exhorting them to obedience, and in hope he should thencefoorth find them dutifull, he pardoned than all: whereat they all made a great shout, gave the king thanks, and hurled awaie their halters.'[39]

Henry VIII pursued a similar policy in his suppression of the 'Evil May Day' anti-foreigner rising of 1517 in London, in which the servants and youth of the city had played a leading part. At first, the Crown responded with widespread repression. Lord Edmund Howard, son of the duke of Norfolk and holder of the office of knight marshal, 'shewed no mercie, but extreme crueltie to the poore yoonglings in their execution'. On 22 May 1517, 411 captured rioters appeared before the king, 'bound in ropes all along, one after another in their shirts, and everie one a

halter about his necke'. Cardinal Wolsey said that they deserved to be hanged. 'Then all the prisoners togither cried Mercie gratious lord, mercie.' At that point, the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk and the earls of Shrewsbury, Essex, Wiltshire and Surrey

> besought his grace of mercie at whose sute the king pardoned them all. Then the cardinall gave unto them a good exhortation to the great gladness of the hearers. Now, when the generall pardon was pronounced all the prisoners showted at once & altogither cast up their halters into the hall roofe so that the king might perceive they were none of the discreetest sort.

Those who had evaded capture, upon hearing that the prisoners had been pardoned they came before the king at Westminster 'stripped … into their shirts with halters and came in among the prisoners willinglie, to be partakers of the kings pardon … . Then were all the gallowes within the citie taken downe and manie a good praier saied for the king, and the citizens tooke more heed to their servants'.[40]

Halters also made their appearance in the suppression of the risings of 1536 and 1537. In October 1536, Henry VIII instructed that the Yorkshire rebels should suffer either 'by the dent of sworde or ells yelde them soo w[i]t[h] halters aboute their necks'. The rebels of the following year were paraded wearing halters.[41] In what seems to be the final occasion upon which halters were worn by defeated rebels, the captured insurrectionaries who had been led to London by Sir Thomas Wyatt were paraded before the victorious Queen Mary 'kneeling all, with halters about their necks … her Grace mercifully pardoned, to the number of 600: who immediate[l]y thereupon, with great shouts, casting their halters up into the air, cried "God save your Grace! God save your Grace!" '[42]

Two key points emerge from this cascade of examples: first, we should note that the crown combined severe initial repression with subsequent pardons, a carrot-and-stick approach which enabled the authorities to re-establish order and execute leading malefactors, while at the same time appearing just and merciful. Second, the circumstances surrounding the grant of pardon to the Evil May Day rioters highlight the stage-managed, dramatic quality of the crown's response to disorder, in which cardinal Wolsey's initial demand for mass executions is followed by the leading noblemen of the realm pleading for a pardon. The effect was to underline the force which the crown could potentially deploy, while simultaneously legitimating elite authority in the aftermath of large-scale violence and disorder.

The stage-management of the crown's grant of collective pardons to defeated rebels, together with the ritual assumption of the trappings of penitence and submission by the rebels, can be interpreted through two (not mutually exclusive) models derived from anthropology. First, to return to Max Gluckman's analysis of the rituals of rebellion, Gluckman argued that such rituals 'are intended to preserve and even to strengthen the established order'. Despite its functionalist tinge, Gluckman's analysis attempted to deal with the question of conflict. He recognized that 'conflicts are built into a system of social order'; Gluckman's point was not, then, that small-scale societies are conflict-free, but rather that rituals of reversal and rebellion helped to smooth over those conflicts, and so to sustain the existent distribution of power. Thus, rituals of rebellion restate 'both the cohesion and the conflicts which exist within that cohesion. The conflicts can be stated openly wherever the social order is unquestioned and indubitable – where there are rebels, and not revolutionaries. In such a system, the licensed statement of conflict can bless the social order'.[43] Gluckman's model, derived from his study of mid-twentieth-century Zulu and Swazi society, is of course not fully transferable to the rituals of late medieval and early modern popular protest. Most obviously, the rebellions with which we have dealt were not in any way 'licensed' by the state. But Gluckman's interpretation does help to explain one of the central features of the rituals of pardoning. The effect of the nightshirts, halters and declarations of loyalty to the monarch was symbolically to restore the social order, highlighting the paternal and beneficial nature of authority, and the grace of the crown. What emerged, therefore, from these rituals was a strengthened normative order, its authority renewed in the aftermath of a dangerous challenge.

The second interpretive model which I would like to pluck from social anthropology derives from the work of Gluckman's student, Victor Turner. Turner developed a concept labelled 'social drama', a term which was designed to explain those social processes which led from initial conflict to either subsequent compromise or permanent division. Turner explained that 'a social drama first manifests itself as the breach of a norm, the infraction of a rule of morality, law, custom or etiquette in some public arena'. Thus, social dramas arise 'in conflict situations. Typically, they have four main phases of public action'. In the first of these, there is the 'breach of regular, norm – governed social relations … within the same system of social relations … such a breach is symbolised by the public, overt breach or deliberate nonfulfilment of some crucial norm regulating the intercourse of the parties. To flout such a norm is

one obvious symbol of dissidence'. In the second, 'a phase of mounting *crisis* supervenes, during which, unless the breach can be sealed off quickly within a limited area of social interaction, there is a tendency for the breach to widen and extend until it becomes coextensive with some dominant cleavage in the widest set of relevant social relations to which the conflicting or antagonistic parties belong'. In his formulation of this second phase, Turner develops an insight which is useful to understanding the rituals of rebellion in late medieval and early modern England: 'This second stage, *crisis*, is always one of those turning points or moments of danger and suspense, when a true state of affairs is revealed'. That is to say, that the nature of power relations is stripped bare and so rendered publicly visible. In Turner's third phase, '*redressive action* … certain adjustive and redressive "mechanisms" … informal or formal, institutionalised or ad hoc, are swiftly brought into operation by leading or structurally representative members of the disturbed social system'. These '*redressive or remedial procedures* … range from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal jural and legal machinery and … to the performance of public ritual'. The final phase 'consists either of the *reintegration* of the disturbed social group or of the social recognition and legitimization of irreparable schism between the contending parties'.[44]

Finally, we will now turn to look at how Gluckman and Turner's insights enable a closer understanding of medieval and early modern rituals of rebellion, compromise and conflict. We will do so with reference to key turning points in two East Anglian popular insurrections. The first of these was the rising in 1525 at Lavenham (Suffolk) against the Amicable Grant, a novel form of taxation levied upon the population at the instigation of cardinal Wolsey. The second rising was that led by Robert Kett in Norfolk in 1549 against the perceived oppressions and corruption of the gentry.[45]

The Lavenham rebels of 1525 had agreed to rise 'at the sounding of bells … with the men of the towns of Kent, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk'. Thousands of labourers, farmers and weavers converged on the town, while others in the surrounding countryside had agreed to rise at the sounding of the great spell of Lavenham parish church. In response, the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk were dispatched to raise an army 'to check the rising and coming together of the commonalty'. Suffolk wanted to attack the rebels at once; but Norfolk, realizing that his own levies were not to be relied upon, preferred to negotiate: 'A long conference ensued, and the lords agreed to hear the people's grievances'. Sixty rebel representatives were then sent from Lavenham, 'in their nightshirts' to

meet the dukes; Norfolk and Suffolk offered to intercede with the king on their behalf, and the representatives returned to Lavenham to convey this offer to their comrades. This the rebels decided to reject, preferring instead to fight the dukes. But they were unable to rally further forces due to the prior removal of the clapper of the great bell of Lavenham by a loyal clothier. The rebels were therefore forced to return to negotiations. Again, sixty of the rebels appeared before the dukes 'in their shirts, bareheaded, and kneeling down'. Following discussions with the leader of the rebel delegation, an aged weaver called John Greene, the dukes again agreed to represent the rebels' complaints to the crown. They then arrested the rebel leaders and conveyed them to London, where they were set before the court of Star Chamber. Cardinal Wolsey reproved the rebel leaders for their rising, at which point, upon his knees, John Greene explained the impossibility of the commons' meeting the crown's fiscal demands, crying out 'Merciful lord, we beseech you, for the glory of God, to hear me unfold the poverty of our lives'. After hearing Greene's representations, Wolsey paid for the costs incurred by the rebel leaders during their imprisonment and gave each of them 90 pieces of silver.[46]

The example of the Lavenham rising can be taken as support for Gluckman's view that 'the licensed ritual of protest and of rebellion is effective so long as there is no querying of the order within which the ritual of protest is set, and the group itself will endure'.[47] In this formulation, rebellion is not a destabilizing force, but rather is incorporated within existent social relations, providing a mechanism which allows complaints to be voiced without challenging the dominant order. Certainly, this coincides with other evidence concerning both popular and elite views of rebellion in the period. Confronted with popular insurrection, gentlemen often assumed that the purpose of the rising was to open negotiations with the elite, and therefore attempted to speak with the rebels. This happened, for instance, at the beginning of the rising at Sampford Courtney (Devon) in 1549 – although on that occasion, the gentlemen were violently rebuffed.[48] There is also evidence that labouring people thought of rebellion as a collective act of petitioning. The intention of would-be rebels at Walsingham (Norfolk) in 1537 was to organize an insurrection in order to petition the crown: one of the leaders of the attempted rising, George Guisborough, observed that 'ther was moche penery and scarcenes among the Comons and poor folks for remedy thereof he thought it were very well don that ther might be an insurrection p[ro]cured whereby … he thought after the kyng and his Councell had knowledge of it he wuld take suche an

order that a redres shuld be hadde in theis things that were not wele'.[49] Likewise, in one of his bills, the leader of the Pilgrimage of Grace, Robert Aske, referred to a gathering of rebels as an 'assembl[i]e and petic[i]on to the kyng'.[50] In the aftermath of insurrections, plebeians likewise assumed that gentlemen would be willing to transmit their views to the Crown. In March 1537, a few months after the Lincolnshire rising, Sir William Parr was sent to Louth (the initial location of the rebellion) to carry out public executions on the market day; he reported that outside the town he was met by 'xl of the moost honest men of Louthe', who asked him to intercede with Henry VIII on the behalf of their town.[51]

Popular rebellion might therefore be considered as a collective form of petitioning, backed by symbolic or actual violence. As Richard Hoyle has recognized, 'the characteristic process of popular politics might be seen to be the formulation and submission of a petition.'[52] This evidence presents us with the opportunity to read popular rebellion in functionalist terms: according to Gluckman's interpretation, insurrection represents a mechanism within an established system of political authority and social relations. The 1525 rising at Lavenham, together with the wider view of rebellion as a type of collective petitioning with violence, might also be conceptualized through Turner's concept of social drama. Certainly, it is possible to read the events of 1525 in terms of Turner's four stages in social drama. First, a breach was effected by the transgression of the rules that united the social order: this took the form of the state's initial attempt to levy excessive and unjustified taxation. Turner's second phase, that of the crisis, was the rising itself. Third, in Turner's terms, redressive action occurred as the representatives of the rebels came before the dukes in their nightshirts and knelt before them, followed by the dukes' subsequent representation of the rebel demands to Henry VIII and the quiet dropping of the Amicable Grant. Turner's fourth stage, reintegration, was met by the grant of a pardon to the rebels, and by Wolsey's highly symbolic gift of money to the pardoned rebel leaders.

Turner's model cannot be applied wholesale; it is perhaps too schematic and predictive to match the messiness of historical reality. Nonetheless, in the other examples discussed above, it is still possible to read the steady escalation of crisis according to Turner's first three phases. The fourth phase, that of permanent breach or of reintegration, does not match the evidence quite so neatly. The outcome of Evil May Day in 1517 might be understood as part of a continuum, part of the constant to- and fro-ing between popular agency and civic authority that held the delicate

balance between the commons and the governors of Tudor London in place – similar to Edward Thompson's analysis of social relations in eighteenth-century England.[53] The aftermath of Wyatt's rebellion of 1554 resulted in complete rebel defeat; no redressive action followed, and reintegration took place entirely on Mary's terms. Similarly, Turner's scheme follows less well for the events of 1450: although Cade's rebellion ended with the 'harvest of heads', and with the ritual submission of the surviving rebels, neither resolution nor redressive action followed; rather, the failure of the Crown to meet rebel demands added to the growing crisis that would erupt later in Henry VI's reign in civil war. Nonetheless, Turner's model is more flexible than Gluckman's. Notably, whereas Gluckman's formulation fails to make sense of outright, forcible opposition to dominant norms (it should be remembered, after all, that in 1525 the rebel representatives were only sent to discuss terms with the dukes *after* the insurrectionaries had found themselves unable to raise the countryside; the rebel representatives' deferential submission therefore resulted not from an acceptance of their social place, but rather from the frustration of their attempt to rally support from the surrounding area), Turner's concept of social drama is more open-ended, allowing either for the settlement of a dispute, or for the creation of a permanent breach.

A similar breach in social relations took place in our final example, Kett's rebellion of 1549. In the east of England, the rebellions of that year resulted from popular hostility to the corruption and depredations of the region's gentry, many of whom were thought to be beneficiaries of the material effects of the Reformation, in particular the seizure of parochial goods and of monastic estates. In Norfolk, the rebellion was characterized by a high degree of violence, which I have argued elsewhere was reflective of the particular ferocity of social conflict within that county.[54] The main rising in Norfolk was led by Robert Kett, and centred on Norwich. This city fell into rebel hands in July 1549, following a failed attempt by a herald to persuade the rebels to disarm. Subsequently, a royal force under the command of the marquis of Northampton was defeated in heavy fighting on 1 August. Thereafter, the city returned to rebel control. Robert Kett established a council on Mousehold Heath, a large area of common land on the eastern side of the city, under an oak tree labelled the Oak of Reformation. Here his council assumed legal powers, and handed down punishments to those gentlemen who were believed to have oppressed the commons. On 23 August, a second and much larger royal force arrived on the western side of the city. This was led by the earl of Warwick, who sent

another royal herald up to Mousehold Heath to negotiate with the rebel leadership.

On the herald's arrival at Mousehold Heath, the initial signs suggested that the rebels intended to follow the established rituals of popular rebellion, and to accept the offer of pardon in return for the consideration of their grievances. Like the rebels in Shakespeare's *Henry VI Part Two*, the Norfolk commotioners engaged in extravagant displays of royalism, doffing their caps and 'as it were with one mouth and consent all at once (for the most part) cried, God save King Edward, God save King Edward'. However, while awaiting the arrival of Robert Kett, the herald proceeded to infuriate the rebels by treating them to a lengthy denunciation of the sins of rebellion. In response, the rebels

> reviled the Herald on every side, with shouts and cursings: some calling him Traytor, not sent from the King: but had received his lesson from the Gentlemen, and suborned by then, to bring them a sleepe with flattering words, & faire promises to deceive them in the end … . Others said, that pardon in appearance seemed good & liberall but in truth would prove in the ende lamentable & deadly, as that which would be nothing else; but Barrels filled with Ropes and Halters.

Not to be put off, the herald continued with his denunciation, until he was interrupted by 'an ungracious boy' who 'putting down his breeches shewed his bare buttockes & did a filthy act: adding therunto more filthy words'. Appalled by this contemptuous display, a royal soldier shot the boy dead. The result was the collapse of the negotiations, and the beginning of the final battle within Norwich, which was to last for three days and nights, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. Finally, the rebels were defeated in a vicious engagement at Dussindale, two miles from Norwich. A band of rebels held out till the last; Warwick again offered them a pardon, but they answered that 'this pardon … [was] nothing else, but vessels of Ropes and Halters, and therefore [they] have decreed to die'.[55]

What, then, is to be made of this? Most obviously, Kett's rebellion clearly fails to conform to Gluckman's model; the rituals of rebellion on Mousehold Heath were deliberately transgressive, intentionally subversive of established patterns of behaviour. Again, however, Turner's notion of social drama proves sufficiently flexible to be applied to the Norfolk insurrection. First, a breach in established patterns of social relations was created by the oppressive actions of the gentry, and deepened by

the Reformation. Second, as in 1525, Turner's 'crisis stage' takes the form of popular rebellion. Third, an abortive version of Turner's 'redressive action' was proposed by the herald: a pardon, in return for the consideration of the rebel grievances. Fourth, and most crucial, instead of reintegration and the settlement of the dispute, the social drama leads to schism. This takes two forms: the Rabelaisian behaviour of the 'ungracious boy' who defecated in front of the herald; and the defeated rebels' rejection of Warwick's final offer of a pardon.

At these points, the established rituals of rebellion were more than merely transgressed; they were rendered devoid of meaning. As Edward Muir suggests, rituals 'exist in the transience of the moment, and when they fail to summon the expected response, they are empty, dead, "mere rituals" '.[56] The rebels' language is significant: both in their confrontation with the Herald on Mousehold Heath, and in their final rejection of Warwick's offer of a pardon, they inverted the meaning of 'Ropes and Halters', presenting them not as symbols of plebeian contrition (as in 1497, 1517, 1525 and 1554), but instead as nooses – emblems, that is, of violent repression rather than subtle negotiation. Both for Gluckman and for Turner, rituals represent depictions of the social order. This remains a key insight. But as potent symbols of the social order, rituals therefore constitute a potential site at which the existent distribution of power can be challenged.[57] This is what the 'ungracious boy' achieved on Mousehold Heath, in an excremental display of contempt for the established patterns of negotiation; this is also what the rebels achieved in turning the meaning of halters upside down. Rituals of rebellion and negotiation therefore became a field of conflict, rather than a mechanism of legitimation.

Notes

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1. The two most important historical studies of ritual and crowd action both deal with early modern France: R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), chapter 2; N. Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1975), chapter 6.
2. For an important starting point, see A. Howkins and L. Merricks, ' "Wee be black as Hell": Ritual, Disguise and Rebellion', *Rural History*, IV (1993), 41–53.
3. For the two key studies of charivari, see E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common* (London: Merlin, 1991), chapter 8; Davis, *Society and Culture*, chapter 5.

For two examples of violent West country skimmingtons, see B. Howard Cunnington, *Records of the County of Wiltshire, being Extracts from the Quarter Sessions Great Rolls of the Seventeenth Century* (Devizes: Simpson & Co., 1932), pp. 64–6, 79–80.

4. M. Gluckman, *Custom and Conflict in Africa* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), pp. 116, 125.
5. For examples, see The National Archives [hereafter TNA] TNA/STAC8/98/7; TNA/STAC8/24/21; C. Holmes, *Seventeenth-Century Lincolnshire* (Lincoln: Committee for the Study of Lincolnshire History and Archaeology, 1980), p. 16.
6. TNA/STAC8/121/20.
7. B. L. Beer, ' "The commosyon in Norfolk, 1549": A Narrative of Popular Rebellion in Sixteenth-Century England', *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, VI (1976), 92. For another example, see TNA/STAC4/10/76.
8. Howard Cunnington, *Records of the County of Wiltshire*, p. 141; D. Dymond, 'A Lost Social Institution: the Camping Close', *Rural History*, I (1990), 165–92.
9. TNA/STAC8/168/25; for an earlier riot in Churchdale, see TNA/STAC2/19/270.
10. John Rylands Library, Nicholas Ms 74/10, 'Accusations against John Phillipps, November 1644'.
11. R. Schechner, 'Ritual and Performance', in T. Ingold ed., *Companion Encyclopaedia of Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 613; E. Muir, *Ritual in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 3, 5, 6.
12. D. MacCulloch, 'Kett's Rebellion in Context', *Past and Present*, LXXXIV (1979), 36–59; E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past and Present*, L (1971), 76–136.
13. Most recently in M. Bohna, 'Armed Force and Civic Legitimacy in Jack Cade's Revolt, 1450', *English Historical Review*, CXVIII (2003), 563–82.
14. S. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion: England in 1381* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), p. 65. See also W. M. Ormrod, 'The Peasants' Revolt and the Government of England', *Journal of British Studies*, XXIX (1990), 1–39.
15. TNA/STAC5/V1/25. For more on this case, see TNA/STAC5/V2/15.
16. TNA/STAC5/C41/16.
17. TNA/STAC5/L34/2.
18. TNA/STAC5/S76/16.
19. TNA/STAC8/4/3.2, 8, 18; TNA/STAC5/D23/33. For more on this dispute, see A. Wood, 'Subordination, Solidarity and the Limits of Popular Agency in a Yorkshire Valley, c.1596–1615', *Past and Present*, XCIII (2007), 41–72.
20. John Rylands Library, Nicholas Ms 73/4, 'From Meare the 24th of Aprill 1643'.
21. I. M.W. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion of 1450* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), 75; M. L. Bush, *The Pilgrimage of Grace: A Study of the Rebel Armies of October 1536* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 293, 345.
22. Harvey, *Jack Cade's Rebellion*, pp. 133, 161.
23. M. L. Bush, 'Captain Poverty and the Pilgrimage of Grace', *Historical Research*, LXXV (1992), 17–36; H. Ellis ed., *Holinshed's Chronicles*, 6 vols (London, 1807–8 [1577 and 1586]) III, p. 709; M. Bryn Davies, 'Boulogne and Calais from 1545 to 1550', *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Fouad I*, XII (1950), 61.
24. TNA/STAC8/227/3.4; TNA/STAC8/122/17; TNA/STAC8/221/1; R. B. Manning, *Village Revolts: Social Protest and Popular Disturbances in England 1509–1640* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), p. 233; J. Walter 'Grain Riots and Popular Attitudes

to the Law: Maldon and the Crisis of 1629', in J. Brewer and J. Styles eds, *An Ungovernable People: The English and their Law in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp. 47–84.

25. Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 21, 28. A wapentake, or a hundred, was a unit of local administration comprising a group of parishes.
26. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, pp. 14, 191; for 'ringing awake', see TNA/SP1/160, fo. 157r.
27. Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 56, 117, 184, 212; F. W. Russell, *Kett's Rebellion in Norfolk* (London, 1859), pp. 181–4; E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English village* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 134–5.
28. Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, pp. 74, 148, 211, 270, 325, 145, 248.
29. A. Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions and the Making of Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming), chapter 4; B. P. Wolffe, *Henry VI* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 233.
30. Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, p. 302. For another such council, see Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, p. 351.
31. J. A. Sharpe, 'The People and the Law', in B. Reay ed., *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 244–70.
32. N. Brooks, 'The Organization and Achievements of the Peasants of Kent and Essex in 1381', in H. Mayr and R. I. Moore eds, *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. H. C. Davis* (London: Hambledon, 1985), pp. 247–70.
33. Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, p. 129.
34. Justice, *Writing and Rebellion*, p. 59; Bush, *Pilgrimage of Grace*, p. 129.
35. Bohna, 'Armed force', 564.
36. For halters and nightshirts as a sign of 'abject contrition', see Muir, *Ritual*, p. 14.
37. *Henry VI Part Two*, act IV scene IX, lines 11, 22.
38. Harvey, *Jack Cade's rebellion*, pp. 152, 158.
39. Ellis, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, III, p. 519.
40. Ibid., p. 625.
41. TNA/SP1/108, fol. 18r; TNA/SP1/116, 108r–v.
42. A. F. Pollard ed., *Tudor Tracts, 1532–1588* (New York, 1964), p. 255.
43. Gluckman, *Custom*, 109, 112, 134. Gluckman reiterates this analysis in two other works: *Order and Rebellion in Tribal Africa* (London: Cohen and West, 1963), pp. 110–36, and in *Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1965), pp. 123–68. See also S. Schroter, 'Rituals of Rebellion – Rebellion as Ritual: A Theory Reconsidered', in J. Kreinath, C. Hartung and A. Deschner eds, *The Dynamics of Changing Rituals: The Transformation of Religious Rituals within their Social and Cultural Context* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 41–57. For a useful overview of the relationship between ritual and social order, see J. D. Kelly and M. Kaplan, 'History, Structure and Ritual', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, XIX (1990), 119–50.
44. V. Turner, *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), pp. 37–42; V. Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 34–5; V. Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982), pp. 70–2. For a historical application of Turner's model, see D. Rollison, *The Local Origins of Modern Society: Gloucestershire 1500–1800* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 136–48.

45. Albeit different interpretive ends, I have already discussed these two moments elsewhere: see A. Wood, ' "Poore men woll speke one daye": Plebeian Languages of Deference and Defiance in England, c.1520–1640', in T. Harris ed., *The Politics of the Excluded in Early Modern England* (Houndmills Basingtoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 67–73; 'Kett's rebellion', in C. Rawcliffe and R. Wilson eds, *Medieval Norwich* (London: Hambledon, 2004), pp. 281–3. For the 1525 rebellion, see D. MacCulloch, *Suffolk and the Tudors: Politics and Religion in an English County, 1500–1600* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986), pp. 289–99; G. W. Bernard, *War, Taxation and Rebellion in Early Tudor England: Henry VIII, Wolsey and the Amicable Grant of 1525* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986), chapter 6.
46. *HMC, Welsh MSS*, I, pp. ii–v. Holinshed adds the detail that when the dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk came to Bury St Edmunds, 'thither resorted much people of the countrie in their shirts, with halters about their neckes, meekelie desiring pardon for their offenses': Ellis, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, III, p. 710.
47. Gluckman, *Custom*, p. 130.
48. Ellis, *Holinshed's Chronicles*, III, pp. 940, 943.
49. TNA/SP1/119, fol. 36r. For more on this attempted rebellion, see C. E. Moreton, 'The Walsingham Conspiracy of 1537', *Historical Research*, LXIII (1990), 29–43.
50. TNA/SP1/107, fol. 116r.
51. TNA/SP1/116, fols. 271r–3r.
52. R. Hoyle, 'Petitioning as Popular Politics in Early Sixteenth-Century England', *Historical Research*, LXXV (2002), 367.
53. Thompson, *Customs in Common*, chapter 2; I. Archer, *The Pursuit of Stability: Social Relations in Elizabethan London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
54. Wood, *The 1549 Rebellions*, chapter 1.
55. R. Woods, *Norfolke furies and their foyle* (London, 1615), sigs. H3v, Ir–v, K3r.
56. Muir, *Ritual*, p. 2.
57. See G. Baumann, 'Ritual Implicates "Others": Rereading Durkheim in a Plural Society', in D. de Coppet ed., *Understanding Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 99, 109.

5
Vengeance in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France

Michel Nassiet

Twenty years ago interpretations of homicidal violence assumed that sixteenth-century men were unable either to master their emotions or to keep their impulses under control, and were thus prisoners of all kinds of irrational anxieties, prone to drunkenness and so on. The 'ferocity' of life was a feature of the era between the Middle Ages and the modern period, and resulted in displays of uncontrolled and spontaneous violence.[1] These assumptions were predicated upon the idea of the 'civilizing process' as conceived by Norbert Elias.[2] The followers of Elias posited an evolutionist theory of modernity, in which an ongoing process of political modernity (the modern state's legitimate monopoly of violence) combined with cultural modernity (as man learned to control his impulses). This notion has recently come under attack by Gerd Schwerhoff who has criticized the idea that interpersonal violence is derived solely from an emotional impulse and that violence only declines as man learns to control himself.[3]

There were reasons for historians of early modern France to ignore the prevalence of revenge as a form of social relationship. On the one hand, historians of the law and the state tended to view royal justice with an efficiency that it was really only to obtain much later. On the other hand, one of the main sources for the study of criminality, the royal letters of remission, concealed more cases of pre-meditated violence in the sixteenth century than it did for the later Middle Ages.[4] This was because in 1539, the edict of Villers-Cotterêts forbade royal chancery courts to grant pardons 'except legitimate ones, that is to say to perpetrators of homicide who acted to save their body and soul'.[5] Killing in self defence thus became the only remissible crime, and as a consequence supplicants had to prove that the homicide was the result of fortuitous circumstance or fit of passion, either caused by fear or induced by drunkenness.

As a result, studies that place blind trust in pardon tales seriously overestimated the role played by emotion and passionate impulses as a cause of violence.

More recently, Stuart Carroll has suggested that in early modern France, as in some other European countries, social relationships continued to be underpinned by kin-related feuds or *faides* (the Old French word), integral to which was the process of arbitration that settled disputes.[6] This chapter attempts to test his assumptions. I shall rely on contemporary commentators like Pierre L'Estoile and Brantôme, and also on three surviving corpuses of sixteenth-century letters of remission. The largest consists of letters registered by the chancery of Brittany between 1516 and 1574.[7] The second gathers letters from the Great Chancery kept in the *Archives Nationales* relating to the first quarter of 1565, a year when the king was travelling throughout his kingdom. The many letters in this corpus issued to supplicants from the provinces of Southern France permits us to extend the geographical focus of our survey.[8] And finally, a run of letters from Anjou is of interest because it stretches to the end of the sixteenth century. I will also briefly consider the ideological discourse that paralleled the decline of revenge and why this decline could not have occurred before the seventeenth century.

Revenge and kinship

Revenge was to be taken for a relative's murder or for an offence made to a relative's honour. It was a kinship duty and the duties to kin preceded all other social relationships. The duty to take revenge can be compared to the duties that the living owed to their dead kindred. The most common form of revenge was the revenge of a father's murder. If a very young son was left with this obligation, a long delay sometimes as much as a decade might result before he acted, during which time hatred was not assuaged. For instance, Guillaume Du Prat baron de Vitteaux, 'avenged the deaths of his two brothers', killing in succession their two murderers. Ten years later, in 1583, Vitteaux was himself killed in turn by the son of one of the murderers.[9] More distant kindred were revenged as well – evidence that the kin group was, in people's minds, conceived as something wider than the nuclear family and the household. In 1530, as soon as he was given notice that his uncles had been killed, a petty Breton noble, François de La Vennerie, went and searched out the culprits; he killed a man he met by chance on the pretext that he dwelled in the same parish as the suspected murderers.[10]

Revenge was not only sought for homicide but also for any assault on family honour. Criminal accusations, such as theft, and the threat of legal action were perceived as slurs on one's honour. As a consequence, revenge on those responsible for the arrest and sentencing of one's kin was perceived as legitimate. In 1531, two brothers and a first cousin, sharing the same surname, agreed to beat up and rebuke the young gentleman whom they hated because he had instituted proceedings against one of their brothers, who had subsequently been hanged.[11] This hanging had brought shame on the family name. There was a symbolic similarity between murder and dishonour because both could be repaired by vengeance.

In order to ensure that the whole community was aware that an outrage had been repaired, revenge had to be committed publicly and in full view of everyone. In Paris in 1583, 14 years after his father had been murdered, the seigneur de Mouy killed the murderer in the street in full view of a large audience, thereby stating that revenge was taken and that his honour had been restored.[12] He was also assisted by his relatives, once again demonstrating how much an act of revenge was a collective family matter. Even real battles were sometimes the result of the ways that the culture of revenge forced kindreds into opposing groups. Brantôme wrote that revenge is 'generous', meaning that it derives from the very core of the 'genus', the kin group.[13]

A husband was also expected to take revenge for the rape of his wife. Once again, it had to be done publicly and this legitimized assassination. In 1574 and 1594 two Breton noblemen assassinated their enemies who had flirted with their wives. Sometime before 1585 during the Wars of Religion another murdered a neighbour who had raped his wife.[14] The desire for revenge was just as powerful when a woman, widow or sister was involved. In 1565, the baron of Bournazel killed a fellow Gascon nobleman in an ambush, and the widow was so determined to get her revenge that he was convicted and on the verge of being beheaded.[15] When, on their tour of the kingdom, King Charles IX and his court visited Bordeaux, those ladies and gentlemen who sympathized with Bournazel came to the queen mother and successfully asked for his pardon. The day after, the widow came and knelt before the king, introducing her three or four year-old son, saying to the king: 'since you have pardoned the murderer of this boy's father, grant pardon to him at once, because when he is old enough, he will have his revenge and kill this wretch'. Brantôme tells us that the mother woke the boy up every morning, showing him his father's blood-soaked shirt, and saying three times: 'look, and remember to take revenge of this when you are grown up, otherwise I shall disinherit you'.

A succession of revenge attacks occurred when the Wars of Religion began, and civil war sparked further attacks. For instance, duke François de Guise was killed by Poltrot de Méré, a Protestant. This murder was itself avenging a previous killing because, according to Soubise's *Memoirs*, Poltrot was a kinsman of Jean Du Barry seigneur de la Renaudie, killed at the behest of the Guise after the failure of the Protestant coup, the Tumult of Amboise.[16] François de Guise laid dying for several days and in the meantime, his wife, Anne d'Este, and his 12-year-old son, Henri, both stated in the presence of Brantôme, their wish to avenge him.[17] Nine years later Henri fulfilled his wish, ordering the assassination of the Protestant leader, Admiral Coligny, the first step in the mass killing on Saint-Bartholomew's Day. A sister, too, might call for revenge, thus when Henri de Guise was himself assassinated on the orders of Henri III's order, his sister strode through the streets in Paris with her late brother's children, calling the people to take arms.[18]

The great flood of vengeance-taking is lost by too cursory a reading of the letters of remission, because pre-meditated actions were actively hidden by the supplicant. Sometimes, the evidence of a previous enmity is clear because it is referred to in two successive letters of remission. In 1531 a Breton noble, François Desboys, killed a priest for which he obtained a remission, but the year after he was in turn killed by a group of foes, shouting 'Kill! Kill Desboys, this arsonist and murderer!'[19] The cry, 'Kill! Kill!', is typical in a revenge action.[20]

A kin's revenge could be delayed for many years before an event occurred that triggered its realization. In 1545, Guy de Landujan assaulted Labbé father and son, leaving the father impaired and unable to walk anymore. Labbé had to quit his home and take shelter with his brother-in-law to avoid harassment by his foe.[21] Such inglorious flight is accounted for by the social discrepancy existing between Landujan and Labbé: the first was a mid-ranking nobleman, while the Labbé were only petty gentry.[22] When Labbé's son returned home in 1554, his enemy immediately went to confront him, with the result that Labbé killed him claiming self-defence.

Killing the murderer was not mandatory; the death of a kinsman could alone suffice, the intention being to restore the balance between two kinship groups. In Plenée-Jugon, for instance, a parish where nearly fifty petty nobles dwelled, two sets of brothers, the Sauvaget and the Harcouët, were cousins (and probably accounts for the use of the same Christian names in both families from the fifteenth century on). One Sunday in 1518, a drunken Roland Sauvaget provoked Roland Harcouët many times, strongly suggestive of the existence of previous

enmity. The provocateur, Roland, was killed, and his murderer obtained letters of remission. Five years later, the same murderer, a tavern keeper, following a quarrel, fought alongside his brother, Jean, against Jean Sauvaget, brother of the first dead Sauvaget, who succeeded in killing Jean Harcouët. Sauvaget fled to Italy and served in the royal army in the knowledge that such a heinous crime was irremissible, and only asking for a pardon on his return in 1525 when his story makes no mention of the previous enmity. It is unthinkable that the second was not a consequence of the first.[23]

It is essential to determine whether such cases are exceptional, indicative of unusual behaviour or, on the contrary, common occurrences. Stories abound in the letters of remission telling how the supplicant 'rescued' their kinsman by killing someone who was in the process of attacking one of the supplicant's kinsmen. Behind these stories often lies cases of pre-meditated revenge. For example, in 1512, three brothers, among whom was a husbandmen and a priest, were in serious strife with a fiddler, who had threatened to kill the priest several times. One day, the two brothers were informed that the musician was on his way to kill their other brother, and so rushed to his aid at once. Assuming that the fiddler had already killed their brother, they confronted him and beat him to death.[24] This purported story of 'help' on behalf of a kin was a convenient way of covering up a revenge attack and ensuring that the letter of remission would be acceptable when it was presented for registration in a court of law.

Revenge and justice in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries

Revenge killing continued into the sixteenth century because, first and foremost, royal justice did not have the necessary and sufficient means to curb it. The judicial system was too weak to punish offenders. Many men who had committed notorious thefts and homicides had effective immunity from prosecution. Guillaume Lenoual, a renowned thief, subjected to arrest several times, quietly walked the streets in the town of Braspart, even on market day.[25] Guillaume de Launay, who had killed a man around 1510 when coming back from the market in Saint-Méen, lived peacefully for 15 years in Saint-Malo, being employed as a *morte-paie*, a kind of reserve soldier, before bothering to ask for a letter of remission for a murder.[26] In 1534, Jean Leformal, who, rumour had it was 'a powerful man', was known to have murdered someone two years before, but who nevertheless retired quietly to Carhaix, where he kept a

furrier business and was highly sociable.[27] In 1581 in a village in Anjou, a man named Gaultier was eventually prosecuted for several crimes, a homicide among them, but until then he came and went freely.[28] To proceed with an arrest it was only necessary to engage a sergeant from the locality who could in turn request assistance from inhabitants. But arrests were often disruptive of the peace because the accused did not think twice about resisting arrest.

In order to renounce revenge, victims had to have confidence in an impartial judicial system. But in sixteenth-century France, judges were often biased, and even royal judges were not exempt from the web of family obligations and the dominant role that kinship played above all other social relations.[29] Judges were suspected of bias against their kinsmen's opponents as well as undermining cases involving their own enemies' kin.[30] François I acknowledged the truth behind these suspicions, forbidding from time to time certain judges to deal with a case, or ordering pardon proceedings to be ratified by another judge in the same court or by another court. As a consequence of the killing of Alain de Penmarch in Morlaix whose relatives were officers of justice in the town, the *sénéchal* sentenced to death a certain Jehan de Marec. After the execution, Marec's widow remarried and her new husband launched an appeal to the Parlement of Brittany against the death sentence (most probably to avoid civil damages), thereby arousing the Morlaix judges' hatred. In 1532, François I then ordered that the letters obtained by the new husband on account of another homicide be ratified at Carhaix, since the officers of justice were relatives of the first victim, Penmarch.[31] In 1580, a nobleman who had mortally wounded a young man who had attacked his house with an armed gang was prosecuted in the Nantes *présidial* court by the young man's father. Technically, the court should not have dealt with the case because it occurred in a parish in the Marches of Brittany and Poitou; that is to say in between the provincial boundaries that divided the two jurisdictions. However, the accuser was 'a very rich man related to several judges' in the Nantes court, 'where he receives much preferential treatment'. Finally, the killer had his remission ratified by the *présidial* court of Angers.[32] According to Max Weber, one of the main features of the modern state is its 'impersonal' character and the bureaucratic fashion in the way its civil servants work 'without any hatred and emotion … , without any regard for rank, dealing with everyone equally'.[33] But the obligations of kinship solidarity, from which judges were not exempt, explains why even royal courts in sixteenth-century France never came close to reaching the Weberian ideal.

Even during the reign of François I, a powerful and respected monarch, unlike his grandsons who followed him after 1559, the system of avenging one's kinsmen was not eliminated. The cycle of revenge was raised to new heights during the Wars of Religion. According to Monluc, a key actor in the civil war, religion was a 'mere cloak' to hide revenge.[34] During the Wars of Religion battles were fought in order to settle private matters, for instance during the attack on Pons in 1569 Agrippa d'Aubigné killed a captain 'who had attempted to rape his aunt.'[35] Nobles took advantage of these chaotic times to take revenge for the wrongs done to themselves or to their kin. As a consequence, a long-term revenge culture prevailed in France during the period 1562–1652, but even before this royal power was weak and revenge was a feature of court life as well as in the remoter provinces. The weakness of royal power ensured that a revenge culture thrived at all social levels and was as much to blame as religious strife for the Wars of Religion, since political strife nurtured religious strife.

It is not clear to me why the levels of homicide receded because quantitative data is of dubious validity. However, after the peace enshrined in the Edict of Nantes (1598) royal power reasserted itself and took a harder line towards private war. In 1599, the Parlement of Paris decreed that 'no law either divine or human permits one to seek or pursue any revenge, except by way of the formal laws of justice'. In 1602, Henri IV promulgated the first law prohibiting duelling with the death sentence for offenders.[36] In 1627, royal justice actually beheaded Montmorency-Bouteville and his second, Des Chapelles, but only on the grounds that the first was a stubborn and troublesome recidivist. Barely one year later Richelieu prevented another duellist from being prosecuted.[37] The restriction of letters of pardon was not easy for kings who saw themselves, first and foremost, as merciful and forgiving fathers to their subjects. The recurring anti-duelling legislation of 1609, 1626, 1643 and 1651 testifies to this. Even during Louis XIV's reign the state did not claim for itself an absolute monopoly of legitimate violence.

The right to take revenge was deeply rooted in the minds of people in the first half of seventeenth century, especially in the shape of the duelling. In 1636, in *Le Cid*, Corneille argued for the requirement to avenge wronged honour: 'only in blood can one wash away such outrages'. Evidence that the old quarrels between the houses of Guise and Coligny was still a burning issue come from 1643 when a duel was fought between the heads of the respective clans.[38] During the 1650s and 1660s in Agen, 'deadly enemies proffered provocative challenges,

fought and killed each other in public in order to restore their honour or to avenge themselves of some slight.'[39] Louis XIV himself paid a special attention to his subjects' quarrels, granting audiences to settle their quarrels.[40] As previous kings had done, he bestowed many letters of remission for homicides that were dressed up as acts of self-defence, and remissions for murder can still be found in the late eighteenth century.[41]

During the second half of the eighteenth century, duelling continued though it no longer perturbed public order. The social elite no longer resorted to murder to solve disputes. This change occurred due to several factors: an improved royal judicial system, a standing army, the elaboration of the court at Versailles and religious reforms which had an impact on the behaviour of the laity.

