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**Stuart Carroll**, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France.* Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 2006. xii + 369 pp. Figures, notes, bibliography and index. $110.00 (hb). ISBN 0-19-929045-8.

Response Essay by Stuart Carroll, University of York, to the Review Essays of his book by Kristen Neuschel, David Parrott, Jonathan Dewald, and James Collins.

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It was with some trepidation that I approached these reviews by four distinguished scholars, each of whom has contributed to *Blood and Violence* in some measure, either by providing inspiration or by assisting in the interpretation of the mass of often difficult documentation. In the book I hope to show that violence is a diverse and dynamic phenomenon; it is not simply an elemental *Angriffslust* that requires taming; it cannot be easily pigeon-holed, or reduced to a 'pathological' condition. Since violence is always a moral category, and frequently has social or political overtones, I found that as I wrote the range of subjects requiring my attention multiplied. As the number of themes grew, so did my reliance on the ideas and research of my colleagues. I am gratified that three of the reviewers, experts in differing fields, are in agreement that my work makes a significant contribution to the historiography and opens up new fields for further research. I beg their indulgence if I do not reply at greater length to their considered and thoughtful critiques, since one of the reviews stands apart, both in its content and tone, and I feel obliged to reply to it at greater length. Before doing so I would just add that, in a work of this scope, some of the findings are necessarily schematic, and I hope that other scholars will soon begin to fill in the gaps, nuance my findings, and show where I err. Professor Neuschel knows more about the categories of gender and identity formation than I do, and I would agree with her that these areas are worthy of further research. In the chapter on women I simply wished to demonstrate the important role they played in the disputing process and to question some of the anachronistic assumptions that historians have made about discipline and patriarchy. My debt to Professor Collins in the chapter 'violence and royal authority' is evident in the footnotes, and he will be as aware as I am of the sketchiness of some of my argument here and the need for more research into how the state worked, or did not work, at the level of the parish. His research into the ways in which absolutism benefited all property holders, and not just a narrow class of aristocrats, influenced my conception of the social elite and will be crucial to new approaches to the politics of the parish. As a *seizièmiste*, I appreciated the balanced and nuanced assessment of *Blood and Violence* by another seventeenth-century expert, Dr. David Parrott. The army is an example of a subject that I had not initially expected to have to deal with when I started the project. I welcome his engagement with my thesis and the ways in which he suggests we can refine and enrich it.

As for Jonathan Dewald's review I can only apologize for not having written the book he wishes I had written. He is a fellow historian whose work I have always admired, and I was surprised to be accused of pugnacity and outlandishness in a review which contains more than its fair share of what I consider to be gross distortions and misrepresentations of my argument. In wishing to pick a fight, he really should know the terrain better. It is significant that in his brief and idiosyncratic introduction to the literature he can cite nothing published since 1942. The history of violence has moved on a bit since then. Coming after 330 pages of richly detailed text, the rhetorical conclusion of my book was written out of frustration. It calls straightforwardly for greater attention to the politics of the parish. I was frustrated by the fact that no historian of late medieval or early modern France had thought the feud a topic worthy of consideration. When I began work on the project, a leading French historian was shocked to learn what I was doing and told me that such things did not happen in France and warned me that I would be better off working on Italy. Dewald admits to feeling confused and frustrated. Let us see if I can help him by referring to what I actually say, rather than what he claims I say, or wishes I had written.

After working systematically in the archives for a decade and collecting material on feuds for much longer, it became clear to me that the archives told a different story to that of the accepted grand narrative, a fiction that was given credence by Elias and his followers. Even for the great François Billacois, the reason for duelling's dramatic and rapid spread had to be associated with the rise of the state: he explained duelling as the revolt of the individual against the inevitable triumph of absolutism. Dewald says that I have confounded what he calls 'timeless angers' with things they have nothing to do with: factional enmity, religious division, and social mobility. In fact, the structure of the book was organized with the purpose of making it accessible to students and non-specialists. I had to balance structure and event and incorporate thousands of pieces of complex data. In doing so, I show what endured and what changed in violence: some structural factors were common to the whole period; religious violence, for example, rose and declined. Dewald thinks that family tensions have nothing to do with faction, religious division, or social mobility. The archives suggest otherwise.

