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Monstrueuse guerre! Literature and Warfare in Late Sixteenth-Century France

by

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Committee in charge:

Professor Timothy Hampton, Chair

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Abstract

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The end of the French Renaissance was marked by a period of violent civil conflict, often referred to as the Wars of Religion, which lasted from 1562 to 1598. While substantial work has been done on structures of violence during this period, literary scholarship has yet to engage fully with the implications of war in the development of literary discourse. Moving beyond readings in which war is relevant only as context, I recuperate both major and minor texts of this period as a corpus that offers a sustained reflection on the problem of how to represent violence in language. Because representing war requires writers to grapple with how to use language to represent violence inflicted on physical bodies, formal literary choices become part of a broader cultural discourse of how to think about and judge war. Looking at four different genres—essays, tragedy, epic, and memoir—my analysis highlights how, in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, literary form develops in part as a discursive response to a larger problem of how to represent war. Montaigne's *Essais* offers a hermeneutic of war based upon the assumption that choices about representation are also ethical choices. In humanist tragedy, language becomes an expressive vehicle for shaping our understanding of virtue, heroism, and community in the context of warfare. D'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques* reinvigorates epic and recuperates its potential for critiquing the excesses of warfare, while Monluc's *Commentaires* gives voice to a new kind of war hero who is neither glorified nor martyred but who epitomizes the professional. By exploring the diverse characteristics of war writing during this period, I contribute to our understanding of the complex relationship between the activity of war and related literary production, which can be traced and studied comparatively over different periods and literary traditions to help us better understand how we shape and are shaped by our experience with war.

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Introduction

I. Writing War

War is an abiding topic of discussion and debate. When people argue about war—including whether or not it should be waged, why, how, and against whom—they attempt to justify their conduct and judge the conduct of others, and they do so using language. While setting up the relationship between language and war in the introduction to *Just and Unjust Wars*, Michael Walzer makes the point that the vocabulary we have available colors our response to events. In other words, choices about how to represent war using language influence how we think about and judge it. Simply put, words—be they in the form of debates over whether or not to go to war, reports from the battlefield, or narrative recastings of combat—allow us to work through our thoughts about war. Therefore, representations of warfare in poems, plays, histories, or other genres all serve as arguments that put forth a particular point of view on the subject. By looking at written representations of war across several genres in late sixteenth-century France, we can start to uncover “a comprehensive view of war as a human activity” (Walzer xxi) during this period.

My goal in writing this dissertation is to tell a particular story about the French Wars of Religion. This is not a story of the battles that were fought or the religious and political convictions they were fought over; social and political historians of the period have already done a great deal of work on these topics.¹ Instead, by approaching the literature of the period from a new angle, my work points the way towards a gap in the cultural and intellectual history of the religious wars that is just beginning to be addressed, namely how certain French writers in the latter half of the sixteenth century chose to represent the subject of war. What story does the literature of the French Wars of Religion tell about war, and how is it told? In answering this question, I want to show how, in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, literary form develops in part as a discursive response to a larger problem of how to represent war. In addition to looking at the literature of this period in a new light, this project elicits reflection about the relation of those wars to other wars both before and since, specifically in the way that writers choose to represent some of the central ideas related to warfare, including violence, heroism, and how communities are defined in relation to conflict.

Beginning with the Homeric epics, the question of how to represent war has always posed a challenge to writers and artists, and it continues to do so to this day. In fact, as the media available for such representation has changed (photography, film, television journalism, blogging, real-time social media, etc.), the challenge has become ever more apparent and the stakes of these representational choices have

¹ The most comprehensive study of the intricacies of violence and noble culture during the Wars of Religion is Denis Crouzet’s two-volume study, *Guerriers de Dieu*. For more on the links between the culture of war and the nobility, see also Carroll, *Blood and Violence in Early Modern France*, especially 49-81, 130-159, and 264-284.

been brought into ever sharper focus. Judith Butler has recently drawn attention to how war and its consequences are framed in our cultural understanding, with no small sense of political urgency. What I call “representation” for the purposes of this dissertation is essentially what Butler, in the introduction to her collection of essays, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*, describes as “cultural modes of regulating affective and ethical dispositions through a collective and differential framing of violence” (xii). In other words, when examined together and in relation to one another, the composite of the ways in which “we,” in a particular culture at a particular time, write about violence and represent it in literature goes a long way in shaping how war is perceived, experienced, justified, and, most significantly, waged. Conversely, as the forms of warfare change, representational forms must adapt to account for new forms of experience. In particular, my dissertation will look at the presence of war in French literary discourse of the late Renaissance in order to examine the notion that at this juncture, in the closing decades of the sixteenth century, the French literary tradition, like the nascent form of the modern French nation-state, was, to a large extent, forged on the battlefield.

II. “Frames of War”/Framing War

As Judith Butler suggests, so much of how we understand war depends on how it is framed, and there are three major themes that will frame my own examination of the literature of the French religious wars. The first is the relationship between public and private and the way it shapes our understanding of virtue and heroism. The relationship between public and private is a very important topic in sixteenth-century France, where the lines between family, clan, and state are being blurred and where the military profession is undergoing a profound transformation. Public is exterior and state-centered, but also communal. Belonging to a group is an act of identifying publicly, and in war one usually belongs to one of two groups, which can be described in any number of ways depending on perspective or ideological agenda: us or them, winners or losers, attackers and defenders, aggressors and victims, or persecutors and persecuted. Private, on the other hand, is the space removed from the battlefield, be it the gendered domestic space of the family or the interior subjective space of the nascent modern individual.²

In literature, the figure of the hero is closely linked to warfare; beginning with Achilles, most pre-*Bildungsroman* literary heroes are also war heroes. One hallmark of the hero is exemplarity; he is a figure worthy of being imitated. Indeed the hero invites imitation because, as Timothy Hampton writes, “heroism is a rhetoric—a deliberative rhetoric intended to provoke action” (4). However, when we zero in on representations of violence in warfare, exemplarity becomes more problematic. This is apparent in Montaigne’s *Essais*, for example, with the moral

² For more on the idea of public versus private specifically in Montaigne, see Reiss “Montaigne et le sujet du politique.”

ambiguity of typically heroic figures such as Alexander and Julius Caesar. Although he includes them in his essay “Des plus excellens hommes” (II:36), which is ostensibly about superlative models of action, Montaigne concludes that their brutal style of waging war, driven by ambition, makes them not so much admirable as needlessly destructive: “Ce furent deux feux ou deux torrents à ravager le monde par divers endroits” (II:36, 418).³ In humanist tragedy, heroic actions on the battlefield are called into question by the suffering of those who are often at a greater physical remove from the fighting but still deeply affected by it, namely women. In Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques*, we are confronted with the horrors of reverse exemplarity in the poet’s depiction of the copycat massacres that followed the grisly Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in August, 1572.

A second theme that frames my research is the role of language and literary form in the shaping of history and heroism. Each of the works I am writing about deals with many of the same issues surrounding war, but they each “exhibit rhetorical modes that profoundly affect the way these issues are addressed” (Rigolot 3-4). These rhetorical modes take shape as genres, and it is the strategies deployed by each of these genres that interest me, as well as how they both overlap and differentiate themselves. Epic, for example, is the ancient genre of war writing *par excellence*, the genre of heroic action, battle tableaux, and imperial and national glorification. Michael Murrin’s work on Renaissance epic, for example, has demonstrated the relation of formal changes in the epic genre to technological changes in warfare, especially the so-called gunpowder revolution. Murrin argues that the advent of modern warfare and its techniques challenged and changed traditional vernacular literary forms including the epic and the romance.⁴

The third theme that frames my readings is the relationship between violence and the body in times of war. Any attempt to represent war, whether in language or with visual images, must grapple with the fact that war entails violence inflicted on bodies. By looking at how scenes of war are figured in these texts, I ask what the relationship is between violence and literary forms. At the same time, sixteenth-century portrayals of violence in war are framed by an ongoing discourse about war and peace. At the beginning of the sixteenth century there is a theoretical discourse about peace in the writings of Christian humanists. Most notably, the Dutch humanist Desiderius Erasmus made the case for war being both irrational and unnatural in the adage *Dulce bellum inexpertis* (“War is sweet to the

³ Alfredo Bonadeo explores this and other paradoxes of Montaigne’s presentation of war and war heroes, including the paradox of man’s simultaneous superiority and inferiority to beasts, in his essay, “Montaigne on War” (420-22).

⁴ Murrin also suggests that, to some extent, literary form and the forms of war bled into one another (83-87). The siege, for example, in spite of its anti-heroic nature, becomes one of the characteristic literary tableaux of the Renaissance epic because of its prevalence in contemporary practice. This will be an important point in Chapter One, below.

inexperienced”), lamenting that “there is nothing more wicked, more disastrous, more wildly destructive, more deeply tenacious, more loathsome.”⁵ In the latter half of the century, something like a legal framework begins to supercede the old humanist bromides about princes needing to be charitable and irenic. Spanish jurists such as Francisco de Vitoria (1486-1546) and Francisco Suarez (1548-1617) built off of Aquinas’s discussions of what actions were acceptable for Christians during war, laying the groundwork for a more general formulation of the laws of war in the following century.

Earlier, scenes of violence were often figured between the Christian and the “other,” with the 12th-century *Chanson de Roland* being the best-known example in the French tradition. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, the degree of difference or otherness between those on the inflicting and receiving end of violent interactions had diminished. The reform movement transformed the Pauline Christian brother touted by humanists into the religious other. This was accompanied by a shift from cross-cultural violence to civil violence. The fact that the decades of hostilities in France between 1562 and 1598, marked at intervals by uneasy peace, were an instance of civil war is important. The lack of a clear-cut definition of community (or the existence of competing models of community—Catholic and Protestant—within a larger community of Frenchman) throws into relief the question of the limits of violence. Just as the limits of violence become blurred, the boundaries of literary genre are blurred. The relationship between these limits will be at the center of this project. How is literary form related to the pervasive presence of the violence of warfare in the culture at this time? How does the writing of this period engage with and in turn re-imagine the violence to which it is at least to some degree a response? What forms does the representation of this violence take?

In the broadest terms, this dissertation is about war and how we understand and process it. This includes how we recognize, distinguish, honor, emulate, and mourn heroes, as well as how we represent the conflicts in which they fought. Looking specifically at how this takes place in literature raises a number of questions: What is the language of heroism? Are heroes public figures or private individuals? How is their virtue defined? How do such definitions influence the cultural processing of warfare? I am interested in looking at these questions for a particular time and place, i.e., France in the latter half of the sixteenth century.

Sparked by the religious upheaval of the Reformation and fueled by a precarious political situation, including a weak monarchy and powerful factions, the Wars of Religion (*guerres de religion*), as they are commonly called, dominated the political, social, and even literary landscape of the second half of the sixteenth

⁵ For further discussion of humanist thought on war and peace, see Margolin, *Guerre et paix dans la pensée d'Erasmus*, a compilation of and commentary on Erasmus’s writings; and Adams, *The Better Part of Valour*, especially 29-87.

century in France.⁶ The Renaissance dream of a culturally flourishing and militarily competent France whose aggression was directed outwards towards conquest ended in 1558 with the death of the king, Henri II, in a freak accident that occurred ironically during war games. Things took a further turn for the worse in 1562 when full-scale civil war broke out following a massacre of peaceful Protestant worshipers at Wassy ordered by the newly powerful duc de Guise. Over the next thirty years, France would see eight wars and four rulers in quick succession. In the same time, the exuberance of the literature of the early Renaissance was dampened; the linguistic playfulness of the *grands rhétoriciens*, the cornucopian richness of Rabelaisian prose, and the ennobling ambitions of the *Pléiade* poets were all replaced with darker themes.⁷ Just as war and violence marked the social, political, and geographical landscape in France during this period, they also marked the literary landscape.

The corpus that I will examine in the following chapters includes four distinct genres: essays, tragedy, epic poetry, and memoir. Despite substantial differences in form and conditions of production, these texts nevertheless all have crucial elements that bind them. For instance, they all shed light on the changing nature of heroism in warfare by posing, in varying ways, the question of what a hero is and trying to answer it. In addition, they all offer some reflection on the relationship between violence and the body during war. Nevertheless, these works have not been considered together by criticism before, in part because they are so very different. Yet it is precisely the generic breadth of this corpus that allows us to think more broadly about the representation of war in the Early Modern period. While a similar approach has been taken to the writing of the English Civil War of the following century with edited volumes including *The Cambridge Companion to Writing the English Revolution* (2006) and *Literature and the English Civil War* (2010), the literature of the French Wars of Religion has yet to be critically examined together in a similar way. The study of war writing is a rapidly expanding field of scholarly interest across all historical periods. The scope of this dissertation represents an effort to address the richness of writing produced in response to and as part of the religious and political tumult of this period of French history.

⁶ At the time, the conflicts were commonly referred to as *troubles* rather than *guerres*, a euphemism that demonstrates the power of language to shape how events are experienced and judged. This fluctuating terminology also brings to mind the more recent example of the Algerian War (1954-1962), which was referred to in official discourse in France with pernicious delicacy as *les événements d'Algérie* until 1999.

⁷ For an overview of French literature in the sixteenth century, see Simonin, ed., *Dictionnaire des lettres françaises - Le XVI^e siècle* (3-23).

III. Chapters

All of the aforementioned concerns relating to war writing are what bind together the otherwise disparate corpus of this dissertation, which is comprised of four distinct genres: essays, tragedy, epic poetry and memoir. Each of these genres to some extent shapes the picture of war it offers. Moreover, because genres come with certain conventions or expectations, not to mention possibilities (in the case of the essays and the memoir, especially), thinking in terms of genre helps me to zero in on how these texts highlight certain challenges of representing war by comparing them to standards. In other words, rather than viewing each genre as a strict set of norms to be followed or deviated from, I understand them as a kind of scaffolding or framework that can be shifted or built upon; the richness of these works as attempts at representing war lies in that movement. Indeed, when considered together as part of a repertoire of genres that deal with themes of war, all of these texts offer a fuller picture of the interaction between history (specifically war, in this case) and literature.⁸

In the first chapter, I look closely at several scenes of war in Montaigne's *Essais* (1580-90). I argue that despite Montaigne's retirement from active public life to the relative tranquility of his private home, the threat of violence is as pervasive in his text as it was in his world. The France in which he lived was torn by religious strife and factional violence, and while his is not an *homme de guerre* himself by profession, he is to some extent formed by war, simply by virtue of being a man of his time. In the essay "De la phisionomie" (III:12), for example, he recounts his near brush with death at the hands of a band of marauding soldiers who come to attack his home in the countryside, to which he had retired to read, write, and escape the vanities and headaches of public life. In addition to inhabiting a world at war, Montaigne has intimate experience with war in its textual form as he encounters it in history and poetry. Thus, careful attention to his practice of citation and his use of examples will allow me to consider Montaigne's own reflections on the relationship between writing and war as a relationship between rhetoric and action. From discussions about the conduct of exemplary military men from classical history such as Alexander, Caesar, and Epaminondas to reflections on contemporary military conduct, Montaigne addresses practical (i.e., tactical, strategic, and technical), political, and ethical aspects of war by way of historical example, classical literary topoi, and personal experience.

Next, I turn to the genre of tragedy. Tragedy is as old, formally speaking, as the essays are new; therefore, humanist tragedy, especially as an object of literary criticism, must grapple with formal baggage as much as the *Essais* liberate themselves from it. In part for this reason, the corpus I address in the second

⁸ For an overview of the field of genre studies, see Bahwarshi and Reiff, *Genre: An Introduction to History, Theory Research and Pedagogy*. Of special relevance to how I understand genre to be a useful category is the section on Rhetorical Genre Studies (78-104).

chapter has received much less critical attention than the *Essais*. Humanist tragedy generally suffers in the comparisons made with classical models of Greek and Roman tragedy or with French literature's golden age of *la tragédie classique* in the seventeenth century. The three plays I discuss in this chapter are no exception: Robert Garnier's *La Troade* (1579), Jean Robelin's *La Thébaïde* (1584), and the anonymous *Tragédie de Sac de Cabrières* (ca. 1566). However, all three plays are immediately concerned with wartime dilemmas, namely the circumstances surrounding a siege or its immediate aftermath; this allows me to focus on the way war is rendered in tragedy in the context of a society that was primed to read ancient tragedy as an allegory for contemporary misfortunes. Garnier, for example, makes explicit the link between the collective subject of his tragedy and the *nous* of the fractured French Christian community in the dedication of another of his plays, *Les Juives* (1583), in which he explains that the play portrays "les souspirables calamitez d'un peuple, qui a *comme nous* abandonné son Dieu" (ed. Jeanneret 27). While Montaigne is often centered on the individual, be it his own bodily experience or the actions of exemplary figures from literature and history, these tragedies expand outward to consider the relationship between individual and community in times of war.

In the third chapter, I consider the visual nature of violence as it is represented in Agrippa d'Aubigné's epic poem *Les Tragiques* (1616). In the same way that scholarship of humanist tragedy has been dominated by classical and neo-classical comparisons, epic expectations have limited critical consideration of D'Aubigné's florid poem. By focusing on the figuration of the body and its wounds experienced visually as testimony, I argue that D'Aubigné opens up the epic form to address concerns specific to a new kind of confessional warfare in which the justice of a community's cause is rendered visible by the wounded bodies of martyrs, who take the place of more traditional epic heroes. Epic is about forms of specific action that have communal consequences; so while tragic form highlights the ability of the voice to express a sense of community forged in mourning, D'Aubigné's epic posits submission to violence as a form of heroic action.

In the fourth and final chapter, I analyze the *Commentaires* of the Catholic career soldier Blaise de Monluc. Specifically, I argue that the use of a narrative mode and the insistence of presence on the battlefield and participation in violent action—on both the receiving and the inflicting end—personalize the link between war and writing in a way that makes his text stand out as an interesting forerunner to the explosion of first-hand accounts of war that we have seen in the last century. At issue in this chapter is the confluence of fighting and writing and its effects on literary responses to warfare, including the development of a testimonial narrative style and the practice of writing by a professional military man rather than a professional writer.

The four texts discussed in this dissertation illustrate the complexity of the literary response to the religious wars in France and the degree to which generic "evolution," for lack of a better term, is linked to cultural processing of violence. By

regarding these dissimilar texts as unified in the sense that they all take on the challenge of representing warfare we can start to see a heretofore unexplored dimension of the cultural response to warfare in sixteenth-century France.

Chapter One

“Par ce que c’est guerre”: War and Language in Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais*

Mais il ne faut pas appeller devoir (comme nous faisons tous les jours) une aigreur et aspreté intestine qui naist de l’interest et passion privée; ny courage, une conduite traistresse et malitieuse. Ils nomment zele leur propension vers la malignité et violence: ce n’est pas la cause qui les eschauffe, c’est leur interest; ils attisent la guerre non par ce qu’elle est juste, mais par ce que c’est guerre. (III:1, 8-9)¹

The above excerpt from the essay “De l’utile et de l’honeste” (III:1), which opens the third volume of Michel de Montaigne’s *Essais*, published in 1588, exposes a tension between the language of valor and honor commonly associated with war and the harsh reality of warfare as a violent and often senseless phenomenon of human existence.² In this short passage, Montaigne brushes aside the predominant mode of moral thought about warfare before the Renaissance—namely the idea of just war, or whether or not a conflict was sanctioned and supported by divine right—and focuses instead on the discrepancy between violent human actions and the language that is used to describe them.³ Montaigne is generally concerned with the relationship between language and the world, including how it can be used as a tool to describe, circumscribe, and judge man’s various enterprises. Yet the stakes of this relationship are greater in times of war. Writing of the state of civil war in France, he notes “et nous advient, ce que Thucidides dict des guerres civiles de son temps, qu’en faveur des vices publiques on les battisoit de mots nouveaux plus doux, pour leur excuse, abastardissant et amolmissant leurs vrais titres” (I:23, 167). This

¹ All references cite the three-volume paperback GF edition of the *Essais*, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1969. I cite the book number using roman numerals followed by the essay number and finally by the page number.

² Even today in the United States, for example, ‘duty’ and ‘courage’ are some of the most common terms applied to the ideology of military service and the profession of soldiering. Whether the violence of war is glorified and glamorized, as it is in the first-person shooter video game franchise *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare*, or glossed over to varying degrees, as in the US Marine Corps recruitment campaign “Honor, Courage, Commitment,” and the presentation of the Medal of Honor (the highest military decoration awarded by the US military for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his or her life above and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States”), the business of war is packaged in terms that recall an ethos of nobility.

³ For an overview of the development of so-called just war theory from Roman law to Machiavelli via Augustine and Aquinas, see the edited volume *The Ethics of War: Classic and Contemporary Readings*, 70-90, 169-198, and 251-258.

process of updating vocabulary to gloss over acts of violence, brutality, and injustice is illustrated beautifully in the above quotation from “De l’utile et de l’honeste” (III:1): when internal bitterness is called duty, treachery is labeled courage, and a propensity to violence is hailed as zeal, a war can no longer accurately be considered just. Stripped of linguistic qualifications or justifications, war boils down to violence inflicted on bodies, which makes writing about it a challenge. For Montaigne, the problem of how to portray, narrate, or depict war is bound up with problems of communication and representation that lie at the heart of the *Essais*. In this chapter, I will explore the relationship between language, with its dual function as a medium of representation and a means of communication, and war in Montaigne’s *Essais*.⁴ As a tractable human contrivance, language is used to give form or understanding to unstructured or chaotic aspects of human existence, such as war and the violence it entails; the ways in which we talk or write about such experiences is a form of issuing judgments about them.

Although war is not the subject of the *Essais*, *per se*, it is present on nearly every page of the text. Sometimes it takes the form of observations about various aspects of the religious wars that raged in France from 1562 through Montaigne’s death in 1592. Often it takes the form of commentary on scenes from Classical or more recent history that he encounters in his extensive reading. For Montaigne, war is an integral and inevitable part of the human condition, and he approaches it as he approaches his kidney stones, that is to say, as a concrete element of his own existence. He often privileges war scenes, such as sieges, which stage ethical dilemmas and demonstrate his concern about the reliability of language; such moments in the *Essais* provide a link between Montaigne’s thoughts about warfare and his own writing project. As the name *Essais*—from the noun *un essai*, meaning a try or an attempt—suggests, Montaigne’s project is an experimental one. He explains in the prefatory “Au lecteur,” that his goal is straightforward: to present himself to his reader without pretense or cover-up. “Je veux qu’on m’y voie en ma façon simple, naturelle et ordinaire, sans contention et artifice” (I, 35), he writes. As part of his attempt at unornamented self-representation, he must deal with the problem of how to represent war as part of his experience; and thus his characterization of war reflects back on his presentation of himself.

There are two problems related to the project of writing simultaneously about warfare and about the self that arise for Montaigne. First, there is the problem of representation, or mimesis; any attempt to represent war must grapple with the fact that war entails violence inflicted on bodies. Second, there is the problem of interpretation, or hermeneutics, which leads us to ask the following questions: How are we to interpret both what the *Essais* have to say about war and the self that Montaigne portrays? In this chapter, I show how Montaigne suggests a

⁴ For more on the transposition of combat to conversation in “Par divers moyens on arrive à pareille fin” (I:1) and “L’art de conferer” (III:8), see Quint, *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy*, 102-144.

hermeneutics of war—that is, a way to interpret war as we encounter it through representation—that is based upon the assumption that choices about writing and representation are also ethical choices.⁵

In four movements, this chapter will trace the extent to which Montaigne develops such a hermeneutics in dialogue with other cultural representations of warfare, both ancient and contemporary.⁶ First, in a discussion of the concept of *bonne foy*, or good faith, I will argue that Montaigne’s concerns with interpretation need to be understood in the context of a tradition of legal hermeneutics stretching back to Roman law (*Corpus Juris Civilis*).⁷ Then, I will look more closely at scenes of siege warfare, arguing that the formal qualities of the siege as a circumscribed instance of warfare make it particularly suited to Montaigne’s own chosen form of representing war, the essay. Next, I explore the threat of violence that is always lurking in language, especially in the moment of parley during a siege. Finally, I offer a close reading of the essay “Observations sur les moyens de faire le guerre de Jules Cesar” (II:34) in which I propose that the figure of Caesar, as Montaigne encounters him through his reading of the *Commentarii*, provides a foil against which Montaigne stakes out an ethical position on how to represent war and how to represent himself in relation to war.

The *Essais* show two coexisting poles of the experience of war that complicate its representation: valor and the beauty of noble action on the one hand, and cruelty, carnage, and massacre on the other. Throughout the text, Montaigne juxtaposes a laudable military ethic based on heroism and martial virtue with the horrors of cruelty and violence. The simultaneous presence of these two aspects of combat foregrounds one of the biggest paradoxes of representing war, namely the simultaneous need to glorify and to condemn.⁸ The very form of the essay allows Montaigne to capitalize on the tension between these two aspects of warfare and makes such a rich and complex representation of war possible. As we sift through

⁵ When we think about the ethics of war we usually think about how and why wars are *fought* (just war theory, international legal discourse, etc.) But we only have to think about contemporary journalism and media—newspapers, television, film, video games, etc.—to realize that the ways in which wars are represented also have profound ethical implications. For a discussion of the ethical implications of war’s portrayal in contemporary media, see Butler, *Frames of War*, 63-100.

⁶ For Montaigne’s own hierarchy of representation (poetry versus history, etc.), see the essay “Des livres” (II:10).

⁷ Montaigne received a legal education and would have been familiar with this tradition, as would many of his contemporaries among the *noblesse de robe*. For more on the Roman law tradition and legal hermeneutics in Renaissance France, see Maclean, *Interpretation and Meaning in the Renaissance*, especially 16 and 135-140.

⁸ For a presentation of the general concerns of “war writing” and its emergence as a distinct field of study, see McLoughlin, *The Cambridge Companion to War Writing*, 1-6.

the examples, quotations, fragments, and *sententiæ* that pile up in the *Essais* as part of an ever-expanding commentary, war emerges as a field of human experience, among others, that has varied and momentous consequences in relation to the self, including the threat of violence on the body, the opportunity to distinguish oneself or be exemplary, and the need to navigate thorny moral choices.

In his essay “War and Representation,” Frederic Jameson elaborates on war’s peculiar resistance to representation. “War,” he writes, “offers the paradigm of the nominalist dilemma: the abstraction from totality or the here and now of sensory immediacy and confusion” (1532). He goes on to enumerate eight narrative variants of the genre of “war stories”, including experiential (existential and collective), institutional and hierarchical, and technological. The problem with each of these alternatives, however, is that war resists narration or any kind of straightforward representation. Thus, according to Jameson, formal innovation is necessary to navigate the singular challenge of representing war. Jameson cites Hans Jakob von Grimmelhausen’s fantastic adventure narrative *Der abenteuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* (1668) as an example of what he means by a formally innovative text that pushes back against war’s resistance to narrative. While the fictional, episodic nature of Grimmelhausen’s novel might invite a more obvious formal comparison to Rabelais’s *Gargantua et Pantagruel* than to the *Essais*, it bears a functional similarity to Montaigne’s text. Indeed, the formal innovation of the essay works not unlike that of the *Simplicissimus*, as Jameson describes it: both texts are endlessly productive. While Grimmelhausen’s text is endlessly productive of generic scenes of the horrors of war, Montaigne’s text is endlessly productive of scenes of ethical reflection about conduct in warfare.

The story about war that emerges in the *Essais* is not a narrative—a form to which Montaigne is self-avowedly resistant. Despite the urging of some of his contemporaries who believe he has the ideal combination of temperament and social placement to take on the role of a chronicler, Montaigne rejects any such vocation. Reflecting on his own writing style in “De la force de l’imagination” (I:21), Montaigne explicitly disavows the narrative model that would align his project with a memorialist or commentarist goal of recounting actions, be they his own or those of others:

[Q]u’il n’est rien si contraire à mon stile qu’une narration estendue: je me recoupe si souvent à faute d’haleine, je n’ay ny composition, ny explication qui vaille, ignorant au-delà d’un enfant des frases et vocables qui servent aux choses plus communes;...si j’en prenois qui me guidast, ma mesure pourroit faillir à la sienne; que ma liberté, estant si libre, j’eusse publier des jugemens, à mon gré mesme et selon raison, illigittimes et punissables. (I:21, 152)

Thus, as far as writing about war is concerned, he refuses to be led along by his subject and all that it often entails for a writer, whether a historian or a poet, including the traps of partisan politics, imperial or nationalist ideology, and self-

aggrandizement.⁹ Moreover, the allusion to illegitimacy and punishment—especially in an atmosphere of civil war, retributive attacks, and threats of rebellion against authority—serves as a clear reminder of the real and violent consequences of getting carried away by passion.¹⁰ By associating various literary forms with problematic ethical outcomes, Montaigne sets the stage for his own style—and the essay form—as a solution for providing a more measured and circumspect judgment of human conduct in times of war.