Revenge, justice, religion: opposing ideologies

The notion of revenge was related to the ways in which people understood justice and religion. Regarding which two attitudes can be traced during the reigns of Charles IX and Henri III. First, there was the mainstream and traditional view, shared by many at court, that avengers deserved understanding and leniency. The other, more modern attitude towards revenge was shared by only a few elevated minds. As far as justice was concerned, Montaigne was aware of the discrepancy between mainstream and educated opinion. He pointed out 'that there are two sets of laws, the law of honour and the law of justice which are strongly opposed'.[42] In 1565 in Bordeaux, Bournazel was sentenced to death for homicide. When the royal court arrived in town, it was the chancellor alone who was left to explain why 'justice had to be done', in contrast to the majority of nobles who were upset and willing to see the condemned man saved. A noble friend of his begged and obtained his pardon after kneeling to implore the queen mother.[43] According to Marguerite de Valois, in 1572, the day after the failed attempt on Admiral of Coligny, Charles IX was determined to punish, that is to say to arrest the duke of Guise, but the queen mother pointed out that Coligny 'deserved such a fate' and that Guise's action was excusable, since he had been unable to obtain judicial satisfaction he was forced to take revenge.[44] In 1573 and 1579 Henri III denied pardon to murderers only on the grounds that he 'loved' the victim.[45] The king, who was after all the very embodiment of justice, was not immune to the personal and emotional considerations that decided matters related to pardons. The royal family shared the same emotional concerns and the same vengeance culture of their subjects. As a consequence, it was very difficult to persuade their

subjects to renounce violence, since homicides so readily remitted by kings, especially those committed by the clients of powerful magnates who were sure of the royal grace.

At the level of religion, vengeance contradicted the biblical injunction to forgive; Christianity is incompatible with a culture of revenge. There was as much opposition to this religious injunction as there was to royal justice. Brantôme claimed that only the 'most reformed', by which he meant the most devout Protestants and Catholics alike, could advocate forgiveness. He attributed these discrepancies among Christians to social status: forgiveness was an irrelevance for nobleman, but wholly fitting for clerics. Very few elevated souls could overcome the thirst for revenge to reach a superior state of grace, as did Antoinette d'Orléans who at first 'wished to avenge her dead husband', killed in 1596, but who instead became a nun and founded the Calvaire congregation.[46] In 1563, as he lay mortally wounded, duke François de Guise with magnanimity asked for forgiveness of his murderer, but his wife, Anne d'Este, declared: 'God, if fair you are, as you must be, avenge this!'[47] Giving orders to God in such a way was very much like the ordinary worshippers who rapped saints' statues that did not fulfil their prayers and requests. Most worshippers had little problem in reconciling their faith with their desire to have wrongs avenged. It was only with the inculcation over the long term of the laity by religious reformers, spreading the Christian message and interiorizing a new piety during the seventeenth century, that the vengeful impulses were reduced. The personal relationship with God first proposed by Luther was taken up by Catholic reformers too and set in motion a process of individualization that undermined kinship obligations. Likewise the obligation to perpetuate one's lineage: now even elder sons chose to become priests, as was commanded by Pierre Bérulle in 1599; heiresses might prefer the religious calling instead of marriage, as happened to the duke of Epernon's grand-daughter.[48] The urge to revenge among Catholics also receded because of the *direction de conscience* imposed by confessors and by the introspection induced by confession. According to Pascal, longing for revenge is sinful, and the appeal of Jansenism testifies too to the decline of traditional heroic values. In Protestant communities, revenge was limited by the arbitration and processes undertaken by consistories.[49]

In conclusion, not only in the late Middle Ages but in the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries too, that is to say over the *longue durée*, acts of vengeance receded only slowly in the face of state justice and religious reform. In the sixteenth century, however, kin relationships still

conditioned pre-meditated violence. Thus the attribution of high rates of homicide in France over the long term to the inability of men to master their emotions, to their fears, to their propensity to drunkenness, or to their lack of control over their impulses – a notion derived from Norbert Elias's much used and abused concept of the 'civilizing process' – must be discounted. Theories that assume that the 'civilizing process' began as reaction to an age characterized by ferocious, uncontrollable and spontaneous violence need to be qualified and recast.[50]

Notes

This Chapter has been translated by Véronique Larcade and Stuart Carroll.

1. R. Muchembled, *L'invention de l'homme moderne* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), pp. 42, 457.
2. N. Elias, *The Civilizing Process* 2 vols (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982).
3. G. Schwerhoff, 'Criminalized Violence and the Process of Civilisation: A Reappraisal', *Crime, Histoire et Sociétés*, VI (2002), 103–26. See also P. Spierenburg, 'Violence and the Civilizing Process: Does it Work?', *Crime, Histoire et Sociétés*, V (2001), 87–105.
4. N. Z. Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987).
5. Isambert, Decrusy and Armet eds, *Recueil général des anciennes lois françaises depuis l'an 420 jusqu'à la Révolution de 1789,* 29 vols (Paris, 1828), XII, p. 635.
6. S. Carroll, 'The Peace in the Feud in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France', *Past and Present*, CLXXVIII (2003), 74–115. See also J. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe, 1500–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), chapter 3.
7. M. Nassiet, 'Brittany and the French Monarchy in the Sixteenth Century: The Evidence of the Letters of Remission', *French History*, XVII (2004), 425–39.
8. J. Boutier, A. Dewerpe and D. Nordman eds, *Un tour de France royal. Le voyage de Charles IX (1564–1566)* (Paris: Aubier, 1984), pp. 197–8, 204–8.
9. *Oeuvres complètes de Pierre de Bourdeille seigneur de Brantôme*, ed. L. Lalanne, 9 vols (Paris: Société de l'Histoire de France, 1869–76), VI, pp. 330–6. Pierre de L'Estoile, *Mémoires-Journaux, 1574–1611*, 12 vols (Paris: Tallandier, 1982), II, pp. 106, 130.
10. Archives Départementales de Loire-Atlantique (Hereafter ADLA), B 32.
11. Boutier et al., *Un tour de France* Royal, pp. 197–8, 204–8.
12. The seigneur de Mouy, Claude-Louis Vaudrey, revenges his father with a relatives' help, the seigneur de Saucourt: L'Estoile, *Mémoires*, II, p. 122; Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, V, pp. 246–7.
13. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, V, p. 245; A. Jouanna, *L'idée de race en France au XVI^e^ siècle et au début du XVII^e^*, 2 vols (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry, 1981), I, p. 91.
14. Noël du Fail, *Contes et discours d'Eutrapel, in Propos rustiques, balivernes, contes et discours d'Eutrapel* (Charpentier: Paris, 1856), pp. 154–5. M. Moreau, *Histoire de ce qui s'est passé en Bretagne durant les guerres de la Ligue, particulièrement dans le diocèse de Cornouaille* (Saint-Brieuc, 1857), pp. 328–9.

15. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, IX, pp. 438, 444.
16. H. Germa-Romann, *Du « bel mourir » au « bien mourir ». Le sentiment de la mort chez les gentilshommes français (1515–1643)* (Droz: Geneva, 2001), pp. 222–3.
17. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, V, pp. 247–8; IX, pp. 442–4.
18. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, IX, p. 438.
19. ADLA, B 33 (letter to François Desboys) and B 34 (letter to Pierre Crochart).
20. C. Gauvard, *De grâce especial. Crime, état et société en France à la fin du moyen age* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1991), p. 758.
21. Archives Nationales, JJ 263b ; M. Pothus, 'Les relations sociales en France d'après les lettres de rémission de 1565' (unpub. mémoire de maîtrise, University of Angers, 2005).
22. In 1534, the same Guy de Landujan appeared in the arrière-ban as *homme d'armes*, flanked with two archers, whereas in 1480 Olivier Labbé in the same parish of Quédillac was reviewed only as an archer with a meagre amount of 15 *livres* of annual income: M. Nassiet and G. Sévégrand, 'Les montres de l'archidiaconé de Dinan en 1534–1535', *Bulletin et Mémoires de la Société archéologique d'Ille-et-Vilaine*, CV (2002), 43–57; M. Nassiet, 'Dictionnaire des feudataires des évêchés de Dol et Saint-Malo en 1480', *Bulletin de l'association bretonne,* CXX (1992), 221–251.
23. ADLA, B 24 (letter to Roland Harcouët) and B 29 (letter to Jean Sauvaget).
24. ADLA, B 23 (letter to Jean Jegou). One homicide story from Soulle in 1564 is similar to this pattern: 'fearing that they wanted to kill his cousin, the supplicant armed with a sword … went to the said place and unsheathed it only in order to defend Olivier, his cousin, from ill, and in order to repulse the blows of the [de Grihetz] he hit him on the head … from which blow … the said de Grihetz died': H. Courteault, 'Trois documents inédits sur le Pays Basque', *Revue du Béarn et du Pays Basque*, I (1904), p. 519.
25. ADLA, B 36 (letter to Christophe Lefloch).
26. ADLA, B 31 (letter to Guillaume de Launay).
27. ADLA, B 36 (letter to Yvon Oréal).
28. Bibliothèque Municipale d'Angers, MS 353 (letter to Jean Joulain). T. Foucault, 'Les femmes en Anjou à la fin du XVI^{e} siècle d'après les sources criminelles' (unpub. mémoire de maîtrise, University of Angers , 2005), n° 13.
29. M. Nassiet, 'Relations de parenté et solidarités dans la noblesse en France au XVI^{e} siècle', in V. Gazeau and D. Bates eds, *Liens personnels, réseaux, solidarités en France et dans les îles Britanniques (XI^{e}–XX^{e} siècle)* (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), pp. 59–72.
30. ADLA, B 34 (letter to Prégent Duval); ADLA, B 35 (letter to Jean de Launay).
31. ADLA, B 34 (letter to Guillaume de La Tribouille).
32. Bibliothèque Municipale d'Angers, Ms 353 (letter to Guillaume Lamoureux), Foucault, 'Les femmes en Anjou', n° 1.
33. M. Weber, *Economie et société. Les catégories de la sociologie*, 2 vols (Paris: Plon, 1995), I, p. 300.
34. Blaise de Monluc, *Commentaires*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 835.
35. Quoted by M. Séguin, 'Haines personnelles et violences politiques en Saintonge au début des guerres de religion', *Violence et relations sociales dans le Poitou et les pays charentais de la fin du Moyen Age au début du XX^{e} siècle* (GERHICO – Société des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, 1994), p. 29.

36. F. Billacois, *Le duel dans la société française des XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles. Essai de psychologie historique* (Paris: EHESS, 1986), pp. 148–9.
37. J. Rohou, *Le XVIIe siècle. Une révolution de la condition humaine* (Paris: Seuil, 2002), p. 231.
38. Billacois, *Le duel*, p. 128.
39. G. Hanlon, 'Les rituels de l'agression en Aquitaine au XVIIe siècle', *Annales ESC*, XL (1985), 257–8.
40. Carroll, 'The Peace in the Feud', 112–14.
41. Hanlon, 'Les rituals de l'agression', p. 251. Lettres de 1713 et 1718: C.-L. Thomas, *Chronique des années 1709 à 1732, attribuée à Jean Brière, bourgeois d'Alençon* (Alençon: Bulletin de la Société Historique et Archéologique de l'Orne, 2001), annexes IV et XI. M. Bordes, 'Les lettres de grâce ou de rémission au XVIIIe siècle en Gascogne', *Bulletin de la Société archéologique, historique, littéraire et scientifique du Gers*, XCIII (1992), 281–90.
42. 'De la Coutume': *Essais* i: 23.
43. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, IX, p. 443.
44. Marguerite de Valois, *Mémoires et discourse* (Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2004), pp. 69–71.
45. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, p. 333; L'Estoile, *Mémoirs*, I, p. 320.
46. Tallement des Réaux, *Historiettes*, 2 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1960), I, p. 29.
47. Brantôme, *Oeuvres*, IX, p. 442.
48. V. Larcade, 'Les replis de l'évidence: la religion de Madame d'Epernon (1646–1701)', A.-M. Cocula, J. Pontet eds, *Mélanges en hommage à Philippe Loupès*, 2 vols (Bordeaux: Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux, 2005), I, pp. 253–72.
49. Carroll, 'The Peace in the Feud', 95.
50. Gauvard, *De grâce especial*, p. 944.

6

At the Sign of the Head: The Currency of Beheading in Early Modern Ireland

Patricia Palmer

In September 1583, Geoffrey Fenton, Principal Secretary for Ireland, sent a gift with a covering letter to the earls of Warwick and Leicester. Fenton, the translator of Guiccardini and Belleforest, the spymaster who interrogated a bishop by 'toast[ing] his feet against the fire with hot boots',[1] relished the telling: 'I think the like hath not been seen at any time before.' Two members of the O'Connor family, parties to a bitter dynastic dispute, had been summoned to Dublin Castle to vent their grievances. Connor MacCormack O'Connor complained that his kinsman, Teige Mac Gillapatrick, had murdered some of Connor's followers. Teige responded by challenging Connor to a fight. The 'lists' were fixed for 9 a.m. the next morning, in the inner courtyard. At the appointed hour, the two men, 'being set upon two stools at either end', were brought sword and target, their weapons of choice. The trumpet sounded and they set to 'with great valour and resolution':

> Teige gave to Connor two wounds in the leg, which as they weakened him so much by the blood which he lost, so Connor pressing the more upon Teige, for that he felt his own feebleness, Teige thrust him into the eye, by which Connor finding himself to be sped, bore into the close, thinking likewise to dispatch Teige, but Teige having the advantage of strength so received him into the close, as he first wrung from him his sword and overthrew him. And then pommelling him about the head with the hilt of his sword to astonish him, Connor's murrion, that was fast buckled under his chin, was loosed with that business. So as Teige, presently taking Connor's sword, gave him sundry wounds in the body, and with his own sword cut off his head, and presented it to those that were principal assistants.

Teige, on the strength of that performance, was 'now professing to be a civil man'. To prove the point, he was sending the sword with which he had beheaded his kinsman as a gift to Leicester.[2]

Such conduct would hardly have surprised Sir Roger Mortimer. 'Slayne in Irelande in Richarde the secondes tyme', he received a post-mortem reanimation in William Baldwin's *The Mirror for Magistrates* in 1559. Since, the narrator explains, Mortimer's

> historye … is notable and the example fruitfull … I will take vpon me [his] personage … who full of wounds, miseraby mangled, with a pale countenaunce, and grisly looke, may make his mone to *Baldwin* as foloweth.

If Mortimer's own assertion that the Irish invariably beheaded their victims is to be believed, this is a severed head speaking – a status that lends ghoulish weight to his claim that the Irish

> know no lawe of armes nor none wil lerne:
> They make not warre (as other do) a playe,
> The lorde, the boye, the Galloglas, the kerne,
> Yelde or not yelde, whom so they take they slay,
> They save no prysoners, for raunsom nor for pay:
> Their booty chiefe, they coumpt a deadmans heade.[3]

'Although severed heads always speak, they say different things in different cultures'.[4] Mortimer's head is saying something very familiar to English readers: as Fynes Moryson, secretary to Lord Mountjoy, wrote in the wake of the Nine Years War, the Irish never believe 'their dead Enemyes … to be fully dead till they haue cutt off their heads'.[5] The complaint was as old as the conquest itself. Gerard of Wales, contrasting Irish warfare with French practice, declared that 'ibi capiunter milites, hic decapitantur', 'there knights are taken prisoner, here they are beheaded'.[6]

A body 'hackt in a thousand pieces', says one of Dekker's characters in *The Welsh Embassador*, is 'nothinge but a signe / Hung at a surgions dore'.[7] But 'a signe' is 'nothinge' if not complex and the head of Connor MacCormack signifies more than the sheer drollery of Irish ferocity. The severed head, 'presented' to – and accepted by – 'the principal assistants', is a counter in a reciprocal transaction. As Moryson himself recorded, Mountjoy refused to accept Irish lords' submissions

> till they had first done some Service, and had drawn Blood against some of their Confederates … *Mac Mahowne*, and *Patrick Mac Art Moyle*,

> offered now to submit, but neither could be received without the others Head.[8]

Dealing in this shared currency, Teige can 'now' indeed profess himself to be 'a civil man'. The gladiatorial contest in Dublin Castle, therefore, introduces us to the complex language of beheading in early modern Ireland. If the severed head speaks primarily of violence, it is not all it has to say. The O'Connors' combat is arresting because it is, at once, ferocious *and*, whatever Mortimer might say, 'a playe': the eye-stabbing, the deliberate decapitation with the right sword are all part of a rule-bound performance, played, at least in part, for the delectation of connoisseurs. For Fenton in his ringside seat, this is not a formless melée but a meaningful sequence of feints and thrusts which he recreates in all its slow-motion physicality for the further entertainment of two earls. Violence itself has a shape and an aesthetic.

* * *

Our point of departure, therefore, has to be that dark pleasure: the troubling beauty of violence and 'the exuberance and the uncanny pleasure of those who cut off the heads and put them on pikes'.[9] A mid-fourteenth-century chronicle, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, 'The Triumph-Roll of Turlough', bears gloriously heartless witness to that pleasure. Sean Mac Craith, a historian in the service of Dermot O'Brien, celebrated the martial prowess of his patron's immediate forbearers in an epithet-encrusted prose that draws on the Irish translation of Lucan's *Civil Wars*.[10] Though it ends in the death of the Hiberno-Norman De Clare, the *Caithréim* is less concerned with fighting the colonists than with *fighting*; its most murderous episodes concern inter-clan rivalries and its culminating battle is against the Clan-Brian-Rua O'Briens at Corcomroe Abbey. In the Old Irish sagas, the traditional comparatives often moved from the brutality of violence towards its aestheticisation. In *Aided ConCulainn*, for example, 'the halved heads' are

> like grains of sea-sand
> stars in heaven
> dew-drops on May Day
> flakes of snow
> hailstones
> leaves in a forest
> buttercups in Brega

and grassblades
under the hoofs
of a horse-herd
on a summer's day.[11]

Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh, however, moves bald-headedly in the other direction: Turlough goes 'into the parts of Grian, land of blue streams, of silvery salmon and commodious roads, *to destroy it*'.[12] The aesthetic, for Mac Craith, lies not in what is outside destruction, though assimilable to it through comparatives, but *in* destruction. Mutilation is neither beautified nor shied away from. Slaughter and its aftermath is exulted in, its mangled carnage inventively reconfigured and multiplied in a pitiless rhetoric of accumulation. Imagining the serried ranks of the fallen after the battle of Corcomroe, Mac Craith plays grisly games with permutation to fold horror on horror:

> by the beard clutched in great handfuls, some held their rivals fast to them; many a man still alive and able faintly to articulate, lay prisoner to the valiant dead whose grip was frozen on his limbs or armour; not even a few, all hastening as they were to death, because their hands were shredded off and fallen to the ground sought with their teeth to behead their enemies, to 'nose-chew'[13] them, to flail them; with uncertain steps others again that had their eyeballs slit across with swords groped, guided by each others' voices. Nor was it easy for any there to recognise his dearest friend, so many were the bodies that lay contiguous to heads other than their own; arms flung far from their native shoulders; fingers wandered off from their rightful hands; feet strayed from their straight long shanks.

Only in the clean-up operation are events given the protective colouring of metaphor: 'the heads [are] stacked – a grisly stacking, and one which had followed very hard upon the reaping'.[14] But the grim self-consciousness with which Mac Craith makes this rare recourse to imagery works to unmask rather than to veil.

A hard-headed undertow of satisfaction steels Mac Craith's text and the pleasure in killing to which it testifies is sometimes unmistakably sexual.[15] These men of war make 'naked bedfellows of their swords' and when Clan-Turlough-More survey their enemies 'littered in death' after battle, 'the sight of that holocaust warmed them with hot pleasure':

> A hosting … we have now consummated after pouring like an impetuous flood's rough wave into this country's northern part.[16]

There is in the *Caithréim*'s lingering, almost lustful, gaze on the physicality – the corporeality – of mutilation something more than a baroque Dirty Realism. Its dense, unrelenting focus on the act of killing and the actions of the half-dead conducts a slow-motion choreography of violent death. So, for example, when a group of kerns is stranded amid the slaughtered bodies of their enemies on a riverbank, they seem to sculpt themselves into a monumental tableau:

> each one of them according as he felt death upon him would in either hand carry to the Shannon's brink a head to hold up and show to his noble lords [on the far shore], then heave them from him to sink in the abyss, and on the bank undismayed breathe out his own life afterwards.[17]

At first glance, something of the same zestful pleasure in the business of killing seems to animate *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, the early seventeenth-century 'life' of Red Hugh O'Donnell, leader, along with Hugh O'Neill, of the Irish in the Nine Years War. Its description of the two sides arming before the Battle of the Yellow Ford exhibits a pop-eyed fascination with cutting edges. The English

> rose at the dawn of day and proceeded to clothe themselves with strange tunics of iron, and high-crested, shining helmets, and foreign shields of well-tempered, refined iron. They seized their broad-shouldered, firmly riveted spears, their wide-edged axes, smooth and bright, and their straight, two-edged swords, and their long, single-edged blades … The weapons and dress of [the Irish] were different, for the Irish did not wear armour like them … but yet … they had straight, two-edged swords and slender flashing axes for hewing down champions.

Once the English commander, Bagenal, is slain, the axes swing into action in earnest: the Irish

> proceeded to mangle and hack, to kill and destroy in twos and threes, in scores and thirties, in troops and hundreds until they came in over the midmost walls of Armagh. The soldiers and their attendants returned and proceeded to strip the people who had fallen in the battle and to behead those who were severely wounded there. The booty of unusual, varied supplies was great.[18]

Within the logic of the Irish narrative, however, these are reactive beheadings, beheadings, as it were, *against* beheading. O'Neill, in a

rousing pre-battle address, promises his men that the day will be theirs

> because you are on the side of truth and the others on the side of falsehood, confining you in prisons *and beheading you*, in order to rob you of your own patrimony.[19]

Beheading is redefined as a sign of reprisal and of politically motivated violence.

Writing at around the same time, John Donne complained that

> Sick Ireland is with a strange war possessed
> Like to an ague, now raging, now at rest,
> Which time will cure, yet it must do her good
> If she were purged, and her head-vein let blood. ('Love's War')[20]

The cultured insouciance of Donne's love elegy reads like the obverse of Ó Clérigh's crude propaganda. Subtly withholding from a war it mystifies as 'strange' any rationale, it advocates violence through euphemism. Plans for blood-letting the 'head-vein' were well in hand: Donne is merely translating the Queen's 'Promise of … 1000 l. to him that should bring [O'Neill's] Head to any of her Majesty's Forts or Garrisons'[21] into the emollient language of prophylaxis. English violence, redescribed in terms of physic or horticulture, is restorative. Spenser opens Book V of *The Faerie Queene* by celebrating

> the virtuous race …
> That cropt the branches of the sient [scion] base,
> And with strong hand their fruitfull ranckness did *deface*.[22]

In no time at all, Artegall, the Knight of Justice and Spenser's allegorical stand-in for Sir Arthur Grey – the only Lord Deputy ever recalled for impolitic excess – is cropping and defacing quite literally.[23] 'With bright Chrysaor in his cruell hand' (V.ii.18.2) – the sword of justice named, alarmingly, after the warrior who sprang into being from Medusa's severed head – Artegall's last act is to kill Grantorto, symbol of Spanish and Papish influence in Ireland. Reaching the point where dark humour shades into sick, Spenser represents the beheading as a mercy-killing: 'Sore aghast' from Artegall's strokes, Grantorto reels,

> Whom when [Artegall] saw prostrated on the plaine,
> He lightly reft his head, to ease him of his paine. (V.xii.23.8–9)

A pamphlet celebrating the 'Ouer-throw' of Cahir O'Dogherty opens with a woodcut of his head staked 'ouer Newgate in Dublin' and then expatiates:

> that mortall plague of Rebellion … is a sicknesse not to bee cured but by letting bloud … and it is most fit that they who lift vp their arme against Gods annoynted, shold haue their Traitorous and Rebellious heads layd bleeding at their soueraignes feete.[24]

'Traitorous' and 'rebellious' were, of course, the magic words that made English beheadings legal and civil, and Irish beheadings savage and transgressive. But 'these out lawes are not by them termed Rebles, but men in Action'.[25] The distinction was crucial: 'men in Action' were men at war, and war was governed by a code of conduct.[26] To be in rebellion – and, by easy extension, to be a traitor – meant that the gloves were off. Colonial hardliners like Spenser would be satisfied by nothing less than a kind of *lex Talionis*, the harsh, retributive justice that gave Artegall's flail-slaying side-kick, Tallus, his name and licensed his 'piteous slaughter'.[27] The reality was draconian enough. Martial law, extended country-wide under Lord Deputy Sidney, provided 'an incentive to slaughter' by 'privatis[ing] state coercion': to kill a rebel was to gain title to one-third of his property.[28] In a war with few perks, heads were a cash crop. 'It cann be no disgrace', Walter Raleigh calmly assured Cecil,

> if itt weare knowne that the killinge of a rebel were practiced, for … wee have always in Irlande geve head mony for the killinge of rebels, who ar evermore proclaimed att a price.[29]

The trade was lively: one Kelly, 'a butcher', for example, made £93.6s.8d in 'hedd monie' for striking off the earl of Desmond's head; Captain Cheston hit the jackpot – £120 – for carrying it ceremonially on the point of his sword to Cork.

The pre-emptive punishment of any suspect 'by marshal lawe, as well by death as by losse of members, [and] limbs',[30] redefined atrocity as justice and made the 1570s, in particular, 'a time of massacres'.[31] The boundary which was being crossed finds its fitting monument in a border of heads: during his suppression of the Munster Rebellion, Sir Humphrey Gilbert decreed

> that the heddes of all those … which were killed in the daie, should bee cutte of from their bodies, and brought to the place where he

> incamped at night: and should there bee laied on the ground, by eche side of the waie leadyng into his owne Tente: so that none could come into his Tente for any cause, but commonly he muste passe through a lane of heddes.[32]

In Ulster, the first earl of Essex's private colonial project produced little more than a case study in how theory can degenerate into atrocity.[33] He invited Sir Brian Mac Phelim O'Neill, his wife and retainers to a Christmas feast in 1574 and

> they passed three nights and days together pleasantly and cheerfully. At the expiration of this time, as they were agreeably drinking and making merry, Brian, his brother and his wife, were seized upon by the Earl, and all his people put unsparingly to the sword – men, women, youths, and maidens – in Brian's own presence. Brian was afterwards sent to Dublin with his wife and brother, where they were cut in quarters. Such was the end of their feast.[34]

In March 1578, two English planters, acting with the approval of Lord Deputy Sidney, summoned a company of O'Mores and O'Connors to an assembly point at Mullaghmast. There

> they were surrounded on every side by four lines of soldiers and cavalry, who proceeded to shoot and slaughter without mercy, so that not a single individual escaped.[35]

Behind the massacre lay two decades of conflict: the expulsion of the O'Mores and O'Connors from their land to clear the way for the plantation of Leix-Offaly had turned chieftains into outlaws. Peace of a kind was gained in the 1560s but only after the heads of 90 O'Connors and 35 O'Mores had been brought in.[36] Just before the massacre, the head of Rory Óg O'More, the latest disturber of the colony's peace, had been 'mounted vppon a poule … on the highest toppe of the Castell of Dublin … for a spectakle to all the whole land'.[37] Next in this chain of outrage and reprisal, Captain Mackworth was

> *crudelis interfectus per Oconors de Ophaly, membrum genitale eo vivente extraxerunt, eumque excoriaverunt.*
>
> cruelly killed by the O'Connors of Offaly: they cut off his genital member while he was still alive, and then they flayed him.[38]

Through the fog of war, the back-story to the lists in Dublin Castle takes shape: Connor Mac Cormack whose head the hardy Teige presented to the colony's chief officers was Rory Óg O'More's second-in-command and a mainstay of the insurrection in the Midlands.[39]

There are two ways of reading this cycle of turn-taking savagery. The first is suggested by Marlow in *The Heart of Darkness*. The colonist, he reflected,

> has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination.[40]

The implication is clear: the darkness in Kurtz's heart seeps in from the continent's encompassing blackness; Africa makes him plant heads on poles. 'Reprisal', writes Barbara Donagan of early-modern codes of war,

> offered a particularly useful justification for appalling actions, matching atrocity for atrocity. And it was characteristic to blame the victims for the cruelties their enemies were forced to commit against them.[41]

Atrocities happen in atrocious places. But if we view the cycle of atrocity in the Midlands against the upheaval required to turn Leix and Offaly, the land of the O'Mores and O'Connors, into King's and Queen's Counties, things look different. Violence is rarely entirely unmotivated and, seen against the charged background of colonial expropriation and native resistance, the gladiatorial contest in the inner court seems less recreational. Fenton, in billing the event as a piquant novelty – 'I think the like hath not been seen at any time before' – was, like Donne, denying Ireland's 'strange war' any logic. Like the compromised 'principal assistants' to the O'Connor beheading, the English administration in Ireland was indentured to an unsustainable distinction: Irish beheadings were a confirmation of savagery; English beheadings were instruments of reform. As David Baker says of Gilbert and Spenser's approach to official beheadings,

> Within the premises of Irish savagery, and the absolute rightness of enforced civilisation, severed heads were not incontrovertable evidence of official depravity, but yet another means of articulating the 'official language' of terror.[42]

On the ground, the distinction between 'savage' and 'civil' beheadings was harder to maintain. As the *Annals of the Four Masters* says, with its lapidary even-handedness, 'countless and indescribable were the injustices mutually done upon each other by the English and the Geraldines' during the Munster Rebellion.[43] The currency of the severed head points not to a clash between civility and barbarism but to the circulation of savagery: beheading was not just an 'official language' but a shared one.

After the Queen's officers had successfully 'practised' the decollation of Shane O'Neill and his head had been sent 'pickled in a pipkin' to Dublin, Elizabeth I 'was verie desirous to haue a true plot of the whole land, whereby she might in some sort see the same'.[44] Map-making in such a world could be hazardous. When Berkeley the geographer went 'to draw a true and perfect map of the north parts of Ulster … the inhabitants took off his head, because they would not have their country discovered'.[45] This unsettling correlation between mapping and beheading comes together in John Thomas's 'plot' of Enniskillen Castle (Figure 6.1), drawn after Hugh Maguire's stronghold was 'Taken the 17 of

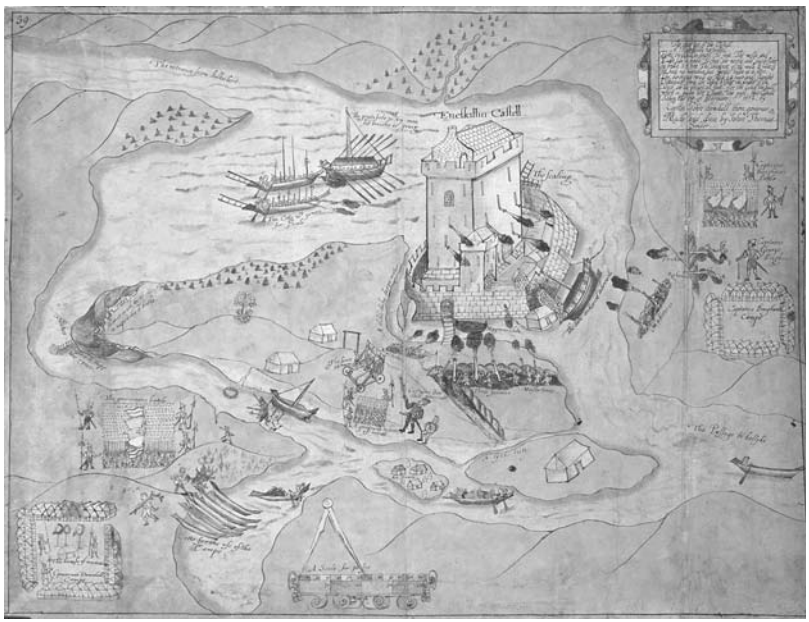

Figure 6.1 'John Thomas's "plot" of Enniskillen Castle'; reproduced by permission of the British Library: Cot. Aug Iii fo. 39.

ffebruare 1593 by Capttn John dowdall'.[46] It provides us with unexpected coordinates for mapping not only beheadings but the circuits of violence which gave them their currency. Thomas reconstructs a moment when all was still in play. Black musket-fire smokes from every 'spieike holle'. But the breach on its south-eastern flank and the scaling ladders against its north wall foretell its fate. The cartographic analepsis avoids what happened next: Dowdall's men 'slew all the defenders … . Even the old men, children and women who had fled to the castle were thrown headlong from the top of the bridge which connected the island to the mainland'.[47] Thomas, freeze-framing a moment before atrocity, supplies the grid-references for imagining other similar scenes: O'Maddens castle, taken by Lord Deputy Russell where all within were 'cast over the walls and so executed';[48] or Adare castle where the constable threw 'a fair young harlot', acting undercover for James FitzMorris, 'with a stone about her neck into the river'.[49] The map invites us to read proleptically, too, into an aftermath of retribution. Even while the siege was still going on, Hugh O'Neill was warning an intermediary from the Pale that Hugh Maguire

> hath bene soe hardlie dealte with, as he … will not suffer a man to passe downe that weares a hatt on his head, or a cloke on his back, or that speakes a worde of english withoute takinge his head from his shoulders.[50]

But the map does not merely project us beyond its margins, following its sight-lines towards beheadings. For there, in its bottom-left quadrant, framed by the tented quadrangle of Governor Dowdall's camp, are three bearded heads on stakes, eyeballed by three axe-men. Dowdall himself, here poised on the map's meridian to take the castle, we have met before, filing nonchalant reports from the killing-fields of the Munster rebellion: 'some days two heads and some days four heads, and other some days ten heads'.[51] Thomas's drawing with its wash of reddish and grey-black aquarelle tinting the beards of the beheaded supplies the graphics for a scene repeatedly hinted at in the State Papers. Lord Deputy Russell's journal of his Irish tour of duty cuts from dinner engagements with local grandees and hunting-and-fishing parties to reports of heads – 214 at a rough count – brought in: 'Mr Philfould's servants brought in the head of Edmund Leonard, a follower of Feogh' [Mac Hugh O'Byrne]; 'Captain Mince brought in the head of Feogh's piper. Captain Willis brought in two traitors' heads'.[52] Captain Willis's earlier treatment of the head of Hugh Maguire's kinsman, Edmund

MacHugh Maguire, hints at campside rituals more roisterous than staking: he and his soldiers had 'hurled it from place to place as a football'.[53] Willis's company brought in prisoners as well as heads, among them 'a girl who had warned six kerne to escape by her cries', and executions by martial law echo through the journal.[54]

Captain George Bingham's camp is, in contrast to Dowdall's, a blank space on Thomas's plan. The Binghams' intimacy with beheadings is off the map. Nine months after the taking of Enniskillen, Captain George's cousin, Sir Richard, President of Connacht, 'the greatest monster of all the English',[55] received a jocund letter from his brother, Sir George, constable of Boyle Castle. Sir George recounted how 'as I walked in the halle at the Boyle ther came in to me on the sudden' an informer, offering to tell, for a price, where two named rebels 'and xxx knaues more weare keepinge of their Christmas'. 'After dynner', George sent out his cousin, Captain Martin, with 40 men;

> by viii of the Clocke [they] had dispatched their buisines verie sufficientlie and well the Lorde be praised for it; for the guide broughte them to a house wher the Traitours weare makinge merrie rostenge of Beefe and had two good Fieres in the hall and but two escaped sore wounded. the reste had their hire and now I have sped vnto you with a horses loade of heads; wch I knowe wilbe better welcome vnto you than all the Cowes in the Breny.[56]

Four years later, Sir Richard was writing a very similar letter about 'Cozen George', seen calmly overseeing the bombardment of Enniskillen in Thomas's picture. But, in a striking instance of the tessellated pattern of reciprocal violence, repetition entails reversal. 'As he sat writinge in his Chamber within Sligoe Castell',[57] George, too, was interrupted 'on the sudden'. But the Captain's intruder, Raymond na Scuab Bourke, grandson of the earl of Clanrickard, had come, not with an invitation to a beheading but to behead: he 'struck at him till he severed his head from his neck'.[58] For Raymond 'of the Brushes', too, beheading was a family affair: his father, Ulick na gCeann – Ulick of the Heads – was 'so called because he made a mound of the heads of those he had slain in battle'.[59]

* * *

In the spring of 1642, during the Confederate War, a company of Old English Royalists laid siege to a 'collony of English' at Ballinekilly Castle

in Co. Kilkenny. As the contest intensified,

> the besieged flung out into the camp the heads of some of the besiegers whom they had killed, and the besiegers staked up in like manner some of the heads of the besieged in the sight of the castle.[60]

The mirroring actions of both sides, symmetrically reproducing the behaviour of the other, points yet again to the circuit of atrocity within which the severed head operated. But these heads, pitched across a no-man's-land and mutually staked within sight of the other, demarcate something else as well: the severed head, that supremely liminal object, is itself a boundary marker.

Even *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh* halts, once or twice, its bloody onward march to admit the claims of the Otherworld, bringing us somewhere purgatorial and transitional. As the 'broad-sworded warriors' of Clan-Brian-Rua press on towards Corcomroe, they pass Loch Rask where a solitary hag is bending over the lake water. Her hair falls in long, grey dread-locks; ulcerated carbuncles pock her wrinkled forehead; her eyes are rheumy and phlegm drips from her blue-tipped nose; stubble hedges a blistered mouth.

> The crone had a cairn of heads, a pile of arms and legs, a load of spoils, all which she rinsed and diligently washed, so that by her labour the water was … covered with hair and gory brains.

The dauntless chief accosts her and asks who 'these so maltreated dead on this moist shore' are. She introduces herself as 'the Dismal of Burren', one of the Tuatha De Danann, the denizens of the Otherworld. The heads she is washing are those of his own men, 'with, in their very midst, thine own head … though now thou carriest it, yet no longer is it thine'. The warriors fix their javelins for casting but the hag rises on a rushing wind and from the air delivers a poem prophesising a baleful trip where their bodies will be 'pruned'.[61]

The quasi-magical allure of the severed head for earlier cultures lay precisely in its liminality, suspended between life and death, between this world and whatever lay beyond, between selfhood and annihilation.[62] If the act of beheading speaks of violence and its circulation, the severed head itself speaks – or can be made to talk – in a different register. At times, the head was little more than a counter for notching up the scale of a victory[63] or to be cashed in for 'head money'. As a present, it curried favour: Ormond sent Lord Deputy Grey John of Desmond's head, 'for a

new yeeres guyft'.[64] But it could also enunciate deeply held beliefs about both morality and mortality. In 1599, Hugh O'Donnell defeated Sir Conyers Clifford at the battle of the Curlews. 'The English left behind many a head and trophy with the Irish troops;' Sir Conyers himself was

> left in a feeble state lying on the mountain sorely wounded … and [O'Donnell's] soldiers did not recognise him until [Brian Óg] O'Rourke at last came where he was, and he knew it was the Governor, and he ordered him to be beheaded. This was done, so that he was a lopped, naked trunk after his head had been chopped off and he had been despoiled.

In the wake of victory, the Irish returned to the battlefield and proceeded 'to despoil those whom they had killed and to slay the wounded whom they met on the battlefield and to behead them'.[65] They then set off for their camp 'with great exultation and gladness; and they returned thanks to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary for their victory'. They attributed their success on the battlefield to the three days of fasting which O'Donnell had undertaken before the encounter.[66] A victory whose *coup de grâce* was the routine beheading of the fallen was itself understood to be rooted in the mortification of the flesh. The 'experiential continuity' of the sacred, the private and the public characteristic of the late Middle Ages finds its common denominator, Mitchell Merback tells us, in the pain of the body.[67] In a manner that, to a post-Reformation sensibility, must already have seemed baffling, there was a spiritual consonance between mortifying one's own flesh and mutilating another's.

'The body's magic instrumentality'[68] was most manifest with the violence of martyrdom. Two incommensurate interpretations of the crowd's response to the execution of 80-year-old Bishop O'Deveny expose a faultline that is as much epistemological as political. For the Puritan, Barnabe Riche, the 'heathenish' carry-on of the Papists was so self-evidently absurd that merely to describe was to satirise:

> The executioner had no sooner taken of the Bishops heade, but that the townes men of *Dublyne*, began to flocke about him: some taking vp the head with pitious aspect … Some kissed it with as religious an appetite as euer they kissed the *Paxe*. Some others were practising to steale the heade away, the which beeing espyed by the executioner, hee gaue notice of the matter to the Sheryues of *Dublyne*. Now when he began to quarter the body, the women thronged about him as fast,

> and happy was shee that coulde gett but her handkercheife dipped in the bloud of the traytor: And the body being once disseuered into foure quarters, they neither left finger nor toe, but they cut them off, and carried them away.[69]

For a Catholic commentator, however, the same actions had a quasi-sacramental significance:

> The Christians who were then in Dublin contended with each other, to see which of them should have one of his limbs; and not only his limbs, but they had fine linen in readiness, to prevent his blood from falling to the ground; for they were convinced that he was one of the holy martyrs of the Lord's.[70]

O'Deveny's relic head, spirited away by the crowd, continued to be an object of veneration well into the seventeenth century.[71] The wondrous head of another bishop-martyr, Terence O'Brien, executed by Ireton in Limerick, 'may yet be seen [four years later], covered with flesh and hair, on the tower which is on the middle of the great bridge and, sooth to say, drops of blood issuing from it'.[72] The head of Sir Conyers Clifford, too, can be fitted into a pietistic economy where corporeal rupture offers instruction in spiritual soundness:

> 't were right to despise the world after the treatment of the Governor; for his weight in gold and silver would have been given for him on the morning of that day had he been in captivity; but the corpse of clay for which so much wealth would have been given was not even carried in one direction on the evening of the aforesaid day; for his trunk was carried for burial to Trinity Island on Loch Cé … and his head to Collooney … as an exhibit for O Conor.[73]

The severed head becomes a meditative aid, an astringent *memento mori* in a spiritual exercise of *contemptus mundi*. But the head was an obligingly elastic signifier which could send a more secular message as well. Following the battle, Hugh O'Donnell visited O'Connor Sligo, a local magnate whom he had imprisoned for not backing his campaign. Even now, O'Connor held aloof – 'until the Governor's head was exhibited to him';[74] with that, he capitulated. The head was next put to work on Murrogh O'Flaherty, son of the pirate-queen, Granuaile, and another reluctant confederate. O'Donnell cracked open a tun of wine and, 'in which time of our drinking, O'Donnell did shew unto the said Murrogh the head of Sir Conyers';[75] the point was taken.