It is also central to my argument that violence might change and be different from one decade to the next, but this is a source of frustration to Dewald. It is axiomatic to me, if not to Dewald, that political breakdown and religious violence, on top of an aggressive aristocratic ethos, was a combustible mixture. But that could change too: I make great efforts to show why people welcomed religious and secular discipline, something Dewald does not allude to. My chief sin is that I am not an uncritical admirer of Norbert Elias. While I make it clear in the book that I do not believe the concept of the civilizing process to be wholly worthless as an interpretative tool, I am a historian and not a social scientist. I am not here to fit my story into other people's models. At a time when my country is engaged in the export of Western values through violence, the origins of 'civilized' values needs questioning. I am surprised that he gives so much credence to Elias's top-down view of historical change. I would agree that centralised and well ordered states limit violence: we only have to look at Iraq to see the disastrous effects of sectarian division, civil war and weak political legitimacy, not to mention rising homicide rates in South Africa and the former Soviet Union.

Dewald's second frustration is that my book does not cover the whole of society and that when peasants appear they are 'only' victims. I make no apologies for concentrating on the social elite: all the evidence suggests that societies with a high level of elite violence are societies with much higher levels of overall violence. As for peasants, Dewald should turn to the index where he will find the dozens of references that he missed on his first reading. Were the peasants who killed the tyrannical Aléxis Guéroult (p. 300) simply victims? I agree with Dewald that men of all social groups--although I do not know what the 'middle class' he refers to might be--fought duels and received letters of remission; that is why my book is full of bailiffs, soldiers, petty officials, lawyers and clerics, as well as traditional sword nobles. Comparing peasants and nobles will not get us very far. As chapter eight of my book makes abundantly clear, Frenchmen were not equal before the law. We need to compare like with like: the evidence so far from Spain, England and the Holy Roman Empire suggests that nobles in these states did not kill each other with the same frequency as they did in France after the mid sixteenth century.

Dewald also thinks that my argument rests 'ultimately' on the quantitative evidence. What argument of the many I put forward is he referring to? Dewald refers to the problems of quantification and then chides me for not doing what he would have done: read through all the genealogies of the *ducs et pairs*, military officers, and members of the honorific corps. How far would that have got us? The answer is probably not very far because Billacois has already made such an attempt without much success. My main focus is on the wider social elite, those who ran the parish, those who leave only a trace in the records, and not the tiny aristocracy of titled nobles and magistrates. The book that Dewald thinks I ought to have written, as well as covering all social groups, would have compared France to other states, a vast undertaking. The debates about the merits of quantification and comparison are extensive in themselves. He can catch up on the latest developments by reading my introductory essay to *Cultures of Violence: Interpersonal Violence in Historical Context*, which will be published this summer.[1] Suffice it to say that American men were not always meaner than their European counterparts. Colonial North

America experienced, once the indigenous inhabitants had been cleared, the lowest recorded rates of homicide in early modern times. But civility will not help us here: the demands of a Protestant conscience are a long way from the fastidious rituals and codes of behaviour in operation at Versailles.

I am also sceptical about the value of Dewald's suggestion of trying to give precise statistics that would distinguish region from region, town from town; such an exercise is all but impossible with the records available. He grossly distorts my arguments at this stage. We do not learn at the end of the book (p. 331) that the South and West are the primary focus of the study: the methodology and geographic focus is explained on page 22. Normandy, the richest province in France, provides a large body of examples, especially relating to hunting disputes. I never say that 'city life encouraged violence.' Are the *Pont-Neuf*, the *Place Royale*, or the *Pré-aux-Clercs*, places which figure large in my book, in the backwoods? Dewald's argument becomes even more nonsensical when he claims that I am 'ultimately' (that word again) a functionalist. Yet a few pages later my argument is said to be 'overflowing' its functionalist container (whatever that means). In his review he refers disapprovingly of my suggestion that French nobles knew their Homer and that the *Iliad* could provide a model for their behaviour. What Dewald fails to appreciate is that violence needs to be approached from different perspectives: it is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, with its own aesthetic, that has to be imagined.

*Blood and Violence* is bold and provocative and I hope it encourages robust and fair debate, which I welcome. But I will not be told how proper history should be written. Dewald wants us to go back to Huizinga, Elias, Bloch, and Febvre, only one of whom has much of value to say about the feud and he (Bloch) was writing about the period before 1200. I suggest we pay reverence where it is due, but that we do not look back, that we go forward in search of fresh ways to interpret late medieval and early modern political culture. In his review Dewald does not mention the word feud once, nor does he refer to the crucial role I attribute to religion as a mediator of violence. I leave it up to the reader to conclude who is being outlandish and pugnacious.

NOTES

[1] S. Carroll ed., *Cultures of Violence: Interpersonal Violence in Historical Context* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming, June 2007). http://www.palgrave.com/products/Catalogue.aspx?is=0230019455

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