I. Building trust: Laying/Layering the foundations of good faith

“Cecy est un livre de bonne foy, lecteur” (I, 35). The *Essais* begin boldly with a claim of good faith (“bonne foy”), which sets the tone for everything that follows. Part of the original 1580 edition, this assertion of good faith serves to justify not only the innovative essay form, but also the layers of expanding commentary that makes up the subsequent editions of 1588 and 1595.¹¹ Comprised of three books containing one hundred and seven chapters of varying lengths treating a diverse range of subjects, the *Essais* expands outward from this premise of reliability. Exploring the anxiety about the bad faith (“mauvaise foi”) implicit in this opening declaration, Yves Delègue concludes that the struggle between good and bad faith is a manifestation of Montaigne’s acute consciousness of the act of communicating through the unreliable medium of language.¹² In Montaigne’s case, however, anxiety concerning the reliability of language is never far removed from the realm of action and ethics in both private and public contexts. For example, when he somewhat reluctantly accepts his appointment of mayor of Bordeaux, Montaigne spells out exactly what should be expected of him during his tenure, based on the limitations

⁹ These “traps” of writing about war are closely tied to the genres of propaganda or pamphlet literature, epic, and the tradition of the Caesarean first-person memoir, respectively.

¹⁰ For more on the general philosophical context of the passions in the early modern period and their role in political thought, see Kahn et. al., *Politics and the passions*, 1-6.

¹¹ The first two books of the *Essais* were published in 1580. In 1588, an expanded edition was published that included a third book and additions to the first two. A third edition, which appeared posthumously in 1595, includes additions to all three books from the last four years of Montaigne’s life. In each new edition, the old essays are not revised but layered, with new text being added to the old without anything being removed. This gives the work its unique quality of depth; the essays can be read in a linear fashion as a series of chapters or “vertically” as a layered commentary. The versions are often referred to respectively as the a-, b-, and c-versions of the text, terms which I will also use.

¹² Delègue, *Montaigne et la mauvaise foi: l’écriture de la vérité*. For more on conversation and linguistic exchange in the *Essais*, see Terence Cave, *How to Read Montaigne*, 96-105.

of his character, and according to him, his success in the role relies in a large part on good-faith adherence to this forewarning:

A mon arrivée, je me deschiffray fidelement et consciencieusement, tout tel que je me sens estre: sans memoire, sans vigilance, sans experience, et sans vigueur; sans hayne aussi, sans ambition, sans avarice, et sans violence; à ce qu'ils fussent informez et instruits de ce qu'ils avoyent à attendre de mon service. ("De mesnager sa volonté" III:10, 217)

To understand the connection between Montaigne's project as a writer and his perspective on war, we must consider the broader implications of the *bonne foy* that Montaigne invokes at the outset of his text.

While Montaigne's use of good faith may be an original literary conceit, the concept has a rich heritage that would have been familiar in some form to anyone steeped in Roman legal tradition and chivalric ideals. *Bonne foy* originates in the ancient legal concept of *bona fides*. As an element of Roman contract law, *fides* implied a reciprocal assumption of privileges and responsibilities in an agreement between two parties and was considered to be both an essential element in the character of a man of public affairs and a necessary constituent of all social and public transactions (Berger 374, 471). The applications of good faith extended beyond civil law to relations between other entities, like states or princes. In his essay concerning the ideals of public behavior, *De Officiis*, Cicero identifies *bona fides* as the foundation of justice in dealing with an enemy. In other words, *fides* is one of the foundational concepts of one of the earliest iterations of just war theory and of the laws of war or international humanitarian law more generally.¹³

While the concept of good faith existed in a formal legal context and was codified in the rules governing the conduct of war, it was also part of the cultural attitudes that governed expectations for behavior in combat. In the medieval conceptualization of how war should be waged, good faith was of the utmost importance, in part because it corresponded with the idea of justice. Within the medieval framework of military ethics—the doctrine of just war known as *Bellum iustum*—the military phase of a campaign was understood to be the administration of justice rather than the means of determining which side justice was on. Fighting itself was therefore considered under the category of *jus in bello*, or the laws governing conduct in war, while the category *jus ad bellum* concerned the justifications for waging of war in the first place. In this system, breaking the faith largely undermined the idea that violence was justified.

Additionally, good faith has important implications in the ethical conduct of warfare. Most importantly, as a guarantor of a certain standard of moral conduct, it carries with it the potential to regulate and limit the violence of warfare. Writing

¹³ This passage in Cicero also addresses the importance of forewarning, which has bearing in a discussion of good faith. "No war is just unless it is waged after a formal demand for restoration, or unless it has been formally announced and declared beforehand." (*The Ethics of War* 52)

about the moral limits of military deception, John Mattox clarifies the central role of good faith in limiting violence in warfare:

Without good faith, the absence of which is implied by the perpetration of illicit deceptions, there exists no rational basis for the minimization of either violence or suffering, and hence no expectation that a just and lasting peace is actually the true aim towards which the war is prosecuted. (250)¹⁴

In the context of the *Essais*, such assumptions about good faith translate into judgments about the character of those engaged in combat and therefore to the depiction of heroism and heroic action. Although it is not explicitly linked with *virtu* or valor, good faith nevertheless emerges as a crucial ethical component in Montaigne's depiction of warfare. In a chivalric context, good faith had currency between knights and resulted in the taking of prisoners rather than killing each other. In other situations, however, the chivalric code did little to curtail bloodshed. For example, taking a town or castle that refused to surrender was considered as exercising predetermined justice, and thus there was no real incentive for limiting violence. As the conditions of warfare changed over the course of the sixteenth-century, with sieges becoming an increasingly prominent mode of fighting, there was an increasing need to reexamine the place of good faith as an ethical standard of heroic behavior. Thus Montaigne's claims of good faith for his own text, as well as for his own public conduct in his role as mayor, have important implications in relation to the ethical conduct of warfare. What exactly, then, is the connection between the *bonne foy* claimed by the text and the *bona fides* expected on battlefield?

The way Montaigne positions himself as a writer is deeply influenced by both a broad philosophical context that privileged serious moral and ethical reflection and a culture of warfare at once deeply entrenched in a tradition of chivalry and rapidly changing to address technological and social changes. Just as the imperative of *bona fides* carries the weight of establishing justice in warfare, the simple admonition of good faith in "Au Lecteur" sets forth the rules of engagement in the *Essais*. However, the relation is not purely a metaphorical one. This is an important point because I want to suggest that Montaigne's portrayal of warfare is deeply engaged and carries with it a sense of what is truly at stake in the manner and reasons that wars are waged—namely, human lives. Despite Montaigne's famous self-exile from public life to his chateau in the Dordogne in 1571, at the relatively young age of thirty-eight, his text is not a world apart from the ever-present threat of violence that existed contemporaneously with its production. While it eschews traditional narrative modes of representing war, the *Essais* is nevertheless a document concerned with and shaped by war.

¹⁴ As quoted in Bennet, "Legality and legitimacy in war and its conduct, 1350-1650," which provides an excellent overview of the development of the rules governing warfare during this period.

War, however, is just one of a vast number of experiences that make up the human condition—and more specifically Montaigne's own human condition, which is what the *Essais* are really about. So what is the link between how Montaigne represents warfare and how he represents himself? As the principal subject of his own writing, Montaigne is not constructed entirely of one kind of encounter with the world. Self and text are composed of a rich variety of experiences: textual, corporeal, phenomenological, educational, sexual, and emotional, to name a few. In his essay on Montaigne in *Mimesis*, "L'Humaine condition," Eric Auerbach argues that Montaigne's portrayal of the human condition relies on the continual interaction of the self with its own vicissitudes, other texts, other subjects, and the world in which it exists and must function. Auerbach's point of departure is the opening of the second essay of the third book, "Du repentir," where Montaigne makes one of many references to the scope of his project: "Les autres forment l'homme: je le récite; et en représente un particulier bien mal formé" (III:2, 20). As Auerbach understands them, the *Essais* are an attempt to portray a moving human subject—rickety and tottering though it may be—true to the vicissitudes of his inner self as well as those of his continually aging physical body.

In particular, Auerbach elaborates on the importance of Montaigne's unique style to this pioneering self-fashioning of a modern subject. Addressing the place of irony in the text and its relation to Montaigne's style, he writes:

[Irony] gives his style an extremely delightful flavor, and a flavor perfectly suited to his subject; but the reader should beware of becoming too entangled by it. He means it seriously and emphatically when he says that his representation, however changeable and diverse it is, never goes astray and that though perhaps at times he contradicts himself, he never contradicts the truth. (291-2)

For all of his irony and his going back upon himself, Montaigne is not guilty of *mauvaise foy*; his style may be slippery, but it is not treacherous. It is important, therefore, to distinguish the essayist's suspicions about language as a reliable tool for communication from his commitment to communicating the essence of his being through that very medium. The seriousness of his commitment to truthful representation extends to what he has to say about war.

In a similar vein, Jean Starobinski, in his study *Montaigne en mouvement*, understands Montaigne's project as a struggle with experience in its myriad forms, including living and writing. Part of this struggle involves how to deal with the tricky medium of language and the hypocrisy of the world. According to Starobinski, the *Essais* betray an anxiety about whether language can communicate anything real or authentic about action. Both Starobinski and Auerbach, though, are willing to take Montaigne at his word and accept his claim of good faith as something more than a literary conceit or a textual ruse intended to charm or dupe the reader into not taking anything too seriously. Far from being a trick—a "ruse de situation," as Delègue calls it—good faith emerges as a place where language and violence collide in the text, allowing us to get to the center of Montaigne's ethical thought. It is easy

to focus on the originality of the opening good faith claim solely in the context of literary history and to read it (as many do) as an index of interiority. And yet, if we consider good faith in the broader context that I have suggested, with its implications, both historical and contemporary, in civil and humanitarian law, its role in the centuries-old development of the laws and rules governing conflict, and its place in a tradition of legal and ethical theory, then we begin to uncover a previously overlooked dimension of the *Essais*'s engagement with warfare.

II. Siege warfare: enduring topos and real threat

Of all the forms of military engagement that are linked to moral reflection in the *Essais*, it is the siege that stands out. For one thing, in siege operations more than in any other form of warfare, outcomes hinge on language rather than action. Verbal negotiations were built into the structure of siege warfare; under the "laws of war" (codified in practice if not yet written into an international legal code) parley during a siege demanded a certain protocol. Breaching this protocol through treachery or bad faith constituted a violation of an established military code of conduct and thus voided all guarantees of safety promised by the other side. With the increasing importance of reliable speech and the emphasis placed on linguistic ability, the shift to siege warfare can be linked to a shift in the nature of heroism and how it is depicted in Montaigne's representation of war. The role of language in the siege leaves situations open to outcomes that rely more on skill with language than on traditional martial skills while also opening the door to trickery and bad faith.

The link between language and siege warfare is not limited to the role linguistic exchange played in siege operations. The siege is also a recognizable literary *topos* stretching back to Homer's *Iliad* that carries with it certain expectations about genre and narrative, as well as a certain image of war. Familiar to readers as a set piece for epic action or a background for the clash of dueling heroes or battling armies, the siege takes on a markedly different role in Montaigne as an ethical set piece. Although people are killed in a siege, the carnage is often not narrated in the way that the action of a battle or a duel usually is. This is in part because casualties of a siege are often civilians rather than military heroes. In the *Essais*, references to the carnage of siege warfare are brief, but explicit and numerous; the violence of these encounters is often summed up with one party or other being hacked to pieces.¹⁵ At one point, for example, we are told of an ensign who goes crazy from fear during the defense of the village of Saint Pol and is "mis en pieces par les assaillans" ("De la peur" I:18, 120), while in another instance we hear of the brutal aftermath of the storming of a castle by the forces of Monsieur de Montmorency where "tout ce qui estoit dedans... esté mis en pieces par la furie des

¹⁵ Formally, Montaigne's listing of deaths resembles Tacitus's. See Barthes's essay "Tacitus and the Funerary Baroque" (99-102) for a consideration of the relative impact of the victims' social status on how much their death stands out in a list of violent anonymous casualties.

soldats" ("On est puny pour s'opiniâtrer une place sans raison" I:15, 111). What stands out in these moments and others like them is the extreme fragility of the body in times of war. The difference between remaining intact or being in pieces often rests on the fine moral distinctions that, according to Montaigne, can be captured in the language used to describe or judge particular actions.

That the siege is able to function so well as an ethical set piece is due only in part to its role as an established literary topos. Siege operations were also a prominent part of sixteenth-century warfare, which adds another dimension in which the siege would have been rendered readable to Montaigne's contemporaries.¹⁶ In fact, between the start of France's religious troubles in 1562 and the publication of the first edition of the *Essais* in 1580, the siege had replaced pitched battle as the predominant mode of fighting. In 1562, Rouen was besieged by Catholic forces, followed by Orléans in 1563, Sancerre in 1572, La Rochelle in 1572-3, and La Fère in 1579. The few large, pitched battles of the first three wars—Dreux (1562), Jarnac (1569), and Montcontour (1569)—were largely inconclusive, and their repercussions were more perceptual and psychological than tactical.¹⁷ The siege, on the other hand, became the site of a new kind of military heroism that depended less on valor than on strategy. As fortifications were improved to counter the effects of increasingly powerful artillery,¹⁸ the role of the siege commander became increasingly important, and the siege offered unique opportunities for military distinction. François de Guise, a leader of the royal army and the Catholic faction until his death in 1563, cemented his reputation as a commander through a series of successful sieges at the end of the Italian/Hapsburg wars: Metz (1552-3), Calais (1557-58), Thionville (1558), and Arlon (1558). The extent to which the siege was an increasingly "readable" situation to contemporaries in the context of current events is reinforced by the relative ambivalence about Guise's role as commander at the battle of Dreux, a sentiment Montaigne himself relates in an essay about the battle ("De la bataille de Dreux" I:44).

Although the importance of siege operations during this period has been widely acknowledged and studied by military historians, the siege remains a largely unexplored topos in Montaigne's text. Yet, like the essay form more generally, Montaigne's deployment of the siege topos is effective because it thwarts expectations; what we think we know about how people should act is turned on its

¹⁶ For background on significant developments and changes in military operations in sixteenth-century France, see Potter, *Renaissance France at War*. Of particular interest is the section on siege warfare (152-183).

¹⁷ The battle of Dreux in particular left a deep impression: "On the psychological level, the mutual slaughter of Frenchman in the first great battle of the civil wars must have swept aside any remaining hesitations to the normalization of the killing of each other by the military elite of France." (Wood 203)

¹⁸ For a discussion of the impact of new gun technology on defense, see Vale, "New Techniques and Old Ideals: The Impact of Artillery."

head. For example, his use of the siege as an ethical testing ground relies on a familiarity with siege warfare as both a literary commonplace and a common collective historical experience. In fact, thinking of the siege as a topos—meaning *place* in Greek—is particularly apt because the walled city that serves as the site of a siege is quite literally a *locus communis*, or a common place.¹⁹ In addition to this etymological evocation of a physical place, the commonplace was an important literary form in the Renaissance. Commonplace books were widely used to record and collect a range of knowledge on various themes and served as a mnemonic tool for remembering useful concepts and facts that would inform subsequent reading and judgment.²⁰ Montaigne and his contemporaries were familiar with the sieges of history and poetry—Homer, Josephus, Tasso—in addition to having a first-hand awareness of siege warfare. Consequently, it makes sense to read the sieges in the *Essais* within the dual conceptual matrices of literary-historical consciousness and material and sensory immediacy. By making the siege a commonplace in his text Montaigne effectively stages a disconnect between action and empty words of conventional morality, between pithy sayings about warfare and the brutal reality of what is at stake when bodies become vulnerable during a conflict.

Having established a background for an interpretative framework for the siege scenes in the *Essais* it remains to examine the formal structure of the siege itself and its implications for literary form. As an event, a siege is, to a large extent, a static phenomenon. It is a waiting game in which action does not transpire in an immediate and compelling way, as it might in a battle. It lacks the dramatic unity of time, place, and action that give the pitched battle its compelling narrative line. At first glance, conducting a successful siege is a simple question of overpowering the defenses of the targeted town. If the initial use of force fails, the operation turns into a game of attrition as the besieging forces wait for defenses to crumble. What stands out in this mode of waging war is the expansiveness or suspended nature of time. In contrast to battles, which were usually concluded in an hour or two, sieges were drawn-out, uncertain affairs that required a huge commitment of time and materiel. Moreover, their suspended nature could render the violence of their conclusions even more shocking.

In addition to being expanded in time, the siege is also constricted in space. Confined to “a definite, enclosed space which is assaulted and defended” (Hebron 2),

¹⁹ The besieged city is a *locus communis* in which the idea of community takes on a heightened importance because the inhabitants face a mutual threat from an outside force. The topic of war’s effect on a community, especially as it is represented in tragedy, will be explored in greater depth below in Chapter Two.

²⁰ “The commonplace-book suggests a method of reading as well as of writing, and it has its implications for the critical attitudes readers brought to texts. With his commonplace-book in hand, the reader brought a series of pre-prepared headings: conceptual matrices into which he expected his reading matter to fit.” (*Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* 151)

and drawn out over an expanded period of time—often weeks or months—sieges create unique challenges of representation. In the epic tradition, the siege is often pushed aside by the text to make room for action. It remains a kind of set piece, part of the backstory and not the focus of the narrative. We have only to think of the duel between Hector and Achilles in Book Nine of Homer’s *Iliad*. It is the brilliant clash of those two great champions and not the drawn-out frustration of ten years of siege warfare that carries the story. Similarly, romances “normally presupposed a siege, but assumed a battle or a duel resolved it” (Murrin 82). To put it in grammatical terms, the siege typically serves as an imperfective backdrop, which is then punctuated with perfective moments of action, such as assaults, spirited defenses, sorties, parleys, or duels between representative champions.²¹ However, these perfective moments—such as the series of siege scenes in the first essay of Book I, entitled “Par divers moyens on arrive a pareille fin” (I:1), which I will address in more detail further on—are not simply foreground action against the backdrop of a siege. Rather, they are very much a part of a siege’s structure and are at the heart of some of Montaigne’s most important observations about warfare. Because the siege has clear physical boundaries in the form of walls that need to be defended from attack, it provides an opportunity to address the question of limits in the more abstract ethical context of how people should conduct themselves in war.

In the essay “On est puny pour s’opinionaster à une place sans raison” (I:15), Montaigne uses a discussion of conduct in siege warfare to explore the thin line separating virtue from vice in a military context. The essay opens with the following cautionary maxim about valor, which was one of the distinguishing traits of the noble man-of-arms and also a highly-regarded characteristic of literary representations of heroism.

La vaillance a ses limites, comme les autres vertus; lesquels franchis, on se trouve dans le train du vice; en manière que par chez elle on se peut rendre a temerité, obstination, folie, qui n’en sçait les bornes, malaiseez en verité à choisir sur leurs confins. (I:15, 111)

As is his custom, Montaigne warns against absolute moral values; the boundary marking virtue from vice is not always as clear as the fortified city or fortress wall that separates attackers from defenders during a siege. Any virtue, when taken too far, runs the risk of making the entire edifice crumble. In this case, steadfastness for its own sake is not worth the harm that it can bring in the context of a failed defense during a siege. Indeed, Montaigne reiterates this in his essay “De la constance” (I:11) when he writes “La Loy de la resolution et de la constance ne porte pas que nous ne nous devions couvrir, autant qu’il est en nostre puissance, des maux et inconveniens qui nous menace” (I:11, 85).

Although Montaigne relies heavily on the literary commonplace, he is everywhere skeptical of “common” thought and action. For example, the first essay

²¹ I am indebted to Mairi McLaughlin for this insight about the grammatical time of the siege.

of Book I, “Par divers moyens on arrive a pareille fin,” opens with the observation that the most common way (“la plus commune façon”) of eliciting clemency from someone who has you at his mercy is to make oneself submissive. This remark is immediately followed by the concession that sometimes just the opposite is the case: “Toutesfois la braverie et la constance, moyens tous contraires, ont quelquefois servi à ce mesme effect” (I:1, 39). By complicating a commonplace about clemency with a contradictory observation, Montaigne establishes the somewhat slippery and noncommittal quality of his style and sets the tone of the *Essais* as a work that offers a sense of relativity in its judgments.

At this crucial opening moment of his text, Montaigne turns immediately to several examples of siege warfare to elucidate a complex moral dilemma of war, namely how to deal with one’s enemies, civilians, or combatants after they are defeated. He begins with an anecdote about the siege of Limoges by the Black Prince (Edward of Wales) in 1370, an episode originally recounted in Froissart’s chronicles. Introducing the prince somewhat sympathetically as “celuy qui regenta si long temps nostre Guienne, personnage duquel les conditions et la fortune ont beaucoup de parties de grandeur” (I:1, 39), Montaigne immediately goes on to complicate his character by portraying him as a merciless conqueror, deaf to the cries of the women and children of Limoges who are butchered when their town finally falls. This brutality is in line with Froissart’s version, but the chronicler alleges that the massacre of thousands of inhabitants was brought on by a “violent passion” that drove the prince to breach the “laws of arms”, which mandated mercy in such a situation.

Montaigne, however, glosses over the legal context that includes a protocol of appropriate action in the case of breeched siege defenses. Instead, he shifts the burden of judgment to the Prince’s own chivalric sensibilities. “La consideration et le respect d’une si notable vertu reboucha premierement la pointe de sa cholere; et commença par ces trois, à faire misericorde à tous les autres habitans de la ville” (I:1, 39). The unsettling thing about Montaigne’s Black Prince is that this supposed “paragon of chivalric courtesy” (Stacey 37) recognizes and responds only to valor, and not to human suffering. Moreover, Montaigne strips him of the excuse of losing his head to passion, or ire, thus calling into question the strength of his moral position. By rewriting the episode to elide the legal context, Montaigne effectively transforms the episode from a military event that can be judged according to adherence to rules to a moral test, thereby calling into question the value of the prince’s clemency.

In light of this example, the *commune façon* referenced at the beginning of the essay would appear to refer not only to the method most often used to seek clemency but also to the method of the common people or rabble, as opposed to the nobility. The essay goes on to reinforce this idea, telling us that being easily moved to pity is part of the softness of women and children and the common herd, while “de se render à la seule reverence de la sainte image de la vertu, que c’est l’effect d’une ame forte et imployable, ayant en affection et en honneur une vigueur masle

et obstinée" (I:1, 40). The qualifiers inflexible ("imployable") and obstinate ("obstinée") stand out here; because Montaigne is staunchly opposed to dogmatism and other forms of unyielding, their appearance calls into question the ostensibly sacred image of valor. Once again, setting this reading in the context of contemporary practice of siege warfare draws our attention to the ambiguity of moral judgment in times of war. The common herd is the cause of much violence, in Montaigne's view, when they attempt to participate in war, but in the reality of a siege situation, common people often became heroes in their own right, as at the siege of Malta (1565).²²

Such complications brought about by a blending of common and more traditionally heroic figures in the siege point to a split between heroic personality and its *mise en forme*. David Quint draws attention to the sometimes-paradoxical relationship between valor and flexibility in a chapter of his study *Montaigne and the Quality of Mercy* entitled "An Ethics of Yielding." Quint posits a reimagining or reconfiguration of confrontation in the form of conversation. The move from fighting to talking follows a cultural trajectory of civility, most famously elaborated for the French nobility by Norbert Elias.²³ Pointing specifically to Montaigne's use of figures of jousting and hunting, Quint claims that "Montaigne has reimagined aristocratic blood sports without the blood" (114). However, in his reading, Quint neglects the legal context, which, as we saw earlier in this chapter, was developing around the rapidly changing practice of warfare. Like most critics, Quint reads "Par divers moyens on arrive a pareille fin" as an essay about nobility.²⁴ For example,

²² One of the most striking and significant examples of the social leveling of heroism during siege warfare is the 1565 siege of Malta. The Knights of Malta, who were supposed to be the last bastion of the united Christian front against the Ottoman Empire as well as the last vestige of European knighthood, didn't really do all that much; it was the inhabitants of Malta who were largely responsible for the island's defense. For a detailed account of this conflict and its importance in the larger picture of European warfare in the sixteenth century, see Crowley, *Empires of the Sea*, 164-180.

²³ In *The Court Society*, Elias seeks to explain the rise of state power arguing that the court and its civilizing rituals became an instrument of social control that enabled the centralized state to retain power over the nobility while diminishing their independent use of violence.

²⁴ Quint is not alone in suggesting that war be read metaphorically in the *Essais*. Thomas Greene, for his part, claims that the siege is an allegory for the writing process, with Montaigne "pitting his own voice against other writers and readers" (149). Greene writes, "it is impossible to distinguish firmly the military press which threatens the landowner from the press of affairs that threatens the meditative solitary" (151). I find it hard to take this claim seriously, especially as Greene is doing a reading of the siege essays, which all have one thing in common—carnage.

writing of the confrontation between Alexander and Betis that closes the essay, Quint argues:

[T]he warfare in which [the encounter] is set is almost a metaphor. It seems to be the inevitable result as much as the condition of a collision between two would-be autonomous selves, neither of whom is willing to acknowledge, much less yield to, the claims of the other upon the self, both of whom express this supposed indifference to the outside world in terms of aggression. (19)

Treating war as purely a metaphor or a background detail means that we lose sight of an important facet of Montaigne's engagement with the world, namely the fact that he remains acutely aware that the real consequence of war is the infliction of violence on bodies (and not just noble bodies). In fact, war is emphatically *not* a metaphor in the *Essais*, and I would argue that there is more at stake in this scene than just a confrontation between two noble and obstinate souls.

Although the encounter between Alexander and Betis does play out as a struggle between noble self-mastery and the assertion of one's power over another person, Quint's analysis misses the context. Rather than being a one-on-one combat or the confrontation of champions, the context of the meeting between the two men is the aftermath of the siege of Gaza. It is not just Betis's body that is at risk in this standoff; many, many bodies are at risk, including the "six mille" killed and the "trente mille esclaves" (I:1, 42) made of defenseless civilians who stand no chance of mitigating this violence with their individual moral qualities.

III. *Bona fides and dolus malus*: language and the threat of violence

The siege is an instance of warfare where outcomes hinge as much or more on language as on action. As Montaigne represents it, the moment where a siege breaks down often corresponds to a breakdown of language, specifically when words no longer correspond to the actions they describe, i.e., instances of bad or broken faith. As we have seen already in the first essay, the siege is a particularly fragile moment that is often resolved by extreme violence. In the fifth essay of the first book, entitled "Si le chef d'une place assiégé doit sortir pour parlementer," Montaigne once again turns his attention to this delicate and familiar wartime situation. The essay is concerned with conduct in war, specifically with the best course of action for political and military leaders in the event of a siege, and it shows the extent to which the threat of violence is bound up with language at the moment of parley. In particular, it calls attention to how repeated failures of good faith threaten any attempts to limit violence through negotiation or other means. Far from being a tactical option that promises to mitigate carnage, as Thomas Greene suggests in his reading of the essay, the act of parley creates conditions of the utmost vulnerability. When parley breaks down or language fails as a guarantee, slaughter ensues and people are hacked to pieces (*mis en pieces*).

The essay opens with an anecdote about a ruse used by a Roman legate, Lucius Marcius, to buy time to reinforce his troops in the war against the Macedonian king Perseus.

[Il] sema des entregets d'accord, desquels le Roy endormy accorda tresve pour quelques jours, fournissant par ce moyen son enmy d'opportunité et loisir pour s'armer; d'où le Roy encourut sa derniere ruine. Si est ce, que les vieils du Senat, memoratifs des mœurs de leurs peres accuserent cette pratique comme ennemie de leur stile ancien. (I:5, 59-60)

While Lucius's conduct leads to victory, the senate judges it to be both less than honorable and less than admirable. Representative of an outdated ethic, the old men of the Roman Senate value an ancient style of warfare that relies on virtue rather than the shrewdness and subtle cunning that Lucius uses to achieve his ends. Instead of appreciating the end result of the legate's actions—the fact that his maneuver was successful in defeating the enemy—the *means* to that end are themselves figured as the enemy (“les veils du Senat...accuserent cette pratique *comme ennemie* de leur stile ancien”). This rhetorical slippage, which replaces the actual enemy, i.e., the Macedonians, who represent a physical threat, with a figurative enemy, i.e., the practice of creating false truces that poses a threat to their ethical ideals, reveals a source of ambivalence in Montaigne's thought about warfare.

Throughout the *Essais*, Montaigne appears to idealize an aristocratic “warrior code” of action; yet as the above example shows, he is clearly aware of the disparity that exists between ideals figured in language and the realities of prudent military action. In the above passage, the virtue underlying the Senate's moral objection seems beside the point. They censure Lucius's behavior in a kind of commemorative gesture to a bygone era instead of judging the case prudently in light of the realities on the ground. In doing so, moreover, they make an enemy of their own legate, thereby turning upon themselves in a gesture that foreshadows civil discord.