Mac Dermon O'Donnell 'to whome the governors head was sent that night for a present', informed the constable of Boyle that he had ensured that the governor's body 'sepultus erit honeste'; Sir John Harrington, in a revealing distinction, judged the letter 'to be barbarous for the Latyn but cyvill for the sence'.[76] The desire to be 'buried honestly' was linked to the fear of becoming an enemy 'exhibit'.[77] When Ony Mac Rory O'More was wounded in a skirmish, Fynes Morison grumbled, he, 'fearing that his head should come into the Lord Deputy's hands, had willed it to be cut off after his death, and buried'.[78] Uaithne ('Ony'), son of Rory Óg, knew exactly what he wanted to avoid. His own father's head had been turned in for a 1000–mark reward and 'set upon the Castle of Dublin'.[79] '[P]itcht vpon a pole on high … . To be a mirrour to all mighty men',[80] display heads proclaimed their message of shame and admonition from all the threshold points and eminences of state power. Sir John of Desmond's head

> was cut off and sent to Dublin, and spiked in front of the castle; his body was conveyed to Cork and hung in chains at one of the city gates, where it remained nearly three years, till on a tempestuous night it was blown into the sea … [The Earl of Desmond's head] was … sent to London, and impaled within an iron cage on the Tower of London as a sign of terror to the Irish princes and Catholics.[81]

Phillip O'Sullivan Beare recalled that his father and three other 'Irish knights' had secretly buried Dr Sanders, the Jesuit, in darkness:

> *Plures vero funeri interesse prohibitum est, ne esset qui cadaver ostenderet Anglis, solitis in mortuos etiam exempla crudelitatis edere.*
>
> The rest were forbidden to attend, in case the English would find the body and make their usual cruel spectacle of the dead.[82]

'Cruel spectacles', however, were not an exclusively English sport. James FitzGerald, 12th Earl of Desmond, was killed by his cousin, Maurice, in 1540. The Earl's nephew dutifully removed his head, 'that he might not be made a laughing stock to his enemyes', and buried it in Tralee.[83] The head could all too easily become an ungainly prop in a boisterous theatre of desecration. Jack Cade, that veteran of an earlier Irish war, directs the beheading of Lord Say and his son-in-law with mirthful brio:

> Let them kiss one another … with these borne before us, instead of maces, we will ride through the streets, and at every corner have them kiss.[84]

There is no escaping the carnival release of violence, where rite and riot gleefully collide. Perverted rituals and marred festivities stalk beheadings. The first earl of Essex justified his killing of Brian Mac Phelim O'Neill, in part, because of the grotesque spectacle Sir Brian had made of those who wouldn't join his 'Create', or plunder-party:

> his crueltie shewed in mangling theire deade bodies, cuttinge of theire privie members and setting vpp theire heads with the same in theire mouthes which crueltie was executed vpon those men whome he desired to come into his Create, to eat and make mery with him.[85]

A parodic inversion of festive cramming, forced on those who wouldn't 'eat and make mery', prompts slaughter at a Christmas feast. The unnerving congruity between severing heads and serving them up structures a set-piece anecdote from a late-medieval chronicle. O'Connor, King of Connacht, sends a poor man to spy on the English camp. The wonderstruck clown sees the enemy tucking into loaves of bread and red wine. He reports back, appalled: 'they feed like dogs, for their meat is children's heads, and their drink is men's blood'.[86] The taint of cannibalism is present less fancifully in an earlier chronicle entry. During the twelfth-century invasion, Diarmuid MacMurrough's Norman allies killed 300 of his enemies. The horsemen

> cast those heads before McMorchow's feet; which he turned to understand what they were, and gave thanks unto God. One head there was among the others of a man that he much hated. He took it by the hair and by the ears, and terribly, as a woman, bit off his nose and his lips.[87]

Quite what women got up to emerges more clearly from one of the depositions collected after the 1641 rebellion. At Michaelmas 1642, six English soldiers and a Protestant minister were killed near Ballinekilly Castle where we began this section. The deponent testified to seeing

> the head of those seven carried to *Kilkenny* by those Rebels (their pipes for joy playing before them on horse-back) and on a market-day which happened to be on the next day following, those heads as triumphs of their Victories, there brought out and set upon the Market-cross, where the Rebels, but especially the Women there … stab'd, cut and slasht those heads.

The revels then took a different turn:

> the Rebels then and there put a gag in the mouth of the said *Thomas Bingham* the Minister, and laying the leaf of a Bible before him, bade him preach, saying his mouth was open and wide enough.[88]

The still-life quality of the death's-head made the invitation cruelly irresistible.[89]

> Let these their heads
> Preach upon poles for trespass of their tongues,

Kent advises Edward II when the insolent barons snipe against Gaveston.[90] The severed head exists in uncanny suspension between the ghost of a life that still haunts its features and the absolute arrest of death:

> Thy lips that kissed the Queen shall sweep the ground;
> And thou that smiledst at good Duke Humphrey's death
> Against the senseless winds shall grin in vain.[91]

The rictus of death gives a post-mortem fixity to features still expressive of life. The face of the red-bearded decapitatee in Thomas's map of Enniskillen Castle is tilted upwards in a meditative gaze. A similarly angled head, 'poled vp' in Dublin Castle, encouraged Sidney's in-house versifier to imagine it 'beholdyng starres, as though he were, / in high Astronomie'.[92] Such heads, slack-jawed as though on the point of utterance, invite ventriloquism: the words they 'preach' are always another's.[93] Mortimer's head seems to 'mone' the exemplary fable of his life to Baldwin. Derricke ventriloquized the 'truncklesse head' of Rory Óg O'More into mouthing a posthumous confession:

> My hed, from the bodie parted in twaine,
> Is set on the Castell a signe to remaine.[94]

The Kilkenny rebels' seemingly perverse gesture of gagging Minister Bingham even as they bade him preach makes sense: ventriloquism annexes the head's speech-right – as the rebels did again when, after burying the heads at a crossroads, they 'set up a long stick, whereto they fixed papers' to make 'the heads themselves more contemptible'.[95]

The 'preaching voyce' of the ventriloquized is heard again when Edward Hayes, 'Scholler at Westminster, a youth of sixteene yeeres',

'prosopopeiz'th' the severed heads of the Gunpowder plotters, Percy and Catesby.[96] Directed pointedly 'Vnto the Irish', Hayes's prosopopoeia multiplies the mouth-pieces at his disposal by making the plotters' ghosts speak as well, sermonizing against their own foolish heads. 'Wearied much' by recent events, Hayes falls asleep and dreams that he is swept towards hell's mouth. There he sees

> Two Monsters skulles …
> Grim, ghastly, pale, shag'd hayre, sulphured eyes
> Pearcing the ayre with howling, yells and cryes.

Their respective ghosts accompany them, in the shape of a lurid dragon and 'a monstrous CAT'.[97] Percy's dragonish ghost execrates his head for allowing the 'Monster Pope' lure it to villainy. Then, '*Percyes head answeres his Ghost*', sneering at the very notion that his villainy had a religious motive: 'All my desire was bloody massacre'.[98] The pattern is repeated as Catesby's ghost bitterly includes his own head in a rollcall of traitors. Then, from the ghostly

> *Catesbyes* Scalpe I then discern'd a smoke
> Of deadly stinke, whereout the Scull thus spoke …
> 'Bloud I did thurst for.'[99]

As that 'scull', too, is swallowed up in smoke, Hayes shifts the time-frame back to the moment celebrated on the title-page's woodcut, as the axeman strikes:

> An helly-day in hell let Fiends proclayme,
> To greet two Monsters sculs, that tumbling come
> From *Theater* of their ambitious ayme …
> Two foote-balls fit to make the Deuils sport.

As the talking head mutates into an infernal football, Hayes awakens, 'affrighted in my bed'.[100]

* * *

Shortly after the Act of Union (1801), the Cork-born artist, James Barry, drew a phantasmagorical representation of Ireland's plight (Figure 6.2).[101] For Barry, as for generations before and after him, the axiomatic moment of Ireland's wretched pass lay in its Elizabethan past.

Figure 6.2 James Barry: Passive Obedience; reproduced by permission of Princeton University Art Museum.

A despairing youth, stranded on a precarious promontory, shies away from the nightmare of history towards an angel's sheltering embrace. At his back, beneath a vortex formed by billowing clouds of gun- and fire-smoke, is a reprise of familiar atrocities. Besiegers scale a fire-stormed castle; a woman, imploring arms outstretched, is flung with her child from the battlements. Below, heads are staked on a gate-tower. Crowding in from the right are the unabashed villains of the piece: King James whose sceptre extolls 'Divine Right' and 'Passive Obedience', flanked by a toadying prelate; a judge brandishes another sceptre on which a doleful head is skewered. Pusillanimous art lines up compliantly with church and state: a whey-faced Spenser points to the title-page of *The Fairie Queene*. Beside him, a wanton Liberty has one hand to the royal sceptre and in the other a mask. But, a pantomime mask – or mask of tragedy – fixed on its wooden stick looks frighteningly like a head on a pole.

Above this distasteful claque – and above the slave-driver letting his whip fall on dark-skinned backs – the clouds mutate surreally into a mass-grave. But these are the unquiet dead: their heads and chests breast

the earth in silhouette. One, slightly risen on an elbow, seems to dream in death. As Hayes's hellish dream suggested, severed heads are the stuff of nightmare. Conyers Clifford's widow recalled waking him 'out of an unquiet sleepe … about a yeare before' his death. His 'troublesome dream' of a death foretold was 'truly interpreted' only when she learned the precise manner of his decapitation and burial from MacDermon's letter.[102] One of the 'Viragos' who happily slapped the heads in Kilkenny's market-square later fell into 'an astonishment and distraction; that for three or four days after she could not sleep nor rest, but cried out that still she saw those heads between her eyes'.[103] Those who live on, haunted and traumatized, like the ghostly mourners in Barry's sketch, leave little trace in the historical record. We catch glimpses of them from time to time: Mrs Mackworth, whose first husband, Captain Henry Davells, was beheaded in his bed and whose second was skinned alive, petitions the Queen on behalf of 'her many children';[104] an old woman, whom Spenser observes unpityingly, cradles her foster-son's head and laps up his blood, 'crying and shrieking out most terribly'.[105]

That shrieking and crying receives, just occasionally, articulate utterance in a curious sub-genre of bardic poetry addressed to the severed heads of deceased patrons.[106] In 1586, Governor Bingham hanged and beheaded two Connacht nobles, Brian O'Hara and his nephew, Domhnall. Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn's lament for the pair addresses their staked heads in the vocative: '*A dhá cheanna ós mo chionn*', 'O pair of heads above my head'.[107] The poem's meditation on the mutation wrought by '*teasgadh bhur gcorp*', 'the amputation of your bodies' (2.2), is disconcertingly mirrored by the gapped and fractured state in which it has come down to us:

> *bhur n-aighthe dho* […]
> *nach dóidh a n-aithne (dh'* […]
>
> […….] *beoil chorcra*
> *do chlaochlóidh cruth éadrochta*
> *na rosg málla na ngruadh ngeal*
>
> your faces […]
> cannot be recognised with certain […]
>
> […….] red lips
> the perfect shape transformed
> the mild eyes the bright cheeks. (3.3–4, 4.1–3)

The poet is transfixed by the fearful solitude of broken bodies left exposed; the words '*aonar*', '*uaigneas*' – 'alone', 'loneliness' – echo through quatrains 7 to 12:

> *fir nar chodoil cneas re cneas*
> *ag sin agoibh a n-uaigneas*
>
> men that did not sleep [in death] body to body;
> look on their loneliness. (8.3–4)

Ó hUiginn moves from the maimed present –

> I grieve at the wretchedness of your carriage
> you, the noblest heads of the men of Ireland
> staked on two posts (14.1–3)

– into evocation of a past that only intensifies the brutal anomaly of their mutation:

> Often, before that,
> the heads I see on poles, / /
> nestled on lovely princely maidens. (15.1–2, 4)

The violence of the rupture damages the poet as well; something in the minds of the living, too, is cut off:

> *rugsad mo chiall 's mo chuimhne,*
> *rugsad mh'aithne is mh'fhorfhuighle*
>
> it took away my sense and my recollection;
> it took away my power of recognition and my elevated utterance.
> (32.1–2)

James Barry returned to a landscape of devastation and decollation in *Minerva turning from Scenes of Destruction and Violence to Religion and the Arts* (1805).[108] A sorrowful Minerva recoils from horror. Three corpses hang from a gibbet; three heads are staked on a crenellated tower, in an image that uncannily replays a depiction of Northgate Bridge, graced too with a triad of heads, in an early seventeenth-century map of Barry's native Cork.[109] Minerva's attempt to turn her back on destruction seems doomed: the theatrical masks that lie at her feet reproduce the blank horror stamped on the face of a wretch being beheaded just behind

them; and the features of Minerva's bardic harpist are frozen in the same mask of grief. As *Passive Obedience* had already demonstrated, art offered no escape from the nightmare of history. Bearing mute witness to its cycle of violence is the poet, Tadhg Dall – Blind Tadhg – Ó hUiginn. Sometime after elegizing Brian and Domhnall O'Hara, he turned to satirizing six of their kinsmen who had robbed him. Only in the most cruelly ironic sense of the phrase did 'Blind Tadhg' have the last word: for his affrontery, the O'Hara boys cut out his tongue.[110]

Eyeless, without a tongue, the mask is an imperfect analogue for the severed head. The favoured image in the period was the mirror. A mirror, however, whether, like Baldwin's, for magistrates or, like Pollente's, for 'all mighty men',[111] implied a gaze that was not returned. It is an image that denies the circulation of violence and the restless exchange of atrocity that the severed head represented in early-modern Ireland. In an arresting image, however, Hayes calls Catesby's severed head 'a gazing mirrour'[112] and, in the ambivalence of the adjectival participle, two senses collide: this is both a mirror for gazing at and one which can itself *gaze*. The head looks back at those who look at it. The reflection becomes reflexive: the head is both a spectacle and a spectator. It is, at once, the head of a villain – rebel or oppressor – rightly 'cutt off' and the head of a victim looking out at the bloodied hands of his killers. In the 'gazing mirrour', those who shared the currency of the severed head saw, at once, the perpetrator and the victim and saw, in the other, themselves.

Notes

In gathering material for this chapter, I have been greatly helped by the benign headhunting of Deana Rankin, Hugh Haughton and William Smith of UCC.

1. On the interrogation of Bishop O'Hurley, see *Calendar of State Papers, Ireland, 1574–85* (London: H.M. Stationary Office, 1860–1912), p. 498. [Hereafter *CSPI*].
2. *Calendar of Carew Manuscripts 1575–1588*, ed. J. S. Brewer and W. Bullen (London: Longmans, Green, 1867–71), pp. 361–2. [Hereafter *CCM*].
3. *Mirror for Magistrates*, ed. Lily B. Campbell (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1938), pp. 81, 88.
4. R. Janes, 'Beheadings', in S. W. Goodwin and E. Bronfen ed., *Death and Representation* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press), p. 245.
5. Fynes Moryson, *An History of Ireland, from the Year 1599–1613*, 2 vols (Dublin: G. Ewing, 1735), I, p. 70.
6. Giraldus Cambrensis, *Expugnatio Hibernica*, ed. and trans. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), pp. 246–7.
7. *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, ed. F. Bowers, 4 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961), IV, p. 327, ll. 45–6.
8. Moryson, *History*, I, p. 177.

9. R. Janes, *Losing our Heads: Beheadings in Literature and Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), p. 69.
10. Sean Mac Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, trans. S. H. O'Grady, introduction R. Flower, 2 vols (London: Irish Texts Society, 1929), I, pp. xiv–xv.
11. *Two Death Tales from the Ulster Cycle*, trans. M. Tymoczka, (Dublin: Dolmen, 1981), p. 56.
12. Mac Craith, *Caithréim*, II, p. 28; my italics.
13. '*sróncognom*', I, p. 117. After a particularly bloody battle in *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, the dead were found to have 'each other caught by the lips and noses in their fanged teeth': *The Táin*, ed. T. Kinsella (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 213.
14. Mac Craith, *Caithréim*, II, pp. 104–5.
15. Cf. J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London: Granta, 1999), p. 15.
16. Mac Craith, *Caithréim*, II, pp. 89, 105.
17. Ibid., II, p. 68.
18. Lughaidh Uí Chlérigh, *Beatha Aodha Ruaidh Uí Dhomhnaill*, ed. and trans. P. Walsh, 2 vols (XLII and XLV) (Dublin: Irish Texts Society, 1948), XLII, pp. 183–5.
19. Ibid., XLII, p. 179; my italics.
20. John Donne, *The Complete English Poems* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 126.
21. Moryson, *History*, I, p. 181.
22. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. T. P. Roche (London: Penguin, 1978), V.i.1, 6, 8–9, my italics.
23. After Smerwick, Grey told Burghley 'I take no delight to advertise of every common head that is taken off. Otherwise I could have certified of a hundred or two': A. O'Rahilly, *The Massacre at Smerwick* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1938), p. 24.
24. *The Ouer-throw of an Irish rebel, in a late battaile* (London, 1608), A3r.
25. *The Irish Sections of Fynes Moryson's Unpublished Itinerary*, ed. G. Kew (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1998), p. 35.
26. B. Donagan, 'Atrocity, War Crime, and Treason in the English Civil War', *American Historical Review*, XCIX (1994), 1142.
27. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, V.vii.35.5, p. 1190; cf. W. Maley, *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture and Identity* (London: Macmillan, 1997), p. 21.
28. D. Edwards, 'Beyond Reform: Martial Law and the Tudor Reconquest of Ireland', *History Ireland*, V (1997), 19.
29. *The Letters of Sir Walter Raleigh*, ed. A. Latham and J. Youings (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1999), p. 178.
30. Quoted by D. Edwards, 'Legacy of Defeat: the Reduction of Gaelic Ireland after Kinsale', in Hiram Morgan ed., *The Battle of Kinsale* (Bray: Wordwell, 2004), p. 290.
31. Edwards, 'Beyond Reform', p. 18.
32. Thomas Churchyard, *A Generall Rehearsall of Warres* (London, 1579), Q.iii.v.
33. R. Bagwell, *Ireland under the Tudors*, 3 vols (London: Holland Press, 1963 [1885–90]), I, pp. 289–302; N. Canny, *The Elizabethan Conquest Of Ireland: A Pattern Established, 1565–76* (Sussex: Harvester, 1976), p. 39.
34. *Annals of the Four Masters*, ed. and trans. John O'Donovan, 6 vols (Dublin, 1848), V, p. 1677 [Hereafter *AFM*]. Essex put the number killed at 200: The National Archives [Hereafter TNA] SP/63/48/57. For Essex's involvement

in the Rathlin Island massacre, see Walter Bouchier Devereux, *Lives and Letters of the Devereux, Earls of Essex*, 2 vols (London: John Murray, 1853), I, pp. 105–12; *CSPI 1574–85*, p. 77.
35. *AFM*, V, p. 1696.
36. V. Carey, 'John Derricke's *Image of Ireland*, Sir Henry Sidney, and the Massacre at Mullaghmast, 1578', *Irish Historical Studies*, XXXI (1999), 307–8.
37. John Derricke, *The Image of Irelande*, ed. J. Small (Edinburgh: Black, 1883 [1581]), pp. 92, 97.
38. *The Annals of Ireland by … Thady Dowling*, ed. R. Butler (Dublin: Irish Archaeological Society, 1849), p. 44; my translation. For Mackworth's massacre of the ward of Carrigafoyle Castle, see *AFM*, V, p. 1732.
39. C. Lennon, *Sixteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1984), pp. 187, 196–7.
40. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 9.
41. Donagan, 'Atrocity', p. 1144.
42. D. Baker, *Between Nations: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marvell and the Question of Britain* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), p. 68.
43. *AFM*, V, p. 1735.
44. *A Viceroy's Vindication? Sir Henry Sidney's Memoir of Service in Ireland, 1556–78*, ed. C. Brady (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), p. 53; John Hooker, 'The Irish Historie composed and written by Giraldus Cambrensis, and Translated into English … together with the Supplie of the said Historie … vnto 1587', in Ralph Holinshed, *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland*, 6 vols (London, 1807–8), VI, p. 338.
45. *CSPI*, 1601–3, p. 280.
46. British Library Cotton MS Augustus I.ii.38.
47. P. O'Sullivan Beare, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, trans. Matthew J. Byrne (Dublin, 1903), p. 73.
48. *CCM*, 1589–1600, p. 245.
49. Ibid., p. 205.
50. TNA/SP/63/173/64.iv.
51. *CSPI*, 1574–85, p. xciv.
52. *CCM*, 1589–1600, pp. 220, 230, 248, 228, 230.
53. Ibid., p. 156.
54. Ibid., pp. 226, 230.
55. Ó Clérigh, *Beatha Aodha*, XLII, p. 101; cf. C. Falls, *Elizabeth's Irish Wars* (London: Methuen, 1950), p. 166.
56. TNA/SP/63/172/38.ii.
57. TNA/SP/63/180/16.
58. Ó Clérigh, *Beatha Aodha*, XLII, pp. 95–7; *AFM*, VI, p. 1973; cf. O'Sullivan, *Ireland under Elizabeth*, p. 88.
59. Ó Clérigh, *Beatha Aodha*, XLV, p. 222.
60. *The History of the Irish Confederation*, ed. J. T. Gilbert, 7 vols (Dublin, 1882–91), I, p. 149; cf. Deana Rankin, *Between Spenser and Swift: English Writing in Seventeenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 223.
61. Mac Craith, *Caithréim Thoirdhealbhaigh*, II, pp. 93–4.
62. For the significance of severed heads for the Celts, see K. H. Jackson, *The Oldest Irish Tradition* (Felinfach: Llanerch Publishers, 1999); P. Mac Cana, *Celtic Mythology* (Feltham: Newnes, 1983); A. Ross, 'The Human Head in

Insular Pagan Celtic Religion', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, XCI (1960), 10–43 and *The Pagan Celts* (Ruthin: John Jones, 1998).
63. *AFM*, I, p. 501.
64. TNA/SP/63/88/15.
65. Ó Clérigh, *Beatha Aodha*, XLII, pp. 231–2.
66. *AFM*, VI, pp. 2133–5; Ó Clérigh, *Beatha Aodha*, XLII, p. 255.
67. M. B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel* (London: Reaktion, 1999), p. 129.
68. Ibid., p. 271.
69. Barnabe Riche, *Catholicke Conference* (London, 1612), 5v–6r. For dissent at executions, see S. D. Amussen, 'Punishment, Discipline and Power: the Social Meaning of Violence in Early Modern England', *Journal of British Studies*, XXXIV (1995), 1–34; T. W. Laqueur, 'Crowds, Carnival and the State in English Executions, 1604–1868', in A. L. Beier, D. Cannadine and J. M. Rosenheim ed., *The First Modern Society* (Cambridge: Cambidge University Press, 1989), pp. 305–55; P.-H. Stahl, *Histoire de la décapitation* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), p. 21.
70. *AFM*, VI, p. 2371.
71. R. Gillespie, *Devoted People: Belief and Religion in Early Modern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 21.
72. Dominicus de Rosiario O'Daly, *The Rise, Increase and Exit of the Family of the Geraldines*, trans. C. P. Meehan (Lisbon, 1655 [Dublin, 1847]), p. 207.
73. Ó Clérigh, *Beatha Aodha*, XLII, p. 233.
74. *AFM*, VI, p. 2137.
75. *CSPI*, 1599–1600, p. 332.
76. John Dymmok, 'A Treatise of Ireland', in R. Butler ed., *Tracts Relating to Ireland* (Dublin, 1843), II, p. 47.
77. Cf. S. L. Fry, *Burial in Medieval Ireland, 900–1500* (Dublin: Four Courts, 1999), pp. 97–102.
78. *CCM*, 1589–1600, p. 432.
79. Brady, *Viceroy's Vindication*, p. 101.
80. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, V.ii.19.4,6.
81. O'Daly, *Geraldines*, pp. 95, 110.
82. Philip O'Sullivan Beare, *Historiae Catholicae Iberniae Compendium* (Lisbon, 1621), p. 121; my translation.
83. Quoted in C. Tait, *Death, Burial and Commemoration in Ireland, 1550–1650* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 75.
84. William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, part 2*, ed. M. Hattaway (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), IV.vii.112–7.
85. TNA/SP/63/48/57.i.
86. *CCM*: '*Book of Howth*', p. 136.
87. Ibid., p. 41; cf. Cambrensis, *Expugnatio*, p. 37.
88. John Temple, *The Irish Rebellion …* 1641 (Dublin, 1724), pp. 118–9.
89. On portraiture and decapitation, see D. Arasse, *The Guillotine and the Terror*, trans. Christopher Miller (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 134–40.
90. Christopher Marlowe, *Edward II*, ed. C. R. Forker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 148, ll. 116–17.
91. *Henry VI, pt. 2*, IV.i.75–7.
92. Derricke, *Image*, p. 58.

93. I look at the ventriloquism of severed heads more fully in ' "An headless Ladie" and a "horses loade of heades": Writing Atrocity in a Time of Conquest', *Renaissance Quarterly* LX (2007), forthcoming.
94. Derricke, *Image*, pp. 92, 97.
95. Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, p. 119.
96. Edward Hayes, *Trayterous Percyes and Catesbyes Prosopopeia* (London, 1606), B3r, A2v.
97. Ibid., A3r–v.
98. Ibid., B3v–4r.
99. Ibid., C3r–v.
100. Ibid., C4r–v.
101. *James Barry: 'The Great Historical Painter'*, ed. T. Dunne (Oysterhaven: Crawford Art Gallery, 2005), p. 176; W. L. Pressly, *The Life and Art of James Barry* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 1981), p. 149; *James Barry: The Artist as Hero* (London: Tate, 1983), pp. 180–2.
102. Dymmok, 'Treatise', p. 47.
103. Temple, *Irish Rebellion*, p. 119.
104. *CSPI*, 1574–85, p. 448; cf. 394, 445, 454, 460.
105. Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, ed. W. L. Renwick (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), p. 62.
106. I look at further examples in 'An headlesse Ladie', *Renaissance Quarterly*.
107. *The Book of O'Hara*, ed. and trans. L. McKenna (Dublin: Dublin Institute of Advanced Studies, 1951), pp. 290–9; I have adapted McKenna's translation.
108. Pressly, *Life and Art*, pp. 184–5.
109. Thomas Stafford, *Pacta Hibernia*, ed. S. H. O'Grady, 2 vols (London: Downes, 1896 [1633]), II, p. 137.
110. *The Bardic Poems of Tadhg Dall Ó hUiginn*, ed. and trans. Eleanor Knott, 2 vols (London: Irish Texts Society, 1922), I, p. xvi.
111. Spenser, *Faerie Queene*, V.ii.6; Raymond Jenkins identifies Pollente as John of Desmond but James fits the Cork context better: 'Spenser and Ireland', *English Literary History*, XIX (1952), 350.
112. Hayes, *Prosopopeia*, C3r.

7

Duelling and the Court of Chivalry in Early Stuart England

Richard Cust and Andrew Hopper

On 9 February 1640, William Viscount Monson caught Robert Welch esquire cheating during a game of piquet at Welch's house in St Martin's Lane, London. According to the depositions later made in the High Court of Chivalry, Welch had palmed two of the cards and then attempted to discard them when Monson was not looking. When Monson challenged him, Welch lost his temper and without attempting to deny the imputation tried to turn it against Monson by announcing before the rest of the company, 'I will baffle you, just as you have been baffled by every boy in the town.' Welch appears to have been using the term 'baffle' in both its seventeenth-century meanings – that is to publicly disgrace a nobleman and to trick, cheat or confound someone. By exploiting the ambiguity of the term he was attempting to humiliate Monson by implying that he was a simpleton, with too little wit to recognize the tricks that had been played on him since he had come up to the metropolis. Monson, unarmed and in the presence of Welch's friends, decided that discretion was the better part of valour and beat a hasty retreat. But the furious Welch followed him into the street challenging him to duel and offering to lend him his sword if he would only fight. Monson, on his own account, remained a model of coolness, declaring, 'I beseech you Mr Welch, let me alone until tomorrow … I will talk with you tomorrow.' However, the next day he went straight to the Court of Chivalry, just around the corner in Whitehall, and commenced an action against Welch.[1] Unfortunately the outcome of this case is unknown – and indeed it is probable that it never reached a verdict because the court's proceedings were suspended by the Long Parliament in December 1640. However, it does illustrate the central issue that we wish to explore in this chapter: the role played by the High Court of Chivalry in regulating the practice of duelling in the 1630s, and, more

particularly, the extent to which it enabled contemporaries to sidestep challenges to fight and still emerge with their honour intact.

The practice of the 'duel of honour' or 'private combat' developed in England in the late sixteenth century. Up to the 1580s most of these combats were chaotic and relatively harmless affairs, being fought with the heavy broadsword with a single cutting edge, and the buckler or shield. As Lawrence Stone has observed these weapons often 'allowed the maximum muscular effort and the most spectacular show of violence with the minimum threat to life and limb'. By this date however, the broadsword was giving way to the needle sharp rapier with which it was all too easy to kill a man by running him through the vital organs. This was a thoroughly dangerous weapon and it was quickly recognized that if its largely unregulated use was allowed to continue the English gentry might well face the sort of death rates which were common in France (where it was said that the king granted over 6,000 pardons in the first decade of the seventeenth century for the killing of noblemen in duels). So from the 1580s there was a concerted effort at educating the gentry in the proper use of the rapier and the conduct of duels more generally. In 1576, the first fencing school opened at Blackfriars in London, under the Italian master of arms Rocco Bonetti, and by the turn of the century fencing was firmly established as one of the skills required of the young gentleman. At the same time, as part of the courtesy literature of the period, there emerged a body of work setting out the rules for conducting 'private combats'.[2]

It used to be argued that this genre – and indeed the whole development of duelling in this period – was a throwback to the chivalric past in England. On this account, the duel was closely linked to the judicial combat and was, according to Mervyn James, an expression of the 'honour violence' of the knightly code, given a new lease of life by the revival of chivalry under Elizabeth.[3] However, our understanding of the whole subject has been transformed by Markku Peltonen's illuminating study of duelling and duelling literature. He demonstrates that the emergence of the 'duel of honour' from the 1570s onwards was a consequence of Italian practices imported into England. Contemporaries clearly distinguished between this and judicial combat, and regarded the former as a recent innovation developing out of Italian courtesy literature which insisted that the slightest injury or affront was a gross insult which could only be avenged by a challenge to combat. By the 1590s, there was a well established and elaborate etiquette covering every aspect of the duel, from giving the lie and drawing up a suitably disdainful challenge, to the choice of weapons and the conduct of

seconds. Throughout the emphasis was on good manners. The aim may have been to kill your opponent as efficiently as possible; but, as the Italian fencing master Vincente Saviolo emphasized there was no excuse for being impolite about it.[4]

This new code did not, however, go unchallenged and, as Peltonen shows, many of the pros and cons were outlined in the programmes put forward by the earl of Northampton, and the attorney general Sir Francis Bacon during James I's 1613–14 campaign to put a stop to duelling. Both writers endorsed the view that the private duel was a direct challenge to the king's authority, because it removed from his hands the power to make judgements and inflict punishments; however, they differed on how to deal with it. Northampton accepted the premise of the Italian literature that honour was reflexive, and depended on the individual responding aggressively to the slightest challenge to his good name. He had to demonstrate repeatedly, in the arena of public opinion, that he was neither a coward nor a liar. The earl's remedy for the whole problem was to give the Court of Chivalry a much more active role than hitherto in determining disputes about honour. The idea was to ensure that the court – rather than gossip or hearsay – became the supreme arbiter of an individual's reputation by giving it responsibility for adjudicating the insulting words or gestures which provoked duels in the first place. Once this happened, he argued, gentlemen would no longer feel compelled to fight, because they would be entrusting the vindication of their reputations to the judgement of the king who was, after all, the fount of all honour. Northampton's death in 1614 put a halt to the development of such procedures; but they were implemented in the 1630s when the court was established on a regular footing to deal with precisely such matters.[5]

The alternate approach, advanced by Bacon, was to punish challenges or injuries connected with the duel with the full rigour of the common law, but otherwise not to interfere. As he recognized one of the consequences of the elaboration of the duelling code was to make 'private combats' much more likely. The rigid stereotyping of the conventions had become so elaborate that a gentleman found himself under an obligation to challenge an opponent for the most trivial of slights: a loose word, the unintentional jostle in a passageway, a touch of bad temper, all could be interpreted as demeaning acts which required a gentleman to give the perpetrator the lie and thus invite a challenge to fight. To attempt to arbitrate in matters of personal honour would, Bacon argued, simply perpetuate the whole elaborate charade. Instead the gentry must realize that the duelling code was based on a false premise. Those who subscribed to it were equating honour with the 'vain opinion of the world', whereas,

in fact, it was the reward and acknowledgement of virtue, and therefore something altogether more robust and enduring. Drawing on an alternative literature of honour, he challenged the link made in the courtesy manuals between external comportment and inner virtue and insisted that the latter had nothing to do with manners. 'True fortitude' was about mastering one's passions rather than reacting to every trifling discourtesy; about internalizing the Christian message of forgiveness and charity; and about understanding that if one was to sacrifice one's life it should be done in the service of one's country rather than in pursuit of some private quarrel. In the 1610s, crown policy largely followed Bacon's line; but the issues would not go away and the debate continued, not least in the minds of the gentry themselves.[6]

One of the best guides to gentlemen's thinking on the whole issue is advices to sons which provided a mix of high-minded aspirations and practical wisdom gleaned from personal experience. A central theme of most advices was the need for the man of honour to control his passions through the use of reason. The Gloucestershire gentleman William Higford echoed Bacon when he told his heir that 'fortitude or courage' ultimately meant triumphing 'in the conquest of yourself', subjugating your 'affections and appetite to the government of reason', overcoming 'all fear' and, above all, displaying the virtues of patience and moderation.[7] He must learn to pacify quarrels rather than inflame them. 'Blessed are the peacemakers', the fifth earl of Huntingdon reminded his son, encouraging him to 'forgive and forget' past injuries.[8] In the same vein, Sir Richard Grosvenor urged his son to remember that

> the greatest victory is that which is got by clemency. Constantine laughed at those who stoned his statues and Theodosius pardoned those who dragged his, whereas it is proper to base spirits to seek to glutt themselves in revenge and to delight in the miseries of their neighbours.[9]

It was also acknowledged that it was the sign of a base spirit to pay too much attention to popular opinion. The Jacobean Lord Keeper, Viscount Ellesmere, urged his son to rise above the reports of his cowardice that were being spread around Cheshire and Flintshire by a vindictive opponent: 'my credite and reputacon stand not upon the waste wynde of the mouthes of the multitude who doe seldome eyther judge or speake aright'.[10]

At the same time, however, these gentlemen recognized that in the real world such high-minded sentiments were not always practicable. When the sensitive matter of family honour was raised, Huntingdon

rapidly backtracked on his earlier injunctions and insisted that his son must 'never be insensible of a wrong done thee; for although no quarrel is lawful by divinity, yet to maintain thy reputation unspotted thou must not remayne with any injury offered thee'.[11] Sir William Wentworth gave similar advice based on a rather bleak view of human nature. 'Sometimes in honest policy', he told his son Thomas, later earl of Strafford, 'you must seem something contentious and ready to sue men that do you wrong … for nothing but fear of revenge or suits can … curb their beastly and base natures.'[12]

This ambivalence extended to discussions of duelling. Authors of advices recognized that duelling contravened ideals of virtues and godliness, and was in direct opposition to the king's commands. Sir Christopher Wandesford told his son that 'obedience to God and allegiance to the prince' should persuade him to avoid any quarrel likely to lead to a duel, while Huntingdon insisted that duelling was never worth the risk: 'I assure you that I never saw that he that killed another man ever prospered himself – though as the law of duels calls it fairly, that is with equal weapons, not taking advantage – blood being of that nature that it rises unto God for vengeance.'[13] On closer examination, however, it becomes apparent that what they were generally condemning was aggressive duelling, the approach of those who, as Wandesford put it, 'glory in a heady and passionate audacity, never believing themselves true Christians in the duelling religion until they be rebaptised in that bloody combat'. A duel fought to protect one's good name was a different matter, and Wandesford went on to urge that it was an 'equal vice to want courage in your own defence'.[14] Similarly William Higford, after enjoining his heir 'above all things to avoid duelling', stressed that 'to defend yourself in a just cause … and to do it with judgement and resolution will marvellously redound to your honour and safety'. He then went on to discuss the weapons to be used, and advocated fighting with both rapier and dagger, as had been the fashion in his own day.[15] Duelling, and indeed other forms of violent action, then, could be construed as legitimate when it came to defending one's good name; but seeking out quarrels or aggressively inciting violence could not.[16]

This created a large grey area, depending on how precise circumstances were interpreted, which meant that gentlemen often faced tricky decisions. It was possible to err on both sides. If one failed to respond to a really direct or damaging affront there was the risk of being branded a coward. Thus after Sir Charles Bolle of Louth, Lincolnshire, had refused to fight following a quarrel with Sir Gervase Scroope, George Lambert,

a gentleman servant to Scroope, had put it about that Bolle 'was a coward and durst not meet with Sir Gervase … in the quarry'. Francis Haselwood esquire complained that Thomas Dangerfield had challenged him to a duel after a dispute at Pershore market in Worcestershire and declared that he would 'proclaime him a coward' if he would not fight. John Travers had gone one better and 'did poast upp [Jervays Wood] for a coward in a libell in the body of the church of St Paules'.[17] On the other hand, overreacting where an affront might have been answered in some other way could be just as damaging. Sir John Oglander clearly felt that Sir Edward Dennys had failed to display the self-control expected of a justice of the peace when he fought with Philip Fleming 'in the open street', using sticks and fists. According to Oglander, the episode redounded 'to their own shame and the no little discredit to the place Sir Edward held'.[18] Faced with difficult choices, many gentry developed elaborate strategies for sidestepping violent confrontations whilst still ensuring that they emerged with honour intact.

One common method of wriggling out of a violent confrontation was to refuse a challenge because of an opponent's inferior status. When Philip Chetwynd struck Sir Henry Shirley with his stick – admittedly after extreme provocation since Shirley had alleged that he would 'forswear himself for a dog's turd' – Sir Henry avoided escalating the conflict by declaring that had Chetwynd been his social equal 'he would not have breathed after so great an injury'; however, because he was so base he could not possibly duel with him.[19] This wonderfully disdainful response had various advantages. It proclaimed Shirley's social superiority and demonstrated the self-control expected of a true gentleman, whilst, no doubt, driving Chetwynd to complete distraction. It also showed how hard it was to force a fight when there was a significant social disparity. In theory all gentry and nobles were on equal terms in matters of honour; but in practice the force of the doctrine that honour could only properly be impugned by a social equal gave an enormous advantage to the superior. As long as he kept his temper he was likely to come out on top. He could either deflect the challenge by invoking his status, or bring a law suit for attempting to provoke a duel, or simply have one of his servants administer a beating to the offending party.[20] This acted as a significant deterrent to would-be challengers.

The Shirley/Chetwynd confrontation also illustrates how the verbal duel could often become a substitute for the clash of swords. The challenges issued on such occasions were invariably noisy and over the top. Thomas Lovell's giving the lie to Sir Nicholas Bacon during a quarrel in

Norfolk in 1586 is a vivid example:

> thou lyest, thou lyest in thy throat, and I do by this my letter challenge thee as a lying knight … if filthy fear causeth thee to refuse this … I will openly blaze thee as a dunghill spirited man.[21]

A challenge such as this was as much part of the whole contest as any exchange of blows. Both were essentially theatrical performances designed to humiliate an opponent and destroy his reputation in the eyes of fellow gentry.[22] To this end challenges were often copied and circulated locally. In early 1614, after a quarrel during a hunting expedition, Gervase Markham esquire had drawn up a letter to Lord Darcy which was tantamount to a challenge in that it accused him of lying in saying that his servant had 'beaten him to rags'. The letter was never delivered directly to Darcy, but it was circulated locally, prompting reports that Markham had issued a challenge and implying that that Darcy was dodging a fight.[23] James's proclamation of October 1613 attempted to outlaw the publishing of challenges and reports of confrontations, on the grounds that it perpetuated quarrels which might otherwise have been settled.[24] No doubt there was something in this; but, equally, as seems to have been the case here, the issuing of challenges and the circulation of reports was a means of channelling the conflict into verbal rather than physical confrontation, and prolonging it until arbiters could intervene and wiser counsels prevail.

Another common response, open especially to those who were justices, was to proclaim that one's obligation to uphold the peace precluded any resort to violence. This was the line taken by Richard Rock, a Shropshire J. P., when Edward Hatton challenged, him and threatened to 'publish' that he had 'no manhood' if he should refuse to give him satisfaction and also by Sir John Byron, a Nottinghamshire justice, when Lord Stanhope tried to provoke him with a particularly noisy affront.[25] Again it demonstrated the superior self-control of the respondent, while at the same time aligning him with the authority and prestige of the crown. It was also a measure of the growing strength of respect for the law and the public service ethos in England. The fact that a gentleman could appeal to his obligation to keep the peace as superior to his obligation to fight – with a reasonable expectation that this would be sufficient to deflect charges of cowardliness – demonstrated the extent to which orderliness and restraint had become part of accepted standards of behaviour. Of course a good deal depended on the circumstances of those involved. For young men at the Inns of Court, where a high proportion

of the challenges recorded in the Court of Chivalry records were issued, it was hard to evade combat in this way. This was something acknowledged by the young Simonds D'Ewes, not a natural duellist, when he received a challenge from a fellow student. He recorded in his diary that 'my honour, credit, reputation and all lay at the stake if I answered it not'.[26] The same applied to courtiers, whose punctiliousness on matters of honour was notorious, and also to gentleman soldiers. Markham claimed in his defence against Darcy that, 'as one who had lyved by the [illegible word] of his sword … he might without danger of displeasure to his Ma[jes]ty take his revenge for satisfaction of the wrongs he had received'; and even Attorney-General Bacon recognized that he had a point, acknowledging that it was far more of a 'slander … to say of a soldier that he had been beaten' than it would have been for an ordinary gentleman.[27] For other groups amongst the gentry, however, there is every indication that messages about the need for non-violent behaviour, which the crown had been drumming into its subjects for years, were getting through. This sort of response was also testimony of the extent to which some gentry had internalized Christian humanist and classical ideals.

