

H-France Forum

Volume 8, Issue 3 (Summer 2013), No. 1

Arlette Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: The Mysteries of a Crime of State*, trans. Joseph Bergin. Manchester, U.K. and New York, N.Y.: Manchester University Press, 2013. xiv + 271 pp. Glossary, appendix, bibliography, and index. \$100.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0719088315.

Introduction by Joseph Bergin, University of Manchester

I read Arlette Jouanna's *La Saint Barthélemy* shortly after it was published in 2007, and I was soon sufficiently impressed by its qualities to begin to think how useful it would be to have an English translation of the book—as I had years ago with her equally impressive *Devoir de révolte*.^[1] The difference this time was that I pushed harder to find a publisher willing to take on the project, so that it remained only to find a translator.

There were two main reasons for seeking such an outcome. The first was the relative poverty of English-language publications on the subject available to readers; the second was Jouanna's own treatment of it. Ever since “putting religion back into the wars of religion” became the mantra of recent decades, the connections between religion and violence have come to the fore in historians' approach to the Wars of Religion, as is evident in the enduring influence of Natalie Davis's famous essay, recently revisited and celebrated by a younger generation of historians.^[2] For over twenty years now, the prolific Denis Crouzet's monumental excavations of the eschatological angst and emotional landscape of Reformation France have set the agenda for historians.^[3] Not surprisingly, “the” Massacre figures repeatedly as a key event in his work. But it is no secret that his prose is difficult to grasp and far more difficult to translate. Jean-Louis Bourgeon's essays and short monographs did not convince all of their readers, Jouanna included, but they, too, demonstrated what could be gained from returning to the sources and subjecting them to close forensic scrutiny.^[4] Some of this work was filtered into English-language scholarship, but even now readers remain on a slimmer's diet if they do not read French. Within English-language scholarship, N. M. Sutherland's 1973 book was dominated by the European conflict of its title, yet it has been far more extensively used by recent French historians of the Massacre than by their counterparts elsewhere.^[5] Barbara Diefendorf's more recent *Beneath the Cross*, which Jouanna used quite extensively, firmly placed the 1572 Massacre in its Parisian, urban-history context. Diefendorf's much shorter text and selection of documents on the Massacre only appeared in 2009.^[6] Ironically, the only book-length study of the Massacre available in English for many years was that by Philippe Erlanger, which originally appeared in the first Gallimard series, “Trente journées qui ont fait la France,” and which Jouanna's new book has replaced in the revamped collection! It was certainly not Erlanger's best work, and it appears to have attracted few readers, French or English.^[7] As a result, it has for too long been genuinely difficult to direct students towards an authoritative study of the most notorious instance of early modern religious violence.

In my obviously prejudiced view, Jouanna's book offers a judicious synthesis of these different historiographical *acquis*. But it is much more than a synthesis. She returned, to take just one example, to the surviving sources, French and Spanish, in order to decipher Franco-Spanish relations in the lead-up to the events of 1572. Her account of them struck me as realistic and far more credible than the conspiracy theories that have abounded in the field. She also did justice to Crouzet's analysis of the Neo-Platonic symbolism and court culture of Catherine de' Medici, especially as they were displayed in Henri IV's marriage to Marguerite de Valois. She has done the same in her analysis of the political ideas of the monarchomachs, liberally quoting the jurists and pamphleteers, but also the poets, such as Agrippa d'Aubigné, in her account of how the Protestants subsequently tried to understand the meaning of the Massacre. I was equally impressed by her grasp of the practical political maxims of the French

monarchy in its efforts to deal with overlapping events, local, national, and international, in the 1570s, as is most evident in her account of its tactics to control the circulation of information and interpretations of the Massacre within and outside France. Above all, this is a story that does not taper off in the weeks or months after the initial Massacre. Its longer-term fall-out, in both practical politics and the evolution of political ideas, occupies the extensive final section. The shifts in political attitudes, documented in the fascinating account of the debates of the Estates General of 1576, make it hard for the reader not to sense the lurking shadow of Jean Bodin, whose magnum opus, *The Six Books of the Commonwealth*, appeared in the same year. What the book offers is a carefully contextualized study of the massacres, Parisian and provincial, and their impact on attitudes of the warring religious confessions. In accordance with the philosophy of the French series in which the book originally appeared, it also seeks to tease out the ways in which the Massacre contributed to the subsequent evolution of French history. It does so in a way that avoids excessive teleology, while firmly suggesting how much it contributed to the debates that eventually cleared the way towards a concept of royal absolutism.

Readers will judge all this for themselves, but as I write these lines, I feel vindicated in my decision to translate this book, since Jouanna's fine new book, *Le Pouvoir absolu*, which covers the entire sixteenth century, has just landed on my desk.[8] Her work, written in classic French prose and characterized by an enviable combination of lucidity and balance, presents its own challenges to a translator, but if my efforts help to make it better known, as it deserves to be, they will have certainly been worth the effort. Meanwhile, thanks to the clarity of its organization and analysis, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre* offers students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, a context for understanding the genesis, forms, and intellectual as well as political consequences of early modern religious conflict generally, and not merely of religious violence.

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NOTES

[1] Arlette Jouanna, *Le Devoir de révolte. La noblesse française et la gestation de l'état moderne, 1559-1661* (Paris: Fayard, 1989).

[2] Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of violence: Religious riot in sixteenth-century France," *Past and Present* 59 (1973): 51-91, reprinted in Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1975), 152-18; and Graeme Murdock, Penny Roberts and Andrew Spicer, eds., *Ritual and violence: Natalie Zemon Davis and Early Modern France, Past and Present supplement 7* (Oxford, 2012). See also Mack P. Holt, "Putting Religion Back in the Wars of Religion," *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 2 (1993): 524-51.

[3] The most relevant are Denis Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de dieu. La Violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525 – vers 1610*, 2 vols. (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 1990; 1-vol reprint, 2005); idem, *La Genèse de la Réforme française, 1520-1562* (Paris: Sedes, 1996; Belin, 2008); idem, *La Nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy. Un rêve perdu de la Renaissance* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); idem, *Le Haut Coeur de Catherine de Médicis. Une raison politique aux temps de la Saint-Barthélemy* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2005); and idem, *Dieu dans ses royaumes. Une histoire des guerres de religion* (Seysssel: Champ Vallon, 2008).

[4] Jean-Louis Bourgeon, *L'Assassinat de Coligny* (Geneva: Droz, 1992); and idem, *Charles IX devant la Saint Barthélemy* (Geneva: Droz, 1995).

[5] N. M. Sutherland, *The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew and the European Conflict 1559-1572* (London: Macmillan, 1973).

[6] Barbara B. Diefendorf, *Beneath the Cross: Catholics and Huguenots in Sixteenth-Century Paris* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); and idem, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre: A Brief History with Documents* (New York, N.Y.: Macmillan, 2009).

[7] Philippe Erlanger, *Le Massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy, 24 août 1572* (Paris: Gallimard, 1960); and idem., *St. Bartholomew's Night: The Massacre of Saint Bartholomew*, trans. Patrick O'Brian (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1962).

[8] Arlette Jouanna, *Le Pouvoir absolu, naissance de l'imaginaire politique de la royauté* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013).

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ISSN 1553-9172

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