In the a-version of the text (1580), this distinction between two styles of warfare—one acceptable and heroic, the other less so—is followed immediately by a remark that provides yet another interesting link between language and action: “Il appert bien par le langage de ces bons gens qu'il n'avoient encore recu cette belle sentence: *dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat*” (I:5, 59). The Latin dictum, which questions whether it matters if strategy or valor is used to defeat an enemy, comes from Book II of Virgil's *Aeneid*. But the literary language of war epitomized in Virgil is noticeably absent from the language used by the Roman senators, who judge actions in war in terms of justice and honesty, not in terms of utility. In labeling the citation from Virgil “cette belle sentence,” Montaigne seems to be referring to its aesthetic qualities (as an example of Virgil's language) rather than to its moral exemplarity. What distinguishes the language of the Roman Senate—“le langage des bons gens” as Montaigne calls it—is the absence of the language of Virgilian epic—“cette belle sentence.” Conduct is linked to language in such a way that the absence of a particular form of action in language makes the conduct it describes

unthinkable; without the Virgilian maxim, the senate cannot appreciate the utility of Lucius's behavior. Not only does the moral qualifier "bon" contrast with the aesthetic qualifier "belle," but it also clearly recalls the moral inflection of *bonne foy*, thereby complicating Montaigne's position vis-à-vis the ancients as he seems to be setting his judgment above theirs.

Virgil's language is, of course, echoed in the language of Plutarch and, more recently, of Machiavelli, both of whom advocate assuming the guise of a fox, i.e., employing trickery, when that of the lion is ineffective.²⁵ The opposition of force versus fraud had also been used to propagandistic effect by the Romans themselves, who routinely contrasted their good faith with the treachery and cruelty of the enemy; the expression *Punica fides*, for example—an ironic reference to *bona fides*—was used to express the treachery of their enemies, the Carthaginians. Montaigne sets up this contrast between valor and trickery but uses Virgil's language to beautifully dismantle it. *Dolus* and *virtus* are equally acceptable so long as they are effective against an enemy; it is a question of utility, not morality. What emerges, though, in this passage is a *relative* morality, which is codified (or should be, Montaigne thinks) within a legal structure of rules of engagement. Indeed, Montaigne acknowledges the unique status of warfare as a special circumstance: "Et certes la guerre a naturellement beaucoup de privileges raisonnables au prejudice de la raison; et icy faut la regle: *Neminem id agere ut ex alterius praedetur inscitia*" (I:6, 64). War is a separate space ruled by its own reason, yet this is not a license to act in any way or to commit any atrocity.

Returning to the opening paragraph of the essay, the choice between force and fraud—between lion and fox—comes down to a question of form. As the essay develops in the c-text (1595), Montaigne provides a gloss of what the senate called the "stile ancien" in order to clarify that "[c]'estoit les formes vraimentes Romaines, non de la Grecque subtilité et astuce Punique, où le vaincre par force est moins glorieux que par fraude" (I :5, 59). Montaigne is rehearsing a conventional contrast found in ancient histories between Roman *fides* and Greek craftiness; the Roman style of fighting is the one to be imitated and admired.²⁶ However, the gulf between *dolus* and *virtus* is not so wide as the self-righteous pronouncement of the senate would lead us to believe. Not only did the Romans generally use the term *dolus* to denote military strategy, it was also, on its own, a neutral term that only took on a moral cast when modified with *bonus* or *malus* according to the context. The difference between *dolus* and *dolus malus* was the difference between simple shrewdness and perfidy. And in fact, while deception, trickery, and the use of ruses were all accepted practices in war, there were limits to such behavior and one limit

²⁵ This metaphor also appears in Chapter 18 of *The Prince*, "Concerning the way in which princes should keep faith" and in Plutarch's "Life of Lysander" in which the Spartan general says "where the lion's skin will not reach, it must be patched with the fox's."

²⁶ See Livy's *History of Rome*, 42.47 4-9.

that was codified in the developing laws governing conduct in warfare (*jus in bello*) was the presence of perfidy.

Whereas many ruses involved being clever, sneaky, or enterprising, perfidy was rooted in breaking the contractual faith implied by giving one's word. This distinction can be seen in "L'heure des parlemens dangereuses" where Montaigne recounts the following anecdote about the Spartan king Cleomenes and his false truce with the Greeks:

Cleomenes disoit que, quelque mal qu'on peut faire aux ennemis en guerre, cela estoit par dessus la justice, et non subject à icelle, tant envers les dieux, qu'envers les hommes. Et, ayant faict treve avec les Argiens pour sept jours, la troisieme nuict après il les alla charger tous endormis et les défict, alleguant qu'en sa treve il n'avoit pas esté parlé des nuicts. Mais les dieux vengerent cette perfide subtilité. (I:6, 63-4)

The Spartan's perfidious subtlety ("cette perfide subtilité") represents both a moral transgression (because of the perfidy, which, as we have seen is a limiting case in the rules governing war) and an interpretive distortion (because of the subtlety, which is just being sneaky, or *rusé*, or clever, and is therefore acceptable). While *subtilité* on its own might be an admirable quality and a clever way of reading or getting around obstacles, perfidy exceeds the limits of moral behavior.²⁷

The case of Cleomenes brings us back yet again to the problem of interpretation and the question of language which are among the central preoccupations of the *Essais*. The distinction between ruse and trickery is important in the context of analyzing or judging behavior in warfare; it distinguishes heroes from villains while signifying the justice of a larger cause. The contemporary political philosopher Jean Bodin echoes this condemnation of perfidy in Book V of his treatise *Les six livres de la republic* when he writes that "[a]ussi le parjure est plus execrable que l'atheïsme...de sorte qu'on peut dire que la perfidie est toujours conjointe avec une impiété et lascheté de cœur" (188-9). In Bodin's figuration, perfidious behavior, including breaking one's sworn oath, is the manifestation of a less than noble soul. Indeed, this sets up a clear distinction between language and action, which is borne out in the *Essais* by Montaigne's suspicions about eloquent speech; just because someone speaks well doesn't guarantee they will act well. A disparity in ethics emerges between action and commentary; talk about ethical action, like that which takes place in the Senate (or in literature, for that matter), no longer corresponds to action itself and often confuses judgment. This disparity is further emphasized by the temporal gulf between Montaigne's generation and that of his father, the generation that fought in the Italian Wars. The shadow of "le temps de nos pères" lingers over the *Essais* as it did over Montaigne's entire generation. In

²⁷ This is, in fact, what is known as the Odysseus ethos, which is often unfavorably contrasted with the Achilles ethos of the glorious warrior. For more on the history of this distinction, see Wheeler, *Stratagem and the Vocabulary of Military Trickery*, 45-51.

some ways the exploits of the Italian Wars waged against the Hapsburgs (1494-1559) seemed as glittering and inaccessible as the campaigns of the ancient Romans, especially when compared to the degeneration of French society into civil war in the latter half of the sixteenth century. Just as classical times are forever distanced from the Renaissance present, the conduct of an earlier generation of French warriors is forever distanced from Montaigne's contemporaries. This double *décalage*—between speech and action within a framework of ethics, as well as between the ethical frameworks of different generations—is a recurrent theme throughout the *Essais* and evokes the more general humanist malaise that was brought on by the sense that there was an unbridgeable gap between the present and an irrecoverable past.

Ancient exemplarity is not the only Renaissance preoccupation in play here; Montaigne is also concerned with language and its ability to correspond to things in the world. The breakdown of language in the *Essais* is repeatedly linked to the breakdown of the concept of *bonne foy*. We have already seen how good faith plays an important role in Montaigne's textual self-construction. Now, in the siege, it becomes apparent that good faith is also a place where language and violence collide in the *Essais*. We find that good faith has some success at the end of the a-text of "Si le chef d'une place assiégé doit sortir pour parlementer": "Si est-ce que encores en y a il, qui se sont tres bien trouvez de sortir sur la parole de l'assaillant" (I:V, 61). In this case, the besieging commander, Henri de Vaux, upholds the terms of surrender agreed upon by both parties during parley. In other words, "la parole de l'assaillant" was given in good faith and translated reliably into action. This is just one example of an important pattern that emerges in the siege scenes in the *Essais*; it is only when the idea of good faith—of taking someone at his word—has any currency that unrestrained violence can be averted at the moment when the siege defenses are breached.

Indeed, the following essay, "L'heure des parlemens dangereuse" (I:5), reveals a complete breakdown of the system of good faith that had some success at the end of the previous essay in the case of Henri de Vaux. It begins with a reference to the contemporary siege of Mussidan in the Dordogne (April, 1569), the murderous outcome of which prompted allegations of treachery from the inhabitants who were massacred after having agreed to a suspension of hostilities during a discussion of terms.

Toutes-fois je vis dernièrement en mon voisinage de Mussidan, que ceux qui en furent délogés à force par nostre armée, et autres de leur party crioient comme de trahison, de ce que pendant lest entremises d'accord, et le traicté se continuant encores, on les avoit surpris et mis en pieces: chose qui eust eu à l'avanture apparence en un autre siècle. (I:6, 63)

Prefaced with a qualifying "toutes-fois", this example serves to reverse the hopeful conclusions of the previous essay concerning the restraining powers of good-faith speech. Evidence of such treacherous behavior threatens to shake whatever confidence in the system of good faith the reader might have. Not only is the

traditional suspension of hostilities during negotiation breached in this example, but Montaigne also normalizes the breach with a qualifying figure. After being surprised and hacked to pieces (“mis en pieces”), the victimized party cries out *as though* at treachery; the simile makes it clear that the accusation of treachery is unfounded in this case. Perhaps in another century (“en un autre siècle”) such behavior would be considered treacherous, Montaigne explains, but war is no longer waged in accordance with such antiquated standards. The old moral hardline position based in an ethic of virtue is seemingly dismissed in favor of an updated ethic of efficacy, although there is a lingering nostalgia for the old standard.

Montaigne’s subtle dismissal of the charges of treachery in this instance is hardly a partisan move to brush aside suspicion of dishonorable conduct. On the contrary, the comparison he draws between an age when such conduct would be considered treacherous, i.e., a golden age of chivalry, and the present time is heavy with irony. For one thing, although the possessive reference to “nostre armée” positions Montaigne on the side of the Catholic/royalist aggressors, there is much in the *Essais* that would suggest that his sympathies almost certainly lie with the slaughtered townspeople. For example, Montaigne makes his general position on gratuitous violence extremely clear in his essay on cruelty, “De la Cruauté” (I:11), where he professes his distaste for such inhumanity: “Je hay, entre autre vices, cruellement la cruauté, et par nature et par jugement, comme l’extreme de tous les vices” (II:11, 98). Even so, he clearly recognizes that the standard of judgment as to what constitutes cruelty is relative to the time and to a particular contingent understanding of the correspondence between language and the world.

IV. Forming an image of war: Caesar and the “art of war”

The concerns about the reliability of language that emerge from these wartime exchanges, particularly during sieges, provide a link between Montaigne’s thoughts about warfare and his own writing project. Broadly speaking, writing about war and waging war can be understood as two manifestations of the same challenge, the challenge of imposing order and direction on a chaotic experience. Montaigne explores the relationship between these two challenges—the management of war and the management of its representation—in an essay entitled “Observations sur les moyens de faire la guerre de Julius Cæsar” (II:34). The essay begins with a list of famous military leaders and the texts that they carried with them or consulted as they went to war: for Alexander the Great it was the *Iliad*; for Scipio Africanus, Xenophon; for Marcus Brutus, Polybius; for Charles V, Commynes. Finally, he commends the Italian mercenary leader Piero Strozzi’s choice of Caesar as his guiding text, especially over the more fashionable (and controversial) Machiavelli.

[À] la verité [César] devoit estre le breviaire de tout homme de guerre, comme estant le vray et souverain patron de l’art militaire. Et Dieu sçait encore de quelle grace et de quelle beauté il a fardé cette riche matiere: d’une façon de dire si pure, si delicate et si parfaicte, que, à mon goust, il n’y a

aucuns escrits au monde qui puissent estre comparables aux siens en cette partie. (II:34, 397)

In Montaigne's estimation, Caesar's place as the true and supreme model of the military arts ("le vray et souverain patron de l'art militaire") is doubly secure, since he provides a pattern for both waging war and writing about it. It is striking that in this opening moment of the essay, before going on to record "certains traicts particuliers et rares, sur le faict de ses guerres" (II:34, 397) that he has retained from his reading, Montaigne waxes eloquent about Caesar the *writer* rather than Caesar the general. The beautifully and gracefully arranged image of war that Montaigne finds in Caesar is in some ways a forerunner to the image of war one finds in the military guidebooks that began to proliferate in the Renaissance in which war was to be presented in an ordered, artful fashion and discussed calmly and pragmatically.²⁸ By grounding his presentation of Caesar's exploits as a general in a literary context, Montaigne invites his reader to make a connection between *l'art de la guerre*—a Renaissance genre preoccupied with the *techné* (the craft or art) of military matters epitomized by Niccolò Machiavelli's treatise, *Dell'arte de la guerra* (1521)—and the aesthetic dimension of written representations of war.

By emphasizing that Caesar wears two hats—that of general and that of autobiographer *avant la lettre*—as well as the extent to which his role as a writer shapes our view of him as a soldier, Montaigne draws our attention to an important link between military form and literary form. In order to manage war, commanders impose order in the form of military discipline; armies are organized into battalions, which are regimented and managed through a strict hierarchical chain of command. Thus, in the context of action on the battlefield, form is achieved through ordering, regulation, and codified rules of conduct. Writers, on the other hand, achieve mastery, or at least control of the subject by means of literary form. War is neither orderly nor beautiful; it is a confused, violent, and foggy enterprise that lacks definition and clear outlines. Therefore, the aesthetic dimension of war—whether a perfectly arranged square of Swiss pikemen or a clash between two great heroes retold in epic verse—results from the imposition of form.

In the tradition of war writing, from Homer onwards, the beauty of war lies in the exemplary actions of noble (and less frequently common) individuals. Yet it is striking that Montaigne seems less interested in the traits of great warriors than of great commanders, notably Alexander, Epaminondas, and of course Caesar. The princely educational ideal of a young man being raised both to "conduire une guerre" and to "commander un peuple" (I:26, 197) with aplomb is realized in only a precious few precisely because of the enormous implications of those tasks. A similar argument could be made for the scarcity of truly great historians or epic poets. Only a few exemplary writers—Homer, Virgil, and Tacitus among them—are

²⁸ The Renaissance art of war genre had an important Classical forerunner in Vegetius' *De Re Militari* (c. 450 BCE), which was highly influential in the Middle Ages with French translations/adaptations by Jean de Meun and Christine de Pisan.

able to tackle the subject of war in an appropriate manner. Hew Strachnan articulates this twofold difficulty of war in the following passage from the *Cambridge Companion to War Writing*:

The challenge for commanders is to master [the] chaotic environment [of war], not to be overwhelmed by the bloodiness of the battlefield, and still to try to impose order and direction—a challenge also encountered by any writer attempting to describe war. The Latin word for war, *bellum*, carries these connotations of order, and significantly also belongs to the realm of law. (12)

Here we clearly see the problem of war is how to manage something that is inherently disordered. While a dilemma in its own right, imposing form is nevertheless also a solution to the essential predicament of war, namely how not to be, as Strachnan puts it, “overwhelmed by the bloodiness of the battlefield.” Imposing order is always problematic because it is artificial; you can dress your army up in matching uniforms or you can tell your story in sparkling verse, but people are still getting hacked to bits. Any ethical account or representation of warfare somehow has to deal with the bodies.

Caesar, as Montaigne presents him, would seem to encounter no such difficulties in his management of war. Unlike the other men mentioned in the list above, Caesar himself notably does not have a text that he carries with him into battle; he doesn’t need a book because he *wrote* the book. He offers the ultimate example of a man who can skillfully manage both war (in his capacity as a general) and its representation, not to mention his own image (in his capacity as a writer). Indeed it is Caesar the text rather than Caesar the man that Montaigne prescribes for study with almost a religious fervor—required reading for all military men. Furthermore, he expresses his admiration for the text in explicitly aesthetic terms; he contends that Caesar embellishes the written account of himself and his campaigns with such grace and beauty as to make it incomparable to any other such text. While Montaigne is impressed by the Roman general’s skill at campaigning at the head of an army, he is more interested in Caesar as a kind of artist, capable of turning the raw matter of war into something full of beauty and grace.

While beauty is only ever linked to warfare elsewhere in the *Essais* via the savage nobility of the New World cannibals and their uncorrupted conflicts, the word *grace*, with its connotations of aesthetic refinement, appears a second time in the essay when Montaigne discusses Caesar’s practice of exhorting his troops before battle. These speeches are such an important facet of Caesar’s personal style as commander that it is remarkable when he *doesn’t* give one, such as when he is too pressed for time. When he does harangue his troops, the functional role of his speeches as a means of preparing them for imminent battle is nearly eclipsed by their aesthetic qualities, which seem to enrapture his audience.

De vray, sa langue luy a fait en plusieurs lieux de bien notables services; et estoit, de son temps mesme, son eloquence militaire en telle recommandation que plusieurs en son armée receilloient ses harangues; et

par ce moyen il en fut assemble des volumes qui ont duré longtemps après luy. Son parler avoit des graces particulières, si que ses familiers, et, entre autres, Auguste, oyant reciter ce qui en avoit esté recueilli, reconnoissoit jusques aux phrases et aux mots ce qui n'estoit pas du sien. (II:34, 399)

This is an extraordinary scene. Instead of being guided or stirred to action by their commander's discourse, the soldiers madly scribble down every word of the speech. In this moment, writing supplants action as the focus of Montaigne's discussion of the great general. The bloody business of war is temporarily suspended and eclipsed by Caesar's self-presentation. Not only do these writings then become collectible, they are inimitable. Caesar is thus at once both an example to model oneself after ("le souverain patron") and one who cannot be imitated.

Montaigne's paradoxical presentation of Caesar complicates one of the principal binaries of Renaissance thought about warfare and the military profession, namely the incompatibility of arms and letters. This was especially a concern for the nobility, the traditional fighting class, who wished to preserve their historical privilege in the context of a changing social landscape.²⁹ For many Renaissance noblemen, however, and Montaigne among them, Caesar exemplified the compatibility of writing with military prowess and glorious exploits on the battlefield. In fact, "les moyens de faire la guerre" of the essay's title could refer to both the waging of war and to its representation in a written account. Certainly for Montaigne, as well as for Caesar, the art of war and the art of writing about war are inexplicably intertwined. This is especially the case because both men are ultimately concerned with self-presentation, which seems to be bound up with the image of war with which one is associated. Indeed, Montaigne is rather famously eager to play up his status as a member of the traditional warrior class, the *noblesse d'épée*, even though his family had only been recently ennobled and even though he as a rule is opposed to cruelty and violence.

These parallels between military discipline and literary style or form point to an ethics of form that emerges in Montaigne's discussion of Caesar. Just as there is a fiction of identity or correspondence between words spoken and the ideas or actions (or restraint from action) that they represent, there is a fiction of identity in war literature between the form a war story takes and the content it depicts; for this reason, formal choices have powerful implications. If we consider a genre like the epic, for instance—perhaps the genre of war writing *par excellence*—we can see how literary form manages this gap between what war is represented to be and what war actually is. Like any literary form, the epic shapes readers' expectations of

²⁹ Although it is not the focus of this study, the importance of social change cannot be overlooked or underestimated. On one hand men were rising to nobility by way of erudition rather than prerogative or military prowess, while on the other hand men who were not members of the nobility by birth and education were rising to positions of military importance. For a good overview of complexities of the period and general historical background, see Salmon, *Society in Crisis*.

events and even imposes a particular view of history. As David Quint explains in *Epic and Empire*, “epic draws an equation between power and narrative. It tells of a power able to end the indeterminacy of war and to emerge victorious, showing that the struggle all along had been heading up to its victory and thus imposing upon it a narrative teleology” (45). This feature of epic form has important implications for the management of war in its literary form. By imposing a larger narrative teleology on the war story, epic often glosses over the details of human carnage with a veneer of heroism or imperial glory.

There is, however, another choice available for how to write about war, which is at least in some ways exemplified by Caesar: to write about oneself. Just as military discipline (and proto-international legal theory) offers structures designed to limit the violence and chaos of warfare, to the extent that it is possible, the essay form emerges as an ethical choice for writing about war. This is also Montaigne’s choice, but he rejects Caesar as his literary model for several reasons. For one thing, he is not himself a great general or even a soldier. Moreover, as we see in this essay, Montaigne recognizes in Caesar the danger of becoming too enthralled in a beautified or aestheticized image of war at the risk of eclipsing ethical problems. While Caesar was a great general and a great writer, he was not, in Montaigne’s estimation, the paragon of a great man. Indeed, Montaigne stops short of offering positive moral judgments of Caesar in this essay, finding both his ambition and his excessive concern with his image distasteful.³⁰ Instead, he mostly limits commentary to the prudence of the commander’s military conduct and the quality of his literary style.

Montaigne does, however, make at least one significant deviation from his tendency to gloss over Caesar’s moral shortcomings. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the example he offers to illustrate the limits of Caesar’s ruthlessness is a moment of parley, where violence is temporarily suspended and replaced by linguistic mediation.

[Cæsar] estoit bien esloigné de cette religion des anciens Romains, qui ne se vouloyent prevaloir en leurs guerres que de la vertu simple et nayfve; mais encore y apportoit il plus de conscience que nous ne ferions à cette heure, et n’approuvoit pas toutes sortes de moyens pour acquérir la victoire. En la guerre contre Ariovistus, estant à parlementer avec luy, il y survint quelque remuement entre les des armées, qui commença par la faute des gens de cheval d’Ariovistus; sur ce tumulte, Cæsar se trouva avoir fort grand avantage sur ses ennemis; toutes-fois il ne s’en voulut point prevaloir, de peur qu’on luy peut reprocher d’y avoir procedé de mauvaise foy. (II:34, 403)

In this passage, Montaigne sets up a continuum of virtuous behavior in warfare running from the ideal of ancient Roman valor on one end to the lack of conscience

³⁰ For a discussion of Montaigne’s treatment of Caesar and in particular his disapproval of Caesar’s ambition, see Mackenzie, “Imitation Gone Wrong: The ‘Pestilentially Ambitious’ Figure of Julius Caesar in Michel de Montaigne.”

in (early) modern combat on the other. Caesar lands somewhere in the middle: he falls short of the noble Roman purity, yet still has more scruples than Montaigne's contemporaries. The Roman standard is the same *stile ancien* that we already encountered in "Si le chef d'une place assiégée doit sortir pour parlementer" (I:6). There, as here, the context for the judgment provided by Montaigne's commentary is a moment of warfare, namely a truce or parley, that we would expect to be governed by good faith—and to at least temporarily suspend hostilities in favor of a linguistic solution. But whereas in that instance Lucius seized on the opportunity to defeat his enemy with treachery, in this one, Caesar declines to capitalize on a similar advantage to achieve an easy victory. By setting up Caesar's restraint in the context of his concern for his image in war—be it the beauty and grace of his speeches or his insistence that his troops looked good before heading into battle or his well-crafted prose—Montaigne draws our attention to the fact that this is not an instance of pure clemency but instead a calculated enactment of a particular self-image.

What Montaigne ultimately seems to appreciate about Caesar, then, is a beautiful and gracefully arranged image of war. However, he remains wary of this aesthetic that distracts the reader from the fact that war is *not* beautiful. The ethical dimension comes into play for Montaigne in this unwillingness to be distracted from the underlying fact that war involves violence inflicted on human bodies. It becomes increasingly clear as we trace Montaigne's textual engagement with warfare just how troubled he is by the gulf between the experience of war and the representation of that experience. The essay form emerges in part as an ethical choice for resisting or at least questioning the aestheticization of war. His rejection of Caesar as a model for writing about the self, despite his enthusiastic praise of his style, speaks to Montaigne's reluctance to smooth over the violence, carnage, and cruelty of warfare, just as he refuses to smooth over his own human flaws.

Chapter Two

War and Community in Late Humanist Tragedy

In the previous chapter, I argued that Montaigne's concern with form in the *Essais* is part of an attempt to navigate the distance between language and violence—a distance that is always threatening to collapse in Montaigne's representation of warfare. Literary form, I suggest, and particularly the new essay form, becomes a way to control, manage, or stave off the threat of violence. In the humanist tragedies of the late sixteenth century, we see something quite different happening with language as it is mediated by tragic form. In the three plays that I examine in detail in this chapter—Robert Garnier's *La Troade* (1579), Jean Robelin's *La Thébaïde* (1584), and the anonymous *Tragédie de Sac de Cabrières* (ca. 1566)—tragic form, with its unique use of language, becomes an expressive vehicle for shaping our understanding of the relationship between private and public in the context of warfare, which in turn shapes our understanding of virtue and heroism, and ultimately our understanding of history.

I chose these three plays as my corpus because they are good examples of the way that tragic form (in the hands of 16th-century French humanist poets) deals with the complexities of representing warfare. Tragedy traditionally represents the misfortunes of the great and packs its cathartic punch with the hero's *anagorasis*, the moment of recognition and realization of the true nature of his or her situation. These three tragedies challenge the distinction between public and private that usually exists in tragedy by challenging the figure of the tragic hero and positing alternative models of virtue. In particular, all three of the plays focus on what happens to notions of virtue and heroism—traditional characteristics of the martial hero—at the intersection of the personal (private) and the communal (public). The first two plays stage scenes from antiquity set around two iconic conflicts, the Trojan War and the war of the Seven against Thebes, while the third takes on a contemporary subject, the sack of the Protestant stronghold town of Cabrières by Catholic troops in 1545. Although they take place in wartime, these plays are nevertheless *parapolemic*¹—a term Catherine McLoughlin uses to describe “those spatial and temporal margins of war that include such phenomena as visits to hospitals...the home front, interviews of the waiting and bereaved, and the domestic war effort” (*The Cambridge Companion to Writing War* 49); they are about the consequences more than the actions of war. The scenes staged therein invite us to consider the threat that war poses to a community and the extent to which

¹ This term comes from the Greek *para*, meaning “to the side of,” and *polemos*, meaning “war” or *polemikos*, meaning “warlike, hostile.”

communities are defined by either the conflicts in which they are engaged or the violence that is waged against them.²

In *La Troade*, tragedy creates a distance between violence and the body through the mediation of lament. In the *Thébaïde*, tragedy draws our attention to how civil war destroys the communal cohesion upon which heroic narratives so often depend. Heroic narratives, such as those found in epic, often work to naturalize or neutralize the violence of warfare because they supply it with a *raison d'être*. When there is a fracture in a unified community, as is the case in civil war, heroic narratives become complicated. Finally, in the *Tragédie du Sac de Cabrières*, lament is replaced by testimony and the voice becomes an expression of witnessing. As it does so, it also becomes a marker of a new kind of community that is grounded in collective witnessing and martyrdom.

While violence is more of a spectacle in these tragedies than it ever is in the *Essais*, it nevertheless remains distant—a scene painted only with words and not acted out on stage. Thus, despite the embodied element of performance, tragedy creates a rhetorical distance between the text and the body. Writers of humanist tragedy looked to Horace's *Ars Poetica* for theoretical guidance, notably respecting the constraint that violent or shocking action should be narrated rather than represented. Thus, in spite of tragedy's purported didactic emphasis, any prescriptive ethical dimension relating to conduct in warfare is eclipsed or flattened by a preoccupation with language—one quite different from that which I argue can be found in the *Essais*. In other words, tragedy forces us to consider ethical situations surrounding warfare poetically rather than from the point of view of ethical theory or practice. As Michel Jeanneret remarks, "[s]i les tragédies du XVI^e siècle, 'didascaliques et enseignantes', veulent donner à penser et invitent peut-être à agir, elles jouent autant ou davantage sur le *pathos* que sur le *logos*" (19). As it appears in these tragedies, war does not represent a perpetual threat to the body in the same way that it does for Montaigne; it remains *hors-scène*, accessible only through reported speech and through the voices responding in lamentation. Similarly, language no longer has an ontological relationship to the world, as it did for Montaigne; rather, language is voice that expresses human suffering.

Just as the action of war is pushed to the side and takes place off stage, the bodies of the characters in these plays are overshadowed by their voices. Indeed, the very structure of these tragedies highlights the voice over the body. Senecan in form, the plays are made up primarily of long, highly rhetorical speeches, some short exchanges of dialogue (*stichomythia*), and commentary performed by a lyric

² Troy, the Trojans, and their descendants (including Rome and France in epic discourse) are forever defined in relation to the tragedy of the Trojan War. France, as the collective bound together as a nation of one people, is made illustrious in part by the direct descent of their monarchs from this origin.

chorus.³ This heavily rhetorical dimension gives these plays their humanist character and distinguishes them from other traditions such as popular farce or even humanist comedy. This verbal or linguistic aspect to the plays links up as well to the gender dynamics and linguistic politics they portray. In two of the three plays, Garnier and Robelin, the voices that predominate are female, creating a further remove from the male bodies that are at the center of the action of waging war. The female lament provides a rhetorical foil to the carnage of war and to the martial code and warrior heroes celebrated in epic. These women, as Michel Jeanneret explains in his introduction to another of Garnier's plays, *Les Juives*, "nous font pénétrer dans les coulisses de la guerre, là où les barbares fanfares de l'épopée font place aux gémissements de la tragédie et l'élégie" (22). In other words, they draw attention to those left behind who can take but little comfort in the valorous conduct of their fathers and husbands on the battlefield.