In some cases, they did not respond at all, or else turned the other cheek in the manner recommended by Sir Richard Grosvenor. On one account this was what Sir William Herrick did when Francis Danvers cudgelled him to the ground outside Loughborough church on a Sunday evening in 1622. According to Lady Herrick, Sir William had Danvers at his mercy but 'laid no hands on him, for the fear of God'; nor did he respond to 'base and vile' verbal provocations.[28] Whether Herrick was really as forbearing as his wife claimed is hard to ascertain; but this does at least indicate that such restraint could be viewed as admirable and appropriate in certain circumstances. There are other instances where much the same thing seems to have happened, for example, when John Blount, a Herefordshire justice, refused to rise to the provocation when Humphrey Cornwall gave him they lie whilst he was sitting at petty sessions in 1610.[29] In the light of what has been said about expectations that the man of honour would answer such an affront, this sort of response might seem implausible; but in certain public settings – which included the county bench, and the environs of the parish church – and for particular individuals – like Herrick and, indeed, Grosvenor, whose reputations were based on their godliness and virtue – it was probably risky to react in any other way. To do so would have been to endanger a carefully fashioned image which provided much of the basis on which they were honoured and esteemed. As it was, this approach generally

paid dividends. In a rare example of a lord lieutenant acting under the powers given to him by James's duelling edict of 1614, the Earl of Huntingdon convened a local honour court before a posse of Leicestershire gentry and forced Danvers to make a humiliating submission to Herrick; whilst Blount was rescued by his fellow justices who forced Cornwall to back off by invoking the claims of peace and charity.[30]

A third set of responses – often combined with one of the two already mentioned – was to use the affront or challenge as the basis for a law suit. This was standard practice in Court of Chivalry cases during the 1630s, where 'scandalous words likely to provoke a duel' became the main grounds for bringing an action. Numerous plaintiffs recited the fact that they had been insulted in a way which no self-respecting gentleman should have to endure, but that they had deliberately refrained from exacting physical revenge out of deference to the king's edict and the court's claim to determine such quarrels.[31] These petitions are a reminder that, although in some societies resort to the law might be interpreted as a sign of weakness or cowardice, in early modern England this was generally not the case.[32] There were, of course, circumstances where a lawsuit could, indeed, be regarded as a cowardly evasion, often involving courtiers, military men or gentleman students who were still striving to assert their masculinity. The merciless mockery endured by Thomas Bowen, a Middle Temple student, at the hands of two fellow students who he had reported to the Court of Chivalry for challenging him –

> Zounds, what a redd face hee hath; itt would make a man forfeite five hundred pounds to look upon him and his face. Zounds, I cannot look aside on him but he will complayne to my Lord Marshall on me and I shall forfayte my fyve hundred pound bond[33]

– stood as a warning to those who misjudged the situation. For most other groups of gentry, however, lawsuits were recognized as a potent and acceptable means of answering challenges to one's honour. Sir William Wentworth understood this and advised the young Thomas that, however much he might wish to avoid them, he must

> make show upon some occasions to be prone to them when you are wronged, which show of contention appearing in 2 or 3 examples will make men fearfull to do you wrong.[34]

Christopher Wandesford gave the same advice, adding that it was essential to win one's first suit, 'for according to your success in that shall you be apprehended by your neighbours'.[35]

The resort to litigation to vindicate honour was assisted by the increasing readiness of the central courts to provide redress for the offence of defamation. It was one of the standard defences of duelling in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England that the law was defective in such matters because it failed to provide adequate redress for a gentleman whose reputation had been defamed by insulting words. There was some justification for this. Common lawyers, like Sir Edward Coke, were notoriously suspicious of actions brought for words alone because to allow them would be to open the courts to a flood of litigation over every dubious insult. It was more feasible to deal with the felony or breach of the peace which resulted from such words.[36] Nonetheless, this was a grey area and it was acknowledged in James's anti-duelling edict that there was a need for gentlemen to be given some remedy for 'the slanders which emblemish any man's good name.'[37] The intention of the edict was that this remedy should be provided by the Court of Chivalry taking on a much more interventionist role in determining matters of honour. This did not happen until 1634 when for the first time the court was established on a routine basis, in the same way as the other Westminster courts, and made its main business 'plea of words.' In the meantime, however, taking as its authorization James's proclamations and edict of 1613–14, Star Chamber was increasingly taking notice of cases where insulting words were likely to provoke a duel.[38]

Both courts offered processes which were well suited to vindicating honour. Depositions from witnesses were usually taken locally, at hearings attended by senior gentry, which offered plaintiffs opportunities to defend their reputations in a semi-public forum. These hearings frequently constituted mini courts of honour in their own right, akin to the assembly Huntingdon convened in Leicester in 1622. Plaintiffs would line up local witnesses, regularly drawn from the gentry and knightly classes, who would attest their standing and worth within the local community. This was done partly in order to emphasize the grossness of the insult perpetrated against them, but also to provide a semi-public reparation for their slighted honour and warn off others from attempting the same thing in the future. Moreover, in both the Court of Chivalry and Star Chamber, sentences generally involved defendants being made to apologize at quarter sessions, assizes or some other public assembly, and often to acknowledge that their opponent was a gentleman of 'better quality' or 'greater worth' than they were. The lengths to which some defendants went to avoid performing these penances suggests that they really hurt.[39] Litigation, then, offered the means of humiliating an opponent and at the same time restoring

one's own reputation, which made it a highly acceptable substitute for violence.

Increasingly lawsuits became an integral part of the strategy for conducting quarrels, a continuation of the duel by other means. As an indication of this one finds numerous instances of wily disputants deliberately provoking enemies into some violent threat or challenge, while remaining cool and collected themselves, precisely in order to provide grounds for a suit in Star Chamber or the Court of Chivalry. There are strong hints of this in the Monson case, with the viscount baiting his opponent to the point at which he lost his self-control and in front of witnesses tried to force a fight, thus giving Monson *prima facie* grounds for bringing an action. In *Billiard v Robinson*, two Northamptonshire gentlemen appear to have known exactly what was at stake, as each tried to manoeuvre the other into issuing a challenge. Billiard eventually came out on top, in spite of being the first to draw his sword, and he was able to report to the court his sanctimonious response to Robinson's challenge: 'I will not meete you in the bushy close, but I will meet you in Star Chamber, or some other Court of Justice, where the lawe shall right mee, and I will not right myselfe.'[40] Billiard's response was, of course, carefully calculated to enhance his case and appeal to the prejudices of the Court of Chivalry. Nonetheless it does illustrate the way in which, given the right circumstances, litigation could be seen by gentlemen as an acceptable substitute for combat. This raises the wider question of how effective the Court of Chivalry was in regulating the whole practice of duelling, once it had been established on a routine basis during the 1630s.

It is hard to answer this with any precision because of the difficulty of quantifying the extent of duelling in early Stuart England. Historians have tended to rely on reports in newsletters; however, it is clear from other sources that these were heavily biased towards combats involving courtiers and leading noblemen. Star Chamber and Court of Chivalry cases offer a better guide to the extent of the problem in the localities, but again it is apparent that combats referred to in the written record were only a small fraction of the total. In spite of these limitations, however, it is still possible to assess some of the ways in which the court did have an impact on the problem.

One direct effect was to provide the Earl Marshal with improved intelligence on when duels were about to take place, which allowed him to intervene to prevent them. Numerous litigants went straight to the court after receiving a challenge, sometimes specifically citing James's edict and proclamations.[41] In such cases the Earl Marshal was often able

to send a messenger to detain the parties involved and then bind them over to good behaviour for substantial sums in the order of £500–£1000. This put an immediate stop to some duelling – mainly around the fringes of the royal court or at the Inns of Court, which were two of the main trouble spots – but it is doubtful whether it had much impact as a longer term deterrent.[42] Bonds of £500 apiece did not stop Guy Moulsworth and William Gartfoote from continuing to taunt and provoke the two fellow Inns of Court students who had appealed against them to the Earl Marshal; and Robert Walsh, one of the habitual duellists who crop up in the court's records, mocked and challenged Edward Gibbes, the son of a Warwickshire gentleman, in Westminster Hall in May 1639, in spite of having been bound over for 1000 marks the previous year to stop a duel over a horseracing bet.[43] Where the court appears to have played a much more effective role was in providing disputants with an alternative means of settling their differences.

Once the Court of Chivalry was established on a regular basis in 1634, cases began to flood in. Of these 738 have been traced up to the suspension of the court's proceedings in December 1640, and at the peak of its business in 1637/8 it was processing over seventy cases at each sitting, more than three-quarters of which involved 'scandalous words likely to provoke a duel'. All the indications are that the court quickly became very popular with plaintiffs. News of its procedures spread far and wide, and litigants were drawn from every county in England and Wales. Its appeal was no doubt enhanced by the fact that its proceedings were relatively cheap and speedy – certainly in comparison with the Court of Star Chamber – and that over 70 per cent of plaintiffs were successful in winning their case. It would seem that by the 1630s, the crown was able to offer legal processes specifically geared to tackling the problem of the duel which were having an impact.[44]

Historians have generally expressed scepticism over whether this was in fact the case. In a recent study of duelling in this period Roger Manning has argued that the court was 'lacking in clear direction' and 'more spasmodic than consistent in the suppression of duelling'; and Elizabeth Foyster has suggested that 'because legal remedies were seen as inadequate', the court had 'limited success … in attracting business'.[45] This last comment points to what has often been viewed as a serious flaw in the crown's approach to the whole problem, the assumption that if a gentleman secured a favourable verdict in the Court of Chivalry this would be enough to free him from the imputation of cowardice for avoiding a duel.[46] In many ways this is the crux of the matter. Could litigation really vindicate an individual's honour and manhood in a way

which was an acceptable substitute for fighting? The evidence presented here suggests that it could. Much depended, of course, on the context. For gentleman students, courtiers and military men the evasion which might be implied by resorting to litigation was always problematic. But for other groups victory in the courts seems to have been just as satisfying a means of defending one's honour, without the hazard to life and limb. Ultimately the aim of the duel was to demonstrate one's power and virility, and if this could be achieved through litigation then, for many, so much the better.

This brief survey of some of the themes connecting duelling, gentry honour and the Court of Chivalry does not offer any straightforward conclusions. The whole topic is complex and fraught with ambiguity. Proponents of the duelling code would often argue that one of its great achievements was to curb indiscriminate violence by making gentlemen more careful of how they behaved towards one another; but as its critics pointed out this was rather beside the point when so many young men were being needlessly slaughtered in the name of politeness. Individuals themselves often embodied the contradictory viewpoints. One of the most striking examples is Sir Thomas Lucy who in his mature years was hailed as a paragon of godly magistracy, seven times knight of the shire for Warwickshire and a worthy father of his country. Yet as a young man he had cut and slashed his way across Europe in the company of Lord Herbert Cherbury, one of the most notorious duellists of his day; and in later years he would applaud his friend's punctiliousness and refusal to leave a slight unavenged.[47] The conflict of ideas in the Northampton/Bacon debate was often a conflict within the minds of individuals. This said, it is still possible to highlight some themes which emerge out of this discussion.

One of these is that, in spite of the duelling code's insistence on the reflexive nature of honour, in practice it was relatively easy to evade combat and emerge with your good name intact. This tended to be more difficult in the case of military men, courtiers and gentleman students, for all of whom the display of courage and touchiness about matters of honour were important components of identity; but for most others there was a wide range of get outs, substitutes and evasions if they did not want to risk being killed.

A second, more surprising, finding is the force carried by Christian and Stoical ideas about self-control and keeping the peace. As one might expect these are prominent themes in advices to sons and more abstract discussions of honour; but it is striking how regularly they were invoked

in the midst of potentially violent affrays and used to justify antagonists backing off and seeking non-violent resolutions.

However, the point which perhaps emerges most forcibly is the way in which litigation could become a substitute for combat. For many gentlemen victory in the courts was generally seen as just as potent and satisfying a means of defending one's honour as fighting a duel, and with few of the obvious hazards. After the false start of 1613–14, the growing readiness of the courts to provide redress for defamation does appear to have played a part in containing the problem of duelling in England and preventing the wholesale slaughter of young noblemen which occurred in early seventeenth-century France.[48]

Notes

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1. *Monson v Welch*: College of Arms [hereafter CA], Curia Militaris Boxes [hereafter CM], 2/44, 11/13; Curia Militaris 1631–42, fos 161, 171–2.
2. L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558–1641* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 242–50; M. Peltonen, *The Duel in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 44–79.
3. M. E. James, *English Politics and the Concept of Honour 1485–1642* (Past and Present suppl. iii, Oxford, 1978); Peltonen, *The Duel*, pp. 7–8.
4. Peltonen, *The Duel*, chapter 1.
5. Ibid. pp.108–45; R. P. Cust and A. J. Hopper eds, *Cases in the High Court of Chivalry, 1634–1640* (London: Harleian Society, 2006), introduction.
6. Peltonen, *The Duel*, pp. 108–45; A. Stewart, 'Purging Troubled Humours: Bacon, Northampton and the Anti-Duelling Campaign of 1613–1614', in S. Clucas and R. Davies eds, *The Crisis of 1614 and the Addled Parliament* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 81–91.
7. *Harleian Miscellany*, ed. T. Park, 10 vols (1808–13), IX.594.
8. Huntingdon Library, California [hereafter HL], Hastings MS, HA Personal, Box 15, no. 8, fos 14,18.
9. *The Papers of Sir Richard Grosvenor, 1st Bart. (1585–1645)*, ed. R. P. Cust (Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 134, 1996), p. 36.
10. HL, Ellesmere MS, EL 216.
11. HL, HA Personal, Box 15, no. 8, fo. 18.
12. *Wentworth Papers 1597–1628*, ed. J. P. Cooper (Camden Society, 4th series, 12, 1973), p. 22.

13. *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable the Lord Deputy Wandesforde*, ed. T. Comber (1778), pp. 32–3; HL, HA Personal, Box 15, no. 8, fos 18–19.
14. *Memoirs of Wandesforde*, pp. 32–3.
15. *Harleian Miscellany*, IX, 596.
16. See also the gentry conduct books cited in A. Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 140–1.
17. *Bolle v Lambert*: CA, CM, 5/175; *Haslewood v Pratt*: Arundel Castle [hereafter AC], Earl Marshal's papers [hereafter EM] 304; *Wood v Travers*: AC, EM 342.
18. F. Bamford ed., *A Royalist's Notebook* (London: Constable, 1936), p. 87.
19. The National Archives [hereafter TNA] SP/16/83/29. For a similar response in a Court of Chivalry case, see the retort of William Salven, a Yorkshire esquire, when one of his tenants, Francis Pearson, claimed to be 'as good a man as he' in a local alehouse. Salven picked up his cane to strike Pearson, but then drew back, declaring, 'he was so base a fellowe that he could not find in his hearte to foule his hands with him': *Salven v Pearson*: CA, Acta (4), fos 117–18.
20. See the advice given by Simon Robson in *The Courte of Civill Courtesie*, cited in Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood*, pp. 140–1.
21. Cited in A. Hassell Smith, *County and Court: Government and Politics in Norfolk, 1558–1603* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), p. 184.
22. For some illuminating comments on this practice in an Italian context, see D. Wenstein, 'Fighting or Flyting? Verbal Duelling in Mid Sixteenth-Century Italy', in T. Dean and K. J. P. Lowe eds, *Crime, Society and the Law in Renaissance Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 217.
23. TNA/STAC/8/127/4; J. A. Spedding ed., *Life and Letters of Francis Bacon*, 7 vols (1861–74), VI, 104.
24. J. F. Larkin and P. L. Hughes eds, *Stuart Royal Proclamations. Volume I, Royal Proclamations of King James I, 1603–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 295–7.
25. TNA/STAC/8/251/1, 8/28/10; see also the response of Sir Thomas Beaumont, a Leicestershire justice, after one of his servants had slandered him behind his back: R. P. Cust, 'Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: the Case of Beaumont v Hastings', *Past and Present*, CXLIX (1995), 78–9.
26. *The Diary of Sir Simonds D'Ewes (1622–1624)*, ed. E. Bourcier (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, V, 1975), p. 169.
27. Inner Temple Library, Barrington MS 16, fos 49–50; *Life and Letters of Bacon*, VI, 112. The soldiers who featured in Court of Chivalry cases were often particularly touchy and prone to violence: see for example, *Sibthorpe v Hursler*: CA, CM, 2/64, 15/4y, Curia Militaris 1631–42, fos 87–97, 116–18, 120.
28. Bodleain Library [herafter Bod L], Eng. Hist. MS C.476, fos 33–4.
29. TNA/STAC/8/62/20.
30. Bod L, Eng. Hist. MS. C.476, fos 48–50; TNA/STAC/8/62/20.
31. See for example *Malett v Stokes* where Malett declared that his reputation had suffered as a result of the insults of a Gloucestershire yeoman, but 'in obedience to his Majestie's declaration and commands [he] doth forbear to take revenge thereof by way of single combat': CA, CM 6/118; or *Grice v Jenkinson* where Grice declared that he had forborne combat 'in obedience to this honorable court': CA, CM 6/8.

32. J. A. Sharpe, *Defamation and Sexual Slander in Early Modern England: The Church Courts at York* (York: Borthwick Papers, 1980), LVIII, p. 23.
33. CA, CM 9/4/24, 7/80.
34. *Wentworth Papers*, p. 17.
35. *Memoirs of Wandesforde*, pp. 26–7.
36. We are grateful to Clive Homes for advice on this point. For a fuller discussion, see his article on 'The Strange Case of a Misplaced Tomb: Family Honour and Law in Late Seventeenth-Century England', *Midland History*, XXXI (2006), 18–36; P. H. Hardacre, 'The Earl Marshal, the Heralds and the House of Commons, 1604–1641', *International Review of History*, II (1957), 118–19.
37. James I, *A Publication of his Maties Edict and Severe Censure against Private Combats and Combatants* (1614), p. 46.
38. *Cases in the High Court of Chivalry*, introduction.
39. Ibid.
40. CA, CM 16/2e.
41. See, for example, *Garnett v Aylmer*: AC, EM 296.
42. See for example, *Duck v Doubleday*: CA, CM 13/2p, 2q, 2v, 2w, 2x; *St. Ravie v Raleigh*: CA, CM 6/41, 9/3/4.
43. *Bowen v Moulsworth and Gartfoote*: CA, CM 9/4/24, 7/80; *Napper v Moulsworth*: CA, CM 9/4/31; *Walsh v Gibbs*: AC, EM 136; CA, CM 19/7a, Cur. Mil. 1631–42, fos 132–4.
44. *Cases in the High Court of Chivalry*, introduction. Prior to 1634 the Earl Marshal did receive petitions and intervene in duelling cases, as did the Court of Star Chamber; but the volume of complaints processed was far smaller.
45. R. B. Manning, *Swordsmen. The Martial Ethos in the Three Kingdoms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 224–5, 81; E. A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Longman, 1999), p. 181. For a less dismissive verdict on the court's impact, however, see Lawrence Stone's account of duelling in *The Crisis of the Aristocracy*, pp. 248–9.
46. Manning, *Swordsmen*, p. 222 highlights the assumption made by 'many martialists' that 'honour disputes could not be adjudicated by gownsmen, but only settled by trial on the field of honour.'
47. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, R. P. Cust, 'Sir Thomas Lucy, c.1584–1640', in J. M. Shuttleworth ed., *The Life of Edward First Lord Herbert of Cherbury* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), pp. 50–2, 60; A. Fairfax-Lucy, *Charlecote and the Lucys* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 124–5.
48. On the situation in France, see F. Billacois, *The Duel*, trans. T. Selous (London: Yale University Press, 1990); S. Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

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Part III
Modern Perspectives

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8

Popular Violence in the French Revolution: Revolt, Retribution and the Slide to State Terror

David Andress

There can be few historical subjects so mythologized as the violence of crowds in the French Revolution. As recently as 2005, leading historians Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt were content to state bluntly that 'popular violence defined the French Revolution', and went on to note that such violence 'pushed the Revolution forward, but … also threatened to dissolve it altogether in an acid wash of blood, political vengeance and anarchic disorder'.[1] While Censer and Hunt, like other surveys of the historiography, are able to show clearly that historians have embraced competing collective visions of this threatening (or in the case of George Rudé, politically conscious) mass, they do not consider the overall validity of such characterizations.[2] While it may be true that mass political involvement in revolutionary events most easily took the form of protesting crowds, and while such a crowd always admits of the potential of violence, there is a long way from these basic facts to the attribution of political change to 'popular violence'. As this chapter will argue, it is the structures and limitations of 'popular violence' which are the most interesting features of that phenomenon, and which connect it far more intricately than is usually recognized to the other much-mythologized component of the French Revolution, the state-directed violence of the Terror.

The storming of the Bastille on 14 July 1789, so often viewed as a foundational act of 'popular violence', was in fact an operation of the newly formed citizens' militia of the National Guard, aided by regular troops who had switched allegiance to the municipal revolutionary authorities. When groups of Parisians, fresh from this conquest, where cannon-fire had killed a hundred of their fellows, butchered the garrison

commander Bernard-René de Launay in a triumphal scene in the heart of the city, this was a minor, if gruesome, postscript to the main episode. It has often been used, however, to make a generalized attribution of popular bloodlust, amplified by the killings a week later of Foulon and Berthier, state officials condemned by popular opinion as plotters and hoarders.[3] However, as recorded in the memoirs of mayor Jean-Sylvain Bailly, the narrative of Foulon's death points away from any simple construction of popular appetite for slaughter.[4] Foulon was in the custody of the new municipal authorities, within the Hôtel-de-Ville. Outside, a crowd demanded judgement, which was promised to them by two municipal delegates. Judgement required a court, and no sooner had this view been voiced than two priests and five other 'notables' present, including a serving judge, were named by 'the crowd' to form a tribunal. When the two priests withdrew, pleading their clerical status, two replacements were swiftly chosen. Likewise, calls by the municipal delegates to name a secretary and a prosecutor were answered from the crowd – in the first case with the brisk yell 'Yourself', in the second by pointing out a suitable man in the municipal ranks.

The crowd continued to follow judicial procedures: 'Foulon was brought out, space was made for him, they sat him, as the accused, at a small table'. Only further attempts at delays by the marquis de Lafayette, freshly arrived on the scene, caused the collapse of decorum: 'One individual, well dressed, cried out: Is there need for judgment on a man judged these twenty years past? A tumult ensued; Foulon's chair was overturned … .' He would be variously hanged, shot and stabbed before his decapitated head, the mouth stuffed with the grass he had supposedly threatened to feed the Parisians, was paraded before Bertier, shortly to meet a similar fate. This 'popular violence', then, though ultimately breaking out into gruesome killing, was not beyond attempts at constraint. Nor did it lack for structure – the aim here is quite clearly to judge and execute a perceived enemy of the people, and there is a willingness to endure, and collaborate with, the establishment of judicial process, until the authorities seem no longer to be moving in the direction of the desired sentence. The results are abhorrent to a humanitarian sensibility, and indeed were abhorrent to the refined individuals of the National Assembly at the time, but they follow closely the commonplace understanding of the state's right to display the bodies of the victims of justice – before, during and after their demise.[5]

Indeed, Paolo Viola has commented on the strong connection between 'popular violence' and the sovereign right of punishment – 'What is the quality that makes a sovereign *seigneur* out of a feudal landowner?

The tribunal, the dungeon, perhaps the gibbet, without which he would be a *rentier* just like the bourgeois.' In the imagination of the crowd, according to Viola, the violence of sovereignty and the ability to use violence to achieve representative status are brought together: 'the violent crowd is thus invested with an extraordinary symbolic power: it is sovereign because it can punish its enemies, and it has reason to do so, and at the same time it represents the collectivity which attends at and approves of its conduct'.[6] Viola notes that to 'rationalize' violence as an immediate response to fear of attack is to strip it of its cultural significance, as an element in a world-view built up as 'the masses reflect, just like other [social groups], but also dream, imagine, represent reality to themselves by tinkering with the materials they possess.'[7]

Colin Lucas wrote eloquently around the time of the Revolution's bicentennial on the role of crowd violence, advancing a thesis that, similar to Viola's, began with the collective, representative role of the crowd in acting out punitive justice.[8] Lucas positions this somewhat in the tradition of the carnivalesque, of temporary inversions of accepted ordering and hierarchies. He goes on to argue that the course of the Revolution towards Terror reveals a steadily more transformative direct impact of popular violence – the taking of the Bastille in 1789 having only an indirect impact, likewise the October Days of that year that brought the royal family from Versailles to Paris being the product of popular pressure mediated through elite negotiations, but then the events of the summer of 1792 seeing violence in Paris as central to the actual fall of the monarchy, culminating in the direct intimidation of the National Convention in May–June 1793 that purged it of the Girondins and laid the path open to Terror.

This approach has been echoed more recently by Roger Dupuy, who observes that a long-term 'politics of the people' extending across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be discerned. This contains a number of key elements: a localism of identity and communal solidarity; an acceptance of hierarchy, conditional on successful patronage; a ritualistic and oral culture; and an acceptance of violence as the 'cement of the community'.[9] Dupuy attributes to this violent and localistic culture many of the diverse episodes of revolutionary politics, including violent movements from the ultra-radical *Hébertistes* of the capital to the 'anti-revolutionary' and subsequently counter-revolutionary revolts of the West. He notes that the impetus to Terror is 'born of the popular will to do away with all forms of counter-revolution', and terrorist institutions are 'the result of the bourgeois will to appeal to the brute violence of the people to achieve its policy of public safety'.[10] In a book which seeks to

valorize the long-term politics of the people, Dupuy nonetheless insists that 'the deep nature of the Terror is thus the punitive, restorative and preventative violence of the politics of the people elevated, by the fact of war and the specific strength of the *sans-culotterie* in Paris, to the eminent dignity of a new principle imposed on the political elites'.[11]

And yet there is a fundamental problem with accepting such a schema. While the Parisian events of 1789 clearly involve masses of people, equally clearly they do not resolve to simple popular influence on politics – indeed in the case of the October Days there was a widespread sentiment amongst the political elite, supposedly influenced by this display, that the 'people' involved were little more than a rent-a-mob in the service of the duc d'Orléans (or, in the view of Orléans himself, paid by the marquis de Lafayette to make him look bad).[12] Advancing further towards the Terror, the problem with characterizing events as 'popular' simply grows. The assault on the Tuileries on 10 August 1792, for example, was a military operation, spearheaded by some 2,000 determined Parisian National Guards.[13] A larger 'crowd' followed them, and vented its fury after the initial battle on the Tuileries palace itself, and a number of unfortunate servants found inside, along with the Swiss Guards, but the initiative of the event came from a well-established radical leadership, locked into the institutional politics of the capital and the country.[14] When in 1793 the Parisian *sans-culottes* effectively forced the Convention to expel the Girondin leadership, they did so under far tighter military discipline. Thousands of patriots were called to arms, marched in battalions, surrounded the Convention with their serried ranks, and held fire on the orders of Hanriot, their appointed general.[15] It is only by choosing, a priori, to see these movements as 'popular' that such a character can be forced onto them. The fact that the *sans-culotte* leadership at the time attempted to insist on such an identification does not make it analytically valid.

The French Revolution, as a political process, experienced, in amongst all the other conflicts to which it was subject, an almost irresolvable tension between key conceptualizations of its prime actor. That actor was the state, labelled in straightforward modern analytical terms, but in the absence of such terms (or rather in being unwilling to use them), the revolutionaries allowed ideas of 'the nation', 'the people' and 'the republic' to blur important conceptual and practical boundaries.[16] While actions continued to be carried out around the 'traditional' repertoire of popular self-assertion, lending revolutionary times the air of permanent popular upheaval, the effective political initiative seldom veered from groups that had commandeered the actual forms of the

state – at national and local levels – as a forum for their actions. The conceptual blurring between 'people' and 'nation/republic' tied in with the continued functioning of a 'carnivalization' mode of behaviour, that called on authority to act, or at best (from the point of view of popular autonomy) presented authority with a limited *fait accompli* to be assimilated into the normal order of things. The distinct political evolution of state-centred politics, then, takes something of its nature from the pressure applied by groups in the name of the 'people', but that pressure – insofar as it is actually in any sense 'popular' – was sidelined in determining the application of policy. In this sense, 'popular violence' had no initiative. What it created was merely a facilitation: by remaining limited in scope, by being captured by groups whose agendas were those of political caucuses and assemblies, 'popular violence' dissolved as an actual political force.

When, for example, the National Convention decided to establish a Revolutionary Tribunal on 10 March 1793 – a stepping-stone on the road to full-blown Terror – the radical Georges-Jacques Danton famously declared, 'Let us be terrible, so that the people does not have to be'.[17] One could read this as a simple affirmation that the danger of violence from 'the people' was forcing the state to adopt punitive measures, but let us put it in a wider context. Danton's speech came after tumultuous debate in which radical Montagnards and moderate Girondins within the Convention had assailed each other over the proposed tribunal. His famous phrase comes in a passage that merits longer quotation:

> Here the safety of the people demands great means and terrible measures. I see no middle way between ordinary forms and a revolutionary tribunal. History attests to this truth; and because some have dared, in this Assembly, recall the bloody days at which every good citizen shudders [the September Massacres of 1792], I will say, myself, that if a tribunal had existed then, the people, so often and so cruelly reproached for those days, would not have bloodied them; I will say, and I will have the assent of everyone who witnessed those events, that no human power could have stopped the overflowing of national vengeance. Let us profit from the errors of our predecessors.
>
> Let us do what the Legislative Assembly did not: let us be terrible, so that the people does not have to be; let us organize a tribunal, not a good one, for that would be impossible, but the least bad it can be, so that the blade of the law may weigh on the heads of all its enemies.[18]

With the benefits of six months' hindsight, Danton indeed depicts the September Massacres as an event of 'popular violence', but he also asserts that such events could have been preempted by state action – that the 'popular violence' was supplementing a lack in the state. Much evidence could be adduced to show that, if the Terror had a rational political goal, it was to challenge and constrain 'popular' violence into something more politically, state-centrically, militarily and economically effective.[19] Yet one can go further than that, for it is possible to challenge the entire notion of a radically autonomous 'popular violence', and to speak instead of currents of violence that are, in varied ways, always 'working towards the state'. The demand for the Revolutionary Tribunal that Danton addressed reached the Convention from the population of Paris itself – or at least, from its activists gathered in local *section* assemblies – transmitted by members of the Convention as a plea for justice against traitors in the name of those about to depart for the front lines of a military campaign: the assembly of the Louvre *section*, for example 'invited, in the most powerful manner and in the name of the *patrie*', two such representatives to 'express its view to the National Convention that a tribunal without appeal should be at once established to put an end to the audacity of the great guilty ones and of all the enemies of the public good'.[20] Justice and the punishment of traitors was an echoing refrain of the 'popular' voice in the Revolution (a voice that itself was so often only heard through 'spokesmen' and 'cultural intermediaries' who channelled it into the existing forms of politics), and the first resort for such justice was always the state.[21]

The violence/sovereignty connection, highlighted by Viola above, can serve as a guiding thread to articulate this paradoxical development of 'popular violence' through the years between the first insurrections of 1789 and the last paroxysms of the 'Great Terror' of the summer of 1794. One of the key points to note, at a nation-wide level, about the insurrections of 1789 was their relative lack of direct physical violence. While never free from the threat, and sometimes reality, of beatings and death, communal protest and assertion in the waves of activity that convulsed various of France's regions in the first half of 1789 had primary goals other than inflicting punishment. The French freed themselves from the burdens they had been labouring under for centuries, but they did not carry out a pogrom against the aristocracy. The collapse of the absolutist sovereignty of the state appears to have effected a transfer of legitimacy to the institutions that French people regarded as continuing a previous existence as part of the sovereign corporatist culture – their communities. Such communities had long

possessed official representatives – from the *syndics* and *consuls* of villages to the *marguilliers* of urban parishes – who helped to give them life, structure and identity.[22] Other groups, most notably urban workers, had their own associations and interest-groups that in a time of crisis could function as representative rallying-points for 'political' action.[23] Stimulated, no doubt, by the processes of election and recording of grievances for the Estates-General, communities reacted to the crisis atmosphere of early 1789 by setting out to break the bonds of privilege that were now deemed by popular opinion to be illegitimate and oppressive. While these communities themselves often articulated a legitimacy that they viewed as deriving from national political events, including mythical royal legitimation for the assault on privilege, there can be no disputing the practical loss of state sovereignty and legitimacy involved.[24] As this process continued through the crisis summer, with the 'Great Fear' occasioning a strong inward-looking reaction by rural communities especially, and Paris turning against the forces of the state, the great concern for the political class was to prevent the collapse of absolutist sovereignty becoming the wholesale disintegration of the 'Nation'.[25]

It is in no way an exaggeration to depict the whole political agenda of the National Constituent Assembly, as it functioned for the two years after the summer of 1789, as focused on the reconstitution of a viable, 'national' state sovereignty.[26] And a crucial part of this project was to extend back to every corner of the country the monopoly of legitimate violence lost in early 1789. Where the old monarchy had been at once highly centralist in its 'absolutist' rhetoric and deeply localist in its recognition of privilege and cooperation with provincial elites, the new constitutional monarchy sought reinforced and 'rationalized' versions of both these tendencies.[27] Thus while the Assembly produced a structure of democratic office-holding that permeated down to the individual village, invoking a 'bottom-up' legitimacy of power, it also carefully crafted regulations to ensure uniformity and efficacy of application of state policies and laws.[28] And more directly, it licensed, controlled and attempted to dominate the 'democratic' use of force by regulating the existence of a National Guard.

The Guard, a militia with an explicitly local, part-time membership, elected officers and a 'revolutionary' political commitment, was in these ways clearly a radical formation. It took the monopoly of force out of the hands of a central state, and seemed to vest it in a citizenry who could thereby hold the state to account for its actions if necessary.[29] But this was not the primary, or even secondary, function of the National

Guard. It was envisaged instead as a safeguard of both the social and the political order – and indeed, ironically, less the latter than the former.[30] There were occasions when the National Guard acted to preserve the Revolution against its enemies – this is certainly how the Parisian guardsmen that participated in the October Days of 1789 would have interpreted their actions, as did those who in the following year challenged the power of an oligarchical 'Volunteer Corps' in Lyon.[31] More frequently, however, the National Guard acted to preserve good order against threats from below. This was its central role in Paris, where paramilitary policing continued a tradition begun under the Old Regime, and it was the case in many other episodes of provincial violence.[32] From Brittany to the Pyrenees, the Guard was used as an enforcement agent against recalcitrant rural taxpayers, acquiring a reputation, especially in the West, as the brutal agent of an 'alien' intrusive state.[33]

The urban population, meanwhile, was learning to operate in a political environment much denser even than the National-Guard-invaded countryside. By 1791, at the latest, the initiative in a politics that engaged with 'popular' demands had fallen into the hands of journalists, local politicians and activists, and this political class was never really to look back.[34] 'Popular societies' that were formed with overtly didactic aims in Paris in late 1790 and early 1791 certainly acquired a sharper radical line (and a membership of several thouands) by the summer of that latter year, but they did so under the tutelage of men such as Jean-Lambert Tallien, a clerk-turned-journalist, François Robert, a lawyer-turned-journalist, and sundry others from the educated classes.[35] Popular agitation over the royal Flight to Varennes in June 1791, developing into outrage at the proposed exculpation of the king in July, was channelled into the new political conventions of marching and petitioning, rather than mass insurrection.[36] Petitioners gathering on the Champ de Mars on 17 July discovered two men hiding under a stage, and became convinced, in a revolutionary atmosphere of plot-mania, that the two were counter-revolutionary bombers. The lynching that followed, after local authorities hesitated to act rigorously, was in the classic mould of the despatch of Foulon. The administrative response was to declare Martial Law, and the result was the 'Champ de Mars Massacre', a police riot by the National Guard that killed at least 12 and perhaps as many as 50 protesters.[37]

From this point on, in Paris at least, action we might class as 'popular violence' was constrained to operate within a matrix of political organization and discipline that moved it decisively away from the autonomous goals that might justify the continued use of such a label.

This is evident even in the most bloody of 'popular' episodes, the September Massacres. Though Danton, as noted above, could use these as an example of 'bloody days at which every good citizen shudders' in his backhanded praise of popular revolutionary fervour, and while a mass of accounts gave horrible specificity to the nature of the carnage, other interpretations need to be attended to. Less than two months after the massacres, the moderate republican Louvet de Couvrai, an avowed foe of the kind of Parisian radicalism that asserted a claim to represent 'the people', argued as part of a long denunciation of Maximilien Robespierre that the September Massacres were not the work of 'the people' at all: 'Inside [the prisons], how many executioners were there? Two hundred, not even two hundred, perhaps; and outside, how many spectators could be counted, drawn by a truly incomprehensible curiosity? Twice that, at most.' He went on to assert that the Paris Commune, become an 'insurrectionary' and self-legitimizing authority in the course of toppling the monarchy the previous month, had controlled the whole thing: 'municipal officers, in their sashes of office, presided over these atrocious executions.'[38]

While Louvet's accusations suggest a level of organization rarely acknowledged by modern historians, they also highlight the extent to which this archetypal moment of 'popular' bloodletting fitted into a pattern of state-centric 'revolutionary' killing.[39] The *sans-culottes* who had stormed the Tuileries in August 1792 had done so in the ranks of National Guard units organized in conjunction with the committees of the local administrative *sections*, or neighbourhood councils.[40] It was through the meetings of these bodies that reports emerged of a desire to 'render prompt justice', and indeed it was *section* assemblies that articulated a call for 'immediate prompt justice against the criminals and the conspirators detained in the prisons' on 2 September, first day of the actual massacres. Many of the 'conspirators' were a mixed bag of court aristocrats and refractory (hence counter-revolutionary) clergy, rounded up by the very same forces of *sans-culotte* local power in the preceding days. An atmosphere of extreme crisis prevailed – the last fortress before Paris was surrounded by enemy troops, and the conviction that the prisons sheltered a deadly fifth column of traitors and brigands, awaiting the departure of Parisian forces for the front to strike from behind, was absolute. Yet, and this is the vital point to note, the violence enacted on the victims of the September Massacres was judicial in form. They were not done to death by swarming crowds, but by relatively small groups of executioners who, in all the major prisons, worked at the behest of others who scrutinized records, determined guilt or innocence, and in

some cases, held 'hearings' on the prisoners that went on for days, and 'acquitted' as many as they condemned.[41]

While the image of the massacres, endlessly retailed, was of a bloodlust that was almost cannibalistic in its ferocity, the reality seems to have been of a grim business, carried out with efficiency in the name of the Revolution by those who would have claimed an entirely political justification for themselves. Moreover, it was a business carried out, as some contemporary observers attested long before Danton raised the point in 1793, in the name of supplementing the more formal organs of justice. An official tribunal to judge traitors, and specifically those guilty of orchestrating the 'massacre' of patriots on 10 August, had been set up a week after the events, but had failed to judge more than a handful of the many suspects rounded up. The personnel of that court themselves addressed the Legislative Assembly on 11 September 1792, noting that 'the slow-moving forms' of justice, 'salutary and just during times of calm', had become themselves dangerous when 'the prisons themselves had become the home of conspiracy and the workshops of revolt', and thus the 'national crowd' – a telling conflation of state and people – had 'struck down the parricides'.[42]

For much of the year after September 1792, the political agenda of the Revolution was split between an ever-more difficult fight against overt counter-revolution, and a deepening internal rift, foreshadowed by Louvet's attack on Robespierre as organizer, or at least abettor of the massacres. Louvet's Girondin comrades, and their supporters in the upper levels of local administration across the country, developed an analysis of the threat from radicals that relied on associating them with the evils of popular violence. Madame Roland, wife of the Interior Minister and salon hostess of the Girondins, denounced the followers of Robespierre, Danton and other as 'a swarm of unknown men … patriots out of fanaticism, and even more out of self-interest',[43] the leading deputy Brissot had already denounced 'anarchic, demagogic' political factions, and provincial leaders in Lyon spoke of their local radicals as 'presumptuous through ignorance, ambitious through interest', and set on overturning all order.[44] The point to be noted is that, in all such cases, these supposed 'anarchists' were moving into the organs of state power – either acting as agents of the government ministries, roving deputies of the newly elected National Convention, or occupying local powerbases in neighbourhood and city administrations.