In addition to drawing its dramaturgical inspiration from Seneca, French Renaissance tragedy was closely tied to the transformative, celebratory linguistics of the Pléiade poets who argued that "tragedy was the best way to give their [language] the semantic and stylistic power of Greek and Latin" (Jondorf "Renaissance Theater" 239). Garnier, in particular, had friendships with the poets Ronsard, Baïf, and Belleau who all wrote liminary poems for the published editions of his plays. Moreover, although he was not the first humanist poet to write tragedies, he was the one who best represented Pléiade values concerning the expressive possibilities of the French language (Mazouer 274). In contrast to a writer like Montaigne who was interested in the capacity of language to express moral truths, Garnier is especially interested in the rhetorical and expressive possibilities of language—its *pathos*—rather than in its correspondence with the world in the form of action or in practical or theoretical reflections on how war should be conducted.

Tragedy's engagement with the violence of warfare is in some sense *disembodied*. Whereas in the *Essais*, text and body are consubstantial, in tragedy, text and body are severed from one another. This separation occurs, in part, because the individual body, the body that can be wounded is emptied out so that it can instead represent a collective body (Scarry 70). Consequently, pain no longer corresponds directly with physical wounds on the individual body but with affective wounds on the collective body or the community. Pain is emotional rather than physical and the language used to communicate pain is expressive rather than descriptive. Moreover, the expression of such pain does not come from the voice belonging to the wounded body but from the voices of the wounded community (in Garnier the voices are gendered, in *Cabrières* they are identified by their faith). In what follows we will see the ways in which language at once expressively renders the deleterious effects of war on the individuals that make up a community—or in other words, attempts to

³ For a detailed analysis of the considerable influence of Senecan tragedy on French humanist tragedy, see Braden, *Renaissance Tragedy and the Senecan Tradition*.

explain the violence to the community (this is the writing history part)—and affirms or cements the identity of that community.

Generally speaking, the emphasis on rhetoric in humanist tragedy draws the focus away from the body to the voice—and in particular, to language as voice. “Rhetoric,” Gillian Jondorf explains, “by definition has a purpose, and its purpose in most of these plays seems to be to promote a moral or political message of some kind, and, as one of the means for doing this, to provoke pity for the protagonists and for others whose sufferings are caused directly or indirectly by the protagonist’s actions” (*French Renaissance Tragedy* 207). As Timothy Reiss points out, “[o]ften tragedies were *about* language and its effort to express new understanding of the world and human relations. By the same token, they gave access to new ethical and political realities” (239). In late sixteenth-century France, the lines between family, clan, and state were being blurred—a complicated social change further exacerbated by the religious conflict that erupted mid-century (Salmon). For this reason, the relationship between public and private and the way it shapes understanding of virtue and heroism are very much at issue. These three plays examine these issues through the lens of warfare.

Indeed the contemporary situation in France was such that the entire nation and not just the royal family is the subject of public spectacle. Garnier makes this relationship between literature and contemporary history explicit in the preface to *La Troade*.

Mais aussi les passions de tels sujets nous sont jà si ordinaires que les exemples anciens nous devront dorénavant servir de consolation en nos particuliers et domestiques encombres, voyant nos ancêtres troyens avoir, par l’ire de grand Dieu ou par l’inévitable malignité d’une secrète influence des astres, souffert jadis toutes extrêmes calamités, et que toutefois du reste de si misérables et dernières ruines, s’est pu bâtir, après le décès de l’orgeuillieux empire romain, cette très florissante monarchie. (41)

How does tragedy purport to offer the kind of consolation that Garnier claims for it here? Ostensibly, the catharsis comes from the resemblance between France and Troy. To imitate that great civilization, even in its demise, is attractive and illustrates France’s unique position as the inheritor of the glorious civilizations of antiquity.⁴ France and its “très-florissante Monarchie” are linked to Troy as the culmination of a process of *translatio imperii*.⁵ Although France’s Trojan origins had

⁴ Charles de Gaulle echoed this sentiment of France’s unique historical destiny as an exemplary nation, for better and for worse, nearly four centuries later in his *Mémoires de guerre– L’appel: 1940-1942*, tome 1: “Toute ma vie, je me suis fait une certaine idée de la France...j’ai d’instinct l’impression que la Providence l’a créée pour des succès achevés ou des malheurs exemplaires.” (1)

⁵ In *Homer and the Politics of Authority*, Marc Bizer reads the political relationships in *La Troade* as analogous to the changing relationship between the monarch and his subjects in sixteenth-century France (181-96). While not the focus of my

already been discredited as myth, the myth was still a powerful one with much riding on it poetically and politically, and Troy retained its exemplary value.⁶ Most importantly, comparisons with Troy reinforced the extent to which France's identity was related to its status as a community at war.

I. The ethics of lament: body and voice in Garnier's *La Troade*

In order to address how humanist tragedy represents the relationship between war and the community, I will turn first to Robert Garnier's tragedy *La Troade*. Published in 1579, the play is adapted from Senecan (*Troade*) and Euripidean (*Hecuba*, *Trojan Women*) tragedies on the same subject.⁷ In a change from Garnier's earlier trilogy of Roman plays—*Porcie* (1568), *Cornélie* (1574), and *Marc Antoine* (1577)—based on characters from Roman history and strongly influenced by Lucan, *La Troade* turns to legendary Greek history, taking up the highly evocative subject of the fall of Troy and its aftermath. Although not as explicit as the parallels between Rome's civil wars and contemporary political upheaval, the cultural and ideological impact of the Trojan War story in sixteenth-century France was nonetheless significant. Indeed there was an important literary tradition concerned with the filiation of French monarchy from its Trojan ancestry to the current day, including Jean Lemaire de Belge's *Illustrations de Gaule et singularitez de Troye* (1510–1514) and Pierre Ronsard's incomplete epic poem *La Franciade* (1572). Furthermore, through the philological and pedagogical work of early humanists such as Jean Dorat and Guillaume Budé, the Homeric epics played an important role in the creation of a French heroic idiom.⁸

La Troade stages the familiar story of the aftermath of the Trojan War as a series of bereavements for the women of the Trojan royal family. In Act I, Hecuba, the widow of the Trojan king, Priam, relives the fall of the city and the death of her husband while also mourning her fallen son, the great Trojan hero, Hector. At the same time, Agamemnon, the victorious Greek king, demands Hecuba's daughter Cassandra as a prize. In Act II, the Greeks demand the sacrifice of Hector's son Astyanax so that they can safely leave to return home. In Act III, Pyrrhus and Agamemnon argue over the necessity of sacrificing Hecuba's youngest daughter Polyxena to appease Achilles' ghost. In Act IV, Andromache and Hecuba get news of

argument here, the extent to which political allegory serves as a cadre of interpretation for Garnier's plays is not uninteresting.

⁶ One of the best examples of this ideological project is Ronsard's unfinished poem *La Franciade* (1572), which recounts the story of the founding of the French monarchy by the Trojan Francus.

⁷ For an informative discussion of the differences between the two model plays, see Bizer, "Garnier's *La Troade*: Between Homeric Fiction and French History" 332–33.

⁸ For an extensive analysis of influence of the Homeric tradition in French literature of the period, see Bizer, *Homer and the Politics of Authority in Renaissance France* and Ford, "Homer in the French Renaissance."

the deaths of their son (Astyanax) and daughter (Polyxena) respectively, by way of messengers. Finally, in Act V, Hecuba and her female attendants take violent revenge on Polymnestor, the traitorous murderer of her youngest son, Polydorus, by blinding him and killing his sons.

The play opens onto a scene of extended mourning that blurs the boundaries between private and public inherent to tragedy. Although the burden of the defeat clearly rests on the royal family—Hecuba, Andromache, and their remaining children—their familial tragedy has implications for the whole of the Trojan community. Hecuba and Andromache in turn renounce their private grief as mother and wife and call for public mourning of Priam and Hector. These two fallen men, the aging patriarch and the virile warrior, had been the political and military pillars of Trojan society in addition to being husbands and son to the grieving women. Act I begins with an invocation: Hecuba calls on Troy to behold the pathetic spectacle to which she, the queen, has been reduced:

Qui crédule se donne à la Fortune feinte,
Qui des volages dieux, des dieux légers n'a crainte,
Me vienne voir chétive, ô Troie! et vienne voir
En cendres la grandeur que tu soulais avoir;
Nous vienne voir, ô Troie! ô Troie! et qu'il contemple
L'instable changement du monde, à notre exemple (6-10)

While demanding that Troy look at *her* (“me vienne voir”), the newly-widowed queen simultaneously conjures up the smoking ruins of the city’s own grandeur for it to contemplate (“et vienne voir / En cendres la grandeur que tu soulais avoir”).⁹ The dual focus of this spectacle of ruin is collapsed in the next verse when the first person singular direct object pronoun “me” becomes the plural “nous.” With this subtle shift, the individual is folded into the collective, and the two tragedies—private and public—become one. It is not entirely clear, however, exactly who constitutes the collective of the repeated apostrophe, “ô Troie.” Is it just Priam’s house—his immediate family—or the whole Trojan people? Hecuba’s dolorous appeal to “viene voir” shifts the burden of the tragedy and sets up a situation in which the line between the unique misfortune of the house of Priam and the general fate of the city of Troy and the Trojan people (and their historical descendants the

⁹ This speech is also a clear reference to the Petrarchan “viene voir” trope from *Canzoniere* 247-8, which had already been taken up and transformed in the French tradition by Ronsard in his *Amours de Cassandre* (“Qui voudra voir comme un dieu me surmonte/ ... / Me vienne voir”) and DuBellay in his *Antiquitez* (“Qui voudra voir tou ce qu’on peut nature,/ L’art et le ciel, Rome te vienne voir”). Here the trope is transformed from the highly personal lyric to the public spectacle: Come see Troy if you want to see the mighty fallen (the collective, i.e., the torched and sacked city, rather than the just the individual or his house—Oedipus, House of Atreus, etc.)

French) is blurred. This moves us away from the traditional subject of tragedy, the misfortunes of the great; the loss of Troy is everybody's misfortune.

As Hecuba's speech continues, the perspective shifts from the gaze of the defeated Trojans looking at their queen-in-mourning to the gaze of the enemy, a victorious Greek soldier who pauses for a moment and takes a break from his pillaging to both marvel and cringe at the blazing spectacle of Troy:

Le soldat ennemi la regarde et s'étonne,
Bien qu'ardent de courroux, que sa main la moissonne,
Tant elle apparaît grande et superbe en tombant,
Et tant se voit d'espace en sa braise flambant. (33-36)

Time stands still for a moment and the business of war is suspended as the soldier takes in the show.¹⁰ Even for the hand that has destroyed it, the fall of the great city is almost not to be believed. Similarly, the audience—already familiar with the Trojan legend—is newly astonished as it, too, witnesses the spectacle through this lens of admiration tinged with disbelief. With this image of the victor pausing to watch the destruction of the vanquished, yet another boundary is blurred, this time the boundary between the perpetrator and the victim; the *pathos* of Troy's collapse moves even those who brought about that collapse and should rejoice in it. The spectacle of Troy's fall is bigger than any individual perspective and brings everyone—Trojans and Greeks, but also the play's audience—into the same human community of people touched by war and impressed by its devastating consequences.

The consequences of Troy's fall are not limited to the personal, the familial, or even the communal. Instead, the play's imagery elevates them to the status of natural phenomena. The political disaster of the ruling family's downfall takes on the dimensions of a natural disaster, and the visual description of Troy in flames is reinforced by an aural one as sight gives way to sound:

Le son de sa ruine et des fracassemens...
Fait mouvoir le rivage et la mer oragée...
Ide, le sacré mont, en resonance dolant,
De ses pleureux cyprès la perruque branlant. (39-44)

Nature is personified in this passage to resemble the mourning Trojan women; like them, the cypresses atop the sacred Mt. Ida shake and cry in grief. While the calamity of defeat takes on cosmic proportions, the hyperbolic description of Troy's wealth that follows calls into question the fruitfulness of the Greek conquest.

Mille vaisseaux Gregeois ne sont assez capables
Pour le butin ravi des flammes execrables:
Le rivage en est plein, la mer s'en va joüant,
Et maints riches joyaux vont sur les flots noüants. (45-48)

¹⁰ For a thought-provoking consideration of the role of time in warfare and representations of warfare, albeit in a different historical context, see Chapter Two of Favret, *War at a Distance* on "Telling Time in War."

The overabundance of spoils calls into question the purpose of the war. What end is meant to justify all of the destruction seeing as the Greeks couldn't even hope to carry away a significant part of Troy's wealth? Just as nature comes alive to mourn for Troy in the form of the weeping Mount Ida, the city's riches become part of nature, a river of jewels swept away by the sea. By telescoping out from the personal to the cosmic, the stakes of the tragedy take on larger-than-life proportions that help bridge the gap between ancient and contemporary historical contexts.

Having shifted from the intimate perspective of the grieving women to the distancing gaze of the enemy soldier and then to the encompassing mechanism of natural processes, our gaze returns to Hecuba as she testifies to the power of the gods and bears witness to the destruction of Ilion. "J'ai vu, j'ai vu, première, hélas! je les ai vus, [nos malheurs] / De toi, Paris, enceinte, et ne les ai pas tus" (59-60). Not only does Hecuba usurp Cassandra's prophetic role here by claiming to have foreseen Troy's destruction while pregnant with Paris, she also takes all agency away from the great Greek heroes whose exploits and epithets are the stuff of epic cataloging—crafty Odysseus (*le caut Laërtien*), valliant Tydeus (*le vaillant Tydée*), deceitful Sinon (*le déloyal Sinon*), etc. With one stroke, Hecuba could have put an end to the entire heroic economy of war; had she killed Paris in the womb, or as an infant, he could never have grown up to carry off Helen and unleash a decade-long war upon his people. After assuming personal responsibility for the fate of Troy by declaring, "Hécube, c'est ton feu, ce sont tes propres flammes" (66)¹¹, she chastises herself for putting a public face on her mourning:

Pense à ta propre perte, à ta propre tristesse
Troie est un deuil public où chacun à sa part;
Mais pleure ton Priam, révérable vieillard.
Las! Je l'ai vu meurtrir. Dieux! Ce penser m'affole
Et dedans le gosier m'arrête la parole. (70-74)

Once again the public and private nature of her grief risk being confounded. While the spectacle of Troy in flames unleashes Hecuba's monologue about her culpability relative to the collective fate, the memory of her husband's death *cum* murder pushes her to emotional extremes ("ce penser m'affole") while at the same time silencing her completely ("dedans le gosier m'arrete la parole"). No sooner does she pull herself back to her private grief than she finds herself without a voice, unable to express her mourning.

While Hecuba struggles to find a voice for her private grief amid the general chaos and the overwhelming magnitude of the public calamity, the chorus

¹¹ In 17th century tragedy the image of *la flamme* is frequently used figuratively to refer to an individual's passion, which is, more often than not, destructive (*déstructice*), but usually only to themselves, or on a relatively small scale (e.g., Phèdre). In Corneille, for example, it is private passion (revenge, family honor, etc.) that threatens public order. Here, to the contrary, Hecuba has to struggle to recover her private experience of grief amid the general chaos.

figuratively conflates the defeated hero Hector with the sacked city of Troy. They compare him to the city's fortified walls in his role as defender of the Trojan people and the guardian of their hopes for future glory, addressing the following lament to the coffin containing his corpse:

Tu étais le seul support,
Le mur, le rempart, le fort
De notre destinée. Notre espérance mourut
Par le dard qui te fêrüt;
Troie en fut ruinée. (219-23)

In these lines, Hector is effectively stripped of his individual heroism. He is no longer the hero felled by Achilles's arrow; he becomes the walled city of Troy itself, breeched and reduced to ashes. Because the wound that kills Hector is the same wound that brings Troy to its knees, he can be mourned only publicly as a symbol and no longer privately as a son or a husband: "pour toy cendre Hectoride / nous sentons d'aspres efforts, / et pour toy de nostre corps / coule le sang humide" (215-218). Thus, Hector's body is emptied of its significance, even as it takes on a heavily symbolic character. It no longer represents a person who has been wounded, killed, mutilated, or desecrated but instead becomes synonymous with the fall of Troy. This is an example of the transferal of injuring that Elaine Scarry, in her exceptional book *The Body in Pain*, sees as an essential part of the structure of war and our ability to process its outcomes. "[W]ar," Scarry writes, "...requires both the reciprocal infliction of massive injury and the eventual disowning of the injury so that its attributes can be transferred elsewhere, as they cannot be if they are permitted to cling to the original site of the wound, the human body" (64). Mourning is one of the means by which the physical wound is transformed into to a psychic wound, specifically on the collective psyche or collective memory. The play asks us to think about how we are to grieve in times of catastrophe by demonstrating how mourning is an act of fiction making since it tells us *what* we are mourning, thus shaping our understanding of the past.

The relationship between publically voiced mourning and historical memory was particularly fraught during the French Wars of Religion whose end was accompanied by an edict of forgetting that attempted to legislate the boundaries of collective memory, thereby disrupting this process of mourning as fiction making, or a kind of storytelling about war.¹² Writing about the unanchored quality of language within war, Scarry argues that "[t]he eventual transfer of the attributes of injuries to a victorious national fiction requires as prelude the severing of those attributes from their original source, an act of severing and disowning that has a wide, perhaps collective authorship" (136). The chorus's words to the dead Hector perform this

¹² Andrea Frisch explains the impact of legislated forgetting at this juncture in French history, as well as the importance of forgetting more generally in the formation of national communities, in her paper "Caesarean Negotiations: Forgetting Henri IV's Past after the French Wars of Religion" (1-3).

transfer—the arrow that enters Hector’s body and kills him is the same arrow that ruins Troy— but with an interesting twist. Troy is not the victor in the Trojan War. However, both in the logic of the play and within the cultural framework of Renaissance France that imagined its monarchy descending from the Trojan line, Troy *is* the winner of a contest that it would seem to have lost.

War is in the structure of its activity a contest because it entails reciprocal activity for nonreciprocal outcomes, and the weight of intention and motive located in the final facts, the nonreciprocal outcome, the unique form of ‘ending’ that, more than any other part of war, makes it what it is and compels people to seek it as a form of arbitration when all else has failed.

(Scarry 85)

Garnier employs tragedy to challenge the “non-reciprocal outcome” of Greek victory by turning it on its head, forcing us to consider the non-reciprocal representational outcomes. That is to say, Troy’s name and its reputation endure—through literature, as part of the historical fiction of nationhood—even though the Trojans lose the war, have their city razed, their heroes killed, and their women become the property of the Greeks.

In order to stage this painful process of transferral of Trojan glory, the play stages a kind of contest of suffering in the form of an argument between Cassandra and Hecuba over whose suffering is greater, that of the vanquished Trojans or the victorious Greeks. As part of a stichomythic exchange between the two women, Cassandra makes the claim that the Greeks are in fact more miserable than the Trojans, and their fate is more to be pitied. The reason for this, she explains, is that the Trojans are fighting a just war in defense of their city; because of the justice of their cause, the glory and honor they win will far outlive their material ruin. The Greeks, on the other hand, will suffer from being on the wrong side of history, despite being the immediate victors.

Bref, si la caute Grèce à nos portes n’eût ancré
Pour les murs d’Ilion renverser à son gré,
Notre nom ne fût sans gloire, et nos belles louanges
Mortes, n’eussent passé jusqu’aux terres étrangères,
Le nom fameux d’Hector au tombeau fût éteint,
Et n’eût, vagant par l’air, aux étoiles atteint. (419-424)

Instead of lamenting that the war had ever happened in the first place, Cassandra dismisses the superficial appeal of a hypothetical past without war (“si la caute Grèce à nos portes n’eût ancré”). By fighting and losing, Troy has avoided the real tragedy of falling into oblivion. Instead of being buried along with his body, Hector’s name rises from the tomb as a symbol whose glory (*kleos*) will live on forever. As Casey Dué explains in a classical context in *The Captive Woman’s Lament in Greek Tragedy*, “[Hektor’s] death means the city’s destruction, the death of its men, and the enslavement of its women and children. But these same words [of Andromache’s] initiate his *kleos*. Her grief and the city’s grief are Hektor’s glory” (43). Hector’s

poetic apotheosis inverts the earlier collapse of his individual identity into a symbol of Troy in the Trojan women's lament.

Cassandra's insistence on glory in destruction and defeat demonstrates how the play is interested in the character of virtue and the question of whether war is ultimately about winning or about fame. Is Garnier's version of the Trojan catastrophe just a retrospective rewriting of history to make losers into winners or is there something else going on? The structure of the conflict of war as a contest with a winner and a loser (as elaborated by Scarry) remains intact, but the terms of winning and losing are effectively transposed from the realm of physical confrontation (expressed as violence with one side inflicting injury on the other) to the realm of poetry, or literature (expressed through voice, Fame, or *fama*). Within the play, the fiction of a contemporary political ideology—the fiction of French nationhood and France as the continuation of Troy—is exposed. The lineage of heroes descended from Hector and arriving, via Ronsard's invented hero, Francus, at Charles IX can only exist in poetry. With the torturously drawn-out death of Astyanax, Garnier's tragedy perturbs the would-be seamless narrative of heroic virtue carried through from Hector to the Valois kings. Interestingly, this transposition—the displacement of the wound from body to voice—gives the wound an afterlife in the public space as a way of signaling history.

It is through this sublimation of the wound that the fiction of nationhood is bound up with the idea/ideal of the (military) hero. By staging mourning as a means of signaling status and history within a public space, the play is asking us to think about the value of heroic virtue. Is it private or public? Is it about power or memory? Or is it, in the end, just a question of how virtue is portrayed, which takes us back to the question of language and form that we started out with? As voiced by the Trojan women, mourning becomes a strategy that at once delays further action in the play and turns an ostensible loss (in the form of the death of the national military hero) into a legendary win transmitted via the enduring power of tragic poetry.

With her husband and her community already conflated by the chorus of lamenting Trojan women, Andromache goes on to echo Hecuba and reject personalized mourning of her husband's death in favor of collective mourning of what his death symbolizes for this community:

Alors donc je pleurai, non d'Hector l'infortune,
Mais au trépas d'Hector la ruine commune.
Car dès lors me sembla publique notre deuil,
Et le cercueil d'Hector de Troye le cercueil. (580-84)¹³

¹³ In terms of Scarry's argument, what happens here is that Hector's death reinforces the triumph of the "sacred ideology" of the triumphant Greeks; yet, with hindsight and the ensuing millenia of literary tradition, we know that the Trojans will have the last laugh and it is their "sacred ideology" that will be translated throughout the Western world through a process of *translatio imperii*.

This last line becomes prophetic of the action of Act II in which the coffin containing Hector's ashes sits at the center of the drama. The Greek ships are unable to depart, and the seer Calchas reveals that the Greeks must first kill Hector's young son Astyanax to be sure that he will not seek retribution later. In order to save her son, Andromache hides him in Hector's coffin. However, when Ulysses decides instead to scatter Hector's ashes to the wind if Astyanax cannot be found and killed, Andromache realizes that all is lost and her son will be exposed. At this moment, Hector is conflated not only with Troy, but with his son as well, such that Astyanax in turn becomes the new Troy already in its tomb.

Andromache wants to save her son not because she sees the possibility for Troy's future, but because she sees Hector in him—because he preserves the memory of the past. In the same way that Hector's body becomes a symbol of Troy's fall, Astyanax's body—the body of a son and of an individual vulnerable to injury—loses its particular identity in the image of his father, who has already lost his own identity as a husband and a father in the image of the city of Troy laid low. In the eyes of the Greeks, Astyanax represents the future of Troy and the promise of a Troy rebuilt; for his mother, though, he represents not so much the future as the living memory of the past since he is the spitting image of his father, Hector. When Astyanax is placed in Hector's coffin, it adds yet another dimension to its figuration as Troy's coffin: not only does it contain the great city recently reduced to ashes (symbolically, in the form of Hector's ashes), but now it also contains the promise of a future city, a new Troy, symbolized by Astyanax. This future is symbolically foreclosed in the play's imagery, however, by the fact that, even before his death, Astyanax is trapped inside a tomb. For him to escape would be for Troy to rise again, metaphorically, from the ashes, and perhaps to be literally rebuilt. In closing off this possibility, the play closes off the very future upon which contemporary Valois ideology depends.

Past and future are conflated in the image of the coffin, leaving the audience somehow suspended in time. Standing over the coffin in a state of mourning, the Trojan women are unready to let go of the past and unable to authorize the violence necessary to continue on into the future. Thus, the image of the coffin disrupts narrative; it represents a story that is over (that of the individual hero, who has been killed), momentarily distracting us from the larger narrative still moving forward—the public cause that is supposed to justify the private loss.¹⁴ The explicit

¹⁴ Managing the image of the fallen hero continues to be a challenge to the construction of national fictions and narratives of war and conflict. A salient example of this is the recently repealed 18-year ban on photos of coffins of US military personnel killed in conflict returning from overseas. For an overview of the policy and the controversy surrounding it, see <http://entertainment.time.com/2009/02/27/the-pentagon-and-pictures-of-soldiers-coffins/>.

connection to contemporary France is further developed through the question of what can be done about the larger narrative.

Unlike the direct physical violence of war, which results in injuring and wounds or death, lamentation does not act directly upon physical bodies in the world. For this reason, it is difficult to determine whether or not mourning constitutes an ethical position. There is no choice of action or inaction, there are just tears, which neither change the past nor effect the future. Lamentation is ultimately ineffectual as a means of ending violence or bringing closure. The women in *La Troade* explicitly give voice to this paradox:

..... Nos détresses passées
Et nos pertes ne sont par larmes effacées;
Nos plaintes n'y font rien. Les royaumes perdus
Ne sont, pour lamenter, par Jupiter rendus. (2395-99)

Not only does any ritual, cleansing, or purgative benefit of lamentation seem to be dismissed here (not to mention any cathartic function of tragedy), there is also already a sense in these lines of how lamentation interrupts narrative action. If crying accomplishes nothing—if we cannot hope for closure or catharsis through tears—how do we know when to stop crying? Like war, lamentation seems to have no definite end, threatening to go on forever and thereby negating its ostensible cathartic function. In this way, mourning becomes a figurative expression of the conflict, troubling the traditional narrative drive of a good war story and preventing any satisfying resolution.¹⁵ While Andromache seems to suggest that tears keep memory alive, this is problematic when we consider how easily memory of the past takes over her concern for the future and complicates her reasons for trying to save her own son—namely that he helps her remember his father, her dead husband and Troy's fallen hero, rather than for his own sake. As a reminder of the irreparable harm done to the community, mourning renders the violence of war particularly problematic.

Just as there is no foreseeable end to the Trojan women's lamentations, there is no clear beginning either. The lamentations in the play do not originate with the fall of Troy, but with the beginning of the war ten years earlier. As in Homer's epics about the Trojan War and its aftermath, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the beginning of the conflict always remains distant and inaccessible in a misty, mythic past. In contrast to the precise markers of narrative time found in epic in the form of heroic exploits (battles, etc.), the time of the conflict, as it is represented in Garnier's tragedy, is unmarked; it is a continuous flow of lament: "Nul jour en tout cet espace / Exempt de pleurs n'a été...Aux pleurs qui nous vont baignant / Nous ne sommes apprentives" (141-142, 155-156). By necessity these women are old pros at

¹⁵ This is this same threat posed to the ostensible cathartic, purgative, and restorative function of tragedy by an excess of grief or lamentation that the Greek king Menelaus has in mind when he calls for a stop to the mourning for the lost hero Odysseus in Book IV of the *Odyssey*.

expressing their grief about war. Lamenting is what they do, and they do it well. What is more, in their role as titular tragic heroes, they turn mourning into a public rather than a private business and open the door for tragedy as an alternative to epic as a literary mode of historical understanding. What has been criticized as a kind of flatness or underdevelopment of Garnier's characters, especially when compared to Corneille and Racine's heroines, is actually what makes *La Troade* such an effective representation of war as a backdrop for communal rather than individual virtue. The pathos of this particular tragedy lies precisely in the fact that there is no significant character development—time stands still, and the characters are flattened by their grief.

Ulysses's reaction to Andromache's grief draws our attention to the suspended nature of time in war. He gives her time to mourn but then finally cuts off her lament after realizing the danger it poses to his enterprise. He points out that there will never be an end to the mourning unless it is cut off violently—"Ces pleurs n'ont point de fin" (382). Ever the pragmatic and calculating leader, he reads the Trojan women's grief—not entirely inaccurately—as a stalling tactic. So long as their mourning continues, action is stalled, and further violence is held at bay. There is a time to mourn, but that time is not infinite. Life must go on for both sides; the Greeks must go home. History must move on with the vanquished laid to rest and the victors able to move triumphantly ahead. This cannot happen, however, without a new cycle of violence. For the Greeks to move home, more blood must be spilled in the form of the sacrifice of Hector's son (no heroes left behind).

Acting like a homeopathic antidote to the suspended time of war, lamentation suspends narrative time and thus precludes (at least temporarily) the possibility of further violence. Violence moves the story forward, and without it, everything comes to an end and there can be no heroic narrative. So long as the lamentation continues, violence is suspended; when it ends, a new cycle of retributive violence begins. There is no resolution possible, only suspension, which, as it turns out, cannot be infinite. In her book *Authoring War*, Kate McLoughlin makes the following observation about the temporal peculiarity of wartime:

The fact that while a war is in progress, it is not known when, or how, or if it is going to end gives wartime its special property of *open-endedness* or *endinglessness* (an acute form of endlessness)...no longer pre-war and not yet post-war, wartime is a radical, *sui generis* extended present. One of the challenges for war representation is, accordingly, to communicate and even exploit the peculiarities of this extraordinary temporal state. (107)

Even though the war has technically ended in *La Troade*, the violence doesn't end; it takes on a new form as a personal vendetta when Hecuba and her entourage attack Polymestor as revenge for the murder of her youngest son Polyxene. This recurring cycle of violence, punctuated with the indefinite suspension of lamentation, recalls the recurring cycle of wars punctuated by tenuous peace playing out in contemporary France. It also raises the question of whether there is a difference between violence used in the name of a public or a private cause.

With the hero dead and his successor dead, what must become of the Trojan cause? Is it possible to break out of the cycle of mourning and suspended time and move forward with history? At the end of the play, Hecuba coopts the warrior ethos to vindicate the women's vengeful actions against the deceitful Polymestor. "Ce sont là de nos faits, ce sont de nos prouesses, / Ce sont marques de nous, et de notre vertu; nous avons de tels jeux Polydore ébatu" (429). Insisting on the collective nature of the action with the repeated use of *nous*, Hecuba figures the slave women as warriors who are acting according to an ethos of virtue, prowess, and even play (*jeux*). Their language in this instance also recalls the women in one of Euripides's other plays, *The Bacchae*, who exult in having caught and ripped apart their "prey," which turns out to be Agave's own son, Pentheus, king of Thebes. In *La Troade*, however, in the context of war, they do not come across as crazy women acting in a devotional frenzy but instead like Amazons whose violence (although personally motivated) is justified and even admired.

By the end of the play, the voices of lament give way to action as the women leave off their mourning for Hector (a strategy to suspend time and postpone violence) and step into the role of hero that he left vacant. In *La Troade*, personal grief turns into public/political action. The personal grief of the Trojan women is expressed at first through lament, which suspends violence, and then through an act of violent retribution. In this process, personal grief is effectively rewritten as significant to history.

II. Staging the politics of civil war in Jean Robelin's *Thébaïde*

Garnier understands the tragedy of the fall of Troy to be an apt analogy for the misfortunes of contemporary France and explicitly encourages a kind of allegorical reading in his preface to *La Troade*. Jean Robelin sets up a similar comparison between antiquity and the present with his choice of subject matter in his tragedy, *La Thébaïde*, which appeared in 1584 just before the start of the eighth conflict, the so-called "War of the Three Henrys" (1585-1598). The play is about another famously afflicted ancient city: Thebes. In fact, the legend of Thebes had a rich literary legacy in the French tradition reaching back to the Middle Ages and the *Roman de Thebès* (1150). As the "shadowy partner of heroic Troy" (*John Lydgate, The Siege of Thebes*), Thebes, with its history of incest, fratricide, and civil strife, had a particular resonance in Renaissance France, which had its own troubled ruling family in the house of Valois.¹⁶ While Garnier's play stages the pathos of war, taking the audience (or readers) into "les coulisses de la guerre" (Jeanneret 22) to see and hear the suffering of the victims, Robelin's *Thébaïde* shows a different side of

¹⁶ The play's allusive quality is especially apparent in the character of Jocaste who is a kind of conniving Catherine de Medici figure trying to control and manage the destruction she herself has wrought. For background on the complicated politics of the period, see Salmon, *Society in Crisis*.

warfare; it stages the politics of civil war. In other words, in the *Thébaïde*, we move from a focus on the consequences of war, which we saw in *La Troade*, to the source of conflict. In doing so, Robelin's play assumes the challenge of representing France's own conflict using tragic form to enable the animation of permutations of heroism that would be swallowed in epic. According to Aristotle, tragedy is a genre that deals with the misfortunes of princes and great families. Thus war is an appropriate subject matter for tragedy insofar as it is waged by the great as a means of resolving their personal quarrels. In the *Thébaïde*, where the lines between private and public quarrels are blurred, there are disastrous consequences for everyone.

While the title of the *Thébaïde* already evokes civil conflict with its reference to Thebes, the play's provenance also situates it in relation to the deep rift that existed in France's own political landscape. The play is dedicated to Charles of Lorraine, Duc de Mayenne, and was first performed at the Jesuit College of Pont-à-Musson in Lorraine in 1584. Two liminary pieces, a sonnet "sur la conjonction des lettres et des armes en Lorraine" (482) and a dialogue in which the nine muses sing the praises of the duke of Lorraine, make the case for Musson, or Lorraine more generally, as a cultural center, and for Mayenne as a literary patron who rivals the monarch. This cultural rivalry between the house of Guise and the house of Valois parallels the military and political rivalry that was simmering at the time between the most powerful noble family in France and the monarchy. Tragedy enables us to get at this liminal space between public and private conflict—represented by foreign war and personal or family vendettas respectively—and demonstrates its dangerous instability. In contrast to epic heroes, whose identity and position vis-à-vis history are clear, tragic heroes are often more complicated. In this case, the nature of heroism is called into question by the nature of the conflict: a house divided against itself. War stories without heroes are troubling and complicated, and in civil war stories it becomes difficult to determine who is the hero. Tragedy makes it possible to represent this heroic ambiguity.

Because the *Thébaïde* represents an incidence of civil war, it is even more obviously relevant than *La Troade* to France's own state of civil conflict. Moreover, the actions of warfare, especially battle scenes, have more of an immediate presence in this play than in Garnier's tragedy, although they are still mediated by speech, appearing in the form of prophecy, dreams, or reports from a messenger. The specter of war first appears in spectacular fashion at the outset of the play where, in a monologue of more than four hundred lines, the seer Amphiarée foretells the assault against Thebes about to be waged by the exiled Polynices and his Argive allies. Amphiarus conjures up the disastrous meltdown awaiting the allied Greek armies amassed outside the Theban walls:

Je vois, je vois, je vois les phalanges Argive
Trébuchant par milliers aux Cadméanes rives,
Arpenter par leurs corps le plus bas élément,
Et pourprer de leur sang son vert accoutrement. (210-212)

The triple insistence on the visual with the repetition of the verb *voir* brings the scene to life in front of the audience, even though the action is not occurring on stage and hasn't even yet occurred in the time of the play. The scene described is one of chaos; Greek phalanxes—soldiers who should be striding in orderly fashion—are stumbling by the thousands (“trébuchant par milliers”), measuring out the ground with their bodies. The active verbs in this description, *arpenter* and *pourprer*, are all attached to the dead and dying soldiers; the principal action is not fighting, or even being killed, but simply dying. This lack of command over their bodies, stumbling in defeat and bleeding out over the ground, suggests at once utter defeat and lack of military discipline.¹⁷

The assaulting army takes on an almost machine-like character, but instead of being a machine of destruction (like a massive modern industrialized army marching in step) and successfully taking Thebes, the army itself is destroyed.

Je vous vois, Conducteurs, avec vos bataillons,
 Etendus comme épis sur les jaunes sillons...
 Si qu'enfin vous aurez pour urnes et tombeaux
 Les ventres charogniers des loups et des corbeaux,
 Tels seront vos fins et vos destinées. (223-229)

The Homeric simile comparing the battalions of soldiers to a field of corn naturalizes an otherwise imposing image of warfare, turning the threatening ranks of the besieging army into nothing more than insentient crops that will be mowed down with the harvest. This is followed by the horrifically dehumanizing image of the dead as carrion entombed in the entrails of scavenging animals. These scenes of war empty the combatants of their humanity; there are no people, only dead plants and animals.¹⁸

War, as it is represented in this tragedy, is stuck somewhere in between two kinds of conflict: the notion of “just war” and the idea of a duel between two private parties. Act II shows the escalation of the private quarrel between the two brothers and reveals clearly that the idea of justice in play has nothing to do with the community but only with the power struggle between Œdipus's sons. Polynices and

¹⁷ This theme of order or disorder in defeat is an important one in the Renaissance. For example, in Rabelais's *Gargantua* when the pugnacious King Pichrocole's army is scattered willy-nilly by the hyper-violent monk, Friar John (Chapter 44). The verb “trebucher,” meaning to stumble and used in the play to describe falling movement of the defeated soldiers also had a specific meaning in the context of military discipline: “faire une écart de conduite.”

¹⁸ Strategies of dehumanization were common during the religious wars. Stuart Carroll, for instance, describes how rotting Protestant bodies were left out to be eaten by farm animals (178). After the assassination of the revered Protestant leader Admiral Coligny, his corpse was mounted on the gibbet at Montfaucon to be picked at by birds. The inhuman or bestial character of warfare had also been addressed earlier in the century by Erasmus in his adage *Dulce bellum inexpertis*.

his ally Tydeus dismiss the augurs of defeat, claiming that justice is clearly on their side after Eteocles refuses to give over power to his brother in accordance with the agreement they made following the death of their father, Œdipus. The fact that Eteocles's crime is essentially perjury complicates his status in relation to the laws of war, and sure enough, his lack of good faith has disastrous consequences for everyone; the scene ends with a call to gather up all of their Greek allies who are armed and ready to lay siege to Thebes. The chorus chimes in with the following wisdom: As soon as crazy ambition introduces troubles and factions into man's heart, it gives him over to his exaggerated courage. He abandons himself to every risk with no apprehension of the great peril that surrounds him and can snuff out his passion. "Man's heart" becomes a microcosm for the state—threatened by troubles and factions, acting brashly with "exaggerated courage." With this warning against the dangers of ambition, we enter very clearly into an allegorical register; the ambition of the Guise and the Valois factions leads them to act out their power struggle with a disregard for its effect on the national community.

The circumstances surrounding the siege of Thebes call into question the nature of heroic traits such as honor, virtue, and courage. The play is not so much about how heroes are made as whether or not heroism is possible. Act III is crucial for how it represents and works through the rationale and logistics of civil war, which does not fit easily into discourses of justice or heroism. Specifically, Robelin uses gender to complicate the status of the hero. While Garnier's women were relegated to the gendered and domestic space of mourning where their lamenting voices could act as a mediating force or perhaps deflect violence, Robelin gives women a more central role in the action. While the brothers Polynice and Eteocle challenge each other to a duel in front of the city walls (a traditional chivalric mode of conflict resolution), their mother, Jocasta, takes it upon herself to try and lead them away from the path of mutually assured destruction, first with reasoning and then with tears. Her attempt to reason with her sons hinges on two main arguments: first, that honor and glory can come only at the price of ignominy, and second, that victory and righteousness are incompatible in this situation. By arguing this way, she attempts to appeal to their sense of honor and to take the burden (or the management) of the war upon herself.

Laisse, laisse-moi donc cette guerre sanglante,
Qui ne peut se finir sans misère évidente,
Guerre où voudrait plutôt un honorable cœur

Etre, innocent, vaincu, que, coupable vainqueur.¹⁹ (1445-1448)

This plea calls our attention to the difficulty, if not impossibility, of locating heroic action in this situation. There is a strong implication here that war—or at the very

¹⁹ We will see the inverse of this position later in the chapter in the *Tragédie du Sac de Cabrières* where the commander has a more Machiavellian *modus operandi* that involves winning at all costs. Jocasta's rhetoric relies on an older moral standard of just and honorable action.

least this particular war—is in its nature a crime, and therefore neither side can achieve victory honorably, if at all.

Jocaste pushes the envelope even further when she goes out among the army camped before Thebes in order to find her bellicose son and talk him out of the folly of attacking his own city.

Je viens pour augmenter votre ébat sanguinaire,
Joindre au meurtre du fils le meurtre de la mère!
Où sont ils? que je vois où est ce brave héros,
Cet enfant adoptif de l'étrangère Argos,
Qui nous vient saccager. Me veut-il pas défaire
Avec le même estoc qu'il veut occir son frère? (1205-2010)

Jocaste calls into question whether there can be any demonstration of virtue in the conflict between her sons. Referring to Polynice as “ce brave héros...qui vient nous saccager” is clearly ironic; if anything she is placing herself in the role of commander. Jocaste has her own war tactics, which include quite literally intervening with her body between the two warriors. When she takes center stage in Act III, she also moves out of a private and gendered domestic space, i.e., the space of mourning, and places herself squarely in the center of the action on the battlefield. However, when her verbal challenges fail to have an effect, she resorts to supplication, thereby reverting to her traditional wartime role as distraught mother.

Or puisque les raisons, de ton coeur emouvoir
A suivre la raison n'ont ores le pouvoir,
Je verrai si les pleurs, le prier de ta mère,
Et les genoux fléchis, fléchiront ta colère. (1459-1462)

Jocaste puts on a full emotional show as the weeping matriarch, reminiscent of the lamentations of the grieving women of *La Troade*. Although her distress is heartfelt, it is first and foremost a tactic to prevent the continuation of a conflict that can only end badly. When this tactic also fails, she threatens finally to intervene with her own body, and that of her daughter, Ismène.

Over the course of her speech, Jocaste effects a sudden and dramatic transformation from a weeping mother making an emotional plea to a combatant. At first she is an enemy, and finally, seized by *fureur*, she becomes a defiant, warrior-hero figure, imposing herself physically at the heart of the action. Even more than the mourning Trojan women who end their lament in order to take violent (albeit personal) revenge, Jocaste challenges the gendered relation to the public face of the violence of warfare. Her transition from a gendered role as a private mourner, lamenting her family's tragedy helplessly on the sidelines, to a *rusée* negotiator trying to effect public intervention and finally as a heroic figure on the battlefield raises the question of what women can do other than lament.

In Act IV, however, we leave the battlefield again to return to the more traditionally gendered space of lamentation. Nowhere is the intimate, familial nature of the conflict more fully apparent than when Antigone learns of the death of not just one but both of her brothers in a moment of tragic reversal. As she laments

their miserable (and, as she sees it, unjust) fate, it becomes clear that the outcome of the conflict, i.e., the pragmatic result of military victory, is moot. Even though Thebes, against all odds, beats off the attacking Argive army, Antigone takes no consolation from the victory. She weighs the heaped-up bodies of the slain Argive army against just two dead bodies, those of her brothers.

Que me sert que d'Argos les phalanges vaincues
Sanglantent de leurs corps nos campagnes velues?
Thèbes, que me sert-il qu'ayant les Cieux amis
Tu ayes mis à sac tes hautains ennemis,
Si mes nobles germains, las, si mes pauvres frères
Ont reçu même sort que tes fiers adversaires? (1873-77)

That the lives of the princes are more valuable than the others seems at first a rather callous position, but Antigone's anguished monologue is actually the ultimate moment of recognition of the futility of this war as a situation in which there can be no winner. It is precisely because war spares no one that the cost is simply too high; this is an impossible calculus.

Rather than being deployed to vindicate the conflict in the manner of Cassandra's speech about Troy's poetic afterlife, Antigone's rhetoric has the effect of emptying warfare of its justification. In fact, her speech exposes the incompatibility of two competing models of warfare or theories of war, namely the just war in which the party in the right would be vindicated by victory on the battlefield and an "autonomous, secular, technological militarism" (de Somogyi *Shakespeare's Theatre of War* 8) in which victory is the result of superior military strength, strategy, and materiel. There is no satisfaction or utility in the Theban victory because both sides are from the same family. The fact that both champions fall complicates any claims of justice for the winning side, but also, no matter which of them loses, it is a loss for the House of Laertes. Jocaste, too, laments this fact near the end of the third act when she cries out, "O Dieux, quoi qu'il advienne, / Surmonte qui voudra, la perte sera mienne" (1163-1164). Without some means of determining justice, or some kind of clear way to determine victory or efficacy, the parameters of war and what constitutes heroism become really problematic. This is one of the biggest problems with civil war that Robelin's tragedy exposes and attempts to work through.

Although I don't want to suggest that the play is pure allegory, it must be noted that this kind of zero-sum weighing of war's costs mirrors the zero-sum legislative policies of the French civil war period. As Andrea Frisch points out in her article on "French Tragedy and the Civil Wars," the systematic politics of forgetting, and not simply juridical amnesty, is directly linked to the "peculiar horrors of civil war" which "threatens the very foundations of the state" (301). The need to interrupt an internal cycle of violence in which the line between state-sanctioned punishment and retributive vengeance is considerably blurred is what makes Antigone's subsequent predicament the stuff of tragedy; if she buries her traitorous brother she will incur the disapprobation of her community whose security he threatened. Antigone's lamentation is linked to commemoration, which rather than

being a cathartic expression of grief represents a distinct threat to the restoration of civic order. Whereas in *La Troade* mourning seems to offer some kind of respite from violence, even if only a temporary one, in the *Thébaïde*, giving mourning free rein all but ensures a relapse into chaos. Both Antigone's mourning and her desire to bury her outlawed brother, Polynices, represent a danger to the larger community.²⁰

Robelin's play ends with Jocaste calling punishment down on herself for her complicity in the origins of the tragedy (as Œdipus's mother and wife, and the mother of Polynices and Eteocles) and for her failed attempt to intervene and bring an end to the conflict. She takes center stage again, this time with a startling image of her opening up her own body as a wound:

Courage, donc, mon bras, sus, dextre auxiliaire,
Fidèle à mes desseins, prends ce fer salutaire,
Et d'un sanglant office ouvre de milles coups
Ce flanc prodigieux, porte-fils, porte-époux. (2364-2366)

Jocaste sees herself as responsible for the grief that Thebes has suffered, but her suffering nevertheless remains intensely personal; it does not become a symbol for the suffering of the community in the way that Hecuba's suffering stands in for that of the Trojans. The *blame* for Thebes's misfortunes is placed squarely on the entire ruling family, not just on Œdipus. However, the stunning theatricality of Jocaste's bloody atonement does not erase the problem exposed earlier in Antigone's speech, namely that there are no winners here; the queen's dramatic resolution to this deeply familial tragedy comes at the expense of a catastrophic military defeat and civilian casualties. Just as she was unable to substitute her own body for those of her sons on the battlefield in Act III, Jocaste is not able to assume the wound of the entire community or deflect the violence by wounding herself. Robelin's staging of such futile heroic gestures reveals how tragedy is well suited to show the collateral damage of war because it draws attention to the fact that the private quarrels of the great spread out and affect or infect everyone, and the fate of violent death is not limited to the tragic hero.

²⁰ The idea that remembering could be politically dangerous seems quite foreign to our contemporary practices of commemoration and (hyper-)memorialization in which violence against communities (national, ethnic, religious, etc.) is marked with monuments, moments of silence, works of literature, and slogans. For example, the motto "Never Forget", born of the September 11, 2001 attacks against the World Trade Center in New York City, is the polar opposite of the edicts of forgetting promulgated during the 1570s-90s. The uncomfortable relationship between lamentation and commemoration may be particular to instances of civil war. See, for example, *el pacto de olvido* (1975) in post-Franco Spain; Walt Whitman, "The Million Dead, Too, Summed Up": "the dead, the dead, the dead—*our* dead—or South or North, ours all, (all, all, all, finally dear to me)"; <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/30/opinion/30blight.html?pagewanted=all>

III. Submissive bodies/resisting voices: confessional community and the power of language in the *Tragedie du Sac de Cabrières*

We have seen how classical themes are mobilized to engage problems of warfare, but what kinds of pressure are placed on tragedy that seeks to consider current or recent events? Based on a contemporary rather than an antique subject, the anonymous *Tragédie du Sac de Cabrières* (ca.1566) stages the emergence of a new kind of community: a confessional community whose identity is based in its adherence to a revealed Word, even in the face of extreme violence. Even more than the Trojan women and the unhappy Thebans, this new community is bound together by the violence that is inflicted against it. In the year 1545, the town of Cabrières in the papal enclave of the Comtat Venaissin near Avignon was besieged by royal troops on the order of Jean Maynier, d'Oppède, the president of the *parlement* of Provence. After admitting the Catholic leaders within the fortified town walls for negotiations, the inhabitants of the Vaudois town were mercilessly slaughtered. The events at Cabrières were quickly recuperated in the popular Protesant martyrology of Jean Crespin, thus becoming part of a rapidly expanding collective discourse about legitimate resistance against oppressive government. The kind of violence that took place at Cabrières was to be repeated with alarming frequency in the following decades, including massacres at Wassy in 1562 and Paris on Saint Bartholomew's Day in 1572. Such public acts of extreme violence became the basis of a blossoming narrative tradition of martyrology, which helped to cement a different kind of community from the gendered and politico-geographically constituted communities staged in *La Troade* and *La Thébaïde* respectively, namely a confessional community, representing a new kind of relationship between, power, authority, language, and narrative.

The Cabrières offensive, still fresh in the minds of contemporaries, is the subject of the third play that I will discuss in this chapter. All of the action of the play takes place outside the walls in the enemy camp where the *président*, d'Oppède, consults with the offensive military leader, Polin, and the *seigneur* of Cabrières, Catderousse. Also present in the camp is a tragic chorus of prisoners of war taken from the earlier sack of the nearby town of Mérindol. As victims of that earlier assault, described as "cruellement funeste," the chorus is in a perfect position to provide a voice of lament, but also to forewarn or foretell future action based on past experience. As a community bound by persecution with a collective voice to comment on what they have suffered, they are no longer losers whose history can be easily swept aside; they effect their own inscription in history. After a discussion of whether it is possible (or advisable) to make the town surrender without force, Polin comes up with a ruse to take the town; after being admitted by the reluctant and suspicious Vaudois in order to negotiate with them and assure them of Cadterousse's good faith, he fakes a conversion to Protestantism and promises the removal of the Catholic army camped outside the walls. The play ends with an account of the massacre of the town's inhabitants by a repentant and truly converted Polin who becomes a *porte-parole* for the martyred community.

La Troade and *La Thébaïde* challenged our understanding of virtue by drawing our attention to the problem of the hero and complicating it with questions of gender and civil war. *Le Sac de Cabrières* poses a different question about virtue in wartime: Where is virtue located—in the administration of war or in carrying out the action? This is an important consideration in light of the contentious contemporary socio-cultural shifts in the model of waging warfare that saw an increasingly important role for unskilled bureaucrats, *habile* with language but with no training in the military arts. The opening scene of the play sets up an opposition between “les bonnets ronds” (bureaucrats) on one hand and military men (on the model of the traditional warrior class, the *noblesse d’épée*) on the other. As the president of the *parlement* of Provence, a man of the law, and a member of the socially ascendant *noblesse de robe*, d’Oppède lacks a pragmatic, strategic understanding of how to wage siege warfare effectively (not to mention ethically).²¹ Instead, his orders to take Cabrières and his determination to continue with the assault after being repulsed are based on an ethic that is at odds with his social position. He expresses this ethic in his sententious opening line: “Un coeur vaillant mourra plutot que d’être vaincu” (1). While this is a fairly standard heroic sound bite, it seems out of place in the mouth of d’Oppède who is ostensibly not a heroic or chivalric figure.²² Indeed Polin and Catderousse immediately pounce on the incongruity of his position, mocking his incompetence as a leader. Polin taunts, “Ainsi le camp auquel commande un bonnet rond / comme neige au soleil devant l’ennemi fond” (5-6), while Catderousse adds, “Vous vous entendez trop aux procès et aux enquêtes / A faire fouetter, à faire couper têtes, / Ou a faire souffrir quelque plus dure mort” (7-9). The idea of a military professional equipped to manage to skillfully keep order among his troops is contrasted with the professional administrator who would be qualified only to issue retributive justice. Furthermore, in light of the details of the assault, the possibility of a diplomatic solution is dismissed as being not only ineffectual but also unprofessional—a concept that was

²¹ For a discussion of the ideal military professional, which Polin is not, see Chapter Four below on Monluc’s *Commentaires*. For a discussion of the protocols and ethics of siege warfare in the Renaissance, see above, Chapter One.

²² In *Le différend*, Jean-François Lyotard writes that “[p]ublic authority (family, state, military, partisan, denominational) can order its own addressees to die. The *Die* needs to be modalized...*Die rather than be defeated* (Thermopyles, Stalingrad). Death is prescribed as an alternative to another obligation (civic duty, freedom, military glory) if the latter is revealed to be impracticable” (100). In the French tradition, see Bertrand de Born’s poem “In Praise of War,” which could be the anthem for the violent cult of chivalry: “For it is better to die than be vanquished and live.” Dante put Born in Hell.

taking on new meaning as the concept of military professionalism took off at the end of the sixteenth century.²³

D'Oppède's attitude towards violence is paradoxical: on one hand he is experienced in administering harsh retributive justice in a civil context, while on the other hand he does not seem to want to capitalize on a military advantage to achieve victory against the enemy. His initial hesitance to use violence against the Cabrières holdouts is the result of a persistent dreamlike vision he has in which he brings the resisting town to its knees through the power of his speech alone, manipulating the inhabitants, like Hercules, with his honeyed words:

Un songe, nuit et jour, dormant, veillant, me bride
Par l'exemple fameux de la chaîne d'Alcide,
De laquelle il tira vers lui prompt les Gaulois
Par l'oreille, enivrés du doux miels de sa voix. (35-38)

D'Oppède imagines the city pulled to the ground effortlessly by the golden chain of his eloquence: "Tout ainsi cette ville, à ma langue attachée, / Me semble tomber bas, d'elle même arrachée" (39-40). The prognostications of his seer reaffirm his conviction that speech constitutes the best form of action: "De les vouloir forcer, ce n'est que temps perdu, / la lance n'y peut rien mais seulement la langue" (42-43). This valorization of the tongue over the lance, like that of the pen over the sword, is part of the symbolic re-appropriation of the figure of Hercules/Alcide by an emerging social class of nobles who were trained as administrators rather than as soldiers or commanders. As Michael Wintroub explains,

[Hercules] represented the man-god-ancestor who embodied the chivalrous ideals of strength, fortitude, and bravery. As such, he became emblematic of the opposition to the rising social power of France's new civic-cultural elite. At the same time, as the status of these new elites grew, they increasingly came to challenge the normative ideals with which their royal benefactors most identify. This can be seen in the appropriation and transformation of Hercules for their own purposes. Deployed strategically, the figure of Hercules became a potent symbolic weapon in the struggles to redefine French elite identity. Thus alongside the Hercules who represented the knightly virtues, appeared a new Heracles who represented ideals of eloquence, civility and prudence. (46-47)

In the alternative model of virtue that begins to take shape, public speech, rather than public or private action, becomes the standard by which the hero is judged. The play lays bare the mechanism by which controlling speech and language is essential to controlling history, and specifically narratives of heroism.

For his part, Polin tries to downplay his naïveté as a commander by referencing his earlier accomplishments as the king's ambassador to the Ottoman

²³ For an overview of the rise of professional armies and their effect on the chivalric ethos, see Potter, "Chivalry and Professionalism in the French Armies of the Renaissance."

empire, where he successfully manipulated language for political ends: “J’ai fait devant le Turc mainte fausse harangue” (44). For Polin, speech is effective only insofar as it is *deceptive*; when used adroitly and without scruple to manipulate the other party, language can triumph (“Je l’emportai pourtant, bravement, par mon dire” 48). It is not a question of speaking well or convincingly but rather of speaking falsely. Even though Polin puts it to good use in France’s national interest, this “faux-doux parler” (45) is nevertheless the same treacherous quality of language that Montaigne finds so problematic throughout the *Essais*. Catderousse, on the contrary, rejects outright the effectiveness of any kind of verbal engagement, even as a means to an end. As far as he is concerned, words are a last resort, which no valiant warrior should ever have occasion to use. “Mais qui a un bon coeur et les armes au poing, / du babil de la langue il n’a aucun besoin” (49-50). Language, ostensibly a tool of mediation and the mark of an emerging diplomatic consciousness and sophisticated political system (Hampton 2), is dismissed as “babil”—hopelessly post-lapsarian and perhaps even beyond the ability of the most ardent humanist scholars to master.

Catderousse’s assertion that language, and more specifically mastery of language, serves no functional purpose in the practice of arms points to an interesting conflation of the chivalric ethos—encapsulated in the old Hercules symbolism—with a newly relevant strategic impulse. Being an effective military leader, especially in the age of gunpowder and angle bastions, is not necessarily the same as being a so-called noble warrior.²⁴ This is what Polin understands from his experience with sweet-talking the Ottoman. Nevertheless, Catderousse paints a singular portrait of a military leader whose tactical abilities are innate, the result of the virtue imprinted on his heart rather than of any training or study. Such a virtuous commander naturally understands the protocol of siege warfare. “Quiconque se voit chef d’une puissante armée / S’il a profond au coeur la vertu imprimé / jamais fortifié ne laisse ennemi” (19-21). Catderousse sees words as, at best, a last resort for those lacking in heart, courage, or military power. In his view, words are little more than empty sounds; they do not correspond to actions or objects in the world nor are they an effective means of communicating with an “other.”²⁵ In this view, diplomacy is pretty much an exercise in futility—unless, of

²⁴ This uneasy, evolving relationship between chivalric ideals and pragmatic professionalism is discussed at greater length below in Chapter Four on Monluc’s *Commentaires*.