There were large-scale and more manifestly 'popular' demonstrations in this period, falling into several categories. The most dramatic was of course the Vendéen revolt, sparked when alienated peasants and artisans

in the far west rejected the state's attempt to conscript them for its wars, and launched an insurrection that rapidly became explicitly counter-revolutionary.[45] Since, however, this represents a clear case of 'popular violence' rejecting the Revolution *en bloc*, it is not part of our analytical concerns here. Movements as widespread had filled the Paris Basin in the winters of both 1791–92 and 1792–93 with subsistence protests, and these had clear claims to be articulating the wishes of a 'revolutionary' people. Many, especially those generated by rural communities, showed a return to the assertion of sovereignty through insurrection that had marked the politics of 1789 – local mayors and National Guard cohorts, banners flying, took part in demonstrations, and in some cases in direct price-fixing actions.[46] However, such events had no political leverage. By February 1793, as violent food riots filled Paris, the attitude of radical leaderships to these was made clear by Robespierre himself – this was not 'the people of Paris', but 'a mob of women, led by valets of the aristocracy'. His supposed co-conspirator (in Girondin eyes), the radical journalist Jean-Paul Marat, was more sympathetic, denouncing 'exorbitant rises' in foodstuffs as a plot 'to desolate the people', but while he approved in print of deadly action against hoarders, he carefully kept his remarks in a conditional mood: 'the pillage of a few shops, at the doors of which one hangs the hoarders, would soon put an end to these corrupt abuses'.[47]

It is from the spring of 1793 that a coalition of radical forces in Paris produced that 'popular movement' which Dupuy asserts put 'the punitive, restorative and preventative violence' of the people centre-stage in the Terror. Yet we should consider carefully what this meant in practice. In all the conflict with the Girondins which raged through this season, violence never came near repeating the infamous lynchings of 1789, let alone the September Massacres.[48] 'Popular societies' and *sections* produced repeated angry demonstrations, but their dominant pattern was of a blend of petitioning and intimidatory pressure towards the Girondins in the Convention – who were themselves fighting back with an active campaign to convict *sans-culotte* leaders, including Marat and Hébert, of sedition and counter-revolution. As mentioned above, when 'the people' surrounded the Convention and forced it to purge the Girondins on 2 June 1793, that 'people' was in fact the National Guard arrayed in arms, some of whom were most discontented by delays in voting special payments to salary them for this military service. The illegal 'Central Revolutionary Committee' which embodied the zeal of the *sans-culottes* of the *sections* and produced this uprising had amongst its 25 members only 3 whose occupations suggested they were truly of

'the people'. Six by contrast were lawyers, five professionals, and most of the others either men of means, or virtually professional political activists.[49]

Amongst the latter was Jean-François Varlet, who enjoyed an independent income that had freed him to become one of a small group who would endeavour to set a strongly radical political agenda in the summer of 1793. These *enragés*, or 'madmen' as they were dismissed by their opponents, also included some notable female revolutionary activists, and the 'red priest' Jacques Roux. Roux had campaigned fiercely against food-hoarders and monopolists, whom he saw as responsible for hardship in his urban parish, writing pamphlets in which the revolutionary activist clearly overtook the person of the priest, and the slogan 'death to monopolists' was prominent.[50] He was suspected of inciting the riots of February, and certainly defended their participants in print. But like every 'popular' figurehead at this time, his eyes were on the capacities of the state. His calls for death meant not lynching, but death sentences at the hands of state justice. Roux spoke in the Cordeliers Club on 22 June 1793, furious that his death-penalty demands had not been taken notice of, and called for a petition to the Convention, and that 'all the people [should] surround the Convention, and cry to it with one voice: We adore liberty, but we do not want to die of hunger, suppress speculation and we have nothing more to ask.' Varlet also spoke in this session, with yet another demand for legislative action: 'the people of Paris … must tomorrow give a mandate to the Convention; within twenty-four hours, they must decree that all nobles shall be turned out of places [i.e. employment] that belong only to *sans-culottes*'.[51]

Though the *enragés* proved a political thorn in the side of the new leadership of the Convention – necessitating scurrilous attacks by Marat, Robespierre and others – they did not seek to mobilize 'the people' for anything more than pressure to apply a legislative agenda. All the 'violence' of the *enragés* was in what they called on the state to do. The same was true of the more mainstream *sans-culotte* leadership, who initially echoed attacks on the *enragés*, before adopting much of their programme in the late summer of 1793.[52] The pressures of war on the food-supply, and increasing concern at the progress of the war and the successes of internal counter-revolution brought forth massive demonstrations in favour of the official adoption of 'Terror' in early September. What that Terror amounted to, incorporating demands found in *sans-culotte* rhetoric since before the fall of the Girondins, was state regulation of the pricing, and ultimately supply, of basic foodstuffs and other necessities, laws for the internment of 'suspect'

persons, and the creation of a paid, uniformed *armée révolutionnaire*, a militia charged with scouring the countryside for peasant hoarders and counter-revolutionaries.[53]

The period of the Terror proper, generally dated from the drafting of these laws to the fall of Robespierre in the 'Thermidorian Reaction' of the summer of 1794, is commonly divided in two. The 'Robespierrist Terror' which occupies 1794, is marked by a ruthless pursuit of ideological purity, encompassing the destruction of alleged counter-revolutionary factions led by Danton and Hébert, the propagation of a new civic religion of the Supreme Being, and tightly centralized administrative structures. It is preceded by, and often seen as a reaction against, the 'anarchic Terror' of September–December 1793. The 'anarchic' nature of that period resulted from the destabilizing impact of a highly decentralized mode of political initiative, as individual members of the Convention were sent out as 'representatives-on-mission', and given effectively unlimited powers to promote the war effort and suppress counter-revolution.[54] The result was a proliferation of hastily appointed local adjuncts, *commissaires civils* and other grand-sounding functionaries, along with ad hoc and sometimes frankly uncontrolled formations of *armées révolutionnaires*, all pursuing their 'missions' as they saw fit, and increasingly by the end of 1793 creating new agendas independent of the wishes of the leaders of the Convention – most notably through the persecution of Catholicism that later acquired the label of 'dechristianization'.[55] All this was undeniably both chaotic and not infrequently brutal – though also, it should be noted, accompanied by the successful suppression of both the pro-Girondin 'Federalist' revolts in Bordeaux, Lyon and Marseille, and the overt counter-revolutionary insurrection of the Vendée, which was liquidated as a military threat in December 1793.

What this 'anarchic' Terror was not was in any sense a movement of 'the people' against the state, that such a label might imply. Patrice Gueniffey speaks of the 'anarchic multiplication of administrative and political functions' in 1793, seemingly unconscious of the oxymoronic construction he is perpetrating.[56] While the various representatives, their agents, and the local authorities they repeatedly 'purged' and reconstituted by *fiat* may have been chaotic, they were all asserting claims, not to independence from the revolutionary state, but to represent it. In the undeniably turbulent and bloodthirsty politics of the Terror, there was anything but anarchy. The revolutionary state's continual escalation of violence was inseparable from, but ultimately triumphant over, a quest for popular self-assertion that remains always

fatally compromised by deference to state forms and state goals. Abetted by an apparent inability of their constituents to articulate anything beyond a demand for punitive justice, the continual quest of all political actors to secure the power of the state for their own purposes, rather than to question the purposes of the state, condemned 'the people', as a body supporting the Revolution, to the sidelines, merely egging on the forces of the state. Undoubtedly the state violence of the Terror owed a great deal to the bloody intensity with which political battles had been fought over the preceding years, by many who claimed to be 'the people'. However, the constant recirculation of that violence into forms that were state-like, quasi-judicial, and ultimately demanding of legislative regularization suggests that it is to the acceptability of this practice of state violence, rather than to a violence that inhabits 'the people', that we should look for the dark heart of the French Revolution.

Notes

1. J. Censer and L. Hunt, 'Imaging the French Revolution: Depictions of the French Revolutionary Crowd', *American Historical Review*, CX (2005), 38–45, quotation on p. 38. This piece stands as an introduction to an on-line discussion of selected revolutionary visual images located at http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/imaging.
2. G. Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959). For another overview of generalizing assumptions on this issue, see D. Andress, *The French Revolution and the People* (London: Hambledon & London, 2004), introduction, esp. pp. xi–xiii.
3. According to deputies of the National Assembly itself, these were 'bloody and revolting scenes', and while 'resistance to oppression is legitimate and honours a nation; licence debases it'. These 'excesses' were 'misfortunes that must now be prevented': see W. H. Sewell, Jr, 'Historical Events as Transformations of Structures: Inventing Revolution at the Bastille', *Theory and Society*, XXV (1996), 841–81, citation on p. 859. See also C. Lucas, 'Talking About Urban Popular Violence in 1789', in Alan Forrest and Peter Jones eds, *Reshaping France: Town, Country and Region in the French Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), pp. 122–36.
4. E. Seligman, *La Justice en France pendant la Révolution, 1789–1792*, 2 vols (Paris: Plon, 1901, 1913), I, p. 211.
5. The most resonant account of such display, and its cultural attributes, is that of Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 1–31.
6. P. Viola, 'Violence révolutionnaire ou violence du peuple en révolution?', in M. Vovelle and A. de Baecque ed., *Recherches sur la Révolution* (Paris: La Découverte, 1991), pp. 95–102, p. 97.
7. Viola, 'Violence révolutionnaire', p. 96. 'Tinkering' is here used to translate the concept of *bricolage*, founded in Lévi-Straussian anthropology. For more on seigneurial gallows, and their revolutionary substitution with *mais* or

'trees of liberty', see J. Markoff, *The Abolition of Feudalism: Peasants, Lords and Legislators in the French Revolution* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1996), pp. 224–5.

8. C. Lucas, 'The Crowd and Politics', in C. Lucas ed., *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. 2: *The Political Culture of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Elsevier, 1988), pp. 259–85.
9. R. Dupuy, *La Politique du peuple; racines, permanences et ambiguïtés du populisme*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 2002), pp. 95–122.
10. Ibid., p. 134.
11. Ibid., p. 137.
12. The political dimensions of this episode are analysed by B. M. Shapiro, *Revolutionary Justice in Paris, 1789–1790* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 84–98.
13. See M. Price, *The Fall of the French Monarchy: Louis XVI, Marie-Antoinette and the Baron de Breteuil* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2002), chapter 12; R. Allen, *Threshold of Terror: The Last Hours of the Monarchy in the French Revolution* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999).
14. L. Whaley, 'Political Factions and the Second Revolution: The Insurrection of 10 August 1792', *French History*, VII (1993), 205–24.
15. M. Slavin, *The Making of an Insurrection: Parisian Sections and the Gironde*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 112–14.
16. J. Guilhaumou, *L'Avènement des porte-parole de la République (1789–1792): Essai de synthèse sur les langages de la Révolution française* (Lille: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 1998); J. Cowans, *To Speak for the People: Public Opinion and the Problem of Legitimacy in the French Revolution* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
17. D. Andress, *The Terror: Civil War in the French Revolution* (London: Little, Brown, 2005), p. 376.
18. *Archives parlementaires*, vol. 60, p. 63.
19. This is a central contention of S. Wahnich, *La Liberté ou la mort; essai sur la Terreur et le terrorisme* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2003); esp. chapter 3.
20. Cited in Wahnich, *Liberté*, p. 60.
21. See Guilhaumou, *L'avènement*, and C. Duprat, 'Lieux et temps de l'acculturation politique', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, CCXCVII (1994), 387–400, introducing a special number on this issue.
22. On village *syndics*, see Andress, *The French Revolution and the People* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), pp. 17–20; on urban *marguilliers*, see D. Garrioch, *The Formation of the Parisian Bourgeoisie, 1690–1830* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), chapters 1, 2. For a discussion of the role of urban communities especially in patterns of violent self-assertion that pre-date the Revolution by over a century, see W. Beik, *Urban Protest in Seventeenth-Century France: The Culture of Retribution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
23. See, for example, S. L. Kaplan, 'The Character and Implications of Strife Amongst Masters in the Guilds of Eighteenth-Century Paris', *Journal of Social History*, XIX (1985–86), 631–47.
24. Georges Lefebvre, *The Great Fear of 1789* (London: NLB, 1973), chapters 1–3.
25. See M. P. Fitzsimmons, *The Night the Old Regime Ended; August 4, 1789, and the French Revolution* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2003).

26. M. P. Fitzsimmons, *The Remaking of France: The National Assembly and the Constitution of 1791* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
27. P. Gueniffey, *Le Nombre et la raison: la Révolution française et les élections* (Paris: EHESS, 1993).
28. I. Woloch, *The New Regime: Transformations of the French Civic Order, 1789–1820s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994).
29. See, for example, D. L. Clifford, 'The National Guard and the Parisian Community', *French Historical Studies*, XVI (1990), 849–78.
30. F. Devenne, 'La Garde nationale: création et évolution, 1789–Août 1792', *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, CCLXXXIII (1991), 49–66.
31. W. D. Edmonds, *Jacobinism and the Revolt of Lyon, 1789–1793* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 40–62.
32. For Paris, see D. Andress, *Massacre at the Champ de Mars: Popular Dissent and Political Culture in the French Revolution* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2000); D. Andress, 'Neighbourhood Policing in Paris from Old Regime to Revolution: The Exercise of Authority by the District de St-Roch, 1789–1791', *French Historical Studies*, XXIX (2006), 231–60.
33. See P. Jones, *The Peasantry in the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 110–21.
34. R. B. Rose, *The Making of the Sans-Culottes: Democratic Ideas and Institutions in Paris, 1789–1792* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); cf. Andress, *Massacre*, pp. 118–22.
35. I. Bourdin, *Les Sociétés populaires à Paris pendant la Révolution* (Paris: IHRF, 1937).
36. A. Mathiez, *Le Club des Cordeliers pendant la crise de Varennes et la massacre du Champ de Mars* (Paris, 1910 reprinted Geneva: Slatkine, 1975).
37. Andress, *Massacre*, chapters 8, 9.
38. *Archives parlementaires*, 29 October 1792, vol. 53, p. 55. L. Whaley, *Radicals: Politics and Republicanism in the French Revolution* (Stroud: Sutton, 2001), pp. 82–4, observes that the massacres themselves provoked no particular outrage from such moderates until they began to be seen as part of a plot against them.
39. For a contrary view, emphasizing political 'guilt' for the massacres, see F. Bluche, *Septembre 1792, logiques d'un massacre* (Paris: R. Laffont, 1986).
40. For a debate around the 'identity' of the *sans-culottes*, see R. M. Andrews, 'Social Structures, Political Elites and Ideology in Revolutionary Paris, 1792–4: A Critical Evaluation of Albert Soboul's Les Sans-Culottes Parisiens …', *Journal of Social History*, XIX (1985–86), 71–112; M. Sonenscher, 'The Sans-Culottes of the Year II: Rethinking the Language of Labour in Revolutionary France', *Social History*, IX (1984), 301–28; M. Sonenscher, 'Artisans, Sans-Culottes and the French Revolution', in Forrest and Jones eds, *Reshaping France*, pp. 105–21.
41. See Andress, *Terror*, chapter 4, citation on p. 102.
42. Cited in Wahnich, *Liberté*, p. 45
43. N. Hampson, *Danton* (London: Duckworth, 1978), pp. 76–7.
44. Whaley, *Radicals*, pp. 96–7; W. D. Edmonds, *Jacobinism and the Fall of Lyon*, p. 133.
45. See, amongst many studies, J.-C. Martin, *La Vendée et la France* (Paris: Seuil, 1987).
46. See Andress, *The French Revolution and the People*, pp. 172–4, 187–92.

47. See Andress, *Terror*, pp. 151–6.
48. See Slavin, *Making of an Insurrection*, chapters 1–3.
49. Ibid., pp. 78–89.
50. R. B. Rose, *The Enragés: Socialists of the French Revolution?* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1965), p. 44.
51. Cited in Andress, *French Society in Revolution, 1789–1799* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 188.
52. A. Mathiez, *La Vie chère et le mouvement social sous la terreur* (Paris: Payot, 1927), pp. 339–65.
53. See Andress, *Terror*, pp. 211–16.
54. M. Biard, *Missionnaires de la République: les représentants du peuple en mission (1793–1795)* (Paris: CTHS, 2002).
55. M. Vovelle, *The Revolution against the Church: From Reason to the Supreme Being* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991).
56. P. Gueniffey, *La Politique de la terreur; essai sur la violence révolutionnaire, 1789–1794* (Paris: Fayard, 2000), p. 249. This contradictory argument frames much of Gueniffey's understanding of 'terrorist' politics – he speaks of an 'intensification of struggles for power, itself provoked by the multiplication of public functions', and associates 'a context of the dissolution of State authority' with a Revolution that 'professionalizes and bureaucratizes itself in inverse proportion to popular mobilization' as 1794 wears on: all this is 'the anarchic competition for the appropriation of power', pp. 250–1.

9

Avoiding the Ultimate Act of Violence: Mediterranean Bandits and Kidnapping for Ransom, 1815–1914

Martin Blinkhorn

The dangers of foreign travel

'One thing only needs to be said', *The Times* proclaimed at the start of summer 1870:

> It is to give a word of warning to British residents in foreign countries, whether diplomatists, soldiers, merchants, or mere excursionists and travelling gentlemen. Observe the ways of the people among whom you live, and conform to them. If you happen to be in a nation where every other man is a brigand, don't go about with the same sense of security as you would leave the metropolis for an outing to Hampstead or Richmond. Restrain your love for antiquities and art, for wild boars and woodcocks – nay, even give up your evening ride beyond the [British] Lines, if you find that the price you are to pay for your pleasure is no less than your life. It is possible to live at Athens without ever seeing Marathon, and to exist at Gibraltar without horse exercise; but at neither place can you live with a ball through your brain or a poniard through your heart.[1]

In alerting Britons to the southern European 'scourge' of banditry, *The Times* was alluding to two recent but contrasting episodes in which British subjects had been seized by brigands and held to ransom. In April 1870, three Englishmen and an Italian were murdered by Greek brigands, the Arvanitakis band, who had ambushed and kidnapped members of

an excursion party returning to Athens from Marathon. Because two of the victims belonged to English aristocratic families and were related to prominent statesmen, what quickly acquired the label of the 'Marathon murders' became an international *cause célèbre*.[2] A month later, Spanish bandits kidnapped two merchants from Gibraltar just inside Spanish territory. This time, however, a large ransom was paid and the 'English' captives were safely restored to freedom.[3]

These two crimes, occurring in rapid succession and only five years after two earlier kidnappings involving British subjects,[4] demonstrated to Britain's press, politicians and public the persistence of brigandage in parts of southern Europe and the Near East. More concretely, they indicated the threat of banditry for foreign residents and visitors, the particular danger of being kidnapped, and the very different *dénouements* to which acts of kidnapping could lead. Simultaneously, and as the *Times* editorial illustrates, they helped refuel a devoutly held British view of rural Mediterranean and Balkan Europe as bandit-infested, alien, hostile territory: what the editorial, referring in its closing sentence to Spain, called a 'social desert'.

Earlier in the century, it is true, this self-same territory and its alleged dangers had elicited more positive responses from at least some Britons. Romantic adventure-seekers like Lord Byron, Robert Curzon and the young Benjamin Disraeli embraced a Salvator Rosa version of the southern landscape as a source of bloodcurdling titillation.[5] By the time of the Marathon murders, however, the prevailing cultural climate in Britain was decidedly post-Romantic: more sober, more safety-conscious and more self-satisfied. What in earlier decades had seemed picturesque and pulse-raising was now condemned as evidence of a country's national fecklessness. 'Marathon' also undermined, though without completely shattering, a parallel Victorian perception of banditry as an appropriate theme for light entertainment.[6] The real world of the southern bandit, it was now evident, was neither amusing nor romantic but a harsh and brutal one within which violent death was a constant presence.

It is this world and its particular 'culture of violence' which this chapter explores. We shall enter it as did a number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century foreigners: via that most characteristic of bandit crimes, kidnapping for ransom. Kidnapping in general presented bandits with their most sustained (and complex) experience of contact and communication with 'respectable' society. Holding foreigners to ransom stretched the experience to otherwise unimaginable limits. From the historian's perspective, acts of international kidnapping generated layers and varieties of evidence (memoirs, letters from captivity, police

interrogation records, official depositions, trial proceedings, press reports and interviews, etc.), which, while allowing the kidnappers only limited opportunity to speak freely for themselves, nevertheless do – if used with care and sensitivity – reveal much about the bandit's life and the place of violence within it.

Contemporary British observers were certainly inclined to exaggerate the scale and misunderstand the nature of Mediterranean and Balkan banditry. This does not mean, however, that the phenomenon was not genuine, widespread, intermittently serious and remarkably resilient. In some regions, notably the islands of Corsica, Sardinia and Sicily, it was truly endemic and would persist well into the twentieth century. Much the same held for large areas of Greece, the Ottoman Balkans and Asia Minor. Elsewhere its scale and importance tended to fluctuate according to political circumstances and related social conditions. In Spain, for example, where it had been inextricably linked with the guerrilla struggle against the French (1808–14),[7] it blossomed again in the closing phase and aftermath of the Carlist War of 1833–39. After a period of decline it revived sharply following the 1868 revolution which temporarily removed the Borbón monarchy.[8] In central and southern Italy, while a familiar and chronic presence in many districts, it expanded massively in the early 1860s with the absorption of Naples and most of the Papal States into the new Kingdom of Italy.[9] Greek brigandage, having been mobilized politically and militarily in the 1820s on behalf of the national cause, remained an integral feature of the country's social, and often political, life in the decades that followed the achievement of independence in 1828.[10] This in turn, and the internal difficulties of the Ottoman empire, stimulated ethnic Greek, Albanian and Macedonian/Bulgarian brigandage across the southern Balkans.[11]

Against such a background, and considering the thematic prominence of banditry in the published and unpublished writings of British travellers, adventurers and diplomats, it is striking that before the 1860s very few Britons actually suffered serious physical harm from brigands, while only one was (briefly) kidnapped.[12] Given the effective suppression by this time of the Barbary Corsairs, the first half of the nineteenth century appears to mark a low ebb in the history of British encounters with Mediterranean hostage-takers.[13] This changed from the 1860s, as increased British economic activity in, and travel to, the region coincided with increasing rural outlawry due to the political convulsions just mentioned. A lull, or in some districts a terminal decline, from the mid-1880s gave way after 1900 to an upsurge of banditry and kidnapping

at both ends of the Mediterranean: Macedonia/Bulgaria and, in a highly distinctive form, Morocco.

The activities of Mediterranean and Balkan bandits in the half-century from about 1860 to 1910 produced some 18 cases in which Britons (or in one case a British-employed local) were kidnapped and held to ransom. In 1881, a Foreign Office survey recorded 11 such cases since 1860.[14] Nine of these (all but the two least important) are considered here: those of William Moens (Italy, 1865), Henry Coore (Greece, 1865), the Marathon captives (Greece, 1870), John and John Anthony Bonell (Spain, 1870), Robert Rankin (Spain, 1871), Arthur Haselden (Spain, 1874), John Forester Rose (Sicily, 1876), Harry Suter (Ottoman Macedonia, 1880) and Colonel George Synge (Ottoman Macedonia, 1881). Other cases considered here are those of Gjerasim Qiriazi, a British and Foreign Bible Society missionary (Albania, 1884), Walter Harris (Morocco, 1903), Ion Perdicaris (a US citizen) and his English stepson Cromwell Oliver Varley (Morocco, 1904), Philip Martin Wills (Ottoman Macedonia, 1905), Robert Abbott (Ottoman Macedonia, 1907) and Sir Harry Maclean (Morocco, 1907–08). In all of these cases bar 'Marathon', ransoms were paid, the ultimate act of violence was thereby avoided, and the hostages regained their freedom.[15]

Carried off into the mountains

Few of the unfortunate individuals on whose experiences this discussion is based had been prepared for their ordeal by background or personal history. A notable exception, certainly, was Sir Harry Maclean. Although 60 when seized in 1907 by the Moroccan super-brigand Raisuli, the 'Kaid', after 30 years in Morocco as military adviser to three sultans (and de facto British spy), was physically tough, inured to discomfort, delay and prevarication, and altogether well equipped to face a seven-month confinement with stoicism.[16] A not dissimilar life lay behind Colonel (retired) George Synge, kidnapped in present-day northern Greece while serving as adviser to the Ottoman *gendarmerie*.[17] Most British ransom victims, however, lacked such military credentials. Whether aristocrats, gentry or bourgeoise, they had little in their pasts on which to draw beyond the spartan dormitories and cold baths of the public school or the fleeting rigours of the grouse moor.[18]

Captives were usually taken at carefully chosen spots some distance from what, during the next few days, weeks or months, were to be their places of detention. Several – the Denia factory-owner Robert Rankin,[19] the commercial agent and mineral prospector Harry Suter,[20]

the Greek–American property-owner Ion Perdicaris and Cromwell Varley,[21] and Robert Abbott, son of an English landlord resident in Salonica[22] – were seized in or near their own homes. John Forester Rose was returning home from the Palermo offices of the family mining company when, just outside his local railway station at Lercara Friddi, he fell prey to the brigand Leone.[23] The Gibraltar merchant, ship-owner and landlord John Bonell and his nephew John Anthony were out riding when, some three miles inside Spanish territory, *bandoleros* intercepted them.[24] Others were captured while undertaking more ambitious journeys, whether for business or recreation. William Moens, a holidaying London stockbroker, was ambushed by the band of Gaetano Manzo while returning to Salerno with his wife and fellow excursionists after viewing the Paestum ruins.[25] Henry Coore, just down from Cambridge, was one of three 'sportsmen' led by Lord John Hervey, captured by the brigand Spiro Dellis while ashore from their yacht shooting woodcock. The Marathon excursion party led by Lord Muncaster,[26] the mine-owner Arthur Haselden,[27] Colonel Synge,[28] Qiriazi,[29] *Times* correspondent Walter Harris,[30] and Martin Wills, an employee of the Turkish state tobacco monopoly:[31] all too were taken while traversing open countryside. Maclean's case was again unique. While negotiating with Raisuli on behalf of the Moroccan authorities, the 'Kaid' found himself seized by the brigand chief and converted into an object of negotiation himself.[32]

Whatever the place and circumstances of capture, subsequent events tended to follow a remarkably consistent pattern. As in the Moens, Marathon, Suter and Perdicaris cases, women and children would be left alone or quickly set free.[33] Whilst in part this may have reflected an authentic *cavalleria rusticana*, it would be wise to guard against urban (or 'northern') condescension. In reality, practical considerations probably outweighed sentimental ones. Given the likelihood of arduous cross-country treks, rough sleeping and sanitary conditions, limited privacy, and uncertain food supplies, the perceived frailties of females and infants made them potentially awkward and therefore undesirable hostages. The extraordinary case of the 55-year-old American missionary Ellen Stone, kidnapped in Bulgaria in 1902 by a band linked to Macedonian irredentism, may perhaps be allowed to prove the rule.[34] Where two or more male captives were taken, one was liable to be released within a day or two in order to organize the ransom. Thus Lord Muncaster gained his freedom from the Arvanitakis, the elder Bonell sailed home (at his captors' expense) to Gibraltar, Lord Hervey and his other fellow sportsman, the Hon. Henry Strutt, left Coore behind them,

and Moens remained as Manzo's hostage while his travelling companion, the Rev. Murray Aynsley, literally fled the brigands' camp for safety.

Once those unwanted as hostages had been discharged, the remaining captive(s) would be led off at gunpoint into the countryside, frequently blindfolded and with wrists bound. For obvious reasons movement was mostly nocturnal, the route passing through ever-more thinly populated districts to end at some mountain refuge or remote building. (It was not surprising, perhaps, that British press reports of kidnappings routinely used the phrase 'carried off into the mountains', whether or not it was topographically apt.[35]) In some cases one journey, however long and difficult, was enough. The Bonells, for instance, were led for two nights, one on foot and the other on muleback, a good 50 miles from the place of capture, across the *sierra* of Cádiz province, to their pre-arranged place of detention: a rural hermitage not far from Jerez de la Frontera.[36] A broadly similar set of experiences awaited Henry Coore in Acharnania (western Greece), Harry Suter in the Cassandra peninsula of present-day northern Greece, and Raisuli's captives in northern Morocco.[37] Others had an even tougher time. For 48 hours John Forester Rose was dragged around the hills of northwest Sicily before being immured in a series of caves for the rest of his three-week captivity.[38] Colonel Synge found his military steel severely tested by forced marches through snow-covered mountains just north of Olympus.[39] Between May and August 1865 William Moens and Manzo's band covered around a hundred wearisome miles in the course of their to- and fro-ings along the tracks of the Picentino Apennines.[40] The Marathon captives were first led northwards by their captors into the uplands of central Attica, then hustled into and out of several refuges ahead of the pursuing Greek army.[41] They, like Moens, Qiriazi, and others whose periods of captivity were shorter, actually shared the material lives of those who held them. Even victims confined away from the main band, like Rose or the Bonells, saw and heard enough of their captors to form their own, even if incomplete, understanding of what banditry meant.

The sources which allow us access to the camps, refuges, hiding-places and improvised gaols of Mediterranean and Balkan brigands leave us in little doubt as to what banditry meant for its practitioners. One thing is incontrovertibly clear. Whatever impression the Victorian and Edwardian public may have derived from works of art, literature and music, there was little that was romantic, amusing or enviable about living as a rural outlaw. The exuberant cavortings of the Arvanitakis at their capture of 'princes' may have faintly recalled Berlioz's 'brigands orgy',[42] but real-life bandits spent immeasurably more time bemoaning the hand that fate

had dealt them than they did celebrating it. Far from inhaling with pleasure the bracing air of that 'liberté' acclaimed by Bizet's Carmen, flesh-and-blood bandits commonly saw themselves, no less than those they robbed or held to ransom, as victims and even prisoners.[43] 'We were not suckled on this', the Bonells' chief captor, the self-styled 'Don Antonio', protested; Andalusian *bandoleros* like his colleagues and himself, he explained, were mostly honest smugglers forced into serious crime when hard times hit the region's contraband trade.[44] There was probably some truth in this; even if only a small minority of Andalusia's smuggling thousands were ever drawn into banditry, the two activities were overlapping products of a shared social environment in which the state's agents were regarded as foes by much of the population.[45] Like the 'Don Antonio' gang, most of the Mediterranean and Balkan bandits involved in kidnapping foreigners illustrated, albeit in a variety of ways, how easy it was, throughout much of rural southern and southeastern Europe and for much of the century before 1914, to drift or be propelled into outlawry. Manzo's band and others in the Salerno hinterland during the 1860s consisted mainly of young, male villagers with poor prospects who had taken to the hills following a (usually minor) brush with the law or, like Manzo himself, to escape conscription into the new Italian army which now pursued them.[46] In Spain and the Italian mainland it was, or at any rate gradually became, easier to embrace banditry than to abandon it, though the more seasonal character of banditry in other regions – Corsica, Sardinia, Greece and Ottoman Macedonia – seems to have allowed for rather greater fluidity.[47]

Taking to the hills was a natural enough step for young men in difficult situations, especially in rural cultures accustomed to the bearing and use of weapons. Most male, rural Andalusians carried vicious knives, and all those involved in smuggling owned firearms.[48] In Greece following the independence struggles of the 1820s, as in much of central and southern Italy in the aftermath of Unification, lethal weapons were an equally routine possession of countless rural males. However brigand bands came into existence – calculatedly, in order to commit crimes, like that of 'Don Antonio'; almost accidentally as fragments of disintegrating armies, like those that immediately preceded Manzo's; or, like his and innumerable others, 'organically' as a product of their particular local environment – their most pressing preoccupation then became day-to-day physical survival. This could be achieved, although not without incidental and longer-term risk, only through the committing of acts involving the use or threat of violence: armed robbery, livestock rustling, extortion through intimidation, and kidnapping for ransom.

The shortlived Andalusian bands of 1869–70 were relatively unusual in the deliberateness of their creation and purpose: here, relatively small numbers of actual or former smugglers were actually recruited to commit planned crimes of a kind that would reward them modestly but their 'godfathers' far more.[49] The ethnic Greek band which seized Robert Abbott in 1907 had a similar 'organized' character,[50] while the much larger-scale activities of Raisuli's tribally based brigand armies left little room for doubt as to their leader's purposefulness.[51]

Overall, however, what might be termed 'organized banditry' was far from typical. In most settings the committing of crime was simply what those driven to become bandits did to subsist or, with luck, to turn an occasional and rapidly consumed profit. While this can be inferred from various sources, our best witness is William Moens. During his captivity the former stockbroker was granted a privilege possibly unique in the annals of banditry: the opportunity to examine a bandit-chief's account-book. Manzo's ledger suggested that a collective annual income of £4,000 was necessary simply to keep a band of 20–30 men in the field for a year. Most of this was passed on to the Picentino peasants in return for food, drink, clothes, boots, ammunition, medicine, guiding services, information on troop movements and not least silence.[52] A similar picture, albeit lacking the financial precision, is provided by Qiriazi from the very different setting of Albania.[53] This is not to suggest that profit was either unconsidered or unattainable. Not all bands stayed permanently in the field, while individual coups like those considered here could place the account at least temporarily in credit. Beneficiaries could then include (variously) band members' families, high-quality tailors, gaolers if the need arose and, thanks to the popularity of gambling among brigands, each other.

Regardless of whether it was dedicated to subsistence or enrichment, banditry was a grim business. Violent acts were not only frequent but a necessary condition of public credibility. The closely related crimes of intimidation and kidnapping for ransom depended for success upon their perpetrators' reputation for being willing to make good their threats. Most kidnap victims were treated by their captors to pointedly lurid accounts of former murderous exploits, and sometimes at least these tales were true.[54] On the other hand most captives suffered little serious violence. Mediterranean and Balkan bandits were notorious for allegedly severing captives' ears, noses and digits to send as 'messages' to relatives. Although the extent of the practice was probably less than city-dwellers and foreigners believed, it was no myth. The Manzo band certainly employed the practice,[55] and in Macedonia one Englishman

experienced it personally. Martin Wills, captured by Bulgarian bandits in 1905, saw his ear severed and sent as proof of his plight to the British consulate at Skopje.[56] Others, like Moens, Coore, Synge and Qiriazi, experienced cuffs, punches and over-enthusiastic pushes from impatient band members as they dragged their exhausted bodies around the countryside, but – in terms of physical violence – nothing worse.[57] In general, hostages were treated with bluff courtesy and looked after as well as their hosts' own situation and resources permitted. They were precious human capital, after all.

In our very different world, kidnapping cases have sometimes given rise to what has become known as the 'Stockholm syndrome', whereby hostages develop close sympathies towards their captors and the causes they represent.[58] The cases considered here emitted few pre-echoes of such developments. At most, some hostages attempted an understanding of the socio-economic and political conditions that spawned banditry, and pondered the reforms vital to its extirpation.[59] While actual sympathy for outlaws was quite another matter, all hostages discovered bonds, however contingent and fragile, linking them with their captors. Even before being kidnapped, most foreign hostages had little time for the 'authorities' of the lands in which they worked or travelled. Once in captivity, they found themselves thrown together with 'ruffians' who, admittedly for very different reasons, shared their low opinion: 'Let those thieves [the Spanish government] pay', their captors, speaking for all bandits, advised the Bonells.[60]

An unexpected sense of common interest was enhanced by the activities of armies and *gendarmes*. While generally eager to see their own liberation followed by the arrest and punishment of their captors, hostages remained justifiably nervous lest in the meantime their shared space become the target of army gunfire or the scene of a full-scale battle. Fear of attack replaced any daydreams of being rescued with the most nightmarish of all spectres. John Forester Rose's Sicilian bandit guards warned him that if troops or *carabinieri* attacked he would be given a rifle to help (presumably at gunpoint himself) in defending their common enterprise.[61] Rose's potential (and happily unrealized) dilemma was nevertheless an uncommon one. Far more usual was the experience of young Henry Coore, threatened with instant death should the Greek *gendarmerie* penetrate the Dellis band's bosky hiding place.[62] Like Coore, most captives knew that in the event of trouble they actually had less to fear from 'friendly fire' than from the guns and 'poniards' of panic-stricken captors. A similar awareness inhibited thoughts of escape. Simply to attempt flight would be difficult, dangerous and,

if unsuccessful, quite possibly fatal; at the very least, as Martin Wills discovered, it would disturb the delicate bandit–hostage relationship and ensure an even more uncomfortable captivity.[63] Even in the unlikely event of initial success, reaching safety via territory inhabited by peasants either sympathetic towards or cowed by bandits would be problematical. These unattractive alternatives counselled caution, patience and acceptance that survival and freedom could come only at a heavy financial cost.

Paying the price: (i) 'your money or your life'

Reluctantly, therefore, most hostages accepted their situation and the need to wait, hope and pray for eventual freedom. Over the daily round they shared with their captors, with its physically draining marches, capricious weather, irregular and rebarbative diet, intra-brigand tensions and fears of armed attack, looming uncertainty as to how long the captivity would drag on and, above all, how it would end. Here, again, the two parties' immediate interests converged – in a desperate wish to see ransoms paid and captives freed. Thereafter, however, their desires diverged once more. While brigand-kidnappers envisaged the drama closing with a warm, bear-hugging farewell,[64] many captives, looking beyond their liberation, hoped for an epilogue of a very different character.

Meanwhile, surrounded or closely guarded by ostentatiously ruthless men and with plenty of time to think, few hostages found it easy to put aside a natural fear of violent death. This does not mean, however, that they lived in constant expectation of it. On the contrary, and fortunately for their state of mind, readily available and abundant case-lore suggested that their suffering would eventually come to a peaceful – if expensive – end. In most regions affected by chronic banditry, the carrying-out of kidnappings, the conducting of ransom negotiations, and their non-violent resolution were routine, almost ritualistic, affairs. Brigands seizing and holding hostages expected sooner or later to pocket the finally agreed ransom and to set their prisoners free: otherwise why commit the crime at all? The murder of captives, while a possibility never to be discounted and a threat to be made with conviction, would occur only if, for reasons to be explored later, things went badly wrong. Murder would not only signal the failure of the undertaking but also increase what by then would be the ever-more likely prospect of the kidnappers meeting a violent end themselves. Local populations, including locally resident kidnap victims, shared these understandings

and expectations. Prospective victims were generally well chosen and ransoms carefully calculated to fit the case. Negotiated ransoming was as deeply embedded in such cultures as was banditry itself. With all parties understanding and accepting the rules of the game and equally interested in success, peaceful resolution depended largely on time and the customary procedures being allowed to follow their course. When bandit chiefs reassured their captives that all would ultimately be well, they spoke with the confidence of experience.

In so far as there was a threat to the peaceful settlement of kidnapping cases, it thus seldom came from supposedly 'bloodthirsty' bandits who, while certainly nursing no moral or psychological inhibitions about shedding blood, actually had every reason to avoid doing so. Nor, for reasons too obvious to need rehearsing, did it come from those representing the hostages. In the great majority of cases it came chiefly from those in the host country – political leaders, officials such as provincial prefects or governors, army and police commanders – whose loudly proclaimed intention to crush banditry bound them to oppose not just the payment of ransoms but all negotiation aimed at facilitating it. In itself the 'official' line, however unsubtle, was understandable. If, in the long term, rendering banditry extinct would depend on transforming the social environment that nurtured it, more immediately it seemed to require saturating affected areas with troops and *gendarmes*, terrorizing communities believed to aid and abet outlaws, and physically eliminating the bandits themselves. Criminal violence in the countryside, governments thus concluded, must be countered with the ruthless use of state violence. In this context, and at the level of high policy, official condemnation of negotiation and ransom-payment was perfectly logical. With respect to individual cases of kidnapping, however, implementing this policy with consistency was impossible. In practice, preserving the lives of individual victims – especially if they were wealthy and foreign – took priority over political principle and the demands of nation-building.

Since our focus here is on international kidnapping, it is important to stress that a not dissimilar tension affected the lofty perceptions of British, American and other governments of countries whose citizens became ransom victims in the Mediterranean region. Whenever this happened, the demands of press and statesmen that the 'scourge' of banditry be swept away tussled with an equally vocal insistence that their own countrymen should not suffer in the process. The tension was reflected in the inconsistency shown by British and American governments faced with the possibility of disbursing their own taxpayers' money in paying or advancing ransoms.[65]

The dilemma was intractable. While publicly and officially no government, whether of the kidnappers' country or that of the victim(s), could give its blessing to practices that rewarded crime and thereby encouraged its continuation, in reality there was no other way to ensure captives' safe release. In virtually all international (and indeed local) kidnapping cases, negotiations therefore went ahead, usually mobilizing the services and efforts of already experienced individuals and connections. These usually reflected local networks – of patronage, kinship or, in Andalusian cases, the smuggling profession whose activities spanned the Spain–Gibraltar frontier. Though the details might vary, ransom negotiation throughout the nineteenth century depended upon emissaries, the good offices of outlaws' relatives, the participation of local lawyers, clergy (Catholic or Orthodox), landowners, etc.[66]

When foreign hostages were involved, matters could become more complicated and less predictable than was customary. Unless they were well-established local residents like the Roses of Lercara Friddi or the Abbotts of Salonica, their families, friends and colleagues were unlikely to be conversant with local practices or channels of negotiation. Identifying, contacting and mobilizing these resources took time, while the almost inevitable involvement of British consuls or vice-consuls, while in some cases crucial to a successful outcome, in others did more to complicate matters than expedite them. Consul-General Bonham in Naples, for example, annoyed both his own and the Italian government by communicating directly with Manzo and summoning a royal navy gunboat to the Salerno coast to carry the bandits to a foreign safe haven (probably Malta).[67] The longer things dragged on, the more likely it was that embassies and even the victim's government would become involved; this was especially so where, as in Greece, the Ottoman empire and Morocco, Britain exercised a protective role or possessed other forms of direct influence. If the occasional willingness of brigands' home governments – that of Spain in 1870 and the Ottoman Porte in 1880 – to promise restitution helped oil the wheels of settlement,[68] governmental interest could also work the other way. The Italian authorities in 1865 helped prolong Moens's detention by impeding the movements of emissaries at crucial stages in the negotiations.[69] In the end, however, negotiation usually produced the result desired by all who supported and pursued it: the avoidance of the ultimate act of violence and the freeing of hostages in return for a substantial financial outlay.[70]

Yet while almost all ransom victims eventually walked free, the Marathon murders remind us that the avoidance of tragedy could never be taken for granted. Brigands in general displayed little reluctance to

kill when circumstances or 'honour' appeared to demand it. The Manzo band, though perhaps not Manzo himself, certainly wounded, mutilated and murdered in pursuit of robbery and revenge.[71] The cruelty employed by Qiriazi's captor, Shahin, and his followers was – if the devout Qiriazi is to be believed – wanton and indiscriminate.[72] Raisuli's resort to torture and massacre is well-documented.[73] Bands whose membership overlapped with that of 'Don Antonio' bloodied their hands during Andalusia's banditry-wave of 1869–70.[74] The Anglo-Saxon perception of Mediterranean bandits as 'bloodthirsty scoundrels' oversimplified a complex way of life in which murder more often reflected individual psychopathy or operational failure than collective blood-lust, but the danger to hostages remained real.