²⁵ Machiavelli, who astutely comments on the failure of all unarmed prophets in Chapter IV of *The Prince*, understood that practiced, skillful speech could be an important tactical weapon; even if diplomacy were only a means to an end, it could still be a very effective means. Machiavelli also uses the term *virtù* in *The Art of War* in order to describe the strategic prowess of the general who adapts to different battlefield conditions as the situation dictates.

course, it is used as a calculated strategic maneuver, as Polin mastered in his dealings with the Turks.

While virtue in the Machivaellian sense of *virtù* would include the ability to move easily back and forth between ethical conduct and conduct that is less so, the Christian inflection of the term “virtue” seems to be lost in this context—even though it is invoked repeatedly by the play’s governing Protestant theology.²⁶ Virtue (*la vertu*), as Catderousse imagines it, includes an understanding of strategy; but there is also a strong theological overtone to his claim. The idea that virtue is imprinted deeply on the heart recalls the Pauline distinction between the revealed law of the Old Testament written on tablets, and the New Testament law written on the hearts of men.²⁷ This shift in connotations takes us from a socially inflected conception of virtue as a function of nobility to a theologically inflected one where virtue is bodily submission to violence (martyrdom). The voice, i.e., the chorus of believers that serves as mouthpiece for the Word, becomes a means of resistance and a marker of this new kind of virtue.

Over the course of the play, d’Oppède and Polin undergo inverse conversions that illustrate this ethical shift. At the end of the first part of the play, D’Oppède effectuates a transformation from a bureaucrat into a soldier, beginning with a literal change of costume. Giving up his dream of sweet-talking the resisters into surrender, he lays aside his round hat and robe to don a suit of armor:

Que me servirait-il qu’au lieu de bonnet rond,
De cet armet doré je me couvre le front?
Au lieu de cette grande robe avoir cette cuirasse,
Pour la plume en la main, cette pesante masse?
Suis-je quittant ma mule, armé sur ce roussin
Pour m’enfuir au lieu d’attendre la fin? (141-46)

He seems skeptical at first, couching the change in a series of rhetorical questions; but after assuming the garb of a warrior, he verbally walks himself through the logic of his sovereignty and remodels himself by way of his words into a kind of warrior prince or at least a commander with absolute power to initiate violence.

Voilà comme je suis général capitaine

²⁶ According to the *Robert historique*, the word “vertu” (virtue) had taken a Christian ethical sense by 1606. Thus, although that connotation would not yet have been fixed at the time the play was written, it was definitely floating around bolstered by Christian humanism and developing Protestant theologies.

²⁷ Romans 2:13-2:16 “For it isn’t the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified 2:14 (for when Gentiles who don’t have the law do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves, 2:15 in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience testifying with them, and their thoughts among themselves accusing or else excusing them) 2:16 in the day when God will judge the secrets of men, according to my Good News, by Jesus Christ.”

De tout ce camp, lequel où il me plaît je mène,
Tous mourrant, du premier jusques au dernier rang,
Ou je mettrai Cabrière [sic] aujourd'hui tout en sang. (171-74)

Demonstrating the proverb that the clothes do not make the man, d'Oppède does not, however, transform into a skilled commander. Instead, he reveals himself to be a violently cruel megalomaniac who is willing to sacrifice all of his troops just to impose his will on the town. Rather than exercising his powers of pardon and punishment judiciously, he seems to revel in his power to destroy.

This kind of *furor* taken out of all measure has echoes at the end of the play when Catderousse, comparing himself to Nero, takes pleasure in the carnage of the eponymous sack of Cabrières: "Comme ce feu me plaît! Néron n'eut telle joie / Quand en Rome il voyait derechef brûler Troie!" (1731-1732). The newly-anointed general delights in this gruesome perversion of *translatio imperii* in which the violent destruction of these ancient great cities is what gets passed down rather than their glory and its heroic status. With these acts of violence against a splinter community, France forces itself out of the line of imperial descent and Cabrières becomes the new Troy. Yet, contrary to the legendary old empires of Rome and Troy, which were destroyed by fire, this new community is forged in flames; the new Troy is actually the New Jerusalem.

Marchez, Maire et Syndic, pour accomplir mon vœu!
Marchez pour être mis tout à cette heure au feu,
Et votre fils aussi! ô captifs misérables,
Faites-leur compagnie: innocents et coupables
Venez-y volontiers, que sert le reculer?

Je vous vais faire ensemble à petit feu brûler... (1733-1738)

At the very moment of tragic recognition and reversal, when the mayor realizes over the course of his dialogue with the Syndic that the dead woman and child he sees are his own family, the horror of individual suffering is dwarfed by the suffering of the community. No sooner does the mayor cry out in recognition "C'est ici mon enfant: cette morte est ma femme!" than the chorus dismisses his grief, responding "Cela n'est rien; voyez Cabrière est tout en flame!" (1405-1406). The tragedy is not a personal story of horror and grief but the history of a community; even as their bodies submit, their voices have the final word, at once providing the authoritative version of events (in the *récit de Polin*) and demonstrating the supremacy of the Word.

La tragedie du Sac de Cabrières recuperates not just the subject matter but also the narrative mode of other testimonial genres, including Protestant martyrology and eyewitness narratives. This is an important mode in tragedy for reporting action, especially violent action, which cannot be represented on stage. The play, especially in the so-called *récit de Polin* at the end, casts the relationship between virtue and heroism and the role of language in shaping history and the public/private distinction in a different light from both Garnier and Robelin. Polin's conversion story is based in language which moves from lies (in the form of ruses)

to truth. As a model of virtue, his exemplarity is based not in his actions but in his use of language to testify to the sufferings of the martyrs and to the true faith. Polin becomes the porte-parole of the martyred Protestant community, which itself assumes the role of the hero, anticipating what we will see in the next chapter where, in d'Aubigné's *Les Tragiques*, the community, represented by its martyrs, is elevated even further from tragic hero to epic hero.

The shift from private, familial tragedy, where the tragic hero is a great individual, to a more inclusive tragedy, where the fate of an entire group is the tragic subject, is accompanied by a shift from voice to vision. The important thing is no longer simply to be heard, i.e., to give expressive voice to the community's suffering, as it was for Hecuba and Andromache in Garnier's *Troade*, but to be *seen* as well. In other words, the true power of language in this play is how it is used as a means of locating oneself in relation to the violence of martyrdom as either a witness or a martyr. Martyrdom is, above all, a spectacle, and the martyr's suffering is moving precisely because it can be articulated in such vivid detail; the scene can be brought to life before the viewers' eyes through the use of reported speech without even being staged. Whereas in Garnier and Robelin language/voice is expressive and has the disruptive effect of suspending time, in *Cabrières*, being heard is important insofar as it makes vision possible. This spectacular dimension will be magnified even further in Agrippa d'Aubigné's epic *Les Tragiques*, as we will see in the next chapter.

In these plays we see tragic form doing three different things according to different circumstances and themes. First, in Garnier, the gendered voice of lamentation is used to express the devastation of war beyond the battlefield. Then, in Robelin, the disruption of civil war plays out against a familial tragedy, engulfing any logic of violence. Finally, in the *Sac de Cabrières*, the collateral damage of warfare is elevated to the status of martyrdom. In each case, community and heroism are called into question and recast in different ways. This is the work that tragedy does at this moment before it takes on a new role following the onset of absolutism a couple of decades later.

Chapter Three

“Ici le sang n’est feint”: War as Spectacle in Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques*

In 1577, France was once again mired in civil war—the sixth conflict in fifteen years—following the failure of the Edict of Beaulieu to secure a satisfactory peace between the country’s warring Protestant and Catholic factions. A young Protestant soldier, Agrippa d’Aubigné, was gravely wounded while commanding a light cavalry unit during a skirmish with Catholic troops at Casteljaloux in Guyenne, near Bordeaux. During his long convalescence at a nearby estate, d’Aubigné began work composing a singular piece of testimony: an epic poem of over 9,000 alexandrines that chronicles the sufferings and persecution of the French Protestants, or Huguenots, during the civil wars. Not published until 1616, nearly twenty years after the war ended, *Les Tragiques* offers a remarkably vivid and ambitious portrayal of a conflict in which the poet was deeply invested, both ideologically and professionally. In this chapter, I will analyze how d’Aubigné engages readers through epic, thus telling a story about the role war plays in human life.

Whereas in the Virgilian tradition epic defines its relationship to current events obliquely through topical references, allegories, citations, or emblems—with Aeneas’s shield being one of the most celebrated examples¹—one of the features that characterizes d’Aubigné’s poem is that it seeks precisely to grapple with current affairs, even as it aims to appropriate epic tradition. Because of this immediate historical dimension, to read the *Tragiques* merely in generic terms—whether as a rewriting of Lucan, or as an epic that has somehow failed or fallen short of a generic standard—is to reduce its richness and complexity. By combining rhetorical features of epic with the functional logic of testimony and the visual aspect of tragedy, d’Aubigné enables epic to process the particular complexities of the French Wars of Religion in ways that other genres could not, by way of a uniquely forceful poetic language.² In doing so, he reinvigorates epic and recuperates its potential—

¹ For an analysis of the symbolism of Aeneas’s shield in Virgil’s *Aeneid*, see Quint, *Epic and Empire*, 22-26.

² Montaigne alludes to the continuous tragic spectacle of warfare as one of the perks of military life. “Il n’est occupation plaisante comme la militaire; occupation et noble en execution (car al plus forte, genereuse et superbe de toutes les vertus est la vaillance), et noble en sa cause...La compagnie de tant d’hommes vous plaist, nobles, jeunes, actifs, la veue ordinaire de tant de spectacles tragiques” (III:13, 307-8). Jean-Raymond Fanlo reads the invocation of the muse of tragedy as follows: “Melpomène met le poème sous le signe de la tragédie non comme cérémonial,

not just as a vehicle for ideology, but also as a timely, appropriate, and powerful form of representation. Thus, d'Aubigné's poetry does more than simply recuperate gory scenes of war for a higher purpose. By paying close attention to how d'Aubigné constructs poetic authority in the text and to how he positions his work in relation to other genres, we can appreciate *Les Tragiques* not as a failed or problematic epic but as a work that consciously elucidates a complex relationship between epic form and an immediate, personal, and visceral experience of warfare. What happens when epic is brought into the now and is no longer part of the past? The immediacy of epic in d'Aubigné's hands speaks to a gruesome and troubling reality.

Les Tragiques is the product of a life of which the principal occupation was waging war. Born in 1552, d'Aubigné had a career punctuated by the religious wars, which deeply influenced both his writing and his status as a poet. D'Aubigné was marked by violence from a very young age; he was only ten years old when civil war first broke out in France following the massacre of a Protestant congregation worshipping in secret at Wassy in 1562. At the time, he was following a humanist program of study under the tutelage of the Calvinist preceptor Mathieu Béalalde in Paris but fled to the Protestant stronghold of Geneva where he continued his studies with Theodore de Bèze. Then, in 1567, when he was only sixteen years old, d'Aubigné returned to France following the outbreak of a second religious war to begin his career with the Protestant army. To a large extent, it is his experience as a soldier and his intimate familiarity with the violence of war that validate the poem, lending it both the credibility and sensational shock value of eyewitness testimony. At the same time, however, the poem valorizes its connection to established poetic tradition, especially that of the Pléiade poets, led by Pierre Ronsard, who tried to mobilize poetry to express political engagement. The juxtaposition of this poetic filiation with the poet's professional identity as a soldier is what makes the stakes of the poem so compelling, not to mention quite different from those of humanist tragedy and of the essay.

In the previous chapter, I argued that late humanist tragedy creates a distance between violence and the body through the mediation of the lament. This chapter will continue to explore the relationship between violence and the body in d'Aubigné's epic, *Les Tragiques*. I will argue that the poem collapses the distance between violence and the body, using the wound as a focal point. In doing so, it challenges the conventions of the epic genre, creating a new kind of relationship between public and private that forms the basis for a new model of virtue and heroism. Structured around a series of visual tableaux showing the horrors of the religious wars, the poem brings the human body to the forefront; images of martyred, tortured, and suffering bodies proliferate. The private, intimate, and domestic spheres, which were kept at a distance from the action of war in humanist tragedy, are exposed as part of a violent spectacle which plays out in front of

mimèsis ordonnée, mais comme suspens des règles civiles, des formes policées, comme surgissement transgressif du cri, comme transe fantomale" (116).

everyone and in which everyone takes part. The poem's heroes are not the illustrious or highly placed individuals that we expect to find as epic protagonists; they are "les protestants restés fidèles à leur cause," ordinary men and women who become martyrs (Méniel 184). As it forces the reader to gaze upon the suffering of these martyr-heroes, epic poetry becomes, in d'Aubigné's hands, a vehicle for a new kind of virtue that is paradoxically grounded in an image of war as a scourge.

Published in 1616, *Les Tragiques* describes in gory detail the religious wars that raged in France between 1562 and 1598 and pitted Catholics against Protestants over religious and political stakes. The poem is massive, consisting of over 9,000 lines of verse divided into seven books. Like most epics, it begins *in medias res* with the 1572 Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre in which a large number of Protestants were killed in Paris.³ The choice of the most shocking and salient single event of forty years of warfare as the poem's starting point sets the tone for a work of extreme and unexpurgated violence. The first book of the poem, "Misères," does not disappoint; it paints a broad yet detailed picture of the horrors of civil war. The second and third books, "Princes" and "La Chambre dorée," jump back in time to examine the causes of France's then current troubles, namely bad political leadership and corrupt legal institutions respectively. Books IV and V, "Les Feux" and "Les Fers," comprise the heart of the poem; they return to the present of the religious wars and chronicle the sufferings of Protestant martyrs and soldiers at the hands of their Catholic enemies. The penultimate book, "Vengeances," leaps back to the biblical time of Cain and relates God's punishment of human sin, which prefigures the divine retribution anticipated in an imminent eschatological future in the seventh and final book, "Jugement."

The prefatory "Avis Au Lecteurs" specifies the rhetorical style of each book, which corresponds to its content: Book I, "style bas et tragique"; Books II and III, "style moyen et satyrique"; Book IV, "tragique moyen"; Book V, "tragique élevé—plus poétique et hardy"; Book VI, "théologien et historial"; and Book VII, "élevé historique."⁴ The poem is structured to rhetorically mirror its content, rising from the lowest style and the worst human abominations to the highest style and divine sorting out of the good from the wicked. As their titles suggest, the books written in the tragic style—"Misères" and "Les Fers"—deal most explicitly with the "période des guerres et des massacres" and represent the violence of the religious wars in the

³ For more on the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, including the debate over the number of dead, see Jouanna, *La Saint-Barthélemy: les mystères d'un crime d'état*, 24 août 1572.

⁴ The satire of Books Two and Three is a direct response to Ronsard's *Hymne de la Justice* (1555). It is analogous in structure to Ronsard's poem and also features allegories of human vices, depicted as personifications in painting: la Malice, le Procès, le Débat, la Querelle, l'Inimitié, le Poison, le Rancœur, l'homicide Guerre, le Discord. However, these terms are amplified in d'Aubigné to a total of thirty, reflecting a grander sense of proportion.

most direct manner. By taking a closer look at how this relationship between style and content plays out in these books, I will offer an analysis of how, in d'Aubigné's hands, epic becomes an effective instrument for the representation of sixteenth-century war.

I. "Venez voir": a spectacle of wounds and the limits of representation

Whereas humanist tragedy is parapolemic, focusing on warfare's periphery and creating distance from the battlefield, *Les Tragiques*, true to epic form, takes the reader to the very center of the action, offering both a comprehensive bird's-eye view of the conflict and close-ups of its most grisly details. Various scenes from the wars are laid out in the poem as visual tableaux, which are then looked at from different perspectives, including God's, the poet's, and some of the poem's protagonists. In putting violence on center stage in this way, d'Aubigné's epic collapses distinctions of public and private along with traditional distinctions of heroism. The violence of the battlefield bleeds into cities and towns, with massacres and sieges putting everyone in harm's way.

In earlier epics such as the *Iliad* and the *Aeneid*, as in the humanist tragedies examined in the previous chapter, the bodies that were wounded and the wounds themselves were the subjects of mourning. In *Les Tragiques*, the Protestant community does not have the luxury of mourning the wounded or the dead in the same way that the Trojan women do. France is the wound, rent open and exposed. The image of France as a fractured whole, or as a wounded body politic, is born out by the structure of the poem. In an article comparing the structure of Ronsard's *Discours des misères de ce temps* (1562)—a virulent polemical poem to which d'Aubigné's work is in part a response—with that of *Les Tragiques*, Edwin Duval makes a compelling case for what he calls "the place of the present" in the poem. He argues that *Les Tragiques*, like Ronsard's *Discours*, has at its center a seminal moment of wounding—the massacre at Wassy in 1562. Wassy was the opening act of violence that hacked into the social and political fabric of the nation, triggering the first in a series of eight civil wars that would be fought over the next forty years. Duval argues:

The pivot around which "Feux" and *Les Tragiques* turn is...clearly designated as the precise moment at which the civil wars began. And indeed the dozens of martyrdoms mentioned in random order in the first half of the book all took place before 1562; those mentioned in the second half all took place after 1562...D'Aubigné has given literally epic proportions to Ronsard's representation of a single, critical moment on which history turns. (24)

If the date 1577 marks a destabilizing moment of wounding in the personal and poetic trajectory of the soldier-poet, d'Aubigné—the point at which he turns to literature to come to terms with violence—then the date 1562 marks an analogous moment for France. As these narratives overlap in the poem, war wounds and martyr wounds bleed into each other, becoming one and the same. D'Aubigné's poetry revolves around making these wounds visible. So the question now becomes

how one represents that wound, or what pressure that wound exerts on the tradition of epic.

How exactly does the poem put these wounds on display? In “Fers” the narrator takes the reader on a virtual ekphrastic tour of Paris during the Saint Bartholomew’s Day massacre—the infamous attack of August 24, 1572 on prominent Protestants who had come to the capital to celebrate the marriage of their leader, Henry of Navarre, to the king’s sister, Marguerite de Valois. Through repeated and emphatic use of the verb “veoir” (“voir” in modern French), the narrator exhorts us to gaze upon multiple scenes of horror throughout the city. While all of this carnage is going on, the Louvre itself, the royal palace, undergoes a series of transformations, first into a battlefield and then into a scaffold: “Le Louvre retentit, devient champs de bataille, / Sert apres d’eschaffaut...” (V, 930-931). War has invaded the very seat of government, turning the royal palace into a battlefield and a place of execution. Moreover, the image of the warrior-king leading his army into battle—an image that had become an increasingly distant memory in France following the death of Henri II and the ascension of his son François II, the first in a series of child kings—is turned on its head.⁵ This inversion would be carnivalesque if it weren’t so gruesome. Having turned inwards from defending its borders against foreign threats, the nation is essentially cannibalizing itself.

Icy les deux partis ne parlent que françois,
Les chefs qui redoubtez avoient faict autrefois
Le marchand delivré de la crainte d’Espagne
Avoir libre au traffic la mer, et la campagne:
Par qui les estrangers tant de fois combattus,
Le roy prisonné de peur de leurs vertus
Qui avaient entamé les batailles rangées,
Qui n’avoient aux combats cœurs ni faces changées... (V, 803-810)

This passage capitalizes on the nostalgia for the military exploits of the Italian Wars (“autrefois”) in which now-opposing captains fought together for the glory of France in order to suggest that war is no longer a stage for virtuous exploits that highlight national character or virtue and bolster royal authority. A new kind of war calls for a new kind of epic that posits a new relationship between violence and community identity formation.

⁵ The aesthetic ideal of the warrior king if not the practical one persisted through the Renaissance, and most French kings had themselves represented as noble warriors in paintings regardless of their success on the battlefield. Perhaps the most well-known painting of this kind is Titian’s rendering of the Hapsburg emperor Charles V on horseback in full armor at Mühlberg (1548), but François I and Henri II had similar portraits painted. See also the 2011 special exhibit at the Musée de l’Armée at the Hôtel des Invalides in Paris on the aesthetics of princely battle: <http://www.musee-armee.fr/programmation/expositions/detail/sous-legide-de-mars-armures-des-princes-deurope.html>.

After showing carnage and confusion in Paris, at the kingdom's center, the tour continues through the rest of France. Once again the reader is confronted with a parodic inversion, this time of the royal grand tour of France taken by the young Charles IX and the queen mother Catherine de Médicis between 1564 and 1556. The tour, which covered over 4000 kilometers while visiting all of the French provinces, was conceived as an attempt to restore royal authority and reconcile the opposing parties after the first religious war.⁶ As such, it was an important symbolic ritual of unity that connected the authority of centralized government to the periphery. Instead of a unified kingdom, however, the reader of *Les Tragiques* bears witness to the cascade of copycat massacres that struck across the country following the carnage of Saint Bartholomew's Day. Numerous cities in which violence had been previously unknown—"tant d'autres citez jusqu'alors pucelles" (V, 1102)—follow the example of the capital and become battlefields and slaughterhouses in a troubling perversion of the Renaissance obsession with exemplarity. The gendered metaphor of these cities as heretofore virgins who have been tainted and sullied by religious violence conjures in a powerful way the same side-effects of war that we saw foregrounded, represented, and lamented in humanist tragedy.

There are additional authorial techniques that enhance the poem's power and effectiveness. The poem itself has a living quality that is belied by its non-narrative structure. The complex structure of the poem, at once episodic and panoramic, creates movement; jumping forward and back in historical time, it spans an enormous range from the Biblical past to the end times. Its jumbled presentation of scenes of carnage without respect for chronology reinforces an image of the wars as something chaotic that cannot easily be broken down into rational cause and effect. It is only in an eschatological perspective that the poet can make sense of so much suffering, but despite the celestial remove that the poem tries to achieve through the manipulation of narrative perspective (including staging the viewing of earthly conflicts from a heavenly perspective and by situating human history in relation to theological time), the effects of war—the wounds—are seen up close and from the ground. In his chapter on "monstrueuse guerre" in *Monsters and their Meanings in Early Modern Culture*, Wes Williams contrasts d'Aubigné's understanding of the violence of the civil wars with Montaigne's rejection of the notion of positive exemplarity, arguing that the poem's bloodiness is meant to be understood as "the spectacle that the body of the faithful will commemorate for all time, as the exemplary suffering of martyrs encourages generations to come" (106). Although martyrs are at the center of the poem and their wounds are turned into a spectacle, I disagree with Williams's assertion that that d'Aubigné seeks to unequivocally glorify the violence of the wars of religion. The picture d'Aubigné paints of violence, even as he seems to revel in it, is much more complex than a

⁶ For a detailed account of the royal tour, see Boutier et. al., *Un tour de France royal*. The idea of the tour was to connect the king to the periphery of his kingdom, a purpose also served by the symbolism of elaborate royal entries ceremonies.

gratuitous glorification of martyrdom. On one hand, he sees war as an inevitable consequence of man's sinful nature, a punishment righteously inflicted by God; on the other hand, he never entirely leaves the realm of human agency—humans, after all, are injuring one another. At once inhuman, yet all-too-human, wrought by the divine, but perpetrated by man—war is the consummate ethical puzzle and representational challenge.

In order to grapple with the paradox of violence in d'Aubigné's epic, it is useful to briefly contextualize the phenomenon of violence more broadly in the early modern period.⁷ I will discuss later how d'Aubigné's own complex identity as both poet and soldier influences his representation of war, but first it is important to situate the text in a somewhat larger context of a history of mentalities. In other words, in addition to being analyzed diachronically, either as a part of a literary historical narrative of epic poetry or in relation to the poet's biography, the poem must also be read synchronically in dialogue with contemporary thinking about warfare. D'Aubigné's treatment of violence takes shape in the midst of a cultural conflict between a Christian-Erasman humanist perspective and a waning warrior ethos. Thomas Greene sets up these opposing frameworks superbly in his essay "Renaissance Warfare: A Metaphor in Conflict" by tracing the images of warfare in sixteenth-century literature that show war, on one hand, as an activity beneath human dignity, worthy only of beasts, and on the other, as an essential and admirable skill, even an art (168).

If the ideologies surrounding Renaissance warfare were complex and changing, then so were representational critiques of new kinds of conflicts. Writing about Jacques Callot's series of etchings, *Les Grandes misères et malheurs de la guerre* (1633), Katie Hornstein makes the following compelling point:

To focus exclusively on violence as a general negative term in relation to the experience of war during the seventeenth century is to neglect its cultural and historical import in the early modern period. The spectrum of violence depicted by Callot does not provide an easy moral judgment against it but instead reveals the problematic and often contradictory discourses that enabled wartime violence, toward civilians and soldiers alike. What is truly remarkable about these depictions is not their so-called realism or fidelity to a historical moment but rather the extent to which they confound the slippery divide between people who enact wartime violence and those who suffer from it. (33)

Hornstein is referring here to the fact that Callot's etchings represent violence inflicted on civilians alongside scenes of violent military justice, thereby blurring the boundaries between sanctioned and unsanctioned, or legitimate and illegitimate violence in wartime. While it may seem that Callot and D'Aubigné have little in common—they are representing different conflicts, after all, not to mention working

⁷ There are many excellent studies on this topic, including Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence" and Crouzet, *Les Guerriers de Dieu*.

in different media—they both force their audiences to look at a broad spectrum of violent acts from a range of perspectives. Although he is often regarded as single-minded, even to the point of being a fanatic, d'Aubigné—like Callot—actually offers a more nuanced and reflexive representation of the religious wars in *Les Tragiques* than he is generally given credit for.

The poet's divine inspiration, a traditional epic device, is inextricably linked to d'Aubigné's identity as a soldier and as a man who has had a close brush with death. Although the poet invokes both God and the tragic muse Melpomène as sources of poetic inspiration, the true genesis of the poem is a wound. This is true both in the literal sense that the injuries sustained by d'Aubigné as warrior *cum* poet provide the condition of invention and production of the poem and in the more figurative sense that the point of the poem is to describe the wound that has been inflicted on the French body politic by civil war. The wounded body, then, is at once the main subject of the tragic spectacle represented in the poem and the source of the poem. D'Aubigné's poetic identity is bound by his injuries to his identity as a soldier and a victim. His wounds speak for themselves, identifying him as soldier and connecting him to the persecuted group (French Protestants) whose wounded bodies are on display throughout the poem.

A wound makes a body vulnerable by opening it up to the outside. Civil war is a wound writ large that opens up the body politic and exposes its inner workings. All parts of society become part of the larger spectacle:

Financiers, justiciers, qui opprimez de faim
Celuy qui vous faict naistre ou qui deffend le pain
Soubs qui le laboureur s'abbreuve de ses larmes,
Qui souffrez mandier la main qui tient les armes:
Vous ventre de la France enflé de ses langueurs,
Faisant orgeuil de vent, vous montrez voz vigueurs,
Voyez la tragedie, abbaissez voz courages:

Vous n'estes spectateurs, vous estes personnages. (I, 163-170)

This passage once again makes remarkable use of perspective by placing everyone squarely in the center of the action, on the stage of France's national tragedy, which is to say, complicit in the wars. The wounds depicted are both physical and communal. But how can such a wound be depicted?

For any writer taking on the subject of war, which, by its nature, is difficult to represent, the problem of the limits of representation is inevitable. The limits of representation are debated currently and actively with regards to filmic portrayals of warfare. How much can be shown? How much *should* be shown? Where do truth and taste intersect or diverge? Should one take precedence over the other? The questions, both aesthetic and ethical, are important, and they are questions that d'Aubigné considers within *Les Tragiques*. Over eleven hundred lines into "Fers," a book which describes countless scenes of violence from the wars, the narrator poses this same question in an apostrophe to his witnessing eyes: What should the limits of representation be? Just how far do I need to go before we get the point?

Où voulez-vous mes yeux courir ville apres ville
 Pour descrire des morts jusques trente mille?
 Quels mots trouverez-vous? quel style pour nommer
 Tant de flots renaissans de l'impitieuse mer?
 Œil qui as leu ces traicts: si tu escoute, oreille,
 Encore un peu d'haleine à sçavoir la merveille
 De ceux qui Dieu tira des ombres du tombeau:
 Nous changeons de propos: voy encor ce tableau
 De Bourges... (V, 1117-1125)

The overwhelming nature of the violence, the number of dead, the ceaseless repetition of horrors naturalized by a comparison to the crashing waves of the sea—all of this gives the narrator pause. It does not, however, silence him. Although he takes a moment to rhetorically pose the question of what the limits of representation should be, he nevertheless immediately continues on to relate the massacre at Bourges.⁸ In doing so, he answers his own question. There are no limits to what should be shown, the poem would seem to say. But in tearing down Thimantes' veil, does d'Aubigné glorify a culture of violence and war as so many critics have suggested or is it possible to identify a concurrent critique of violence? In order to address that question, it is necessary to examine what d'Aubigné accomplishes by staging his tragedy in the form of an epic.

Unlike most epics that recount the foundational story of a people or nation, *Les Tragiques* does not display the nostalgia for glory that so often marks a culture of remembering and commemorating heroic exploits. Glory is not present in the world the poem depicts, nor does it exist in the past; it is a future state that will only be attained with the advent of Christ's reign on Earth.⁹ For this reason, the hero's place in history is not what it is in other epics. In the historical framework of humanism, the hero is mostly a figure of the past, or with any luck, the present. (Hampton 300). In the eschatological framework of d'Aubigné's apocalyptic vision, however, the martyr, a figure whose exemplary value is based entirely in his relationship to the future, replaces the hero as the focus of epic. Whereas the glory of the traditional epic hero is rooted in his martial contribution to the foundational history of a culture or nation, the glory of the martyr is based in how his suffering relates to a future time outside the bounds of human history. The wounds and scars of the Protestant community of martyrs are to be trumpeted as signs of what is to come. Thus, in order to establish a model of glory based on martyrdom, it is necessary that the poem be gory.

⁸ The massacre at Bourges on 11-12 September 1572 was one of the numerous copycat massacres that occurred throughout France following the Saint Bartholomew's Day massacre in the capital, Paris, on August 24.

⁹ For a discussion of the influence of Protestant theology and rhetoric on d'Aubigné's writing, see Enders, "The Rhetoric of Protestantism: Book I of Agrippa D'Aubignés *Les Tragiques*."

Martyrs suffer wounds inflicted on their bodies. These wounds, which are seen either by eyewitnesses or in subsequent print or theatrical representations, serve as visual testimony.¹⁰ As physical marks on the body, wounds situate an individual in relation to a particular event—war, battle, massacre, torture—in a way that is not refutable. *Martyr* means witness in Greek, and in the logic of martyrdom that would develop in the Christian tradition, private faith is made public and visible through the physical suffering of the martyr.¹¹ Much has been made of the importance of testimony and eyewitness in the *Tragiques* and in early modern culture more generally; they play an important role in both religious and legal thinking and procedure of the period.¹² However, the testimony of the body offered by martyrs is even stronger than eyewitness testimony because it leaves a physical mark, a trace that can in turn be seen and read by others who may not have been present. The wound thus speaks for itself, as long as it is put on display.

There is, however, also a testimonial aspect of wounds that has nothing to do with martyrdom; wounds received in battle testify to a soldier's courage and engagement, and to his participation in the action. In fact, the wounded soldier becomes an important trope for justifying the literary pursuits of men of arms as more soldiers began to try their hand at writing in the sixteenth century. From Miguel Cervantes to Philip Sidney, the soldier-poet "was no hollow archetype...but rather the blueprint for many sixteenth-century youths who...aspired to fight and write their way to personal recognition" (Gaylord 107). D'Aubigné was not alone in using the period of recuperation from injuries sustained in battle—a period during which he might otherwise degenerate into idleness—as an opportunity to write. But as shown above in the discussion of the "Avis aux lecteurs," d'Aubigné's framing fiction of being called to write while convalescing from his war wounds is used to bolster a collective rather than a personal narrative. In *Les Tragiques*, the sinful authorial self, which is "so problematic...in Calvinist theology" (Randall 469), guarantees the authenticity of the text not through any kind of interiority but through wounds.¹³ D'Aubigné's claims to authenticity are clearly grounded in witnessing and wounding, even though he is not himself a martyr.

¹⁰ Katherine Ibbett's dissertation on the the history of stage representations of the martyr's body in Early Modern France includes a germane discussion of the question of spectacle in the martyrological tradition (33).

¹¹ For an overview of the history of the martyr in the Judeo-Christian tradition, see Boyarin, *Dying for God*. For a discussion of the representational significance of Christ's wounds, which set the standard for martyrs' wounds, and the Augustinian retention of wounds as a mark of good faith, see Hampton, 118.

¹² See Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness* and Harmon, "Witnessing Words: Testimony and Visuality Across Genres in Agrippa d'Aubigné."

¹³ Michael Randall, *The Gargantuan Polity*. "The authorial self, so problematic because marked by sin in Calvinist theology, paradoxically became the guarantor of authenticity in the text" (469).

In the account of war contained in *Les Tragiques*, the martyr becomes the hero. This new martyr-hero then replaces the military hero who is traditionally at the center of war literature, and epic in particular. In *Les Tragiques*, the figure of the epic hero undergoes a transformation from someone whose illustriousness is “based on undertakings of exalted martial valor and on deeds of courtesy, generosity, piety and religion”¹⁴ (Randall 469) to someone whose illustriousness will only be apparent in the times to come. The hero is no longer removed from the lives of ordinary Frenchmen, either spatially, by being off at war in a foreign land, or temporally, in the irrevocable mists of history.

One marker of this transition is nostalgia, which already made an appearance in Montaigne’s *Essais*. Here too, nostalgia serves as proof that the old model of military heroism is dead by highlighting the unbridgeable chasm between then and now—between the admirable exploits of the old heroes and the lack of examples of, or appreciation for, such conduct in the present. We see this outlook in the following commentary on military virtue in *Les Tragiques*:

On appelle aujourd’huy n’avoir faict rien qui vaille
 D’avoir percé premier l’espais d’une bataille,
 D’avoir premier porté une enseigne au plus haut,
 Et franschy devant tous la bresche par assaut:
 Se jetter contre espoir dans le village assiegee,
 La sauver demi-prise, et rendre encouragee,
 Fortifier, camper, our se loger parmy
 Les gardes, les efforts d’un puissant ennemy,
 Emploier sans manquer de coeur ni de cervelle,
 L’espee d’une main, de l’autre la truelle,
 Bien faire une retraite, ou d’un scadron battu
 Rallier les deffaicts, cela n’est plus vertu. (I, 1121-1132)

In this passage, normally praiseworthy examples of military conduct and leadership are dismissed as unremarkable and even worthless. Standard examples of military virtue no longer have value (“cela n’est plus vertu”). However, unlike other Renaissance writers such as Ariosto, who lashed out at the development of gunpowder, d’Aubigné does not target any one specific technological innovation as being responsible for this decline.¹⁵ Instead, he laments the loss of certain intangible qualities such as bravery, leadership, and conviction—a laudable combination of heart and head—that characterized an older generation of fighters. If this is the

¹⁴ Torquato Tasso, as quoted in *The Cambridge Companion to Literature: The Renaissance* (469).

¹⁵ Ariosto offers the following condemnation of the use of firearms: “You [gunpowder] have destroyed military glory, and dishonored the profession of arms; valour and martial skill are now discredited, so that often the miscreant will appear a better man than the valiant. Because of you no longer may boldness and courage go into the field to match their strength.” (*Orlando Furioso*, trans. Waldman 109)

case, how is epic poetry, a genre that largely depends upon recognizing feats of martial valor in its hero, supposed to function? The temporal adverb “aujourd’huy” insists upon the contemporaneity of the conflict that constitutes the subject of the poem—a conflict that calls for a new kind of epic with a new kind of hero.

This image of noble, expertly conducted warfare that once was but is no more conflicts with the repeated images of warfare as an activity that is “monstrously and hideously inhuman” (Greene, “Renaissance Warfare” 160). While it seems that there is a place in d’Aubigné’s worldview for a nobly-waged war, man’s sins have ensured that he is doomed to pay with the brutal internecine warfare that we see painted on the pages of *Les Tragiques*. The tension between “aujourd’huy” and “le temps de nos pères,” a familiar theme in Montaigne and elsewhere, is built into the structure of the poem which animates scenes from the conflict one at a time in a series of visual tableaux that are seen by celestial witnesses who, in a dizzying kaleidoscope of perspective, look down on the events in which they participated and were killed (“ceux qui de tels combats passerent dans les cieus, / Des yeux de leurs esprits voient leurs autres yeux” (V, 305-306).

Dans le ciel desguisé historien des terres
 Ils lisent en leur paix les efforts de nos guerres:
 Et les premiers object de ces yeux saints et beaux
 Furent au rencontrer de ces premiers tableaux.
 Le premier vous en presente une aveugle Bellonne
 Qui s’irrite de soy, contre soy s’enfellone,
 Ne souffre rien d’entier, veut tout voir a morceaux:
 On la void deschirer de ses ongles ses peaux,
 Ses cheveux gris sans loy sanglantes viperes,
 Qui lui crevent le sein, dos et ventre d’ulceres,
 Tant de coups qu’ils ne font qu’une playe en son corps:
 La louve boit le sang, et fait son pain de morts. (V, 323-334)

The whole of France, whose various regions and characteristics are enumerated in the intervening passage, is reduced under the tramping feet of civil war to one small town ravaged by the effects of war.¹⁶ The way the men from each region are described emphasizes the richness of France’s natural resource of citizens. After being introduced as exemplary representatives of various regions of the country—“Voicy le Breton franc, le Poictou qui tout porte, / Les Xaintongeois heureux, et les Gascons soldats” (V, 340-341)—these representatives of regional attributes are recuperated for the nation with the unifying adjective *doux*: “Voicy les doux François l’un sur l’autre enragez, / D’ame, d’esprit et sens courage changez” (V, 349-350). If *douceur* were the unifying characteristic of the French, then the civil war would seem to go directly against the nature of those fighting in it.

¹⁶ The scene is the 1560 conjuration of Amboise and the massacre that followed. It also both echoes (in the time of the poem) and foreshadows (in chronological, historical time) the Saint Bartholomew’s Day Massacre.

Tel est l'hideux portraict de la guerre civile
 Qui produit soubz ses pieds une petite ville
 Pleine de corps meurtris en la place estendues,
 Son fleuve de noiez, ses creneaux de pendus.
 Là dessus l'eschaffaut qui tient toute la place,
 Entre les condamnez un esleve sa face
 Vers le ciel, luy monstrant le sang fumant et chaud
 Des premiers estestez : puis s'escria tout haut,
 Haussant les mains du sang des siens ensanglantees. (V, 351-359)

Civil war gets its own portrait hanging in a celestial gallery, just as the Renaissance warrior kings—François I, Henri II, Charles V—got theirs. However, this portrait is of a much different style. Instead of shining knights on horses, the images are of public squares piled with bodies and battlements strewn with hanging corpses. Not only do these images recur throughout d'Aubigné's corpus, they are emblematic of the religious wars, due in large part to the etchings of Jacques Tortorel and Jean Perrissin.¹⁷ The visual strategy of perspective becomes a rhetorical strategy for manipulating the reader's experience of the events. It enables d'Aubigné to simultaneously reimagine geography and push the limits of representation.

Turning his gaze from the city to the battlefield, the poet deploys several metaphors to illustrate the pitiful state of his countrymen in arms. First, he compares the affronting armies to a drunken man stumbling along a road, falling over himself. Several verses later, he uses the metaphor of a shipwreck—the ship being a familiar image of statecraft—in which there are ultimately no survivors.

Vous voiez la victoire en la pleine de Dreux
 Les deux favoriser pour ruiner les deux :
 Comme en large chemin le pentelant yvgrogne
 Ondoye çà et là, s'approchant il s'éloigne :
 Ainsy les deux costez heurte et fuit a la fois
 La victoire troublee yvre du sang françois :
 L'insolente parmy les deux camps se pourmeine,
 Les faict vaincre vaincus tout à la cadmeene :
 C'est le vaisseau noié, qui versé au profond
 Ne laisse au plus heureux que l'heur d'estre second,
 L'un ruine en vainquant sa douteuse victoire :
 L'autre au debris de soy et des siens prend sa gloire. (V, 369-380)

This passage offers a different perspective on a scene that we have already encountered in Montaigne, the battle of Dreux (Dec. 19, 1562). As d'Aubigné presents it, the battle is exemplary of the futility of the religious wars because it

¹⁷ The images of city squares piled with bodies and corpses hanging from city walls recur in d'Aubigné's other works, notably the *Histoire Universelle* and *Sa vie à ses enfants*. Also, see Benedict, *Graphic History* for reproductions of a series of contemporary engravings depicting some of the same episodes.

demonstrates plainly that nobody wins; both sides taste victory, and both are ruined in the end (“Vous voyez la victoire en la pleine de Dreux / Les deux favoriser pour ruiner les deux”). There are no winners in the short term; only on the eschatological plane will the Protestants emerge triumphant.

By way of his dazzling manipulation of perspective, d’Aubigné transcribes historical events onto a cosmic context, highlighting the futility of fighting for political gain or military glory in the present and the inevitability of an apocalyptic outcome. In doing so, he draws attention to the irony of a new rhetorical framework constructed after the battle in a harangue delivered by the Duke of Guise and repeated elsewhere, which was “posited on the emphasis of the normalcy of heroic action by friend and foe alike, rather than the tragedy and absurdity of internecine warfare.”¹⁸ D’Aubigné explodes the myth of universal heroism, even going so far as to suggest that heroism as a redeeming quality is illusory. In Montaigne’s account of Dreux, Guise himself still stands out as a kind of military hero, however problematic. In d’Aubigné’s account, however, the individual that detaches from the scene is not the hero of a battle but the martyr at Amboise who lifts his face to the sky and cries out while throwing the blood of his fellow martyrs in the air (V, 356-359). Language shapes history in a new way, too, as the poem’s “lurid rhetoric” projects history onto a different plane, turning the martyr into a spectacular new hero.

Timothy Hampton analyzes a similar transformation of heroism through the lens of exemplarity noting the post-humanist questioning of “[models of excellence] constituted as heroic ‘selves’ through the conjunction of a heroic narrative and a heroic body” (300). Indeed, the epic is the genre where the heroic narrative and body link up most perfectly in the figure of the epic hero. Writing about another post-humanist epic, Torquato Tasso’s *Gerusalemme liberata*, Hampton argues that the epic genre limits martyrdom to a subplot. In his reading of the martyr figure, Svenio, Hampton contends that “Svenio may be a model for Rinaldo [the hero], but because Tasso is writing neither tragedy nor haigiography, Rinaldo himself cannot be martyred. Such action would turn the text into a hybrid of tragedy and epic” (128). Unlike Tasso, however, d’Aubigné is uninterested in theorizing about the genre that he is using and unconcerned with generic purity. And unlike Tasso, he is writing both tragedy and haigiography. In *Les Tragiques*, epic form, like the fabric of French society and the bodies of soldiers and martyrs, is opened up and made vulnerable to destabilizing elements.

The problem of generic hybridity, which threatens to destabilize the marriage of genre and ideology that Hampton suggests is at stake in epic, preoccupies much of the scholarship on *Les Tragiques*. David Quint, who, like Hampton, is concerned with the connection between ideology and poetic forms, argues that the poem’s “formal shortcomings relative to the closed classical structures of Virgilian epic” and “indefinite generic status” are part of a conscious poetic strategy designed to “make epic speak on behalf of the defeated” (209). He

¹⁸ See above, Chapter One; Wood, 203.

classifies *Les Tragiques* as an anti-epic, or a loser's epic, in the style of Lucan's *Pharsalia*, and reads it against triumphalist Catholic imagery, like Vasari's frescoes in Rome, that makes the horrors of the war narratable. By insisting on the poem's resistance to narrative as a formal shortcoming, Quint and other critics miss out on the possibility that d'Aubigné is purposely tweaking epic form to respond to a cultural need, namely how to represent and process the violence of the civil wars.

II. "Un autre feu": war and poetic identity

The poem's full title—*Les tragiques donnez au public par le larcin du Promethee*—points immediately to the importance of the paratext which tells the story of how the poem came to be published. In doing so, it frames the image of war found in the poem and imposes an interpretative framework on the subject matter represented. The prefatory note to the reader, "Avis aux lecteur," establishes the fiction of production of the poem and attempts to set out its purpose. To accomplish this, d'Aubigné uses the figure of a Promethean servant who claims to have stolen and published his master's manuscript in order to position the poem as a testimony to "les actions, les factions et les choses monstrueuses de ce temps là" (222). The larcenous servant excuses his transgression based on the fact that his master, the former soldier d'Aubigné, is one of the few remaining witnesses to the full horrors of the wars and thus one of the few who can accurately or legitimately testify about them. The text seeks to justify itself as eyewitness documentation. Strangely, however, d'Aubigné's testimonial credentials depend on his being rhetorically distanced from his role as the genesis of the text; he was a witness to the action and divinely inspired to write about it, but it was not his choice to make it public. Because the testimony is distanced from the personal, it can claim to speak for the collective: in this case, the persecuted Protestant community.

In addition to laying the groundwork for the poem's status as representative testimony, the "Avis" also establishes a relationship to this same beleaguered community as a reading public. The poetic conceit of *Les Tragiques* is as far as one can imagine from the highly personal window into the soul evoked in Montaigne's short preface to his *Essais*, "Au lecteur," wherein he claims that the *Essais* have "aucune fin que domestique et privée," and are intended to be a "commodité particulière de mes parens et mes amis" (I, 37), a very private sort of public. Already by virtue of its epic form, d'Aubigné's poem is oriented outwards towards the conceptions of glory, both public and private, associated with the genre. Thus, despite the poet's alleged attempt to keep the manuscript private, clearly the poem is intended to be seen. The paratext permits the construction of a documentary testimony using rhetorical devices that not only "enable the narrator's assertions of having observed the matter of which he writes" (Harmon 31) but also establish a personal connection between the narrator and the poem's protagonists. These claims to ownership, testimony, and experience are all crucial to the relationship with warfare that the poem is trying to establish. The civil wars were a collective experience, encompassing all Frenchmen and unifying a subset of that group—

French Protestants. The wars were the crucible in which the community was forged. The narrator's status as eyewitness is of the utmost importance because, as Harmon remarks, "[t]his tale of a collective can only belong to an individual voice insofar as that individual belongs to the collective" (Harmon 33). Thus, in contrast to traditional Virgilian epic, which provides a narrative of a hero founding a community, here the narrative voice represents a community that has already been founded by someone or something else, in this case the Word of Christ.

In establishing the text's relationship to various genres, including various forms of testimonial literature and epic, the "Avis" announces cross-purposes for the poem. On one hand, it clearly situates *Les Tragiques* within a corpus of texts written during and about the wars of religion that raged from 1562 to 1598. As much of that corpus is polemical, the author wants to differentiate his poem from incendiary partisan writing like Nicolas Barnaud's *Resveille-matin des François* and other so-called monarchomach texts.¹⁹ While wanting to speak for the Protestant community, d'Aubigné also worries that his poem will be associated with a political tradition that challenges the authority of the monarchy and justifies tyrannicide: "Je gagneray une place au rolle des fols, et de plus, le nom turbulent de republicain: on contournera ce que je dis des tyrans pour estre dit des roys" (220-221). In addition to risking censorship or condemnation of his text, association with the monarchomachs would risk devaluing his status as a career soldier and a loyal servant of his king. His own servant provides a character reference based on d'Aubigné's military service as proof that the poet is neither a "fol" nor a "republicain":

Je l'ay servi vint et huict ans presque tousjours dans les armées, où il exerçoit l'office de mareschal de camp avec un soing et labeur indicible, comme estimant la principale partie du capitaine d'estre present à tout: les plus gentilles de ses pièces sortoient de sa main, ou à cheval, ou dans les tranches. (223-4)

This is a double endorsement, serving at once for his qualities as a soldier and his qualifications as a writer. Moreover, the highlights of his literary output ("les plus gentilles de ses pièces") are linked to his long and conscientious military service, both in terms of their credibility and of their aesthetic value. Simply by doing his job as a captain and being present for everything, he establishes the testimonial credibility that is an essential feature of certain kinds of experiential-based writing with which he wants the poem to be associated, including martyrology.

On the other hand, the poet links his work to a broader literary and poetic tradition to which his primary profession of soldiering is not obviously connected. The conflation between the profession of arms and the vocation of poetry is expressed in the *Les Tragiques* by a metaphor of defending and protecting language.

¹⁹ For more an overview of the monarchomachs and how they fit into the political philosophy of the period, see Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 302-4.

In the “Avis aux lecteurs,” the thieving servant paraphrases Pléiade poet Pierre Ronard’s imperative regarding “des vocables François naturels qui sentent le vieux, mais le libre François” in the following way: “Je vous recommande par testament que vous ne laissiez point perdre ces vieux termes : que vous les employiez et desfendiez hardiment contre des maraux.” (224-225)²⁰ This is a figurative call to arms in a just war of noble defense against marauders who would threaten the “natural” state of the French language. The poem’s sensibility to how language (and poetry) can function as a weapon comes directly from Ronsard, whose own *Discours des misères de ce temps* (1562) and *Continuation du discours* (1563) provide an example of politically engaged poetry. D’Aubigné takes up Ronsard’s poetic cause, even though he supports opposing political and religious causes. Unlike Ronsard, however, d’Aubigné is not just a poet—a figurative warrior defending the linguistic patrimony; he is also a professional soldier who defends his prince on the battlefield. The careful framing of the poem in the “Avis” makes it clear that in the delicate transition from fighting to writing, it is essential that his identity as a man of arms is not lost.

The coexistence of d’Aubigné’s poetic and professional identities is responsible for much of the poem’s complexity, which most critics have found off-putting. The claim that that work was written more or less in the heat of battle “il y a trente six ans et plus...assavoir aux guerres de septante et sept à Casteljaloux...comme par testament” (221) situates the poem in the context of testimonial literature and the testimonial legal tradition that accompanied it and granted it credibility.²¹ Rebecca Harmon deals adeptly with the dynamic of testimony in *Les Tragiques* in her dissertation on witnessing and visibility across d’Aubigné’s corpus.²² Harmon addresses the question of the moral responsibility attached to witnessing and analyzes how the reader of the poem is implicated as a witness to events through the poem’s visibility. Drawing on Andrea Frisch’s work on the importance of testimonial genres in the legal tradition of early modern France, she argues that the poem demonstrates the “transferability of moral obligation through written eyewitness testimony” (43). I want to locate the poem, however, at the intersection of the testimonial tradition and the epic tradition. The poem is not, after all, only testimony; it also participates in larger generic and communitarian currents.

²⁰ This reference to the “vocables François naturel,” which Ronsard hopes he can preserve, presages the “vocables d’art” that d’Aubigné uses to characterize his project and defend its grisly subject matter against critics who would rather read love poetry, a kind of “art” that d’Aubigné no longer sees as appropriate to his times.

²¹ For a thorough discussion of the legal uses of witnessing and testimony in early modern France, see Frisch, *The Invention of the Eyewitness*, 117-140.

²² Harmon, “Witnessing Words: Testimony and Visibility Across Genres in Agrippa d’Aubigné.”

While the testimonial aspect of D'Aubigné's work also ties it strongly to the memoir genre, which will be discussed in the next chapter, testimony in *Les Tragiques* has, in effect, been repurposed; rather than taking advantage of his convalescence to chronicle his personal experiences as a soldier, d'Aubigné envisions his project as a weapon in a larger ideological war.²³ The poet recounts the instructions he received in a vision while he was on the verge of death after being wounded:

Retourne à ta moitié, n'attache plus ta veüe
 Au loisir de l'Eglise, au repos de Capüe:
 Il te faut retourner satisfait en ton lieu
 Employer ton bras droict au vengeances de Dieu:
 Exerce tout le jour ton fer, et ton courage,
 Et ta plume de nuict, que jamais autre ouvrage
 Bien que plus delicat, ne te semble plaisant
 Au prix des hauts secrets du firmament luisant:
 Ne chante que de Dieu, n'oubliant que luy mesme
 T'as retiré..... (V, 1417-1426)²⁴

D'Aubigné's unique status of soldier by day, poet by night sets him and his poem apart from more conventional epic projects. The framing story of his battle injury as the seminal moment of poetic inspiration establishes credibility for the poet as an eyewitness and a participant and reveals his version of events to be sanctioned by God.

Ta main m'a delivré, je te sacre la mienne,
 Je remets en ton sein cette ame qui est tienne,
 Tu m'as donné la voix, je te loueray, mon Dieu (V, 1433-1435)

This is a conversion tale, but the conversion manifests on a professional rather than a personal or spiritual level. D'Aubigné is already a staunch Protestant engaged in the fight against Catholic tyranny. He is already part of the reformed religion, but now he has reformed his poetry as well. This way of moving from soldier to poet puts his writing in an even stronger position in relation to power than Ronsard's

²³ For more on the subject of ideological warfare waged through iconography, see Behrmann, "Triumph and Law: Giorgio Vasari's Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve and the Iconology of the 'State of Exception'." In many ways, d'Aubigné's poem has more in common with the visual propaganda and commentary that circulated during the period than with the political, theological, or polemical tracts alongside which it is often read and to which it is often stylistically compared.

²⁴ The vision continues with the poet looking down and describing his own wounds from an out-of-body perspective: "voilà ton corps sanglant et blesme / Receuilly à Thalcy sur une table seul / A qui on a donné pour suaire un linceul..." (V, 1426-1428). This experience of the body recalls the passage in "De l'Exercitation" in which Montaigne recounts the out-of-body experience of seeming himself after his fall from a horse.

poetry, which was sanctioned by the monarch. Ever the faithful soldier to his prince, Henri of Navarre, as a poet he is not in the service of any earthly king. Instead he positions himself in the line of the Biblical King David, author of the Psalms, whose poetry was sanctioned by God. Poetry has been elevated to the status of a higher calling; far from a polemical rant, it is a divinely inspired song.

In addition to historically grounding the poem in experience and linking it to the testimonial genre, the narrator grounds it in a rich literary tradition. In addition to the poem's epic scope and stylistic echoes of Lucan, there is a great deal of intertextual engagement with the poetry of Ronsard and especially with Scripture, a kind of hybridity that makes the poem unique. Although D'Aubigné received a humanist education, *Les Tragiques* is not a learned humanist epic; it is authenticated by the narrator's experience as a soldier rather than by any poetic or scholarly credentials, thus putting pressure on humanist tradition and the learned emulation of the ancients. Nevertheless, the poem continues the tradition of vernacular poetry established and bolstered by Ronsard.²⁵ The trajectory of D'Aubigné's literary career even follows the career of Ronsard. D'Aubigné did have poetic ambitions before being called upon by God to write his epic; his earliest work was a collection of Petrarchan love poetry, *Le Printemps* (1571-1573) consisting of over 100 sonnets and 52 odes.²⁶ He references his poetic past early in the first book of *Les Tragiques*:

Je n'escry plus les feux d'un amour inconnu
Mais par l'affliction plus sage devenu,
J'entreprends bien plus haut, car j'apprens à ma plume
Un autre feu auquel la France se consume. (I, 55-58)

War, not love, is now the primary source of the flame of poetic inspiration, and it leads to the most worthwhile poetry—even if not the most aesthetic or pleasing. As we saw above, however, pleasing, or *delectare*, is not the poem's rhetorical aim. The idea of a higher poetic calling ("J'entreprends bien plus haut") relates both to the more serious subject matter and to the divine interpellation discussed above.

The poet undergoes an extraordinary transformation or maturation. He is now fired up (to borrow from contemporary American political rhetoric) by the *furor* of war—the "other fire" ("autre feu") referenced above—and not the flames of love.²⁷ The flame and fire metaphor operates on yet another level, also symbolizing divine love. We need only think of the flames of the martyrs' pyres, which mirror the

²⁵ It is important to note that the Ronsard whom d'Aubigné seems to engage with is not the Ronsard who tried and failed to write France's dynastic epic, *La Franciade*.

²⁶ The first part of this collection, *L'Hecatombe à Diane*, was written in the early 1570s while d'Aubigné was staying at Talcy with the Salviati family. Diane Salviati, who inspired the poems, was the niece of Cassandre Salviati who inspired Ronsard's *Amours de Cassandre* (1552).

²⁷ We might think here as well of Marot's prefaces to his translations of the Psalms, where he converts away from love. Petrarch wants to convert, but constantly defers it. Ariosto, on the contrary, shows how fragile conversion can be.

love for Christ burning in their hearts. By giving his pen over to the representation of this other fire and thus to the service of God, the poet becomes at once more worldly—representing the basest of human passions, war—and increasingly transcendent.