As briefly suggested earlier, in kidnapping cases two sets of circumstances, potentially combining, might produce the murderous outcome which would signal the crime's total failure. In theory at least, if negotiations dragged on without resolution, broke down incurably or were seriously interrupted from outside, brigands might opt to free themselves of their human burden in the only way consistent with their honour.[75] Making it clear that they were prepared to do this was, of course, a significant psychological weapon. The same conclusion might be precipitated by physical action on the part of the authorities. In Moens's view at least, his life was imperilled early in his captivity by the over-close attention of the Italian military, from whom the Manzo band briefly came under fire.[76] Later in 1865 Henry Coore had a similar experience in Greece.[77] In May 1870 the Spanish government, under pressure from Britain, deliberately pulled back the army and Civil Guard rather than imperil the Bonells and in order to facilitate negotiation.[78] What was to be a generally followed precedent was obviously inspired by a common British and Spanish determination to avoid a repetition of recent events in Greece. There, near the village of Dilessi, with negotiations confused and collapsing and the Greek army rapidly closing in, the panicking Arvanitakis killed their four captives. No longer representing imminent enrichment, and slowing down their flight towards the safety of Ottoman Thessaly, their units of human capital had become liabilities. There, but for the skill of negotiators, the restraint of governments, and the self-restraint of bandits, went many another ransom victim.

Paying the price: (ii) repercussion and retribution

In the Mediterranean world of the century before 1914, the Marathon murders were exceptional among international kidnapping cases. To be

more rigorous, they were exceptional as regards the fate of the kidnap victims. Whereas Edward Herbert, Frederick Vyner, Edward Lloyd and the Count de Boÿl returned to their respective homes in coffins, all the captives in all the other cases considered here returned alive, if not always entirely well, to their wives, families, friends and local communities. As regards outward appearance, it is true, Martin Wills was a partial exception. Arriving back in Skopje minus his left ear, Wills found it awaiting collection at the British consulate. After the ear had been sewn back in place by a local Greek doctor, Wills declared the result 'satisfactory'.[79] Other ex-captives, while unmarked externally, nevertheless bore other, less obvious, scars in the form of serious physical debilitation and what now would be termed trauma. Thus the two Bonells, reportedly frail and timid even before their ordeal, withdrew afterwards into a seclusion hard to maintain in Gibraltar's tightly knit civil community.[80] Gjerasim Qiriazi, aged 26 when captured, never recovered his youthful vigour and died, as a result of his sufferings, at 35.[81] William Moens, returning to England weakened by weeks of Apennine drizzle, malnourishment and recurrent dysentery, embraced the risk-free life of a Hampshire country squire, antiquarian and pillar of the Huguenot Society.[82] Even the tough 'Kaid' Maclean emerged from his long detention with his health permanently weakened.[83] But perhaps the saddest surviving ex-captive was Lord Muncaster, leader of the ill-fated Marathon party. Because he had been released to arrange a ransom (that was never allowed to do its work), Muncaster returned home unjustly tainted with cowardice, haunted by guilt, and devastated by the death of his friend Vyner.[84]

While surviving captivity could therefore have its darker side, few if any survivors would have exchanged it for the alternative. This is why, when we shift our gaze from the fate of hostages to that of their captors, the apparently sharp contrast between the Marathon and other cases suddenly begins to blur. The intrinsic violence of the bandits' world was in no sense diluted by their need to withhold violence in kidnapping cases. Even so, bandits were at least as likely to be the victims of mortal violence as its agents. 'Marathon' was unique in that kidnappers and hostages died in the same engagement. In the bloodbath near Dilessi, indeed, more bandits perished than captives, seven of their heads shortly thereafter being exposed to the eyes of the Athenian public.[85] As the months and even years passed, most of the bandits who had fled the scene were rounded up and met their ends in a variety of formal and summary ways.[86] The violent and squalid end of the Arvanitakis band was emphatically *not* unique or even unusual. Releasing the

Bonells did not save 'Don Antonio' and his *compañeros* from a similar quietus. As the band's five members rode northwards towards what they hoped would be their own freedom, they were ambushed outside Seville by a waiting Civil Guard detachment. 'Don Antonio', two more of the band, and one guard died in the shoot-out, and another band member later from his wounds.[87] Although the fifth bandit fled and disappeared from our view, it could well be that the rough justice of the times soon caught up with him, given the numbers of Andalusian bandits killed in the ruthless 1870 onslaught of the Spanish government's chief bandit-hunter, Julián de Zugasti. It is important to stress this climate, lest it be thought that the end of 'Don Antonio' and his men reflected an exceptional response to a crime with international dimensions. Far from it: during Zugasti's nine-month tenure, scores of real or alleged Andalusian bandits were killed, mostly 'while trying to escape'. The respectable classes of Andalusia (and the 'moneyed class' of Gibraltar to which the Bonells belonged) may have slept and travelled more securely as a result, but the untrammelled brutality of Zugasti's methods was too much for the frock-coated politicians who, before the end of 1870, had removed him from his post.[88] Whatever the rights and wrongs of Zugasti's appointment, conduct and dismissal, and always allowing for the possibility of coincidence, Andalusian banditry was never to revive to anything like comparable levels.[89]

While the ultimate retribution did not always arrive as swiftly as it did for 'Don Antonio' and his associates, sooner or later many British ransom victims had the satisfaction – if they sought it – of reading in the press of their captors' violent ends. Two examples, both from Italy, will serve to illustrate the point. Gaetano Manzo, William Moens's host during the summer of 1865, surrendered to the Italian authorities in 1866, largely in response to the authorities pressure on his family and especially his mother. Following a labyrinthine judicial process, Manzo received a lengthy prison sentence for his numerous and varied offences. Escaping from gaol in 1871, he found only one profession now open to him and returned to banditry. The Italy of the 1870s was still not short of brigands, but the large-scale *brigantaggio* of the 1860s was well past. The life expectation of small bands like that of Manzo's second coming was shorter than ever, and in 1873 Manzo was ambushed and gunned down by a combined force of *bersaglieri* and *carabinieri*.[90] The Sicilian brigand Leone, captor of John Forester Rose in 1876, met a similar death the following spring.[91] The fates of other named bandit leaders, and the many more unnamed band members they led, frequently followed a similar patter. All in all, and with the conspicuous exception of Raisuli,

there is little reason to believe that many fulfilled the bandit dream – not of lifelong 'liberté' among the mountains *à la* Carmen, but of a quiet and respectable retirement. That was a reward more likely, even if as we have seen not certain, to be enjoyed by *gendarmes* and ransom victims.

Notes

1. *The Times*, 17 June 1870.
2. On 'Marathon', see R. Jenkins, *The Dilessi Murders* (London: Longmans, 1961); C. Stevens ed., *Ransom and Murder in Greece. Lord Muncaster's Journal 1870* (Cambridge: Lutterworth, 1989). There is a vast amount of documentary evidence from the British side: for example The National Archives, [hereafter TNA] TNA/FO/421/27A, 'Capture and murder by brigands of British and Italian subjects in Greece' and TNA/FO 421/27B, 'Further correspondence respecting capture and murder by brigands of British and Italian subjects in Greece, January–March 1871'.
3. M. Blinkhorn, 'Liability, Responsibility and Blame: British Ransom Victims in the Mediterranean Periphery, 1860–81', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, XLVI (2000), 336–56; TNA/FO/72/1262 and TNA/FO/72/1263: Spain. 'Capture of Messrs J. and J. A. Bonell by brigands'.
4. Those of Moens and Coore in 1865: see p. 196.
5. Benjamin Disraeli, *Letters: 1815–1834*, ed. J. A. W. Gunn et al. (Toronto: University of Tronto Press, 1882), p. 131; R. Curzon, *Visits to Monasteries in the Levant* (Oxford: Humphrey Milford, 1916), pp. 253–316.
6. An example is Burnand and Sullivan's *The Contrabandista*, which ran in London during 1869. After a respectable run it disappeared from the British stage until revived as *The Chieftain* in the 1890s.
7. C. J. Esdaile, *Fighting Napoleon. Guerrillas, Bandits and Adventurers in Spain, 1808–1814* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).
8. J. de Zugasti, *El bandolerismo. Estudio social y memorias históricas,* 3 vols (Madrid: Alianza, 1983 [1876–80]).
9. J. A. Davis, *Conflict and Control. Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 66–90, 159–86; J. Dickie, *Darkest Italy. The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1890–1900* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), pp. 25–52.
10. J. S. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause. Brigandage and Irredentism in Modern Greece, 1821–1912* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), pp. 39–238.
11. Ibid.; K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).
12. On the murder of a Mr and Mrs Hunt by Neapolitan brigands in 1825, see E. Clay ed., *Ramage in South Italy* (Chicago, IL: Academy Chicago, 1987), pp. 5, 203, *The Times*, 24 and 28 January 1825. *The Times*, 3 August 1844, reports the brief kidnapping of a Mr Starkey by Spanish brigands near Gibraltar.
13. L. Colley, *Captives. Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1850* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002), pp. 23–134.
14. 'Return respecting British Subjects captured by Brigands, 1860–81' (5 July 1881), *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* 1881 [XCVIII-C.2990] 243.
15. Blinkhorn, 'Liability, Responsibility and Blame'.

16. [Anon.], 'Maclean, Sir Harry Aubrey de Vere (1848–1920)', rev. Roger T. Stearn, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), online edn, May 2006 [http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/ 34781, accessed 18 May 2006]. (Hereafter 'Maclean', *DNB*.)
17. TNA/FO/881/4222. 'Correspondence respecting the Capture of Colonel Synge by Brigands in the District of Caraferia, Macedonia' (1880).
18. Though hunting and shooting may have helped: in a letter to the *The Times* of 7 May 1870, Henry Coore's father attributed his son's survival to his being a 'strong and hardy sportsman'.
19. The Rankin kidnapping (a brief but interesting affair) is covered in correspondence between the Foreign Office and the Madrid Legation: TNA/FO/72/1264.
20. 'Correspondence respecting the Capture of Mr. H. Suter by Brigands at Istvor in Turkey', *House of Commons Command Papers* (1881), vol. C.1015 (no. C.3031), Turkey.
21. Ion Perdicaris, 'Morocco "The Land of the Extreme West" and the Story of My Captivity', *National Geographic Magazine*, XVII, no. 3 (March 1906), 117–57, esp. 140–7.
22. Consul-General, Salonica, to Foreign Office, 25 March 1907, TNA/FO/195/ 2264, fos 305–7; *Daily News*, 26 March 1907.
23. John Forester Rose, statement to Consul Dennis, Palermo, 26 November 1876, enclosed in Dennis (Palermo) to Lord Derby, no. 4, 8 November 1876, TNA/FO/45/297 [hereafter Rose, statement to Dennis].
24. 'Statement of the Messieurs Bonell regarding their capture, treatment and release by Spanish Brigands, Gibraltar, 15 June 1870': TNA/FO/72/1263 [hereafter Bonells, statement].
25. Moens, *English Travellers*, I, 107–9, 123–4.
26. The British and Italian members of the Marathon party were: Lord and Lady Muncaster; Frederick Vyner, Edward Herbert, Edward and Mrs Lloyd and their infant daughter, and the Count de Boÿl. Herbert was Third Secretary at the Athens British Legation and cousin to Lord Carnarvon, a past and future Conservative cabinet minister. Vyner was brother-in-law to Lord de Grey, a member of Gladstone's incumbent cabinet. Lloyd was a lawyer representing the Athens-Piraeus rail company.
27. Arthur Haselden, statement to MacDonell (Chargé d'Affaires, Madrid), 19 July 1874, enclosed in MacDonell to Foreign Office, 21 July 1874, TNA/FO/72/1369/39 [hereafter Hasleden, statement to McDonnell].
28. Colonel Synge, written report to Consul-General Blunt, Salonica, 29 March 1880, enclosed in Blunt to Foreign Office, no. 33, 31 March 1880, TNA/FO/ 78/2134 [hereafter Synge, report to Blunt].
29. Gjerasim Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands* (Wrexham, n.d.), pp. 3–7.
30. Walter Harris, *Morocco That Was* (London: Eland, 1983 [1921]), pp. 182–7.
31. P. L. Martin Wills, A *Captive of the Bulgarian Brigands. Englishman's Terrible Experiences in Macedonia* (London: Allom and Townsend, 1906), pp. 13–15.
32. *The Times*, 7 July 1904. The Foreign Office files in the National Archives contain voluminous information on Maclean's kidnapping: see especially TNA/FO/174/295/9 and TNA/FO/174/295/14.
33. Moens, *English Travellers*, I, 107–9 gives Mrs Moens's version of the capture. Lady [Amy] Morgan, 'An account of the kidnapping by Raisuli of Ion Perdicaris and his step-son Cromwell Oliver Varley', held in the Tangier American

Legation Museum, is a privately circulated first-hand (though highly retospective) account from the viewpoint of Varley's daughter.

34. Stone was seized with her travelling companion, a young Bulgarian woman who was pregnant at the time and gave birth while a prisoner. See L. B. Sherman, *Fires on the Mountain. The Macedonian Revolutionary Movement and the Kidnapping of Ellen Stone* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1980).
35. For example, *The Times*, 27 May 1881 (reporting on the release of Harry Suter).
36. Bonells, statement.
37. Perdicaris, *Captivity*, pp. 147–50; Harris, *Morocco That Was*, pp. 182–98.
38. Rose, statement to Dennis.
39. Synge, report to Blunt.
40. See the map at the end of Moens, *English Travellers*, II.
41. Jenkins, *Dilessi Murders*, pp. 22–63.
42. Ibid.; Hector Berlioz, Symphony 'Harold in Italy', fourth movement.
43. Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands*, pp. 59, 126.
44. 'Minutes of the Proceedings of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the Seizure, Detention and Ransom of John Bonell and John Antonio Bonell, Gibraltar, July–August 1870': TNA/FO/72/1263, f.312 (testimony of John Antonio Bonell). [Hereafter Bonells, Inquiry Minutes.]
45. On smuggling in the Gibraltar hinterland, see R. Sánchez Mantero, *Estudios sobre Gibraltar. (Política, diplomacia y contrabando en el siglo XIX)* (Jerez: Diputacion Provincial de Cadiz, 1989), pp. 65–120 and appendices.
46. Moens, *English Travellers*, II, 86–7, 99–100. A good study of the Manzo band is Antonio Caiazza, *La banda Manzo* (Naples: Tempi Moderni, 1984).
47. On 'The Way of the Bandit' in ninetenth-century Greece, see Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*, chapter 10; on Corsica see S. Wilson, *Feuding, Conflict, and Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Corsica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), chapter 12.
48. On young men and masculinity in Andalusia, see the classic work of Julian Pitt-Rivers, *People of the Sierra* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), pp. 84–97.
49. The Andalusian rural crime-wave of 1869–70 is covered in Zugasti, *Bandolerismo*, III, and in F. Hernández Girbal, *Bandidos celebres españoles*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Lira, 1973), pp. 21–85.
50. Consul Lamb (Salonica) to Foreign Office, 10 December 1907, TNA/FO/195/2264.
51. Rosita Forbes, *El Raisuni, the Sultan of the Mountains* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1924), remains the most vivid portrat of Raisuli; a different perspective is provided by C. F. Tessainer y Tomasich, *Raisuni. Aliado y enemigo de España* (Malaga: Algazara, 1998).
52. Moens, *English Travellers*, II, pp. 302–3.
53. Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands*, pp. 52–3.
54. For example, Bonells, statement.
55. Archivio di Stato, Salerno, Tribunali, B52, fos 729, 742; B55, F775.
56. Wills, *Bulgarian Brigands*, pp. 16–19. A medical certificate confirming the action is contained in TNA/FO/ 294/37, Monastir to Embassy (Constantinople) 1905, E.87(2), fo.197.
57. See, for example, Moens, *English Travellers*, II, 201.

58. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stockholm_syndrome
59. Moens, *English Travellers*, II, 304–5; Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands*, pp. 86–7.
60. Bonells: statement, fo. 235.
61. Rose, statement to Dennis.
62. Henry Coore, letter to *The Times*, 7 May 1870.
63. Wills, *Bulgarian Brigands*, 20–23.
64. And they did take place: see Moens, II, 276–7, 283–5; Bonells, Inquiry Minutes, fo. 314 (Testimony of John Antonio Bonell); Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands*, p. 118; Synge, Statement to Blunt.
65. The official British line established in 1881, for example, was defined in the Abbott case of 1907. Blinkhorn, 'Liability, Responsibility and Blame'. For the American perspective, see R. D. Buhite, *Lives at Risk. Hostages and Victims in American Foreign Policy* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc, 1995), esp. pp. 57–86.
66. The tortuous negotiation leading to the release, first of John Bonell and then his nephew are revealed in Bonells, Inquiry Minutes. Those eventually producing Moens's release can be followed in TNA/FO/ 97/260, 261 (particularly), and 262. On negotiating in Greece, see Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*, pp. 268–9.
67. The tale of the gunboat's abortive expedition can be extracted from documents spanning TNA/FO/97/261 and /262. For Foreign Office criticism of Bonham, see (among other documents) FO 97/262, no. 469, Russell to Herries, 9 July 1865 and FO/97/262, no. 470, Russell to Bonham, 20 July 1865.
68. British Library, Additional MS 39121, Layard Papers, vol. CXCI, Layard to Clarendon, 24 May 1870; Additional MS 39132, Layard Papers, vol. CCII, fos. 87–8, Layard to Salisbury, 10 March 1880.
69. TNA/FO/97/261 and /262 also contain plentiful correspondence on the Italian state's harassment of emissaries. To cite just one example: FO/97/261, no. 191, Elliot to Russell, 16 June 1865.
70. Final ransom sums could vary widely from a few hundred pounds to the £20,000 paid for Maclean.
71. Moens, II, 201, on Manzo's protecting him against the 'brutality of many in the band.'
72. Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands*, pp. 55–66.
73. Harris, *Morocco That Was*, pp. 179–82.
74. Zugasti, *Bandolerismo*, III, pp. 17–169, 222–576; Hernández Girbal, *Bandidos celebres*.
75. Koliopoulos, *Brigands with a Cause*, pp. 268–9; Qiriazi, *Captures by Brigands*, pp. 74–6.
76. W. J. C. Moens, letter to *The Times*, 28 April 1870.
77. Henry Coore, letter to *The Times*, 7 May 1870.
78. British Library Additional MS 39121, Layard Papers, vol. CXCI, Layard to Clarendon, 8 June 1870 and 9 June 1870.
79. Wills, *Bulgarian Brigands*, pp. 20–3.
80. This is an inference drawn from the lack of contrary evidence, which if it existed would not be difficult to find in the Gibraltar Government Archives.
81. Qiriazi, *Captured by Brigands*, pp. 122–9. The book's final chapter, 'The Life of Mr Kyrias', is a short biography, probably by the translator, John W. Baird.

82. C. Fell-Smith, 'Möens, William John Charles (1833–1904)', rev. E. Baigent, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35051, accessed 22 May 2006.
83. 'Maclean', *DNB*.
84. Jenkins, *Dilessi Murders*, p. 117; Stevens, *Ransom and Murder*, pp. 181–3.
85. Stevens, *Ransom and Murder*, p. 57.
86. Jenkins, *Dilessi Murders*, pp. 170–1.
87. *Gibraltar Chronicle*, 13 June 1870.
88. Zugasti, *Bandolerismo*, III, pp. 270–372.
89. For a narrative account of Spanish banditry's long decline, see Hernández Girbal, *Bandidos celebres españoles*, vol. 2, 89–493.
90. *The Times*, 18 September 1873.
91. *The Times*, 8 June 1877; S. Lo Presti, *Briganti in Sicilia* (Palermo, 1996), p. 83.

10

Swords and Daggers: Class Conceptions of Interpersonal Violence in Liberal Italy

Steven C. Hughes

The great debate that swirled around the practice of duelling in the newly unified country of Italy, which reportedly saw a duel a day, often turned on the issue of whether there was not something fundamentally different between gentlemen duellists and lower-class knife fighters. This was a sore point for Italy's leaders because, parallel to its reputation for frequent duels among elites, the new country would rather quickly gain a 'sad primacy' for having the highest murder rate in Western Europe, a result of frequent and deadly quarrels among the working classes.[1] Thus one legislative commission in 1870 argued that in dealing with the issue it was important to 'avoid that for crimes committed in duels [gentlemen] be equated with vulgar murderers'.[2] This study will examine the often tortured, but very revealing, logic employed by Italian legislators, jurists, and journalists to set themselves apart from the 'savage' and violent masses, while they themselves openly engaged in illegal and often bloody chivalric combat. That discourse focused primarily on the critical difference between the self-control and deferred personal satisfaction inherent to the duelling ritual and the impetuous, unruly affrays or *risse* of the popular classes. In the same vein, lower-class combat was often attributed to excessive drinking, thus further enhancing the image of impulsive and dangerous men incapable of restraint and insensitive to true issues of honour. Although they entertained a vague notion of *cavalleria rusticana*, Italy's elites generally refused to attribute honour or ritual to popular forms of violence and embraced iconic images from Italy's past which contrasted the noble sword against the perfidious dagger to drive home the point. In terms of the law such descriptive dichotomies allowed the members of Italy's

civil class to justify the creation of a set of *sui generis* sanctions that offered substantial protection to gentlemen duellists compared to their lower-class counterparts. Thus according to the Zanardelli penal code of 1889, a homicide in a duel could be punished with six months to five years detention (with a reduction of one-third if the encounter resulted from a particularly serious insult) whereas the punishment for a 'regular' homicide was 18 to 21 years' reclusion. This assumed of course that duellists were even brought to justice, and the most recent statistics indicate that only about 15 per cent of known duels (and many were described openly in the newspapers) ever resulted in legal action.[3] In terms of politics, the contrast between *duello* and *rissa* reinforced the assumptions of Italy's new liberal political system which only granted the right to vote, hold office and sit on juries, to that small segment of the population deemed capable of dealing with the responsibilities of government. Thus the image of the mass of men impetuously settling their personal disputes man to man in the dust of the street was constantly contrasted to that of gentlemen writing letters of challenge and then coolly coming to combat at sword's length in some bucolic setting, and it consistently reiterated the critical connection between chivalric honour and public power amongst Italy's elites. With the sweaty drunken knife fight as its classic 'countertype', the duel could be used with virtual impunity for a variety of social and political functions connected to the creation of a new nation based on the free exchange of ideas and products but carefully restricted by class and comportment. Tellingly, the duel would eventually succumb to the totalitarian yet populist tendencies of the fascist regime and the party's promotion of the dagger over the sword as Italy's iconic weapon of honour.

* * *

It was difficult for legislators and jurists not to compare popular and elite forms of interpersonal violence because both became hot topics in the early decades of the liberal regime. Duelling, which had been limited in scope and frequency during the pre-unitary period took off after unification in 1861, and in 1864 an anti-duelling author, Jacopo Nicoletti, expressed his shock over its growth in the young country:

> But in these recent times the mania of the duel is resurgent, and the abuse spreads like a flood. Even today we are constrained to recognize that we have this iniquitous means to define questions of offended honour as a principle of social assurance [garanzia] … thus

> the student, the literato, the officer, the nobles, the deputies, and the representatives of the nation and the government, the ministers, all fight in turn and thus give proof of themselves.[4]

By 1869 the expert on matters chivalric, Paolo Fambri, estimated that Italy had seen 3,000 duels during its first seven years of existence, which amounted to well over a duel a day. Nor did this 'duellomania' fade quickly, with the official statistics registering a minimum average of 276 per year during the 1880s.[5] Murder rates were equally shocking as Italian statisticians began to compile data across the country and compare it to the rest of Europe. About 1880, Enrico Ferri, an early legal anthropologist, calculated that Italy had a rate of 9 per 100,000 for convicted murderers as opposed to rates lower than 2 per 100,000 in France and Germany and below 1 per 100,000 in England and Scotland.[6] Even more shocking was the disparity within Italy, with some Southern provinces experiencing homicide conviction rates of between 16 and 35 per 100,000 and Palermo topping the list with 45 (this in contrast to Milan with 3.6)! Contemporary legislators attributed these high rates to the widespread abuse of knives among Italy's lower classes, and the Italian parliament eventually responded with higher penalties for carrying knives and for the wounds caused by them. Modern scholars, such as Daniele Boschi, have agreed with that assessment and have pointed out that writers and poets of the period talked about the importance of knife fighting as a key to a man's honour among the popular classes.[7] One gets a sense of this 'knife culture' from the introduction to Giancarlo Baronti's exhaustive study, *Coltelli d'Italia*:

> There is no man of the people who, in his own personal knife, chosen carefully by weighing, hefting and trying at the moment of acquisition, sees not just a versatile instrument of work, useful for a thousand daily needs, [but] the tangible sign of his humanity, his virile solidity, and his personal pride and dignity. The knife is a faithful companion – light in weight yet instilling assurance in one's step – a friend of the night – always diligently ready for those exciting moments during which one can, and indeed must, place one's life on the line in order to maintain the respect of others.[8]

Nevertheless, during the long and complex debates that surrounded the duel and its relationship to lower-class interpersonal violence – a natural product of the overlapping outcry over frequent crimes of both sword and knife after unity – the discourse tended to deprive popular *risse* of

any sense of either honour or ritual and instead cast them as savage acts of uncontrollable impulsiveness.

To better understand this point of view we might start with an interesting case involving Vilfredo Pareto, who in 1901 suffered the indignity of having his wife, Alessandrina Bakounine, run off with his cook while he was away in France. Already a respected professor of Political Economy at the University of Lausanne, Pareto was saddened and embarrassed by the loss of his wife, but he was positively mortified by the social status of her lover. 'You can't duel with your cook', he complained to his friend Maffeo Pantaleoni, and this unfortunate chivalric fact threw him into a quandary as how to proceed. Unable to defend his honour in the standard way and anxious to protect his finances against any claim by 'the lover of my ex-cook', he would have to resort to the courts, which would incur both expense and scandal. Such was his concern for the latter, that he considered moving to the border town of Domo d'Ossola for a couple of months and thus avoid the notoriety that a trial might provoke in Florence, his legal residence in Italy. These issues may have been less galling if he had been able to fight his offender, but the servile status of the cook – especially a man in his own (*proprio*) service – forbade such recourse. The social implication was that the cook had no honour to defend and to challenge him would have put Pareto's own status as a gentleman in question.[9]

Pareto's dilemma points to the general insensitivity of Italian elites to conceptions of lower-class honour. Part of this was a reaction to the poverty and illiteracy of Italy's working classes, 62 per cent of which were still engaged in tilling the soil in 1881, a figure that would change little by the turn of the century.[10] From today's standpoint it is hard to fathom just how difficult conditions were among many Italian workers and peasants during the nineteenth century, and in some areas unification brought more misery rather than less. Often hungry, ill-clothed and poorly housed, the masses, most of whom spoke only the local dialect rather than standard Italian, must have seemed totally at odds with the sensibilities and niceties of honour common to the urban upper and middle classes. Suffice it to say that in a monumental treatise on crime and policing published in 1870, Italy's foremost police authority, Giovanni Bolis, echoed earlier French treatises in describing workers as a 'dangerous class' along with prostitutes, pimps and thieves.[11]

There seemed little hope of raising the bulk of this *volgo* up to the standards of polite society, and Inge Botteri has shown how even etiquette manuals written for the *popolo* were actually aimed at the lower middle classes and not the canaille, that is not the 'mob, rabble, vile

multitude, poor people, low people, filthy, and bestial people' to which one of her gentle authors referred.[12] He might have added *facchini* as well, in reference to Italy's ubiquitous urban porters and carters, whose rough manners were so notorious that applying the term to a gentleman would have brought an immediate demand for satisfaction. There was also a particular disrespect attached to peasants, and the simple term *bifolco* or ploughman constituted an insult for a gentleman on the same incendiary level of the more urban *facchino*. This disparagement for the peasantry was clearly obvious in the remarks of Givoanni Nicotera when he was attempting to insult a political rival in 1883. Storming through the halls of parliament in search of foes who had circulated a pamphlet critical of his tenure as Minister of the Interior, Nicotera fixated on a fellow deputy, Francesco Lovito, as a likely culprit and unleashed his fury proclaiming '*Massaro* (farmer), *vigliacco* (coward), *pecoraro* (sheepherder)! I will not lay my hand on your face for fear of sullying myself, but I will spit on you, I will spit on you!' and he proceeded to do just that. Turning completely pale at these insults, Lovito managed to control himself and immediately sent his representatives to arrange a duel.[13] Needless to say, for Nicotera, 'farmer' and 'sheepherder' were epithets synonymous with *vigliacco* or coward, and implied a baseness of spirit as well as of work. And this came from a Mazzinian democrat proud of his revolutionary credentials.

Equally interesting, plebs of the *infimo ceto* were also portrayed as insensitive to insult, and one of Italy's most influential duelling manuals maintained that neither peasants nor artisans felt any dishonour in being slapped in the face.[14] Although Italy's 'gentlemen' might be willing to mitigate penalties for working-class 'crimes of passion' they regarded honour and the duel as a defining feature and obvious prerogative of 'civil' society, quite beyond the comprehension of the *popolo*. As one positivist deputy proclaimed in parliament in 1898, the duel 'occurs for reasons of an elevated moral order that is for offences of such a high level that the *volgo* cannot feel them … . The common people do not have the duel because they do not arrive at the high sensibility to have it'.[15] Unable to understand the content of such offences they further failed to grasp the chivalric rituals of combat, and the swashbuckling journalist L. A. Vassallo, who wrote under the pseudonym 'Gandolin', mentioned offhandedly that on a couple of occasions he had had duels in progress interrupted by peasants throwing rocks.[16]

As with the other attributes of a gentleman, such as manners and courage, the fundamental issue here was one of self-control. In a sort of chivalrous sleight of hand, the fact that plebeians settled their personal

differences without benefit of refined rituals was blamed on their robust passions, quick irritability and lack of emotional restraint.[17] They also used the wrong tools! Constant contrast was made between the violent and uncontrolled passions of working men, who fought on a moment's notice with their hands or knives, as opposed to the calm adjudication and respectable rituals of duelling gentlemen and their refined weapons. Thus a distinction between the plebeian knife and the civil-class sword was a recurring theme among those defending the duelling ethic.[18] Consider for instance the assertion of Cesare Alberto Blengini di San Grato, a fencing master who published a duelling code in 1868:

> The common people and lowly plebs will perhaps use their fists or a club; they will also use a knife; but all of these – even if used without faithlessness, without treachery, without surprise behind one's back, are weapons of a scoundrel, worse than an assassin, from whom an educated man flees as he flees from tolerating his own shame.[19]

As the crude peasant or the rough worker offered a countertype to the cultured gentleman, so conversely did the sword stand in contrast to the work-a-day knife, used for a variety of manual tasks, and the perfidious dagger, a corrupt and sordid weapon, the very nature of which prevented its use for noble purposes.

This prejudice against the dagger had a long and complicated history, which was tied to the fact that Italy's nineteenth-century passion for the duel did not emerge from an unbroken tradition. Although Italy had invented the modern point of honour duel during the Renaissance, the power of the Counter Reformation and the gradual demilitarization of the Italian nobility had subsequently drained the ritual of its early energy. Consequently, by the mid-eighteenth century duelling had virtually disappeared in most of Italy.[20] However, its decline may have been a double-edged sword. Foreign commentators, such as Morrison, Lassels and Sharpe, often attributed high rates of interpersonal violence in Italy to the fact that gentlemen failed to face each other on the field of honour. Anachronistically underwritten by the popularity of Machiavelli's assertions of princely perfidy, daggers and poison became the common descriptors of action among Italian men, and Rousseau claimed in his *Nouveau Héloise* that 'At Messina or Naples, one waits for his man at the corner of a street and stabs him from behind. That's what they call being brave in that country.'[21] Such unfortunate images could be mixed with foreign misapprehension of *cicisbeismo* (the practice of having young gallants socially attend married women) to suggest that

eighteenth-century Italian nobles were fecklessly unconcerned with protecting the morality of their wives, or if they did they used a knife in the night. It was just this combination of charges in Sharpe's *Letters from Italy* that led Giuseppe Baretti to proclaim angrily that the Piedmontese 'mix in intercourse exactly after the manner of the French and the English, and the Piedmontese weapon in deciding sudden quarrels is the sword … , and not the dagger.'[22]

The burden of such unfortunate stereotypes might have been relatively light in the eighteenth century, but as Italy became caught up in the great game of Napoleonic expansion, they would help spark a return to earlier forms of honourable combat. I have argued elsewhere that the mass military experience of Italy's men, and especially those elites who became officers, under the 'little corporal' helped reinvigorate the duelling ethic across the peninsula. Conscripted into an army famous for its chivalrous combats, Italian officers faced the scorn of the French who generally stereotyped them as priest-ridden, effeminate, mama's boys who were afraid to fight as real men. Thus the emperor's armies taught the Italians to duel and then gave them something to fight about.[23]

The continuing sensitivity to these unfortunate stereotypes was obvious in the most famous duel of the Risorgimento period which burst upon the scene in 1825, when the French author and diplomat Alphonse de Lamartine published a poem containing a number of lines highly insulting to Italians. Weak, obsequious, fawning and treacherous, they had, he claimed, betrayed the majesty and courage of their Roman past and now only fought from behind in the dark.[24] Amazingly, Lamartine was not expecting any trouble over the poem, despite the fact he had recently been assigned to the French Legation in Florence. But he quickly found a formidable adversary in Gabriele Pepe, a Neapolitan soldier and writer who had sought refuge in Tuscany after having served two harsh years of prison imposed by the restored Bourbon regime for his participation in the recent revolution. Pepe soon managed to insult Lamartine as weak and cowardly in an otherwise innocuous article or *Cenno* on Dante, and then politely refused all of the Frenchman's efforts at reconciliation. His description of Lamartine's last such attempt before the duel underlines the sword/dagger dichotomy in the mind of this Italian patriot.

> I received him with all possible courtesy, just as our written correspondence had been genteel and courteous. I tell you this because, knowing full well that the dart fired by my *Cenno* would lead to an affair of arms, I wanted to use and exaggerate the forms of chivalry. I was dealing with a Frenchman who had depicted the Italians as

> assassins capable only of treacherously using a dagger in the night. It was thus necessary to demonstrate with facts that the Italians are more chivalrous than the French.[25]

Pepe promoted this project throughout the rest of the affair with a series of gentlemanly gestures, such as accepting French seconds, using a shorter rapier and binding Lamartine's wounded arm with his own handkerchief after he had bested him in the action. Thus the duel offered Pepe a chance to prove the Italians as 'civilized' as the French and, by carefully observing the rules of honourable combat, to counteract the painful image of the perfidious stiletto in the shadows.

The same theme also appears in one of the most famous novels (later adapted into a Verdi opera) of the Risorgimento, Massimo D'Azeglio's *Disfida di Barletta*, which clearly juxtaposes the dagger of betrayal against the sword of chivalry. In fact the very issue that drives the dramatic action of the novel towards the famous mass duel of 1503 (in which 13 Italian knights took on 13 French knights) is a French knight's insult that Italians are cowardly fighters, who prefer the stiletto for settling accounts. In the story the knight complains to his Spanish counterpart 'I assure you that the guile and chicanery of the Italians cause more harm than their swords.' And he continues,

> You came from Spain a short time ago, Signor, and do not yet know what a race of knaves are the Italians. You have not had to deal with the Duke Lodovico nor with the Pope, nor with Duke Valentino. They first receive you with openness, then seek to plunge their daggers into your back.

As if to give credence to this problem, D'Azeglio quickly focuses the narrative on Duke Valentino's evil sidekick, Don Michele, who posed as a humble novitiate priest so that he could thrust a knife into the heart of his younger brother, who had fallen in love with his wife. All this stands in stark contrast to Ettore Fieramosca, chief of the Italians, whose honesty and chivalry come to dominate the action as he defends Italy's military honour and courage in a fair fight against the French. Thus dagger and sword form the antipodes of Italian honour in Risorgimento eyes and only chivalric deeds can wash away the collective stain of past iniquity.[26]

This sentiment continued beyond unification as legislators seeking to limit penalties for duellists argued that Italy's gentlemen needed to embrace the sword and reject the dagger as part of its national regeneration. In 1875, Diomede Pantaleoni claimed in the Senate that there were nations of duels and nations of knives, with Corsica and Sicily

serving as examples of the latter, where vendetta took the place of chivalry. Duelling, he claimed, limited conflicts, set rules, allowed reconciliation and individualized offences to honour rather than spreading them to entire families. But duelling, he claimed, went beyond the control of interpersonal violence; rather it appealed to the best sentiments of men and had thus played an important role in helping the Italians find their way to freedom and independence.

> The nations that had the duel were the greatest and the strongest; and those of the knife, of the assassin's poison, were the conquered the enslaved. And why is that? Because the duel is founded on the sentiment of dignity, on courage, on strong convictions; and the secret vendetta, which takes its place, includes treason, vileness, cowardice. If for many centuries we did not have the duel, from the barbarians we had in its stead servitude, slavery, tyranny; and if now for some years we have had a great vogue for the duel they have been the first years of regeneration, of our emancipation, of our liberty.[27]

Once again the intimate tie between national pride and chivalric violence manifested its attraction, and found its countertype in the cowardly thrust of vendetta's dagger.

The dagger suffered further political setbacks during the Risorgimento as it became associated with the Carbonari sects and their various conspiracies of assassination and revolution. Indeed, the dagger featured prominently in at least some of the groups' initiation rites as exemplified by this description from 1818:

> having given my word to be ready to sacrifice everything for the good of the patria and to energetically work against the repression of tyranny, they put my hand over a naked dagger upon which I uttered the prescribed oath. After which they removed my blindfold and I found myself surrounded by a forest of daggers. Then the old man Andrea Garavini, who was directing the meeting, said to me in a loud voice. 'All of these daggers will come to your defence in every encounter if you observe the sanctity of your oath, but they will be your ruin if you break it: the penalty of the traitor is death'.[28]

In the same vein one can find a dagger crossed with a quill pen as part of the iconography of a Carbonaro 'diploma' granted to an adept from the same epoch, thus symbolizing the overlap of thought and action as twin forms of propaganda for the cause.[29]

Such images of 'Brutus' blade' of liberation naturally became increasingly discredited as popular forms of insurrection (perhaps best symbolized by the daylight murder of Pellegrino Rossi – Pius IX's moderate prime minister – whose throat was cut with a knife on the steps of the papal chancellery in 1848) gave way to more military notions of nation-building with the 'sword of Italy' being reciprocally recognized in King Vittorio Emmanuele and General Giuseppe Garibaldi. The political criminalization of the dagger was then only enhanced by Italy's long and bloody struggle against 'brigandage' in the 1860s. As illustrated in Figures 10.1 and 10.2 the dagger had become an

Figure 10.1 'Italian Brigands Surprised by Papal Troops', by E. J. H. Vernet, reproduced by permission of the Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore.

Figure 10.2 'Massaroni con li suoi compagni sono sorpresi dalla forza' ['Massaroni and His Fellow Brigands are Surprised by the Armed Forces'], by Bartolomeo Pinelli, reproduced by permission of the Museo Centrale del Risorgimento, Roma.

iconic marker of bandits and brigands for romantic artists, and those images took on an even darker hue of popular 'chaos' as the nascent Italian army fought to bring the countryside into compliance with the new political order.

These negative connotations of daggers and knives formed part of the cultural baggage of Italy's liberal leaders as they wrestled with how to square lenient treatment of the duel with heavy penalties for plebian *risse*. The basic difference, a government commission would argue in 1875 was one of deferred gratification and rational self-control. 'The *rissa* is an impetuous event, an event in which passion plays a greater role than reason; the duel in contrast is a mediated event, an event prearranged with mature counsel; it is an event regulated by customs so that it is almost elevated to the level of institution.'[30] Carrara, one of Italy's greatest legal commentators would put it another way, 'In the *rissa* there operates a concept of disdain: in the duel there operates a concept of honour, of common danger, and of reciprocal consensus.'[31] Crivellari, who studied the problem more closely than anyone else, offered a parallel argument, which at least took into account the attributes of *educazione*.

> Among people of the other [lower] class, one responds to a terrible insult with the impetuousness of anger, with a knife blow that kills the adversary; no other objective do they have than to offend the offender in life and limb. Among people civilized by education the need runs in the opposite direction; one lets anger disappear, one sends a written challenge.[32]

Reinforced by authors such as Verga, and illustrated in graphic prints (see Figure 10.3 and the current cover of this volume), the image of artisans or peasants sprawled dead in the road following the undisciplined clash of lower-class wills clearly contrasted with gentlemen duellists calmly awaiting the direction and adjudication of their peers on the field of honour (see Figure 10.4 from a 'how to do it' duelling manual).

The issue of self-control went to another common assumption about lower-class quarrels, which was that the participants were generally portrayed as drunk. Consider Crivellari's reaction to a court decision in

Figure 10.3 'Costumi trasteverini, in Roma' ['Customs of Trastevere in Rome'], by Bartolomeo Pinelli, reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Roma.

Figure 10.4 'In guardia – Avanti' ['On Guard – Begin'], photographic plate from Ernesto Salafia-Maggio, *Codice cavalleresco nazionale: sua procedura*, Palermo: Sandron, 1895; reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Roma.

Florence which threatened to loosen the rules as to what constituted a 'legal' duel:

> I cite an example: an argument breaks out between two peasants *(villani)* in a pub: the one says to the other: come outside with me, take your knife out of your pocket and to this [the knife] we will entrust our fortune. The adversary accepts; the two knives are the same; the two exit; the one is before the other; they fight; they wound each other. According to the maxim of the Florentine court, this would be nothing more and nothing less than a duel. But if those French gentlemen who over past centuries fought while scorning the severe edicts of their Kings; if those Italian gentlemen, who went down to the closed field to sustain the fatherland's honor, could take off their winding sheets, they would rise up out of the sepulchre and make heard their voice, oh! Without doubt they would find a word of reproach against a modern jurisprudence who with its judgement wants to confuse them with drunken peasants, who of chivalrous procedure know not even the name.[33]

Here the image of '*villani ubriachi*' (drunk peasants) underlines the lower classes' lack of control over their drinking habits while placing them in stark contrast to Italy's sober patriotic gentlemen, an effect enhanced by his choice of the term *villano*, with its implications of ill-breeding and boorishness, for peasant rather than the more neutral *contadino*.

By conflating issues of class, comportment and nationalism, Crivellari unconsciously leads us through the underlying logic that connected chivalry and Italy's 'civil class'. Only men who could truly control their emotions and their bodies were fit to rule the nation.

This helps explain the extraordinary weight placed by Italy's gentlemen on following proper chivalric procedures, which were explicated for them in no less than 24 duelling manuals published between 1860 and 1914.[34] Having suffered an insult in print, word or action, a gentleman had to engage a third party to issue a challenge, and, if an apology or explanation were not forthcoming, to arrange a duel. Enhancing the stature of such deliberations, all matters regarding the affair or *vertenza* had to be committed to paper and these *verbali* offered a concrete affidavit of one's expertise, judgement and gravitas in the face of life and death decisions. Once on the field of honour, one had to demonstrate the same self-control expected of a gentleman in all of his affairs. This implied courage, of course, in the face of immediate danger, but it also meant that one had internalized the rules of the game and could play accordingly. Advantage should never be pushed unfairly, strict attention should be paid to the presiding director and a touch should never be celebrated, just as a wound should never be lamented. Losing control of one's emotions or actions during the combat was infinitely worse than being wounded and could bar a man from requesting satisfaction in the future. It could also open him up to heavy legal sanctions, because failure to abide by the rules meant the lenient penalties reserved for proper duellists gave way to the full weight of the criminal code.

For instance, in 1889 the ex-deputy Giuseppe Bonajuto was fighting a sabre duel with a lawyer, Enrico Fongi, over a mutually insulting exchange of letters, when he was stabbed in the chest. The director of combat called '*Alt*' and Fongi began to obey, but Bonajuto grabbed the offending blade with his left hand and drove his own sword deep into Fongi's neck, an action that narrowly missed killing the man and put him out of commission for two months. The *padrini* of both parties were appropriately shocked by such an egregious infringement of the regulations and published a scathing denunciation of Bonajuto in the newspapers. More to the point, the *procuratore del re* indicted Bonajuto for attempted murder. Evidence was collected from all the participants, and Bonajuto's lawyer was able to substantiate that his client was hard of hearing and thus might not have heard the command to stop. The court consequently dropped the homicide charge but still convicted Bonajuto for personal assault (*lesione personale volontaria*) and sentenced him to 18 months in jail and disqualification from public office – the

latter being a punishment reserved only for crimes considered as particularly dishonourable. In stark contrast Fongi, who had followed the rules of chivalry, got off with only 16 days in jail, despite the fact that he had wounded Bonajuto first.[35] Such was the legal and social power inherent in the duelling code, the details of which were supposed to be second nature to true gentlemen.[36] Overall then, the best notice that could appear in a newspaper regarding a duel was that both men had acquitted themselves as 'perfect' gentlemen and that they had mutually affirmed and satisfied their honour.

The rigorous application of the rules of the ritual helped keep duelling a 'civilized' practice, both in terms of the literacy necessary to participate and in the damage done to the participants. Indeed, Italian duels were simply not terribly dangerous. According to the best available statistics, in the 3,918 duels reported between 1879 and 1899 only 20, or substantially less than 1 per cent, actually ended in death.[37] Likewise, of the 5,090 wounds received in these duels, only 1,475 (29 per cent) were considered 'grave' or worse. The others were judged as light (2,026) or very light (1,589). The relative harmlessness of the average encounter – always attended by a minimum of one physician – allowed Italian elites to demonstrate their courage, prove their place in the chivalric 'club', and defend their honour over even trivial offences. The 'perfect' duel then was aptly illustrated by the cover of Cesare Alberto Blengini's duelling manual of 1868 (see Figure 10.5) which shows a doctor bandaging a minor wound while the duellists are reconciled with a heartfelt handshake. Having controlled their tempers and followed the rules, true gentlemen could find in the fraternal and bonding nature of the duel a means of healing honourable disputes.

The overall importance of self-control in the chivalric equation had an important political dimension as well. As countertypes to the civil class who could vote and hold office, workers and peasants were seen as lacking the critical criteria of rationality, equanimity and judgement. Power should only be allocated to those capable of controlling their feelings, their bodies and of course their words. As pointed out in an article in 2000 by Madeleine Hurd, this was a common theme in liberal regimes. Refining Habermas's ideas on the bourgeois public sphere, Hurd examines how manners, mores and masculinity became vitally important markers in the new ethos of liberalism which stressed probity, openness and rationality as hallmarks of discussion and action. Liberal public debate was supposed to be universally inclusive, but of course it was not; and it ringed itself with defences to exclude various groups who were not seen as fit for political discourse or action. Public discussion

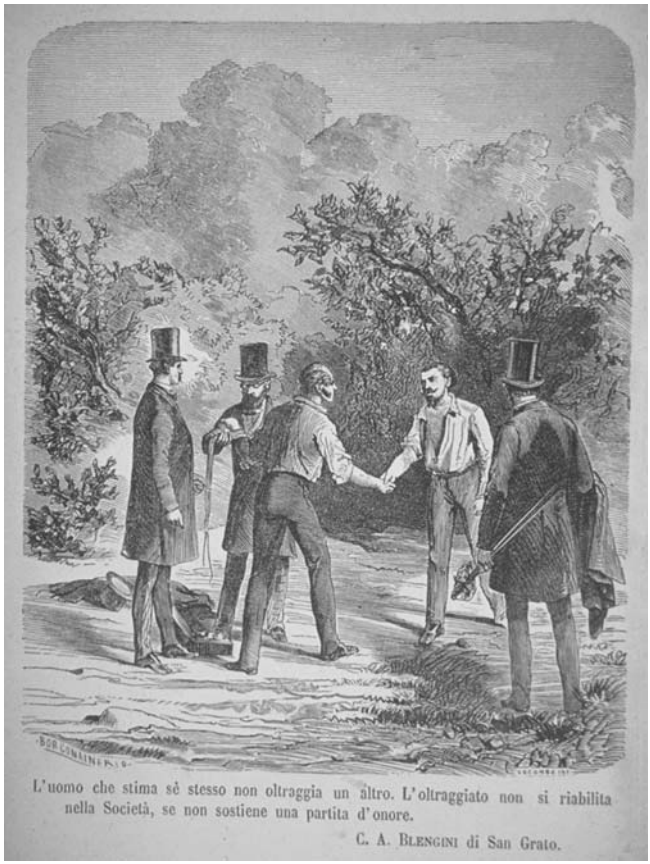

Figure 10.5 Cover, Cesare Alberto Blengini, *Duello e sue norme prinicpali per effettuarlo* ['The Duel and the Principal Rules for its Execution'], (Padova: Prosperini, 1868); reproduced by permission of the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Roma.

among 'rational' people became an essential part of sovereignty which was now invested in a 'transparent' state, the actions of which were constantly under public scrutiny. Newspapers, political associations, demonstrations and speeches all became part of the public sphere of power relations.[38] In consequence, participants in this system had to demonstrate good manners, which assured reasonable debate and discourse, while maintaining a new 'public masculinity' which stressed responsibility, respectability, sobriety and a concern for one's family. Hurd's analysis applies well to the sword and dagger binary of liberal Italy

because the duel was in fact used by elites to police behaviour within public debate either oral or written.[39] If one transcended the boundaries of propriety – especially with one's comments – a duel (or at least an affair) might ensue that would restore the balance of honour. Moreover, duelling allowed members of the civil class to display their virile courage while simultaneously demonstrating a reasoned composure that set them off from the bulk of society who settled their personal disputes in the street with impetuous rancour rather than mutual respect.

Such a dichotomy of personal violence had significant consequences for united Italy for it necessarily broadened the social and symbolic gulf between the people and the ruling elites. Contemporary commentators as diverse as the Catholic Stefano Jacini and the Marxist Antonio Gramsci pointed out (and later historians have consistently echoed them) that the liberal period was dogged by a split between 'legal Italy', represented by the official institutions of the parliament, the bureaucracy and the military, and 'real Italy', which consisted of most everybody else. Failure to bridge this gap created a resounding dissonance in Italian society that undermined allegiance to the state and even the basic precepts of liberalism, eventually leading to the rise of fascism. Indeed, perhaps no clearer line could be drawn between 'legal' and 'real' Italy than the distinction between those who could and those who could not defend their honour through the code *duello*, and the very assumptions of the ritual reinforced an elitist world view that made communications across the gap all the more difficult. Consequently one of the most striking aspects of the various duelling codes and the discussion that surrounded them, was their general disregard for forms or manifestations of honour that did not fit definitions or patterns of chivalry and heraldry. Students of Italian culture today emphasize that, because they had precious little else, Italy's lower classes set great store by the idea of honour. Yet one gets the sense that the political class had little conception of this fact, or at least chose to ignore it. With knives and daggers denigrated as both pedestrian and perfidious, it is no wonder that Italy's growing collection of elites failed to understand the mafia or omertà or high homicide rates or even peasant culture in general.[40] They were self-absorbed in their own struggle for self-validation through honour as defined by their fellow 'gentlemen' and adjudicated by the duel.

* * *

The obvious connection of the liberal regime to the dichotomy of sword and dagger was clearly demonstrated by its gradual breakdown after

fascism came to power. The change was not immediately apparent because many of the early fascists were avid duellists who found that the dash, courage, and danger of the duelling ethic harmonized well with fascism's emphasis on virility, action and violence. Coming out of the devastation and disruption of the First World War, the fascists actually promoted the duel to prove their martial merits, assert their aggressive political credentials, and keep their opponents off balance. Mussolini himself fought in at least five encounters, and in sharp contrast to the rest of Europe, Italy actually saw an overall increase in duelling in the early 1920s. Nevertheless, as fascism moved ever farther away from its revolutionary roots, it became increasingly concerned with hierarchy, conformity and obedience, and the individual notions of honour and the freedom to defend them inherent to the chivalric code would wane. As Mussolini eliminated all opposition, controlled public communication and created a civil religion based on a cult of the *Duce*, the duel lost much of its motive force, and the regime began to subtly direct its policies against the practice.[41] At heart, the monopoly of coercion demanded by the totalitarian regime was inconsistent with the private yet public combat of the duel.

Likewise, the duel embraced a notion of personal honour that ran counter to the organic, integralist theories of nationalists such as Rocco, architect of the dictatorship, who claimed excessive individualism to be the 'congenitive Italian illness' that had held the country back under atomistic liberalism.[42] The uniforms, the marching children, the gymnastics exhibitions, all denoted a mass movement in which the individual was swept away to higher spiritual purposes. At the same time, the regime had to make itself popular, in both senses of the word, and attempted to create a mass culture that would unite the peninsula and the islands, all the while celebrating the rural roots and peasant traditions of the 'true' Italy. Mussolini, in particular, was portrayed as a 'man of the people' who could – threshing wheat or riding tractors – hark back to his rustic beginnings, all the while leading Italy forward.[43]

One aspect of this populism manifested itself in the portrayal of the dagger as an icon of power projected by the fascist party. Admittedly, this takes an interpretive leap of faith, but for someone sensitized to the long-standing denigration of the 'perfidious dagger' to the advantage of the 'loyal sword' by elite proponents of the duel, the images of blackshirts (Figure 10.6) constantly saluting the *Duce* with rows of drawn daggers virtually crackle with meaning. As with so many 'fascist' innovations the original emphasis on the dagger rather than the sword came from the *arditi*, who had prided themselves on attacking the enemy at

Figure 10.6 'Mussolini scende dal palco dopo la celebrazione del ventennalle' ['Mussolini Descending from the Stage at the Twentieth Celebration of the Fascist Revolution'], reproduced by permission of the Centro Studi e Archivio della Comunicazione, Università degli Studi di Parma.

close quarters (Figure 10.7). After the war, it became part of a consciously anti-elitist ideal that was described by Giovanni Comisso, an *ardito* and a legionnaire in Fiume, in a conversation he had with Guido Keller, Gabrielle D'Annunzio's quartermaster in 1920:

> We spoke of making a revolution that would begin to change the structure of the army by abolishing the ranks above captain, by recreating the old Italian tradition of companies of adventure, by taking the *ardito* as the typical example of the true Italian soldier, and by modifying the uniform, abolishing the closed collar and the *useless sword*.[44]

From these roots, the fascists embraced the image of the dagger along with the blackshirt and deathshead symbol of the *arditi*, and it became part of the standard uniform of Mussolini's honour guard as it evolved in the 1920s (Figure 10.8). Although military in its origins, the iconic

Figure 10.7 'Arditi in Guerra' ['The Arditi in War']. Postcard from www.arpnet.it/arditi/pics/prop01, accessed 14 December 2006.

dagger could only appeal to the popular traditions of Italy's lower classes, many of whom still embraced the knife culture of their predecessors.

By taking the dagger rather than the sword as fascism's iconic weapon of honour, the party reached out not only to the trenches of the First World War but also to the honour rituals of the popular classes, which the liberal regime had so often ignored or disparaged. Yet the fascist dagger-*cum*-bayonet was in fact uniform; it was controlled, disciplined, and it became part of the mass display designed to subordinate individual honour to that of the collective (as in Figure 10.9). Popular, potent and obvious, it symbolized a bellicose tie between the *Duce* (who, one remembers, was twice dismissed from school for stabbing fellow

Figure 10.8 Contemporary postcard 'Moschettieri del duce' ['Musketeers (personal honour guards) of the Duce'], believed to be by Vittorio Pisani. Author's own collection.

students with knives) and the *popolo*. It thus offered an environment in which the elite traditions of the sword and the ritual of the duel no longer held the upper hand. By the time the Second World War shook Italy to its core and betrayed the dangers of Mussolini's virile rhetoric and military daring, the duel had virtually disappeared from Italy's civil society.

Figure 10.9 Contemporary postcard, 'Befana fascista anno 1941' ['Fascist Epiphany, 1941'] artist unknown. Author's own collection.

Notes

1. For an extended treatment of this 'sad primacy' see J. A. Davis, *Conflict and Control. Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 314–42.
2. Quoted in G. Crivellari *Il duello nella dottrina e nella giurisprudenza: studio sui progetti del nuovo codice penale* (Turin: Unione Tipografico, 1884), p. 119. This volume contains a number of parliamentary documents and relevant commentary.
3. D. Fozzi and M. Da Passano, 'Uno "Scabroso Argomento": Il *duello* nella codificazione penale Italiana', *Acta Historiae IX: Onore, Identità e ambiguità di un codice formale* (Capodistria: Società storica del Litorale, 2000), p. 291.
4. J. Nicoletti, *Del duello civile e militare ed argomenti atti a distruggerlo* (Florence: Tipo Nazionale, 1864), p. 26.
5. S. C. Hughes, 'Men of Steel: Honor and Politics in Liberal Italy', in P. Spierenburg ed., *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1997), p. 79.
6. D. Boschi, 'Homicide and Knife Fighting in Rome', in P. Spierenburg ed., *Men and Violence*, p. 129.
7. This of course was not restricted to Italy. For instance see P. Spierenburg, 'Knife Fighting and Popular Codes of Honor in Early Modern Amsterdam', in P. Spierenburg ed., *Men and Violence*, pp. 103–27; T. Gallant, 'Honor, Masculinity, and Ritual Knife Fighting in Nineteenth-Century Greece', *American Historical Review*, CV (2000), 359–82.

8. G. Baronti, *Coltelli d'Italia: rituali di violenza e tradizioni produttive nel mondo popolare, storia e catalogazione* (Padova: Muzzio, 1986), pp. 9–10.
9. Pareto to Pantaleone, Céligny, 29 November 1901. Fondo Vilfredo Pareto, Banca Popolare di Sondrio, Sondrio. Thanks to Sign. Pier Carlo Della Ferrara for providing this reference.
10. Even in 1911, which was after Italy's first industrial boom, 56 per cent of the population was still engaged in agriculture: M. Meriggi, 'The Italian Borghesia', in A. Mitchell and J. Kocka eds, *Bourgeois Society in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).
11. G. Bolis, *La polizia e le classi pericolose della società* (Bologna: Zanichellli, 1871), pp. 394–6.
12. I. Botteri, *Galateo e Galatei* (Rome: Bulzoni, 1999), pp. 330, 359–62.
13. The incident is recorded in I. Gelli, *Duelli celebri* (Milan: Hoepli, 1928), pp. 98–101.
14. A. Angelini, *Codice cavalleresco italiano* (Florence: Barbera, 1883), p. 4.
15. *Sul duello: discorso del deputato Venturi pronunziato alla camera dei deputati nella seduta del 16 aprile 1898* (Rome: Tipografia della Camera, 1898), pp. 4, 7.
16. L. A. Vassallo, *Gli uomini che ho conosciuto* (Milan: Fratelli Treves, 1926), p. 73.
17. T. Gambarella, *Padrini e testimoni del duello* (Naples: Pierro e Veraldi, 1898), p. 8.
18. For example, P. Fambri, *La giurisprudenza del duello* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1869), p. 90; L. De Rosis, *Codice Italiano sul duello* (Naples: De Angelis, 1865), p. 85.
19. *Duello e sue norme prinicpali per effettuarlo* (Padua: Prosperini, 1868), p. 12.
20. The important exception was Piedmont which was also the only Italian state to maintain its own army based on a military service nobility.
21. Letter LVII, quoted in M. Fougeroux de Campigneulles, *Histoire des duels anciens et modernes* (Paris: Tessier & Cherbuliez, 1835), pp. 289–90.
22. G. Baretti, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of Italy* (London: Davies, 1768), II, p. 124.
23. S. C. Hughes, 'Deadly Play. Napoleon, Dueling and the Rearmament of Honor in Italy', *Rivista Napoleonica*, II (2001), 27–58.
24. G. Jannone, *Il duello Pepe-Lamartine su documenti inediti* (Terni: Visconti and Co., 1912), pp. 11–14.
25. G. Pepe, *Epistolario* (Naples: Società Napoletana, 1980), I, p. 400.
26. M. D'Azeglio, *Ettore Fieramosca o la disfida di Barletta* (Turin: Fontana, 1842), pp. 19–20.
27. Session of 16 April 1875, Quoted in Crivellari, *Il duello nella dottrina*, p. 144.
28. P. Uccellini, *Memorie di un vecchio carbonaro ravegnano*, ed. Tommaso Casini (Rome: Alighieri Society, 1898). Cited in www.esoteria.org/documenti/miscellanea/scismainternomassoneriacarboneria.htm.
29. Immagini di storia, Museo Civico del Risorgimento di Bologna, www.immaginidistoria.it/immagine1.php?id_img=111&id=9&id_epo=4.
30. Penal code commision, 26 April 1875, in Crivellari, *Il duello nella dottrina*, p. 162.
31. 'Rissa e *duello* – opuscolo' quoted in Crivellari, *Il duello nella dottrina*, p. 49.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid., p. 257.
34. A list can be found in S. C. Hughes, 'Una storia di due codici', in Alda Spotti ed., *A fil di spada: Il duello dalle origini … agli ori olimpici* (Rome: Colombo, 2005), pp. 54–6.

35. The case can be found in *Rivista penale*, L (1899), 122–3.
36. For an outstanding example of legal intervention in the face of 'ungentlemanly behavior' on the field of honor see the 1887 case of Augusto Barbieri and Giuseppe as detaile in *Cavalleria e tribunale: documenti di un processo* (Bologna, 1889), a copy of which can be found in the Biblioteca Nazionale di Roma, fondo Levi.
37. I. Gelli, 'Il *duello* nell'ultimo ventennio', *Nuova antologia,* January (1901), 11.
38. M. Hurd, 'Class, Masculinity, Manners, and Mores: Public Space and Public Sphere in Nineteenth-Century Europe', *Social Science History*, XXIV (2000), 76–7.
39. The vast majority of duels were fought over journalistic and political insults. See Hughes, 'Men of Steel', p. 77.
40. All of this contributed to the overarching stereotype of the 'other' that has recently been the subject of historical scrutiny by Nelson Moe, Jane Schneider and John Dickie as they have examined the stereotypes of the liberal regime towards Italy's southern provinces.
41. For example, *Lavori preparatori del codice penale e del codice di procedura penale* (Rome: Tipo. delle Mantellate, 1929), V, part 1, p. 185.
42. Quoted in R. Ben Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922–1945*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), p. 18.
43. B. Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 90–1.
44. G. Comisso, *Le mie stagioni*, (Treviso: Edizioni di Treviso, 1951), p. 59. The italics are mine.

11

Race, Class and Maritime Authority in Late Victorian England: The Surprising Cases of Charles Arthur (1888) and Bagwahn Jassiwara (1891)

Martin J. Wiener

How have the boundaries between acceptable use of 'force' and unacceptable 'violence' shifted over time? There is a social institution devoted to clarifying and publicizing these boundaries – the criminal trial. One route, therefore, to a better understanding of the process of boundary shift is to closely examine such trials, particularly when something about them initially 'surprises' the historian. This chapter seeks to do just this, in regard to nineteenth-century British notions of maritime authority.

On 3 August 1888, the opening day of the Liverpool Summer Assizes, a man stood in the dock charged with murder. He was a black crewman, Charles Arthur, a native of Barbados. While the sailing ship *Dovenby Hall* was returning to Liverpool from India via San Francisco, Arthur, a steward, disembowelled his captain with a carving knife. Before dying, Captain Baillie swore that he had never struck Arthur, and being seized and put in irons Arthur admitted that he had had no immediate provocation – only, as his counsel was to describe, 'a long period of bullying and extreme verbal provocation' – and that it had been 'a cold-blooded murder'.[1] Although at the trial Arthur retracted this admission and claimed that he had acted in immediate hot blood, his self-command cracking under fresh insults, he could offer no supporting evidence for this new claim. Most of the witnesses were officers, who described the gruesome scene, and confirmed Arthur's confession upon seizure.

They did agree that Captain Baillie was known to be a bully, and that he had taken a particular aversion to Arthur, despite (or perhaps because) of the man being 'a favourite of the crew'. However, not only had captains traditionally been allowed wide scope to maintain authority at sea, but blacks were almost always at the bottom of the maritime social hierarchy, usually serving as cooks or stewards or as 'common' (as opposed to 'able-bodied', that is, skilled) seamen. There were some who made it up to able-bodied seamen, and an occasional example of a black man becoming a mate (an officer), but generally it was pretty clear that a black man's 'place' was near the bottom of maritime, and port, society. The jury convicted on the full charge, as it could hardly help doing – before withdrawing, its members were informed by the judge, the eminent Victorian jurist James Fitzjames Stephen, that 'mere ill-usage is no provocation (that could reduce a charge of murder to manslaughter)'. The 'only thing which had this effect', Stephen had continued, 'was a serious actual assault or possibly such threatening gestures as if a man was to make such an assault'.[2]

It is fair to say that in previous generations such a defendant's path to the gallows would have been smooth. In this case, however, there was a great deal of sympathy for Arthur – the *Liverpool Evening Express* had headed its account of the trial 'A *Tragedy* on the High Seas'. The jury added a strong recommendation to mercy – that is, a commutation of the death sentence that was then the only punishment for murder – on account of provocation. And after the trial concluded additional seamen, a sailors' missionary, and even the captain's former employers came forward with accounts of the captain's history of abusing men under his command, particularly those of colour, turning even Stephen – a man not easily swayed by others' views – to sympathize with the Barbadian. When asked by the Home Office to comment on the jury recommendation, Stephen replied that although insufficient evidence had been offered in court to justify it, he had since seen new evidence which 'suggests a course of tyrannous conduct [by the victim] which would be sufficient' for reprieve, and indeed, for a lighter sentence than usual in reprieves. Stephen proposed a sentence of 15 to 20 years, rather than the normal sentence of life imprisonment given to murder convicts reprieved from execution. The Home Office made further inquiries, and concluded that the captain indeed was well known as an inveterate bully. Arthur was reprieved, although only to life imprisonment. However, his many friends – constituting most of the ship's crew as well as his previous captain – continued to petition for his early release (a petition organized by a Liverpool seamen's missionary gained over

1,300 signatures, many of them of seamen) and he was set free after 11 years. He had no trouble immediately finding employment as a ship's rigger. In effect Arthur was punished as if the jury had found him guilty only of manslaughter. This well-publicized case delivered a lesson to captains: they mistreated even a lowly black steward at their peril. And a question was raised for later historians about the supposed 'hegemony' of racism at sea, or in Liverpool.

Three years later, on 16 March 1891, another coloured sailor was in the Liverpool dock for murder. On the merchant ship *Buckingham*'s voyage from Australia, Baghwan Jassiwara, a Hindu seaman, repeatedly quarrelled with his captain, who once had him locked up. One day he was seen sharpening his knife, remarking to another sailor that if the captain struck him again he would kill him. The following day the captain was seen to strike him twice on the face, and shortly afterwards the captain's body was found in the storeroom into which he had gone alone with Jassiwara, stabbed in the head in several places. Although several seamen testified for the prosecution that the captain was 'a kind man', the accused's counsel was able to obtain a witness who had sailed with the captain, and who agreed with the suggestion that he was 'a man of brutal character', indeed one 'likely to bring upon himself that which had happened'.[3] The defence counsel in his closing 'called attention', the *Liverpool Courier* reported,

> to the fact that the captain was alone with the prisoner in the storeroom, and he might have done a thousand things to him there during the few minutes they were alone. To strike a man in the face was as great an insult as they could offer to a man, and if the contemptuous slap and kick would raise their [the jury's] blood, what effect would it have upon the warm-blooded races of the South? The blood of the European was but as ice to the hot blood of the Hindoo or negroes generally.

Justice Day informed the jury that such provocation as had been shown would not be sufficient to reduce the crime to manslaughter, and the jury dutifully complied, returning a murder verdict. But it appended to the verdict another strong recommendation to mercy on the grounds of 'great provocation'. The secretary of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, writing in support of a commutation, pointed out that the captain had first broken the law by personally and repeatedly striking Jassiwara, treating him 'like a dog'.[4] The jury's recommendation was followed by the Home Office. Jassiwara's death sentence was commuted

to life imprisonment. Again, a captain's 'tyrannical' repute saved his killer from the gallows.

Do these two murder cases signify anything of general import? I would suggest they do. For one thing, they point to an ongoing process in later Victorian Britain that was redrawing the lines of maritime authority, the border between legitimate 'force' and illegitimate 'violence', and restricting captains and officers in their use of force to maintain proper 'discipline'. For another, they highlight the increasingly 'multi-cultural' character of maritime Britain, a growing sub-world of British subjects that itself was rapidly expanding in the nineteenth century. This sub-world was not only becoming more multi-cultural in numerical terms, as residents of different parts of the Empire were recruited in ever great numbers to fill the ranks of 'British' seamen, but also conceptually, as the authorities were learning to adapt to the position of a global power by learning how to deal with – and make allowances for – a population drawn from widely varying cultural backgrounds.[5]

* * *

Soon after mid-century, resistance to harsh discipline in the Royal Navy was producing outbreaks of unrest. These led to official inquiries and during the 1860s important reforms in naval discipline. During Gladstone's government in 1871 the Admiralty went further and issued an instruction suspending *all* corporal punishment in peacetime; the last authenticated flogging on board a naval ship took place in 1880.[6] Thereafter, the issue of excessive violence by authorities on naval vessels faded; but such instances on merchant ships, with their more racially and nationally heterogeneous crews, now stood out all the more.

The first important legislation in this area, the Mercantile Marine Act of 1850, which came to be called the 'Seaman's Charter', had been primarily concerned with raising the standard of British seamen and seamanship, in response to fears that British leadership was endangered. A second aim, however, was to protect seamen from being exploited by the ship owners or tyrannized by their officers. It established local marine boards in all main ports and a shipping master appointed by each to take administrative responsibility for examinations for certificates of competency administered to all masters and mates of foreign-going ships. Such masters could withdraw the certificates if officers proved incompetent or unfit. As these boards established a pattern of operation, 'unfitness' was found to arise not only from lack of capable seamanship but also from unacceptable treatment of the crew. The new

shipping masters were empowered to interfere with employment contracts and to inquire into disputes arising out of voyages, which meant that for the first time there now existed paid officials with the responsibility to see that the laws were followed at sea, as the new police recently created were doing on shore.[7]

Such intervention was a response to the rapid expansion of British overseas trade and power during the nineteenth century, which was making the world's oceans an increasingly significant part of 'Greater Britain'. Indeed, without the ships that plied these oceans under the British flag, merchant as well as naval, there would have been no Empire. Between 1840 and 1900, the British merchant fleet increased from 2.7 to 9.3 million tons (rising, despite emerging competition, from an already leading 30 per cent to a dominating 36 per cent of the world total).[8] This meant not only ever-larger ships, but a further substantial increase in the number of seamen. What happened on these ships was of increasing concern to British authorities and the British public. Just as violence in Britain was being subjected to increasing legal scrutiny,[9] so such scrutiny was beginning to extend beyond its shores. Moreover, as democratic trends within Britain were diminishing the acceptability of violence perpetrated by those in authority, so too excessive or unjustified violence by ships' masters and officers on the high seas was increasingly likely to be proceeded against.

In the course of the century the character of the seafaring population was changing; the increasing demand for seamen for British merchant ships was coming to be met more and more from outside Britain. With slave emancipation, the number of black crewmen rose; they were joined by growing numbers of South Asians, commonly called 'Lascars'.[10] In 1891, when the first systematic statistics were collected, non-Britons (the great majority of them men of colour, who could be paid much lower wages) accounted for more than 22 per cent of seamen employed on UK vessels, disproportionately in the lower ranks.[11] As Tony Lane has noted, 'Indians, Africans and Chinese were all thought of as suitable servants while in sailing ships West Indians had so much made a speciality of these tasks that black cooks, in particular, were almost the norm.'[12] Moreover, coloured peoples were seen as more amenable to discipline than Europeans; the general image particular of Lascars being that of contentment with their lot, or at least a docile acceptance. One captain wrote in 1903 that 'a much more efficient state of discipline prevails on lascar-manned steamers than can ever be hoped for on similar vessels manned by ordinary types of European crews'.[13] Shipowners saw them as the salvation of the British merchant fleet,

whose labour needs could no longer be satisfied by ever-more-demanding British manpower.

By the late nineteenth century, 'maritime Britain' formed an ever-more multi-racial society, paralleling in some ways the greatly expanded land empire of Britain. It was a society of racial hierarchy, in which the officers were white and the ranks were of varied races, with the non-whites clustering in the lowest ranks. Yet, although one would expect sharp racial tensions on board, with white seamen fearing displacement by cheaper and more 'manageable' coloured workers, there was also, as these murder cases suggest, a strong element of community in the crew, more so than in the empire itself, an element that might readily override racial differences. In a way, the merchant fleet constituted an intermediate realm, unlike either Britain or its imperial possessions, but partaking of aspects of each. In the course of the century the writ of English law was fully established to run through these ships, wherever on the globe they might be; consequently, the 'rights of Englishmen,' whatever they might be, were more easily extended to subjects of colour here than elsewhere beyond the shores of Britain.

* * *

A number of murder trials in the 1880s firmly put merchant captains on warning to rein in their resort to force, whether against British or foreign crewmen, including coloured men. The death of a black cook aboard the *Cutty Sark*, bound from London to the Dutch East Indies, led to such a trial at the Old Bailey in 1882. John Francis, who had signed on as an able seaman, had been found to have exaggerated his skills and was relegated to cooking; he apparently did not take that demotion well.[14] He quarrelled with the first mate, John Anderson, and threats from the mate led to counter-threats from Francis. Finally, one night, while Francis was acting as look-out as the ship rounded the Cape of Good Hope, a fight broke out between Anderson and him. Francis was carried below deck with a wound on his head 4 inches long, deep blood flowing. The captain dressed his wound, but to avail. The following morning the chief mate said to the steward, 'I have done for that son of a bitch. He will never lift no capstan bar to me again'. Francis died that night and was buried at sea. The captain, Anderson later claimed, declared that 'it served him damned well right'. Along with Francis's body, the captain dropped the capstan bar he was struck with overboard. When they reached the East Indies, the captain arranged for Anderson to leave the ship. Adding to the grimness of the story, two days after Anderson's

departure the captain fell into a depression and committed suicide by jumping overboard. The second mate got the ship to Singapore, where he went before the magistrates to have statements taken about the killing of Francis.

Eventually all the sailors got back to England, and Anderson was taken into custody. Unfortunately for Anderson, there were quite a few witnesses to the quarrel; when at his trial he claimed 'that nigger' had threatened him with a knife at one moment and a capstan bar at another, only one other seaman supported these claims, while numerous others explicitly denied them. The second mate testified that he was forced by the captain to sign an untrue statement in the log, that there were high seas and the ship was rolling. Anderson was at least able to produce a series of character witnesses, who seemed to impress his judge, Fitzjames Stephen. Stephen accepted that 'he was a man of good character generally speaking and of humane disposition' and that 'the deceased had certainly acted in a manner which was calculated to make the prisoner very angry'. However, he directed a verdict of manslaughter, observing that 'it must be clearly understood that the taking of human life by brutal violence, whether on sea or on land, whether the life be that of a black or a white man, was a dreadful crime, and deserving of exemplary punishment'. He sentenced Anderson to seven years' penal servitude.[15]

For two days in June, 1887, Captain James Cocks of the *Lady Douglas* and three of his crew stood charged, also before Justice Stephen at the Old Bailey, with the deliberate shipboard killing of a Malay prisoner, being shipped from Western Australia back to Britain after a mutiny.[16] As with other South Asians like Jassiwara, all referred to collectively as Lascars, Malays were being employed in ever-larger numbers in the expanding merchant marine, especially with the coming of steam-powered liners in the 1870s, which demanded a larger number of less-skilled and thus lower-paid crewmen. The most despised group of aliens in British ports, they were described as 'naturally indolent' and 'entirely destitute of moral capacity', with 'habits which are so repugnant to all Englishmen's ideas of comfort'.[17] During the voyage in 1886, this Malay, named Hassim, escaped custody, got hold of a knife, and had run 'amok', something Malays were thought to be prone to do. No one was seriously harmed, but he then retreated to a difficult-to-reach spot within the ship near the stores of coal for cooking, from which he threatened to come out at night and attack his fellow seamen. After days of failed efforts to dislodge him, the frightened crew (who were also facing a consequent lack of coal for cooking) urged the captain to kill him if necessary.

The captain then organized a dislodgment party, one of whom shot the Malay. Dragged up on deck, the man, in great pain, appeared to be fatally injured. The captain gave his pistol to a mate who 'put him out of his misery' with a shot to the head. After returning to England, he and the men who had shot Hassim were arrested.

The defence took its stand on the traditionally accepted broad discretion allowed a captain to maintain discipline and protect the safety of his crew and ship. Upon that discretion had rested centuries of maritime harshness, for it had long been agreed that shipboard life, isolated and always potentially in danger from without and within, could not be treated the same as more secure life at home. In Victorian Britain, however, this understanding was under challenge both from the authorities and the general public. Democratic sentiments, increasing newspaper coverage and circulation, sensitivities to violence and also judicial claims of authority were all advancing; together, they were shrinking the sphere of a captain's discretion. The story produced revulsion both among popular newspaper-readers and elite judges and bureaucrats. 'Civilization' itself, the fundamental moral justification for Britain's unprecedented world power, seemed under threat. As Justice Stephen declared

> If they once broke through the principle that the law laid down – that except in certain excepted cases people were not to be put to death deliberately – how easy it would be to slide into the abominable doctrine that as soon as a man became a nuisance to his neighbours they were to put him to death, not that it was necessary to do so but because it was highly convenient.[18]

Stephen's remarks echoed those of Baron Huddleston in the famous Dudley and Stephens trial in the same court just three years before, in rejecting the claims of 'the law of the sea' and convicting two shipwrecked sailors who ate their cabin boy; if *they* could be found criminally liable for killing, as they saw it, for their survival, the case of Cocks and his men was all the weaker. To justify the actions of Cocks and his men on the ground of self-defence, Stephen argued, 'it must be shown that they were in instant and immediate danger of death or some desperate injury'. Instead, what they did were the actions of 'timid men' in 'cowardly terrors' (a judgement repeated within the Home Office).[19]

Casting aside any pretence to neutrality, Stephen used his summation to urge the hesitant jurymen to return such a verdict, while signalling to them that it would be safe to do so, for he would see to it that no one would actually hang. The jury was out for an hour (a long time in the

nineteenth century). Pressed by the judge, they finally returned not a manslaughter verdict but a highly unusual conviction on the full charge of murder. Cocks and his men were, as Stephen had virtually promised, readily reprieved; for his men a sentence of a mere 18 months' hard labour (for the officer) and 1 year's (for the seaman) was substituted; for Cocks, 5 years' penal servitude. For Cocks it was much less punishment than the usual murder convict was dealt, but for the Government it was a landmark murder verdict that delivered a public lesson – as the prosecutor had told the jury, their verdict 'would tell captains and crews how to behave in future' – that there was no longer a 'law of the sea' distinct from the English common law, which applied in full on British ships anywhere in the world.

Race, and indeed culture, did enter into the discourse of the case: the Malay, a Muslim, was regarded by all on the ship, Cocks claimed in his petition for mercy

> as a dangerous madman armed with a deadly weapon, possessed with the idea that the death of a Christian at his hand would ensure his entrance into paradise and consequently quite indifferent to his own life as long as he could take that of another.

This claim however was ignored by the authorities. In addition, Malays' supposed inherent tendency to unpredictable violence – running 'amok' (the English word is borrowed from Malay) – was made much of during the trial by the defence, which read out from news clippings describing such occurrences. Yet it also cut no ice: Stephen dismissed the clippings as irrelevant, and later Thomas Gray, the head of the Merchant Marine sub-department of the Board of Trade, consulted by the Home Office in deciding the terms of the reprieve, observed that rather than being more dangerous:

> as a rule coloured men are more amenable to discipline than whites – and severe but reasonable punishment in this case would I think tend in the direction of making officers more instead of less careful in prescribing discipline, and would not weaken their hands at all, while it would certainly be a salutary warning not to abuse their authority.

Cocks' resort to lethal violence, like Anderson's, was branded 'cowardly' and 'unmanly'. Given the easy assumptions of a 'hegemonic' nineteenth-century racism, it is notable that the victim's inferior racial and colonial status did nothing for his killers' defence, except perhaps to weaken it.[20]

Thus, by the time of Arthur's and Jassiwara's crimes and trials in 1888 and 1891, a major shift in judicial (and behind the judges, I would suggest, public) tolerance of extreme force as a means of social discipline on the high seas was well under way. An increasingly multi-cultural British maritime world was coming to be governed in a more restrained, law-supervised way, a way also more sensitive to cultural differences among its members. As the secretary of the British and Foreign Sailors' Society, when writing in support of a commutation for Jassiwara, further observed, not only did 'some captains' not understand the proper limits of their just powers, but such men also 'do not know the art of governing, and treat hot-blooded Southerners and Easterners, who use the knife, as they might take the liberty of treating with comparative safety and impunity the more cold-blooded Northerners.'[21] This, it was clear, they could no longer do.

Notes

1. Quotations on this case are from The National Archives. [Hereafter TNA] TNA/HO/144/216/A59165.
2. Indeed, he went on, resentment of previous ill-treatment could actually strengthen the case for a murder conviction: 'If the captain was a provoking and ill-conditioned person and had treated the prisoner improperly and violently on former occasions this on its own was not provocation, but inasmuch as such treatment was calculated to produce resentment it was considered in law to give evidence of ill-will or malice on the part of the prisoner against the prosecutor. The law upon that point was very strict and clear': *Liverpool Evening Express*, 3 August 1888.
3. *Liverpool Courier*, 17 March 1891.
4. TNA/HO144/239/A52652.
5. That is the 'cultural defence', not in law, but in consideration of the seriousness of offence, already existed.
6. P. Kemp, *The British Sailor: A Social History of the Lower Deck* (London: Dent, 1970), p. 205. Significantly, it was at almost the same time (1881) that flogging in the army was also abolished: E. M. Spiers, *The Late Victorian Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 74.
7. A. Marsh and V. Ryan, *The Seamen – A History of the National Union of Seamen* (Oxford: Malthouse, 1989).
8. H. J. Dyos and D. H. Aldcroft, *British Transport: An Economic Survey from the Seventeenth Century to the Twentieth* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 248.
9. See M. J. Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
10. On West Indian seamen, see A. Cobley, 'Black West Indian Seamen in the British Merchant Marine in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', *History Workshop Journal*, LVIII (2004), 259–74.
11. G. Balachandran, 'Recruitment and Control of Indian Seamen: Calcutta, 1880–1935', *International Journal of Maritime History*, IX (1997), 1–18: 'Indian

seamen were the lowest paid in the industry; in 1914, for example, they received between 1/4 and 1/3 of the rate paid to British crews, a disparity that widened in succeeding years'.

12. T. Lane, 'The Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire: The Case of the Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925', in D. Frost ed., *Ethnic Labour and British Imperial Trade: A History of Ethnic Seafarers in the UK* (London: Frank Cass, 1995), p. 109.
13. W. H. Hood, *The Blight of Insubordination: The Lascar Question and the Rights and Wrongs of British Shipmasters* (London: Spottiswoode, 1903), p. 49. However, this image co-existed, at least earlier, with a less comfortable one of thoughtless beings susceptible to being roused by agitators to revolt. In 1883, 2 crews of 120 Indian seamen were reported to be in revolt as a result of British suppression of a rebellion in Egypt. A London newspaper claimed that 'fanatical Moslems have been on a mission to the docks, proclaiming as unholy the English crusade against the faithful in Egypt, and forbidding Lascars, under penalty of future torture, to take any part in the expedition': S. Lahiri, 'Patterns of Resistance: Indian Seamen in Imperial Britain', in A. J. Kershen ed., *Language, Labour and Migration* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), p. 174. An undercurrent of anxiety may have accompanied the satisfaction in the normal docility of Lascars (which may help explain Captain Cocks' behaviour, discussed later in the text).
14. At the inquest, the sailmaker testified that 'Francis acted that night only as look out because he was incapable of anything else – he had been a cook and steward on a Yankee ship and signed onto this one without the proper skills of an Able-bodied seaman'.
15. *R. v. Anderson: The Times*, 4 August 1882, p. 4; his inquest is recorded in TNA/CRIM 1/16/1.
16. Quotations on this case are from TNA/HO144/199/A47104B, and *The Times*, 30 June 1887.
17. R. Visram, *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes: Indians in Britain, 1700–1947* (London: Pluto, 1986).
18. Stephen went on that 'It had been said that it was an important case, as it would tell captains and crews how to behave in future. It *was* an important case, and the jury must be careful that their verdict did not encourage timid men in circumstances of difficulty to get out of that difficulty by taking life'.
19. The Permanent Under-Secretary remarked that 'the conduct of these men seems to have been guilty of the most cowardly character and quite unnecessary'.
20. TNA/HO/144/199/A47104B and *The Times*, 30 May 1887.
21. TNA/HO144/239/A52652. That what can be called either 'multi-cultural tolerance' or 'reverse racism' – this making allowances for the 'hot blood' of the 'darker races' – was widespread in the late Victorian courts is very strongly suggested by the fact that *none* of the 26 Africans and Asians tried for homicide in England between 1867 and 1892 was executed: Carolyn Conley, unpublished manuscript.

12

From 'Duels in the Clouds' to 'Exterminating Attacks': Legitimizing Aerial Warfare in Britain and Germany, 1914–45

Bernhard Rieger

Aerial warfare changed fundamentally between 1914 and 1945. Initially a reconnaissance tool that gave rise to much publicized direct encounters between enemy pilots, the military aeroplane had developed into a strategic weapon designed to inflict civilian mass casualties in a depersonalized manner by 1945.[1] This new form of warfare has raised serious questions of military ethics in the first half of the twentieth century. In recent debate, air raids overtly targeting civilians have been judged to contravene international law and been morally condemned for exposing non-combatants to dangers for life and limb.[2] Such charges are by no means new but have accompanied aerial warfare since it came into existence. Underscoring the legitimacy of aerial campaigns presented a problem to belligerents most notably during the Second World War when death tolls reached unprecedented levels. In Europe, Britain and Germany were most affected by air war as the Luftwaffe killed about 43,000 British civilians while the allied air forces took the lives of between 420,000 and 570,000 German city dwellers.[3] This chapter compares public justifications for air war in Britain and Germany in order to understand how two countries with contrasting political trajectories accommodated depersonalized military violence in their public cultures in the 'Age of Extremes' (Hobsbawm). Since the need for public legitimizations became most acute during military conflicts, both world wars provide the focal points.

Public justifications can be traced in the air war propaganda that disseminated public knowledge about this new way of war that many

contemporaries faced with dread. Propaganda stories about the air war were integral elements of the wider war effort, a trait that manifested itself in a flood of writings among both belligerents. After all, propaganda not only justified and explained aerial campaigns; it also aimed to uphold the very morale that air raids were designed to disrupt. The newspaper reports, public speeches and accounts penned by and about pilots that provide the sources for this chapter had to pass the – very different – censorship regimes in both countries. Given the control that state authorities exerted over propaganda initiatives, it would be unrealistic to expect 'faithful' accounts of specific event or revelations of individual flyer's private motivations from the texts under study. The texts analysed here were intended for public consumption and served political purposes. What they do reveal is stark differences between the stories and pieces of information that governments and military leaderships promoted or, at least, tolerated as public knowledge of military violence, contrasts rooted in both countries' dominant public cultures and ideologies.

* * *

Notwithstanding its initially marginal impact on the overall outcome, aerial warfare arrested contemporaries' imagination from 1914 on as 'aces' piloting fast, single-seater fighter planes armed with machine guns became national heroes. Unlike ground troops locked in mechanized and impersonal 'mass slaughter', the 'aces' of the Great War owed their prominence to the fact that propaganda cast them as autonomous fighters who determined their own rules of engagement. While, in Germany, public pronouncements sometimes credited pilots with observing a code of chivalry, German propaganda often openly defied a knightly ethos. In biographical and autobiographical writings, Germany's foremost aces neither showed mercy to defeated opponents nor suffered pricks of conscience after combat. On the contrary, a hagiography of Oswald Boelcke – Germany's first celebrated ace – claimed that its subject positively enjoyed the havoc he wreaked as he described exploding enemy aircraft as an aesthetic delight: 'Seeing the enemy apparatus break up just in front of me, bursting into flames and then falling down like a torch was a beautiful spectacle.'[4] Some flyers issued martial pledges that 'tomorrow it must rain English pilots' blood' while others proudly referred to themselves as 'the modern riders of the apocalypse'.[5] Glorifications were not restricted to aerial combat among pilots but extended to campaigns against civilian targets including residential

neighbourhoods in Paris and London where 'it rain[ed] glass upon the people who hurr[ied] around in wild confusion, trying to salvage belongings where nothing can be saved any more'.[6]

These eulogies of military violence, including attacks against defenceless civilians, did not jeopardize air crews' status as heroes because German propaganda cast their acts in a thoroughly favourable light. German air aces of the First World War embraced a model of military heroism that affirmed rather than problematized the use of military violence. In recounting their violent exploits, aces and outside observers often described these acts as analogous to hunting, an activity that carried significant social prestige. Hunting metaphors highlighted instinctual aspects of the war in the air, dehumanized enemies and transformed them into 'prey' to be gunned down. The memoir penned by Manfred von Richthofen, widely known as the Red Baron, contains the most explicit statement along these lines. Waiting for a bison to come within shooting range, Richthofen felt 'the very hunting fever which takes possession of me when I am sitting in an airplane, spot an Englishman and still have about five minutes to fly to reach him'.[7] Since German war propaganda remained under the exclusive control of military censors, the military authorities could silence voices challenging public glorifications of wartime violence.[8] A restrictive media environment worked to maintain the most important justification for Germany's use of air power against French and British civilians: the German military argued that it merely reacted to Allied provocations such as air attacks on the German cities of Freiburg and Karlsruhe as well as the Continental blockade that caused widespread shortages among the civilian population. Raids on British and French cities represented justified 'punitive vengeance'.[9] Rather than regret the use of violence against civilians, German propaganda used moral wrath and arguments of self-defence to legitimate attacks against non-military installations. The First World War thus established a tradition casting Germany as a victim of external aggression for which the German air force revenged brutally and justly.

Peter Fritzsche is undoubtedly correct in stating that during the First World War 'the aviator remained a hero, but of a kind that had not been seen before'. Still, his claim that the airman's novelty rested primarily in the 'new image of the machine-man' is debatable since journalists and pilots themselves only rarely resorted to the sober language of technological efficiency in their descriptions of wartime flying.[10] Between 1914 and 1918, the figure of the war flyer usually derived its exceptionality from other iconic elements. While his relative autonomy in battle

elevated him above other military personnel, it was the celebration of uncompromising brutality that distinguished the airman from other German military heroes. If trench warfare gave rise to Walter Flex's bestseller *The Wanderer Between the Worlds* about an infantry soldier's nostalgic yearning for the romanticism in the pre-war youth movement, comparable sentiments did not find their way into accounts of the air war which celebrated aviators as ruthless, independent military agents.[11]

In the Weimar Republic, the less overtly chauvinistic figure of the noble aerial knight flourished because, in front of a background of widespread accusations about war crimes committed in Belgium, it emphasized the German military's moral integrity during the Great War and countered suggestions that the harsh conditions of the Versailles Treaty were justified.[12] Chivalric motifs proved short-lived, however, because after 1933 their historicizing overtones clashed with a rhetoric of dynamism and radical innovation that accompanied the expansion of the German air force. While most of the aerial heroes of the First World War had belonged to the exclusive and individualistic order of fighter pilots, National Socialist propaganda, taking up the idea of the supposedly classless *Volksgemeinschaft*, placed these men within the 'community of fighters' (*Kampfgemeinschaft*) that included other air crew members alongside ground personnel and service branches.[13] Not designed for a strategic bombing campaign but as a tactical force operating with ground and naval troops, the Luftwaffe may have lacked the military hardware for a strategic air campaign but its propaganda strove to establish beyond doubt that it was permeated by a merciless mindset.[14]

While the cult of the military aviator in the Third Reich produced some stars like Werner Mölders and Hans Joachim Marseille, celebrations of individual pilots became rare after 1942 when casualty rates rose. On the whole, the military pilot of the Third Reich remained an impersonal figure that exemplified the new heroic ideal deemed necessary to enact the combative demands of Nazi ideology.[15] Even extensive portraits of Mölders and Marseille concentrated almost exclusively on their dedication to the military, barely touching on private hobbies or predilections.[16] 'Toughness' and 'hardness' provided the core of the aerial fighter's personality as outlined both in the run up to and during the Second World War.[17] According to official depictions, an unshakeable physical and mental frame allowed aerial 'soldiers' to release a 'steely will of annihilation' onto their enemies.[18] German flyers turned into a 'terror for all opponents' who not only continued fighting despite severe injuries but were also willing, in keeping with National Socialist cults

celebrating the dead, to sacrifice themselves for *Volk und Führer*.[19] Two traits in particular constituted this exemplary soldier. First, accounts related that flyers openly rejoiced in the destruction they sowed. For instance, after dropping his payload over a Polish railway station, the pilot of a *JU 87* dive bomber wanted to 'shout with delight' while observing the chaos he had created on the tracks.[20] These sadistic texts fit into the tradition celebrating gratuitously violent actions that had originated during the First World War.

Second, propagandistic reports alternatively emphasized how calm and detached the heroes of the air remained during missions. Even with 'every nerve tense' pilots gained 'trust from their own strength', as well as from the 'steely hum of the engines'. Depictions of commanders as 'clear and calm' also conveyed an atmosphere of self-confidence and discipline.[21] A sparse documentary style further added to the image of air crews as single-mindedly dedicated to their military duties. A pilot's report from Poland features a typical passage:

> I see gigantic fountains of smoke and sand beneath me. Houses explode. Rails are bent like thin wires as if by an invisible hand as a result of the air pressure. A train stands on a parallel track – direct hit. The direction of the carriages has changed by ninety degrees.[22]

In addition to signalling physical and emotional detachment, the atmosphere of controlled discipline indicated that a spirit of sobriety or '*Sachlichkeit*' dominated the Luftwaffe. These descriptions were in keeping with the ethos of sobriety that the German Right had considered a precondition for the country's return to world power status since the 1920s.[23] As military recruitment schemes after 1933 incorporated psychological tests to select candidates who promised to make sober officers with strong will power, a host of propaganda texts correspondingly impressed upon readers that the new pilots epitomized the figure of a death-defying fighter whose 'steel-like' qualities allowed him to maintain his composure in dangerous situations.[24]

These characteristics created a warrior figure whose ruthlessness the Nazis had idolized since their modest beginnings.[25] Above all, this fighter was meant to possess one central trait: he was entirely devoid of any qualms or ethical considerations when dealing with the enemy, following the maxim that 'the German sword is sharp and where it strikes, all life must end'.[26] Accounts of annihilation were by no means restricted to the war in the East, but emerged in Western battle theatres too. While one pilot bombing London described the 'band of fire'

stretching several miles north-east from Hyde Park as a 'grandiose sight', a war correspondent accompanying a crew on its way to Coventry resorted to apocalyptic rhetoric to describe the 'blood red flames' he beheld: 'it seems as if the world has opened up to spew fiery streams of lava across the country.' In the wake of the attack on Coventry, the party paper quoted 'neutral correspondents' who supposedly saw themselves confronted with 'indescribable destruction' as 'the population walks about the rubble aimlessly and desperately'.[27] German propaganda cast the air war as a campaign of annihilation in which aerial warriors displayed the sober qualities of steel-like toughness that promised German success on the battlefield.

Two sources fuelled a cynical tone in German air war propaganda. First, Nazi celebrations of the air war repeatedly laid the blame for raids at the feet of their opponents. According to one propaganda work, the Luftwaffe dealt Warsaw the 'last destructive blow' in the form of an indiscriminate aerial bombardment only after the city had refused to surrender. The consequences were predictable: 'By lunchtime, a gigantic dark cloud towered over the city.'[28] Similar stories reached German readers after the air raids on Rotterdam whose 'intimidated inhabitants' allegedly caused 'heartfelt pity' in a war correspondent. Nonetheless, as the journalist immediately pointed out, the people of Rotterdam had their own government to blame for failing to surrender in time: 'This is the German fist and who does not listen to our warnings shall feel it … . Now the city is uncannily quiet'.[29] The Nazis adopted a pose feigning regret that was eclipsed by triumphant descriptions of aerial attacks. The victims allegedly brought their suffering upon themselves, an assessment that exonerated the Nazis from any responsibility.[30]

Second, as hostilities progressed, the air war propaganda of the Third Reich stressed in increasingly bloodthirsty language that Germany asserted itself in a merciless fight for survival and domination. This motif dated back to the 1920s when the Nazis and others on the German Right had begun to cultivate a myth of victimization. After 1939, public pronouncements radicalized the core ideological belief conceiving of history as a relentless racial struggle by emphasizing that the Reich's enemies not only strove to defeat Germany militarily but aimed at its utter annihilation.[31] The war, so the official argument ran, suspended all rules of engagement because Germany faced an alliance that consisted of callous war criminals. In April 1943, for instance, Goebbels initiated a campaign that began with lurid coverage of the Soviet mass executions at Katyn, interpreted the killings as evidence for the murderous nature of the Jewish–Bolshevik conspiracy the Nazis claimed to confront, and

concluded with the charge that 'the complete extermination [*Ausmerzung*] of the European Jewry presents the indispensable precondition for a new life'. In the immediate wake of the Holocaust's most intensive killing phase German propaganda went beyond this – by Nazi standards – conventional combination of anti-Semitism and anti-Bolshevism to paint its opponents as war criminals. On 23 April 1943, less than a week after the reports about Katyn, the main paper informed the German public that a Japanese court had sentenced to death a group of US bomber pilots. Japan, according to the *Völkischer Beobachter*, had finally placed the 'British–American aerial barbarians [*Luftbarbaren*]' in the dock where they had revealed the 'abysmal perfidy of the Anglo-Saxon mentality' because the pilots, who allegedly failed to explain the military logic behind their raids, had done nothing but terrorize 'non-combatants, women, children, and the elderly'. The implication of these articles was clear: the Soviets, the Americans and the British were all ruthless criminals who should expect no leniency from the Germans either.[32]

Frustration about persistent, ever-more destructive air raids on German towns and cities fuelled propagandistic rage at this stage. When, in June 1944, the German military launched the V-1 rockets against Southern England and London to counter the Allied landings in France, the party paper justified these attacks as revenge for 'devilish torture' and 'our women's and children's tears'. It was now time to strike back at the 'sadistic monster on the other side of the Channel' that aimed 'to exterminate the German people [*das deutsche Volk auszurotten*]', the party paper concluded.[33] Towards the end of the war, the Nazis viewed themselves in the midst of a global war of extermination in which all rules of conduct had, in principle, become obsolete. How do these characteristics compare with the British interpretations of the air war?

* * *

In Britain, the figure of the aerial knight provided a more prominent and durable motif for the public celebration of airmen during the First World War than in Germany.[34] Moreover, reports also paid homage to pilots' fairness and mutual respect.[35] By emphasizing the theme of medieval chivalry, British war propaganda cast fighter pilots as respectable military heroes upholding under the new conditions of the First World War the same code of honour that had been instrumental in the celebration of Victorian army leaders.[36] At the same time, many British depictions of aerial warfare displayed a deep ambivalence about military heroism because battle strained the moral foundations of

existing languages of elite masculinity. Nothing illustrates this better than the officially authorized biography of Albert Ball, an 18-year-old who shot down 43 enemies. Commander-in-Chief Douglas Haig's preface underlined Ball's chivalry and gallantry, while Chief of Air Staff Hugh Trenchard praised his modesty and sense of responsibility. Prime Minister Lloyd George singled out Ball for his dutiful commitment to 'freedom, home and country' as well as his moral integrity: 'In all his fighting record there is no trace of resentment, revenge or cruelty.'[37] Ball stood out because he fought in a just war and escaped moral destruction through battle violence. The biography told how he resembled 'a young knight of gentle manners … who … remained a good-natured happy boy' despite having become 'a terrible instrument of Death'.[38] Ball was a tragic hero who suffered qualms because the violence of war strained the chivalrous and honest qualities ascribed to him. 'I do get tired of always living to kill, and I am really beginning to feel like a murderer', he wrote to his parents.[39] Documenting Ball's struggle for quotidian normality on the front, the book made much of the garden he tended, thereby maintaining a hallmark of respectable middle-class domesticity. Ball's ambivalence was by no means unique among the military aviators British propagandists elevated to fame.[40]

British military aviators claimed to struggle with the moral implications of serving one's country in war. Accounts of pilots constructed an image of British military personnel in sharp contrast with British official representations of German soldiers as inhuman 'evil Huns' who habitually committed atrocities.[41] Moreover, British politicians often presented the country's involvement in the Great War as a moral obligation to restore a European order based on international law which German aggression had disrupted. Aces thus personified the dilemmas arising from the tension between violent means and ethical ends which the British nation confronted as a whole as it sought to re-establish justice through military force. British depictions of pilots' masculinity also drew heavily on the idea of the gentleman. As Mark Girouard has shown, conceptions of the gentleman as 'brave, loyal, true to his word, courteous, generous, and merciful' remained influential in the early twentieth century.[42] British flyers thus conformed to an ideal of masculinity whose norms tended to problematize rather than affirm violence. Finally, British war propaganda was never conceived by the military alone, which might have encouraged a more emphatic rhetoric of combat violence.[43] As Lloyd George's contribution illustrates, British war propaganda represented a collaborative effort between the military and civilians. Since many civilians involved in public relations initiatives,

like the prime minister, harboured an ambivalent attitude to violence and military conflict, British propaganda highlighted moral quandaries. British publications, then, cast war pilots as heroes whose dilemmas arose from the exertion of military force in pursuit of a legitimate political aim. In this respect, the figure of the war flyer supported other official legitimizations of the British war effort that played up the country's commitment to the restoration of international law.

The First World War thus produced an iconography of the military pilot that stretched gentlemanly heroism in Britain to its limits. In interwar Britain, military aviators did not undergo a major re-interpretation, not least because promoting military heroes remained a difficult enterprise as long as 'the "Big Words" – duty, honour, country – had a hollow ring for many people', as Jay Winter has pointed out.[44] It was not until the outbreak of the Second World War that military aviators re-established themselves as unproblematic icons. Military flyers gained undisputed status as heroic defenders of the nation in the Battle of Britain. In Winston Churchill's famous turn of phrase about the fighter pilots, 'the gratitude of every home in our island, in our Empire and indeed throughout the world … goes out to the British airmen … . Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'.[45] Other publications took up this theme, hailing the flyers as the 'young champions of civilization'.[46] Despite ready acknowledgement of their pivotal role in the war effort, state propaganda did not single out individual pilots.[47] Selfless 'teamwork' became a prominent theme in wartime writings by and about pilots.[48]

With Germany the open aggressor, the United Kingdom found itself in a defensive position that provided the core motif for British war propaganda.[49] As they faced an opponent with seemingly inexhaustible supplies, some British pilots admitted to feeling despondent, especially at the beginning of the Battle of Britain.[50] As they confronted the enemy, pilots not only worried about death; the prospect of injury, particularly from burns, was even more gruesome.[51] Accounts of inexpressible suffering were central to British conceptions of the early air war. Characteristically, Richard Hillary, who chronicled his recovery from burns through protracted plastic surgery in a best-selling memoir and visibly bore the traces of his injury, became the most prominent Spitfire pilot.[52] His and other pilots' agony provided as powerful an illustration of the war's human cost as the Luftwaffe's bombings raids that Churchill condemned as 'cruel, wanton, indiscriminate' in September 1940.[53]

If narratives of suffering emphasized Britain's position as a victim of outside aggression, pilots' courage and dedication also provided assurance

that the nation was not helpless. 'Grim determination' characterized their mood in critical situations, an outlook which propagandists also ascribed to the Londoners who continued to attend work despite the Blitz.[54] Given the dedication their duty required and the nature of the German threat, pilots made no secret of the satisfaction they derived from killing enemies. After shooting down his first enemy, Richard Hillary, for instance, recalled a 'feeling of the essential rightness of it all'.[55] Others recounted how intercepting the enemy granted 'gloriously exciting' experiences not only because of its inherent adventures but because it offered the satisfaction of exacting revenge on the enemy.[56] The theme of retribution became most prominent in public stories about air raids against German cities that began to achieve large-scale devastation in the spring of 1942.

The idea that Britain had been forced into the war by German aggression remained the most important justification for British aerial attacks against the Third Reich. In July 1941, Winston Churchill promised 'that the Germans should be made to suffer in their own homeland and cities something of the torment which they have … let loose upon their neighbours'.[57] In particular, the civilian casualties resulting from German strikes stoked a desire for revenge that expressed itself in drastic language. In a richly illustrated pamphlet from 1941, Bomber Command pledged to attack the Germans 'without mercy, respite or limit, with no regard to place or person'.[58] It was thus not surprising that bomber pilots claimed 'never' to have 'felt such a thrill' as when they first released their charges over a target, or, to put it in contemporary diction, when they 'hammered' German cities.[59] Hatred fuelled a desire for revenge in Britain, emotions that Churchill expressed with particular eloquence in June 1943. He deemed 'necessary the utmost application of exterminating force' to defeat 'the guilty nation and its wicked leaders … never was there such a case of the biter bitten'.[60] Historians who stress that the British public sphere abounded with support for Bomber Command are undoubtedly correct. In contrast, public moralists and church leaders who condemned large-scale raids against Germany as inhumane received only modest support.[61]

Retribution and hatred provided prominent themes, but they should not obscure the fact that British war propaganda often retained a measured tone. British dailies, for instance, strove to preserve a restrained style that contrasts with the cynical statements in the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Coverage of the first raid on Cologne involving over one thousand bombers in June 1942 – retrospectively considered only a partial success because it failed to set off a firestorm – provides a case in point.

While Bomber Command naturally concealed that it had hoped for a larger conflagration, the *Times* restricted itself to the statement that pilots had noted 'a pall of smoke rising to 15,000 ft. over the target'.[62] More destructive raids received similarly reserved and understated treatment. After the devastating attack on Hamburg in July 1943, *The Times* remarked with notable understatement that 'there was a suggestion of desperation in the way in which the German night fighters' strove to intercept the British bombers.[63]

Abstaining from the cynicism characteristic of German propaganda, British coverage of the air war adopted a range of styles including the restrained and the understated, praising bomber pilots' actions in a pluralistic rather than a homogeneous manner. At times, the British public sphere granted flyers opportunities to express their regrets about the war. Writing in 1943, bomber pilot Leonard Cheshire admitted that 'an inescapable note of sadness' tainted his memories because the outcome of encounters with the enemy depended on unpredictable luck. As a matter of fact, Cheshire concluded his book stating 'that our values must be put upside down and that a long life does not really count for much in the long run. It isn't much comfort, though is it? I suppose that is the point'.[64] If war subverted life-affirming values that had appeared self-evident to Cheshire and many others before 1939, moral qualms did not plague the British pilots of the Second World War – quite in contrast to their predecessors during the Great War. The fact that blatant German aggression had carried the hostilities onto British soil prevented pricks of conscience. Only during the war's closing stage did the press signal ambivalence, when, after the raid on Dresden that killed at least 35,000 people in February 1945, *The Times* shuddered at the 'new and terrifying prodigy of air power'.[65]

Public images of British aerial warriors and the air war thus differed from depictions of military aviators in Germany during the Second World War. Coherence characterized the public appearance of British pilots to a smaller degree when airmen described war as confusing and contradictory. Fear, exhilaration, suffering, despair, cruelty, hatred – all these provided the public face of British military aviators. Unlike the German authorities with their firm grasp over the public sphere, the British pursued a more circumscribed propaganda policy during the Second World War that led to a less standardized portrayal of pilots. Military authorities controlled sensitive information and the Ministry of Information aimed to influence public debate, but pluralism remained a feature of British public life. George Orwell marvelled that in December 1940 'newspapers abusing the Government … are being

sold in the streets, almost without interference'.[66] Given the fact that the country was embroiled in an existential conflict it was not surprising that most Britons supported the aerial campaign against Germany; what was remarkable, however, was that the British public sphere granted platforms to critical voices who, like Bishop Bell, spoke out openly against the revenge bombings in 1944 or who, like a correspondent to the *Daily Telegraph* in 1941, suggested issuing warnings to German civilians before raids so that they could save themselves.[67] Public debates sometimes considered dissenting opinions on military matters as part of the 'liberty' the country defended.[68]

This comparatively liberal media environment provided the framework which allowed British pilots to retain an aura of individualism. While German propaganda portrayed Luftwaffe pilots in exclusively military terms, British aviators fashioned themselves as more complex individuals. Hillary and his comrades from Fighter Command characteristically recalled their horror of organizations and claimed to have joined war flying because it promised an 'individual' and 'disinterested' form of warfare.[69] Bomber crews, of course, were only efficient if their members cooperated but they featured a fair number of characters who, according to Cheshire, were 'quite mad'.[70] These narratives established a powerful contrast between the ethos guiding British military aviators and the prevalent image of 'German mass psychology'.[71] In short, individuals with identifiable traits and complex emotions made up the British community of warriors, whereas uniformity and discipline dominated in German accounts.

Finally, an overtly non-ideological guise distinguished British flyers favourably from Luftwaffe pilots who according to British observers, had been 'poisoned by the dope of Nazi doctrines' to instil 'an almost romantic diabolism'.[72] In contrast, Richard Hillary claimed to maintain 'basically a suspicion of anything radical'.[73] Of course, British pilots acknowledged that they fought to preserve liberty and freedom but, on the whole, passionate statements remained rare.[74] To be sure, the hatred that British bomber pilots harboured towards their German enemies provided a radical motivation that broke the mould of moderation. Nonetheless, abandoning oneself to this passion came at the risk of resembling the enemy who was, according to Churchill, driven by 'soul-destroying hatred'.[75] In fact, one account explicitly assured its readers that, irrespective of their hatred for the Nazis, British bomber pilots harboured a profound antipathy against war in general, thereby implying that their efforts were directed towards restoring peace.[76] Moreover, British narratives were often suffused with nostalgic longings

for the years before 1939 as pilots regretted the lack of peacetime normality.[77] Thus, during the Second World War the public iconography of the British aerial soldier combined ostentatious distrust of ideological radicalism with an ethos of individualism and a desire for peace that went hand in hand with a commitment to national defence.

* * *

In conclusion, German and British air war propaganda differed fundamentally between 1914 and 1945. In Germany, where publications had praised pilots as violent, brutal fighters between 1914 and 1918, the Nazis radicalized celebrations of military aviators as cruel warriors whose effectiveness rested on a passion for killing and a sober frame of mind. In the Third Reich, propaganda cast Luftwaffe pilots either as passionate warriors or sober technicians of death, denying anyone foolish enough to oppose the Germans the right to exist, thereby illustrating that the Nazis' impulse for radical destruction reached far beyond the East.[78] During the Second World War, depictions of aerial warriors included neither emotional nor personal details that lent complexity to portrayals of their counterparts in Britain. Instead, Luftwaffe pilots were presented as impersonal warrior figures that viewed war as a heroic time of fulfilment. The Luftwaffe's propaganda, in short, fantasized openly of a pervasive war of destruction and annihilation even if it could not be implemented for a lack of a strategic bomber fleet.

The transformations in the British iconography of the military aviator between 1914 and 1945 supports work challenging the prominence of a relatively stable 'warrior myth' in twentieth-century Britain.[79] The findings presented here highlight how the British public sphere accommodated the nation's military might within a culture strongly shaped by liberal values. At times termed 'liberal militarism', British reverence for things military during the first half of the twentieth century possessed some noteworthy characteristics.[80] Celebrations of military feats incorporated moral dilemmas that arose from the contradictions between a commitment to humanitarian values and the necessities of war. Liberal militarism was therefore a rather moderate variant of the pan-European reverence for armies, navies and air forces which, compared with many Continental nations, exerted a relatively weak attraction in inter-war Britain where concern about the moral effects of martial violence gained prominence.[81] After the Third Reich's aggressive acts had pushed cautious voices to the sidelines, affirmations of military violence provided but one motif in British war propaganda – albeit an

important one. Passionate narratives about military exploits stood alongside a large number of reports adopting a factual, at times restrained tone. As a matter of fact, writings by fighter and bomber pilots often included expressions of their antipathy to war and of a yearning for normality that signalled a commitment to restoring peace. As a range of motifs simultaneously affirmed and problematized the air war's violence, British propaganda retained pluralistic features. Even a fundamental victimization did not give rise to a public culture that revelled in the nation's ability to unleash violence in an unqualified manner.

German and British public culture found markedly different ways of accommodating military violence as aerial warfare turned into an increasingly depersonalized form of combat. At first sight, air war propaganda stands in a paradoxical relationship to both countries' military actions during the Second World War. In Germany, whose aerial campaign killed less than 50,000 civilians, the violence the air force could wield was emphatically affirmed. In Britain, which pursued a protracted air campaign resulting in several hundred thousand German civilian deaths, the imagery of the aerial warrior articulated a more ambivalent attitude towards military violence. While German official writings accommodated aerial raids relatively easily, air war strained British public culture to its limits. As Britain was engaged in a conflict with a ruthless enemy, the defence of the country and its dominant values required the use of potentially morally corrosive violence. Even if British attacks killed more people than raids by the Luftwaffe, fundamentally different cultural and political sources fuelled the air war as a depersonalized form of military violence in the first half of the twentieth century in Britain and Germany. As Britain wielded this violence in the 'Age of Extremes', it did so with moral and political difficulties – quite unlike her adversary.

Notes

1. J. Morrow, *The Great War in the Air: Military Aviation from 1909 to 1921* (London: Airlife, 1993); R. Wohl, *A Passion for Wings: Aviation and the Popular Imagination, 1908–1918* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 203–51; *The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination, 1920–1950* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), pp. 213–75.
2. The most prominent recent intervention is J. Friedrich, *Der Brand* (*Deutschland im Bombenkrieg, 1940–1945* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2002). On the ensuing public debate, see L. Kettenacker ed., *Ein Volk von Opfern? Die neue Debatte um den Bombenkrieg 1940–1945* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 2003). See also A. C. Grayling, *Among the Dead Cities* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005).

3. See A. Calder, *The People's War Britain, 1939–45* (London: Pimlico, 2003), p. 236; H. Boog, *Das Deutsch Reich in der Defensive: Strategischer Luftkrieg in Europa, Krieg im Westen und in Ostasien, 1943–1944/45* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2001), pp. 36–9.
4. *Hauptmann Boelckes Feldberichte, mit einer Einleitung von der Hand des Vaters* (Gotha: Perthes, 1917), p. 68. Similar tales can be found on pp. 92, 170.
5. *Wir Luftkämpfer: Bilder und Berichte deutscher Flieger und Luftschiffer* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1918), pp. 8, 15, 60.
6. *Zeppeline gegen England* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1916), p. 97.
7. Manfred Freiherr von Richthofen, *Der rote Kampfflieger* (Berlin: Ullstein, 1917), p. 178.
8. On the swift institution of the German propaganda regime, see D. Welch, *Germany, Propaganda and Total War, 1914–1918* (London: Athlone, 2000), pp. 20–36.
9. A. Jünke, *Zeppelin im Weltkrieg* (Leipzig: Abel und Müller, 1916), p. 114.
10. P. Fritzsche, *A Nation of Fliers: German Aviation and the Popular Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 96ff.
11. Flex's book sold 250,000 copies between 1916 and 1918. T. Medicus, 'Jugend in Uniform: Walter Flex und die deutsche Generation von 1914', in Ursula Breymayer, Bernd Ulrich and Karin Wieland eds, *Willensmenschen: Über deutsche Offiziere* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1999), pp. 94–108.
12. J. Werner ed., *Briefe eines deutschen Kampffliegers an ein junges Mädchen* (Leipzig: Koehler, 1930), pp. 7, 59, 67, 90, 171.
13. The term *Kampfgemeinschaft* is from Dr. Eichelbaum, *Das Buch von der Luftwaffe* (Berlin: Verlagshaus Bong, 1941), p. 43.
14. E. L. Homze, *Arming the Luftwaffe: The Reich Air Ministry and the German Aircraft Industry, 1919–1939* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1976).
15. On National Socialist notions of masculinity, see G. L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 154–80.
16. See 'Major Mölders erzählt sein Leben', in *Der Adler: Eine kommentierte Auswahl abgeschlossener und völlig unveränderter Beiträge der Propagandazeitschrift der Deutschen Luftwaffe,* 5 vols (Hamburg: Jahr Verlag, 1977), II, pp. 140–57; 'Der Jüngste mit Eichenlaub und Schwertern', in *Der Adler*, IV, p. 95.
17. See K. G. von Stackelberg, *Legion Condor: Deutsche Freiwillige in Spanien* (Berlin: Heimbücherei, 1939), p. 47; H. Orlovius ed., *Schwert am Himmel: Fünf Jahre deutsche Luftfahrt* (Berlin: Scherl 1940), p. 91.
18. Orlovius, *Schwert am Himmel*, p. 59.
19. For an account of despite severe injuries, see 'Husarenstreiche unserer Flieger', in *Der Adler*, I, pp. 98–101. On the cult of the dead, see S. Behrenbeck, *Der Kult um die toten Helden: Nationalsozialistische Mythen, Rituale und Symbole* (Vierow: SH-Verlag, 1996), pp. 178–84, 214–41.
20. H. Adler, *Unsere Luftwaffe in Polen: Erlebnisberichte* (Berlin: Limpert, 1940), p. 49. See also von Stackelberg, *Legion Condor*, p. 56.
21. von Stackelberg, *Legion Condor*, pp. 28ff.
22. Adler, *Unsere Luftwaffe*, p. 61. See also *Völkischer Beobachter*, 18 September 1939, p. 3.
23. On *Sachlichkeit*, see U. Herbert, *Best: Biographische Studien über Radikalismus, Weltanschauung und Vernunft, 1903–1989* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), pp. 42–51;

H. Lethen, *Cool Conduct: The Culture of Distance in Weimar Germany* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001).

24. T. Flemming, ' "Willenspotentiale": Offizierstugenden als Gegenstand der Wehrmachtspsychologie', in Breymayer, *Willensmenschen*, pp. 111–22.
25. B. Weisbrod, 'Gewalt in der Politik: zur politischen Kultur in Deutschland zwischen den Weltkriegen', *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, XVI (1990), 391–404.
26. Adler, *Unsere Luftwaffe in Polen*, p. 116; Orlovius, *Schwert am Himmel*, p. 98.
27. E. von Loewenstern, *Luftwaffe über dem Feind* (Berlin: Limpert, 1941), p. 232; *Völkischer Beobachter*, 17 November 1940, p. 2.
28. P. Supf, *Flieger, Kämpfer, Kameraden* (Stuttgart: Union Deutshe Verlags-Gesellschaft, 1941), p. 82ff.
29. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 18 May 1940, p. 5.
30. This thought pattern reappeared in 1944 when the Nazis launched their vengeance weapons against England. See *Völkischer Beobachter*, 17 June 1944, p. 1.
31. C. Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
32. Articles on Katyn can be found in *Völkischer Beobachter*, 17 April 1943, p.1ff.; 18 April 1943, p.1ff. The American pilots are denounced in *Völkischer Beobachter*, 23 April 1943, p.1ff. One headline explicitly equated all German opponents in *Völkischer Beobachter*: 'Churchill's and Roosevelt's pilots are murderers just like the butchers of Katyn'. See *Völkischer Beobachter*, 30 April 1943, p. 2. Goebbels directed both propaganda campaigns personally. See E. Fröhlich ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Teil II, Band VIII, Diktate 1941–1945, April–Juni 1943* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1993), pp. 159, 163.
33. *Völkischer Beobachter*, 17 June 1944, p. 1. On Goebbels's orchestration of the propaganda surrounding the V-1, see E. Fröhlich ed., *Die Tagebücher von Joseph Goebbels: Teil II Band XII, Diktate 1941–1945, April–Juni 1944* (Munich: K.G. Saur, 1995), pp. 479–85, 488–93, 500–3, 507–8.
34. B. Wherry Anderson, *The Romance of Air-Fighting* (London: Cassel, 1917), pp. 12ff.
35. *The Times*, 4 November 1916, p. 5; W. A. Briscoe and H. Russel Stannard, *Captain Ball V.C.* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1918), p. 213.
36. See M. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); G. Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994).
37. Briscoe, *Captain Ball*, pp. ix, vii.
38. Ibid., p. 23.
39. Ibid., p. 21.
40. Ibid., p.157. For another fighter pilot who suffered pricks of conscience, see James McCudden, *Five Years in the Royal Flying Corps* (London: The Aeroplane, 1919), pp. 264, 220.
41. On British stereotyping of the German army during the Great War, see C. Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), pp. 79–107.
42. Girouard, *The Return to Camelot*, p. 16.
43. M. L. Sanders and P. M. Taylor, *British Propaganda during the First World War, 1914–1918* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 15–100.

44. J. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 8.
45. *The Battle of Britain, August–October 1940: An Air Ministry Account of the Great Days from 8th August–31st October 1940* (London: Collins, 1941), p. 3.
46. J. M. Spaight, *The Battle of Britain, 1940* (London: Geoffrey Bless, 1940), p. 55.
47. R. Overy, *The Battle* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2000), p. 117.
48. *The Battle of Britain: Air Ministry Account*, p. 8.
49. On German material superiority, see *The Battle of Britain: Abridged by Permission from the Air Ministry Account of the Great Days, August to October 1940* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1941), p. 29.
50. For accounts of dejection, see D. M. Crook, *Spitfire Pilot* (London: Faber and Faber, 1942), pp. 31–2; Richard Hillary, *The Last Enemy* (London: Macmillan, 1978 [1942]), p. 2.
51. For a gruesome account, see Leonard Cheshire, *Bomber Pilot* (London: Hutchinson, 1943), p. 82.
52. For the account of his injuries, see Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, pp. 3–8. On Hillary, see David Ross, *Richard Hillary: The Definitive Biography of a Battle of Britain Fighter Pilot and the Author of The Last Enemy* (London: Grub Street, 2000).
53. R. Rhodes James ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, 7 vols (London, Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), VI, p. 6276. Churchill invoked this theme throughout the war. See also *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VII, p. 7026.
54. Crook, *Spitfire Pilot*, p. 22. On Londoners, see *Battle of Britain, Abridged*, p. 23; *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VI, pp. 6276–7.
55. Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, p. 121.
56. Crook, *Spitfire Pilot*, pp. 26–9.
57. *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VI, p. 6451.
58. *Bomber Command: The Air Ministry Account of the Bomber Command's Offensive Against the Axis* (New York: n.p., 1941), p. 125. The same book was published in Britain.
59. See Cheshire, *Bomber Pilot*, p. 57. The press also termed bombing raids as hammerings or batterings. See *The Times*, 28 July 1943, p. 4; *The Times*, 29 July 1943, p. 4; *The Times*, 31 July 1943, p. 4.
60. *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VII, p. 6798. Hatred as a motivation among pilots is mentioned in H. E. Bates, *There's Something in the Air* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1943), pp. 15, 26, 30.
61. M. Connelly, 'The British People, the Press and the Strategic Air Campaign Against Germany, 1939–1945', *Contemporary British History*, XVI (2002), 39–58.
62. *The Times*, 1 June 1942, p. 4. See also *Manchester Guardian*, 1 June 1942, p. 5.
63. *The Times*, 26 July 1943, p. 4; *The Times*, 29 July 1943, p. 4. The Propaganda film *Target for Tonight* (1940), which documents an air raid from planning stage to the actual attack to debriefing, also retained a measured, factual tone. I would like to thank David French for bringing this film to my attention.
64. Cheshire, *Bomber Pilot*, p. 101ff.
65. *The Times*, 16 February 1945, p. 5. The figure is from M. Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A New History* (London: Pan, 2001), p. 780.

66. G. Orwell, 'The Lion and the Unicorn', in *Essays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1994), pp. 138–88, 149. On propaganda in Britain and Germany, see M. Balfour, *Propaganda in War: Organisations, Policies and Publics in Britain and Germany* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979), esp. pp. 53–102, 195–200.
67. On Bishop Bell, see Calder, *The People's War*, pp. 490–4. The letter to *The Daily Telegraph* is quoted in Connelly, 'The British People', p. 48.
68. *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VII, p. 6645. See also Bates, *There's Something in the Air*, p. 88.
69. Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, p. 16; Crook, *Spitfire Pilot*, p. 9ff.
70. Cheshire, *Bomber Pilot*, p. 24ff. See also the wide range of different individuals that provide the characters in Bates, *There's Something in the Air*.
71. Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, p. 71.
72. Spaight, *Battle of Britain*, p. 79; Wing Commander, *Bombers' Battle: Bomber Command's Three Years of War* (London: Duckworth, 1943), p. 15.
73. Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, p. 12.
74. *Battle of Britain*, p. 8; *Battle of Britain: Abridged*, p. 3; Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, pp. 102–12.
75. Rhodes James ed., *Churchill: His Complete Speeches*, VI, p. 6277.
76. See Bates, *There's Something in the Air*, pp. 92–4.
77. Ibid., pp. 9–10, 26–8; Hillary, *The Last Enemy*, p. 15.
78. Omer Bartov has noted similar traits in propaganda about the Wehrmacht: Bartov, *Hitler's Army: Soldiers, Nazis and War in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).
79. J. Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), pp. 33–56 argues for a consistent warrior myth. David French casts doubt on her thesis. See David French, ' "You Cannot Hate the Bastard Who is Trying to Kill You … ": Combat and Ideology in the British Army in the War against Germany, 1939–1945', *Twentieth-Century British History*, XI (2000), 1–22.
80. The term has been used with different meanings. For David Edgerton it refers to policies of Britain as a warfare state that relied 'on technology as a substitute for manpower and us[ed] technology for attacking civil populations and industry, rather than armies'. See D. Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991), xv. Anne Summers employs the term to emphasize that, despite its liberal political culture, Britain featured militaristic tendencies during the Edwardian years. See A. Summers, 'Edwardian Militarism', in Raphael Samuel ed., *Patriotism: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity: Volume I: History and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 236–56.
81. Jon Lawrence, 'Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in post-First World War Britain', *Journal of Modern History*, LXXV (2003), 557–89.

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