III. “Un autre style”: an epic born of tragedy

The poem’s rhetorical program, as laid out in the “Avis aux Lecteurs” (as mentioned above) attests to the fact that the poem has been carefully crafted to produce an effect on its audience. Certainly nothing about *Les Tragiques* is supposed to be subtle, and the “Avis” tells us not only what kind of effect the work should have on the reader but also why it should have that effect: “Nous sommes ennuyez de livres qui enseignent, donnez-nous en pour esmouvoir” (219). This declaration situates the poem in relation to the “canonical triad of Quintillian rhetoric”: *movere*, *docere*, and *delectare* (Rigolot 4). Rejecting the instructive function of rhetoric, *docere*, the above statement aligns the poem with rhetoric’s affective function, *movere*. The goal of pleasing the audience, *delectare*, is not even mentioned. Even so, by clearly announcing that this poem will be different than other works with which it might be compared—namely the “livres qui enseignent,” which have become boring—the poet is positioned as responding to a need for change, a cultural imperative to communicate in a new way.²⁸

Although much scholarship has focused on the didacticism of the poem’s extensive theological content, finding it consistent with an important Protestant tradition of scriptural exegesis, the above statement from the “Avis” actually seems to cut ties with such writing.²⁹ However, the poet pulls out all the stops to elicit an emotional response from his audience. In doing so, he aligns himself even more explicitly with Aristotelian theories of tragedy, which had become popular among humanists following the publication of a French translation of the *Poetics* in 1571.³⁰ Bypassing the impressive but distant public figure of the war hero—who is also the conventional epic hero—the poet launches into a general panorama of the atrocities of civil war, focusing on the horrors inflicted upon ordinary citizens (I, 367-436). In keeping with the title of the poem, the poet establishes the metaphor of France as a tragic stage upon which these scenes are acted out in front of an audience that is also implicated in the drama.

²⁸ See Nicholas Cronk. “Aristotle, Horace and Longinus: the conception of reader response.” *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume III: The Renaissance*.

²⁹ On the didacticism of *Les Tragiques*, see Jody M. Enders. “The Rhetoric of Protestantism: Book I of Agrippa d’Aubigné’s *Les Tragiques*.” For a concise presentation of Calvinist literary criticism, see Catharine Randall’s article in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume III: The Renaissance*.

³⁰ See *Cambridge History of Literary Criticism, Volume III: The Renaissance* 206-7 for a discussion of the theoretical tendency to transfer Aristotle’s norms for tragedy to epic.

O France desolee! Ô terre sanguinaire:
 Non pas terre, mais cendre! Ô mere! Si c'est mere
 Que trahir ses enfants aux douceurs de son sein,
 Et quand on les meurtrit les serrer de sa main (I, 89-91).

This insistence upon the tragic results in an opening up of epic to a collective subject, a move that is borne out in what follows.

Some of the most moving scenes in "Miseres" recount the desperate acts of violence committed by citizens of besieged towns.³¹ Starving people eat their faithful canine companions and fight over the stinking entrails of dead horses, clawing out the marrow from rotting bones with their nails. As ghastly as these images are, what follows surpasses even the worst horrors of antiquity: a mother struggles within herself but finally looses the battle against extreme hunger and kills her own child for food.³²

La mère ayant long-temps combatu dans son cœur,
 Le feu de la pitié, de la faim la fureur,
 Convoitte dans son sein la creature aimee,
 Et dit à son enfant (moins mere qu'affamee)
 Rends miserable, rends le corps que je t'ay faict:
 Ton sang retournera, où tu as pris le laict,
 Au sein qui t'allaitoit r'entre contre nature,
 Ce sein qui t'a nourry sera ta sepulture.

.....
 Tout est troublé, confus, en l'ame qui se trouve
 N'avoir plus rien de mere, et avoir tout de louve,
 De sa levre ternie il sort des feux ardans,
 Elle n'appreste plus des levres, mais les dents,
 Et des baisers changez en avides morsures:
 La faim acheve tout de trois rudes blessures,
 Elle ouvre le passage au sang, et aux esprits:
 L'enfant change visage, et ses ris en ses cris:
 Il pousse trois fumeaux, et n'ayant plus de mere

Mourant cherche des yeux, les yeux de sa meurtriere. (I, 519-526, 533-542)

The passage stages a war within a war; the mother's conflict is figured as a combat between a fire associated with motherly love ("le feu de la pitié") and a furor caused by hunger ("de la faim la fureur"). The mother is both the vanquished hero and the ruthless victor, thus calling into question the traditional epic categories of winner and loser. Having lost the battle, her order to her child to surrender its body to her

³¹ Cf. Chapter One on the siege as an evocative Renaissance *topos*. Specific scenes of cannibalism during sieges were further sensationalized by contemporary documentary accounts, including Jean Léry's account of the 1573 siege of Sancerre.

³² This is a famous scene from Josephus's *The Jewish Wars* and is also found in Jean Léry's account of the 1572 siege of Sancerre.

hunger echoes the kind of language one might expect to hear from a commanding general to the citizens of a town besieged by his troops (“Rends miserable, rends le corps que je t’ay fait”). In addition to its martial tone, the reported speech adds a dramatic quality to the passage. Hearing the mother speak to her child, as it were, fleshes out her presence; it is as if the narrator’s rhetoric actually brings the scene to life.

With the mother’s tormented cries, the poem modulates into a fantastic mode; it returns to third-person narration and a vivid and terrifying transformation takes place before the reader’s eyes. The once-loving mother changes into a savage she-wolf ready to destroy her young (“...l’ame qui se trouve/ n’avoir plus rien de mere, et avoir tout de louve”), a metamorphosis emphasized by the repetition of the verb “changer.” As the mother’s kisses become bites (“...des baisers *changez* en avides morsures”), the child’s laughter turns into frightened cries (“L’enfant *change* visage et ses ris en cris”). The reader is set up as a witness to the scene, which quickly surpasses even tragedy and turns into a horrific tale of monstrosity—the kind of tale that is nearly impossible to believe if one does not see it for oneself. This intimate moment of a mother nursing her child is transformed into a grisly public spectacle that calls into question the heroic imagery of war by juxtaposing it with base animality.³³

Clearly, all of this violence is supposed to move the reader. But how does epic accomplish this differently than tragedy? In Chapter Two, we see the characters of humanist tragedy responding on stage to violence that affects them only indirectly, which is to say that it does not make a physical imprint on their bodies. There I argue that this response, which takes the form of lament, functions as a linguistic mediation of the unbridgeable distance between violence and language. In *Les Tragiques*, d’Aubigné uses epic form to call for a new form of mediation—to render immediate the violence it describes by making it visual and visceral.³⁴ Immediately preceding the passage analyzed above, the poet invokes the power and supremacy of sight for processing the horrors of the wars.

Cett’horreur que tout oeil en lisant a doubté,
Dont noz sens dementoient la vraye antiquité:
Cette rage s’est veüe et les meres non meres

Nous ont de leurs forfaitcs pour temoings oculaires. (I, 495-498)

Having only read about such terrible and desperate acts as infanticide and cannibalism in accounts from antiquity, the reader can hardly be expected to believe them. Now, however, the reader can see these images of utter desperation with his own eyes (“Cette rage s’est veüe”) and thus becomes part of a collective group of

³³ See Crouzet, 262-268 on the importance of animality and animal imagery during the religious wars.

³⁴ Sight was at the top of the Renaissance hierarchy of the senses.

spectating witnesses (“nous”).³⁵ The poet’s ferocious insistence on war as spectacle—as something that has to be seen in order to be believed and if we are to make any sense out of it—is powerfully and painfully juxtaposed in this scene with an example of violence that we are unable to process. When the bitten, dying child looks up at his mother who is sucking the life out of him, he no longer recognizes her and sees someone else instead: a murderess.

The child’s pitiful, helpless confusion mirrors the reader’s own disoriented state when confronted with the scene. This subtle, yet remarkable shift in perspective brings war in all its horror into focus. Such nuance leads me to disagree with Mitchell Greenberg’s claims that “the physical reality of suffering, war and torture loses its horror in the all-embracing wisdom of God’s gaze” and that “our historic vision both eliminates human chronology in an all embracing present, and mollifies human fear in a superior peace” (19). It is scenes like this one that show d’Aubigné to be more concerned with the physical effects of warfare than scholars, including Greenberg, have suggested.³⁶ For example, Judith Sproxton, by focusing on war as a sign, a divine punishment inflicted on man to punish his sinful nature and entirely out of his control, overlooks the degree to which d’Aubigné calls the violence of war into question. War always, but perhaps increasingly at the dawn of the 17th century, involves the blurring of social boundaries. Hunger, fear, and death are all great equalizers; and even though civilians are generally supposed to be off limits, nobody is untouched. Despite the fact that d’Aubigné is often read as being a zealot, his poetry does not constitute a bloodthirsty glorification of war; rather, it offers a more subtle critique of the morality of war.

If the poem’s claim to not be *utile* is rhetorical ploy intended to trick the reader into being taught a lesson, it is the polar opposite of the sugar-coated pill tactic employed by both Horace and Rabelais to make their moralizing more pleasant for the reader. Far from being sugar-coated, d’Aubigné’s style is blood-soaked. Because of the poem’s gruesome subject matter, the aforementioned rhetorical function of *delectare*, or pleasing the audience, which is closely associated with poetry, becomes problematic.³⁷ In fact, one of the most common critiques of

³⁵ “Les meres non meres” is the subject of the final clause. They have us as eyewitnesses to their crimes. Also, this goes a step further than the allegories of human vices that Ronsard used in his *Discours* and d’Aubigné copied and amplified in the satirical books of the poem (II & III). “Famine” and “War” are not personified; “Cette rage” (referring to *rage de faim*) is seen through the actions of the starving mother, i.e., the cannibalism of her child.

³⁶ See Greenberg, *Baroque Bodies: Psychoanalysis and the Culture of French Absolutism* and Sproxton, “Perspectives of War in the Writings of Agrippa d’Aubigné.”

³⁷ While *delectare* (pleasing) is most commonly associated with poetry, the Italian poet and epic theorist Torquato Tasso thought that it should be trumped by *docere* (teaching) in epic poetry.

the work, by contemporary and recent critics alike, is that it is too flamboyant and graphic to the point of being gratuitous.³⁸ The eminent 20th century Renaissance scholar Thomas Greene, for example, emphasizes the poem's "lurid rhetoric" as proof that "[i]t is the work of a man whose element is violence, whose stomach is strong, whose sensibilities are so exacerbated that only the wildest horrors, the most glaring effects touch him. If epic is the genre by which violence is accommodated most commonly in literature, then here epic accords violence its apotheosis" (*Descent from Heaven* 256). This assessment of the poem suggests an unequivocal glorification of violence, but I would argue that the way d'Aubigné "accommodates" violence in his epic results in a complex representation of war that, far from being gratuitous, is calculated to condemn the excesses of civil war.

D'Aubigné is under no illusion that his readers will take a morbid pleasure in the horrors that unfold before them in verse.³⁹ He responds pre-emptively to anticipated accusations of gratuitous voyeurism in the following passage from "Princes" which is worth quoting at length:

Si quelqu'un me reprend que mes vers eschauffez
 Ne sont rien que de meurtre et de sang estoffez,
 Qu'on n'y lit que fureur, que massacre, que rage,
 Qu'horreur, mal-heur, poison, trahison et carnage:
 Je luy reponds, ami, ces mots que tu reprends,
 Sont les vocables d'art de ce que j'entreprends,
 Les flatteurs de l'amour ne chantent que leurs vices,
 Que vocables choisis à peindre les delices,
 Que miel, que ris, que jeux, amours, et passe-temps,
 Une heureuse follie à consumer son temps:⁴⁰
 Quand j'estois fol heureux, (si cest heur est folie,
 De rire aiant sur soy sa maison demolie:
 Si c'est heur d'appliquer son fol entendement
 Au doux, laissant l'util: estre sans sentiment
 Lepreux de la cervelle, et rire des misères
 Qui accable le col du païs et des freres:)
 Je fleurissois comm'eux de ses mesmes propos,

³⁸ In the previous chapter, we saw how the civil wars were thought of as a subject appropriate for tragedy. It is less apparent how they are appropriate to epic, although there are notable precedents in Statius's *Thebaid* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*.

³⁹ This is one of the big questions facing the entertainment industry today as we start to seriously question the routine aestheticization of extreme violence for entertainment purposes.

⁴⁰ D'Aubigné consistently uses the verb *peindre* to describe his project, but the difference between his old poetic style and his new one is the difference between painting a still-life or pastoral scene and painting a vivid battle scene, or painting a series like Callot's.

Quand par l'oisiveté je perdois le repos:
Ce siècle autre en ses mœurs demande un autre style:
Cueillons des fruits amers desquels il est fertile.⁴¹ (II, 59-78)

D'Aubigné recognizes a need for a new poetic language that is appropriate to his time, "ce siècle," which is a time more suited to tragedy than to any other genre. Writing poetry for pleasure (or with the intent of pleasing) is a phase that he has passed through already as a poet and one in which, in his opinion, too many of his contemporaries have become stuck. Poets, he believes, have an obligation to write in a style that is consistent with the behavior of the time, which in his case was decidedly bellicose. While this declaration echoes Ronsard's fervent call for poetic engagement, expressed in his *Discours* and elsewhere, d'Aubigné uses one of the most famous metaphors from Ronsard's love poetry, that of gathering flowers, to establish a drastic change of subject matter.⁴² Not only are roses replaced with bitter fruit ("des fruits amers"), the second-person imperative "cueillez," directed intimately at the poem's love object, becomes the first-person plural "cueillons," a ringing and inclusive imperative, a call to action. To the ear of the modern reader, this is the language of the *Marseillaise*, the cohesive anthem of a unified nation whose identity was forged on the battlefield.

Although the poet establishes a personal narrative from frivolous youthful fancy to full poetic maturity, this trajectory is eclipsed by the national narrative of a nation in a flowering Renaissance descending into chaotic civil war. Love is replaced with war and intimate address of lyric replaced with a poetic call to arms; the lute is replaced by the trumpet. D'Aubigné is not, however, simply renouncing profane poetry for divine or more elevated earthly subject matter. He is switching from one poetic mode to another, specifically from lyric to epic. The poem's title immediately conveys a great deal of information about what to expect from this switch. *Les Tragiques* evokes at once the tragic genre, including the late humanist tragedies discussed in Chapter Two, and *histoires tragiques*, the grim and graphic short stories that were popular in the latter half of the sixteenth century.⁴³ These generic connotations in and of themselves prepare the reader for a spectacle, and a gruesome one at that. But whereas the spectacles of the tragic stage are often

⁴¹ For other readings of this passage, see Prat, "Les Tragiques de d'Aubigné ou la douceur indicible," Prat, *Les mots du corps: un imaginaire lexical dans Les Tragiques d'Agrippa d'Aubigné*, and Cornillat, *Sujet caduc, noble sujet: La poésie de la Renaissance et le choix de ses "arguments."*

⁴² See Pierre Ronsard, *Amours de Cassandre* and *Sonnets pour Hélène* (1552) "Cueillez dès aujourd'hui les roses de la vie" and "Cueillez, cueillez votre jeunesse:/ Comme à ceste fleur la vieillesse/ Fera tenir vostre beauté."

⁴³ The genre was initiated by Pierre Boaistuau's 1559 translation/adaptation of Matteo Bandello's *Novelli* (1554) and continued by François de Belleforest (1570). For a discussion of narrative form in *histoires tragiques*, see Carr, *Pierre Boaistuau's Histoires tragiques: A Study of Narrative Form and Tragic Vision*.

removed from the audience in time, place, and subject, the spectacle that awaits d'Aubigné's audience has already been acted out before them on the stage of human history. War in *Les Tragiques* is not represented euphemistically: it is real, personal, and immediate. It is not meant to bring to mind "les malheurs de nos temps" so much as it tries to bring them back to life. In addition to powerful generic connotations (and perhaps because of them), the poem's title also evokes particular content—violence, death, and the horrors of war—and a visual mode of experience. As Jean-Raymond Fanlo points out, "[l]e mot [*tragiques*] souligne la violence spectaculaire, la terreur, l'effroi, le caractère exceptionnel" (111). However, the sheer sensory overload of the poem suggests that the violence is anything but exceptional. Unlike the tragic genre that it references, d'Aubigné's poem does not try to displace violence so much as it tries to render it present in the most striking sensory fashion.

In contrast to humanist theater, which processed the violence of war by highlighting its aftermath through the voicing of lament, d'Aubigné's epic incarnates the effects of violence by putting the wounded body on display. Whereas humanist tragedy uses the communal, gendered expression of mourning to mediate between the individual and the social, d'Aubigné uses the figure of the body and its wounds. This undercuts the possibility for a unified narrative structure, and the episodic nature of the poem is thus of a piece with its main metaphorical concerns. Using the striking visibility of the wound, d'Aubigné opens up epic form to destabilizing elements, a move that in turn gives the genre new life.

Chapter Four

Deffence et illustration d'une vie—the hero as professional in Blaise de Monluc's *Commentaires*

In the same year that the protestant soldier Agrippa d'Aubigné was beginning work on his epic poem, *Les Tragiques* (1577), another soldier—a Catholic—was finally succumbing to the effects of a lifetime of war. Blaise de Monluc (1502-1577) began his military career as an archer in Francis I's expeditionary forces in the 1520s and rose through the ranks to achieve the highest possible military distinction, becoming *maréchal de France* in the 1570s (Gould 1). Like d'Aubigné, Monluc was a passionate partisan and a dedicated soldier, albeit for the Catholic rather than Protestant side, and, like d'Aubigné, he took up a pen to tell a story about the wars in which he fought. The resulting text, which Monluc began dictating during his convalescence after receiving a serious facial wound at the siege of Rabastens in 1570 that left him without a nose, circulated first in manuscript form and was finally published posthumously in 1591 under the name *Commentaires*.¹ The text is a detailed narrative account of Monluc's fifty-five year career as a soldier in the service of the king of France. Written in the first person, Monluc's story is part self-justification and defense against charges of corruption, part military manual for future soldiers, and part chronicle of his role as both soldier and commander and of the wars in which he fought. This excessively personalized and immediate text is lacking in the ethical dimension that we have seen in other accounts of warfare—the professional has become the hero.

This chapter will look at Monluc's *Commentaires* not as a historiographical source but as a textual representation of sixteenth-century warfare that, alongside the essays, plays, and epic poem discussed in the previous chapters, provides yet another response to the overarching question of how, and by whom, the material reality of the experience of war is represented in French literature of the late sixteenth century. Monluc's text is a crucial representation of a new kind of hero who is neither glorified nor martyred but is instead a kind of antihero who rejects all forms of sentimentality.

The same wars that are represented with cynicism and prudence by Montaigne, with displaced pathos by humanist tragedy, and with flamboyant and inflammatory rhetoric by d'Aubigné, are rendered prosaic by Monluc's portrayal of them. This is true in both senses of the word: that is to say, not only does his account

¹ Monluc's text was edited and first published in 1592 by the jurist Florimond de Raemon. For a detailed publication history of the *Commentaires* and an account of the circulation of the manuscript, see the introduction to Paul Corteault, *Blaise de Monluc historien* 1-22.

unfold as a straightforward, chronological prose narrative, but also the violence depicted therein is unremarkable despite its being omnipresent. The instances of violence that appear in the *Commentaires*, notably several scenes of retributive justice, are not framed as situations requiring ethical reflection, as they are in the *Essais*. Nor are the few graphic accounts of combat sensationalized, including the battle at C risoles in 1544 and the siege of Rabastens in 1570 where Monluc is gravely wounded. Death, which Monluc encounters everywhere on the battlefield, and his own mutilated body are nothing more than the natural byproducts of an activity that is both a business and a way of life.

The narrativization of Monluc's experiences as a soldier transforms the relationship between violence and the body by naturalizing it as an integral part of a recounted life. Here we find a much different kind of early modern subject than the carefully constructed public identity described by Stephen Greenblatt as "self-fashioning." Instead, we see a professional whose body disintegrates as a function of his profession as he moves through life. Monluc has been fashioned by war, and his dictation of the *Commentaires* is essentially an act of translation in which the story told by the wounds on his body is turned into a text. As Michael Wolfe puts it in his exhaustively researched article "Pain and Memory: The War Wounds of Blaise de Monluc," Monluc's scars "served him as a bodily memoir that could immediately be translated into an oral life story" (110).

This idea of naturalization is also tied to literary form. Despite being omnipresent, the violence of war does not stand out as being particularly problematic in the *Commentaires*. In particular, it does not seem to pose an ethical dilemma or offer a space for moral reflection. Indeed Monluc recognizes that the exigencies of the warrior life do not leave time for weighing moral choices, noting that "la necessit  de la guerre nous force, en despit de nous-mesmes,   faire mille maux, et faire non plus d'estat de la vie des hommes que d'un poulet" (822). The cook or the housewife does not think twice about wringing the neck of a chicken because it is their job to put food on the table; in the same manner, the military commander does not think twice about hanging intransigent holdouts during a siege because it is his job to capture a town and secure a military advantage. While the analogy may seem facile, it is born out by practices such as small war, which "embraced calculated moves against targets of high value" (Pepper 196) that were commonly used by Monluc and others although they were not recognized practices of a chivalric style of warfare.

Because the violence of war, both received and inflicted, is such an integral part of the life that is being recounted, a different kind of writing is needed to make this natural. Over the first three chapters of this dissertation, we saw the relationship between violence and the body in wartime manifest in different ways: as tenuous and threatening in Montaigne's *Essais*, as a distance mediated by lament in late humanist tragedy, and spectacularly conflated in the visible wound in d'Aubign 's epic *Les Tragiques*. Each of these relationships is developed, or illustrated, in the form of the texts themselves. Just as the forms of essay, tragedy,

and epic shape the representations of war they contain, thereby shaping reflections on war that emerge from these texts, Monluc's autobiographical-historical narrative *Commentaires* gives a new shape to the same wars.

Because Monluc's narrative spans his long career, it is to some extent a narrative history of the two defining conflicts of the French Renaissance in which he took part—the Italian or Hapsburg-Valois Wars (1494-1559) and the French Wars of Religion (1562-1598). The contrast between these two conflicts encapsulates the difficult transformation of the image of the French fighting class. The latter were often negatively compared to the former in the contemporary cultural imagination; if the Italian Wars were at least ostensibly waged for the purpose of glorious conquest, the civil wars were an abomination. Monluc straddles the generation gap between the two, belonging at once to what we saw Montaigne refer to respectively as the “temps de nos pères” (I:5, I:19, II:4, II:12, III:6 etc.) and “nos troubles” (III:9, III:12).

Unlike Montaigne's *Essais*, with their layered complexity and thematic breadth, the *Commentaires* takes the form of a story that unfolds chronologically in an orderly fashion. Here one does not find the meandering thoughts of a man whose life was marked by encounters with violence in his reading and in his experience that raised philosophical questions about their meaning. Instead, one sees the arc of a career unfold over time, backed up by a prodigiously detailed memory of events. For one thing, this means that a coherent picture of war is laid out directly to the reader, whereas in the *Essais* it comes into focus more slowly and is less fully formed from the outset. The development that occurs over the course of the *Commentaires* is of a professional and not a philosophical nature. Monluc moves up in the military ranks as he gains experience, but his core qualities of bravery and dedication to his job do not waver over fifty years and many hundreds of pages. Although it is transcribed from the story written on his body in scars, Monluc's is not a personal story so much as it is a professional one.²

Monluc's professional connection to both of the major military conflicts of the sixteenth century gives him a unique perspective on these engagements. As a career soldier whose reputation depends entirely on his conduct during his service, he is concerned with self-presentation and self-representation. But while Monluc is both a participant and an eyewitness in the wars, he does not position himself as d'Aubigné does as a representative eyewitness of a collective experience. Nor does he retire to contemplation, as Montaigne does, thus gaining a physical remove from

² Without relating them to discussions of the early modern development of interiority, these military memoirs represent a step in the development of personal narrative, which follows a hero or protagonist, in contrast to the meanderings of romance/*romans de chevalerie* in which the hero flits from one encounter to another without much logic between the episodes. For example, each episode in Monluc's career is directly linked to a clear military goal and relates to a unified presentation of his character.

which to philosophize about the violence in which he participated. The *Commentaires*, like *Les Tragiques*, is a form of testimony, but the actions about which Monluc testifies are, for the most part, his own. By using a first-person narrative voice and eschewing the third-person used by historians, Monluc marks his account as something other than history and asserts ownership of his project.

Nul aussi ne pouvoit mieux représenter les desseins, entreprises et executions, ou les faicts survenuz en icelles [ces guerres], que moy mesme, qui ne desrobe rien de l'honneur d'autrui. Le plus grand capitaine qui ait jamais esté, qui est Cesar, m'en a montré le chemin, ayant lui-mesme escrit ses Commentaires, escrivant la nuit ce qu'il executoit le jour. J'ay donc voulu dresser les miens, mal polis, comme sortans de la main d'un soldat, et encor d'un Gascon, qui s'est toujours plus soucié de bien faire que de bien dire. (22)

Although he cites Caesar as a military paragon, Monluc nevertheless implicitly rejects the aesthetic dimension of the Roman general's artistry as a commander and as a writer that so fascinated Montaigne.³ Instead he proudly assumes the rough, soldierly quality of his work, which is antithetical to courtly and soldierly ideals.

Narrative—and especially such straightforward, unpolished narrative—suits Monluc's portrayal of war. One reason for this is the text's intended audience: "Ce n'est pas un livre pour les gens de sçavoir, ils ont assez d'hystoriens, mais bien pour un soldat, capitaine, et peut estre qu'un lieutenant de roy y pourra trouver de quoy apprendre" (22). Monluc's obsession with order and with presenting things as they really happened so that aspiring captains might follow in his footsteps by reading him as a how to (and how *not* to) manual creates a very different image of war than the chaotic and jumbled tableaux of d'Aubigné's epic. In fact, the orderliness of the text's narrative form contributes to a very different explanatory logic of violence than anything we have encountered thus far. In *Les Tragiques*, for example, the violence that the reader witnesses is tumultuous and overwhelming, completely defying any logic other than an eschatological script of sin, punishment, and redemption. The *Commentaires*, on the contrary, reveals a clear logic of cause and effect. Monluc demonstrates time and again how his actions as a commander are dictated by the facts on the ground and the constraints of his *charge*, or the orders that he has been given. The portrayal of violence in the *Commentaires* is at once the most personal and the least troubled that we have seen. The lessons to be learned are not ethical, but practical.

In keeping with this focus, Monluc's portrayal of himself is not preoccupied with the conception of heroism and honor attached to ancient or chivalric accounts of warfare. Contrary to Brian Sanberg's claim in his book *Warrior Pursuits* that Monluc presents an "idealized perception of warfare as a space of honor, bravery and valor" (xvi), I argue that Monluc's conception of honor is above all a professional and pragmatic one that was quite sensitive to the technological and social changes taking place in his profession, as well as to the differences between foreign and civil

³ See Chapter One for a detailed reading of Montaigne on Caesar.

wars. In contrast to Cornelian heroes like Le Cid, whose heroic martial exploits are complicated by their changing relationship to the state, Monluc does not pit himself ideologically against the state or the king that is his employer. Thus, the *Commentaires* does not call into question the new system so much as they propose a kind of blueprint for it to run smoothly. Indeed, Monluc is less fixated on the outgoing feudal hierarchies than on the new chains of command. The apologetic side of Monluc's text can't really be dissociated from the idea of professionalism. He has a personal stake in how public action is handled, not to mention in how it is funded. However, his interest in these matters is not driven by his social status; he does not care about them in the sense that they challenge the social hierarchy. Soldiering is his vocation.

The practical dimension of the text is reflected in the history of its critical reception. As a military memoir, the *Commentaires* has primarily been appreciated as a document of military history; it has been of limited interest to literary scholars. Because of the impressive span of his career and the degree of detail in his account of it, Monluc has long been recognized and exploited as an important historiographical source of the period. In fact, most of the scholarship dealing with the *Commentaires* approaches it from a historiographical point of view, as a primary text that can either elucidate or complicate comprehension of the facts concerning the period in which he lived and the wars in which he fought.⁴ For example, Paul Corteault's comprehensive and authoritative thesis on Monluc bills itself in its subtitle as an "*étude critique sur le texte et la valeur historique des Commentaires*." After tracing the trajectory of the *Commentaires*'s documentary contribution to a history of the Italian Wars and Wars of Religion, Corteault goes through each of the seven books and analyzes the accuracy of the historical details. This results in a thorough critical edition of the text, but the focus on issues of objective historical truth such as dates, people present, etc., misses the literary aspect of a text that is very careful to avoid the label of "history" for itself.

Characterizing how the *Commentaires* develops over the course of seven books, Robert Knecht, a noted historian of the sixteenth century, comments that they "lose something of their spontaneity and gain a sort of literary self-awareness" as they move through the years from 1521 to 1577. He elaborates that "narrative gives way to a more selective treatment of past events; facts become less important than the reflections they prompt. Monluc ceases to be a soldier and becomes a man of letters; the pen displaces the sword" (117). While I agree with Knecht that the *Commentaires* deserves to be read and studied not only as a historical document but also within the context of literary history, I would argue that his own narrative of Monluc's transformation from soldier to man of letters is a bit too tidy. If anything, Monluc's transformation to a man of letters is specifically a literary strategy to

⁴ See Corteault for a discussion of how Monluc's texts was used by 19th century historians including Ranke, Michelet, and Saint-Beuve to further their historiographical agendas (17).

maintain and preserve his image as a soldier. It is a calculated tactic to lend authority to his claims to respected professional status as earned by his actions.

Insofar as Knecht's claim of transformation exaggerates a perceived dichotomy between fighting and writing, it diminishes the importance of the coexistence of the two activities in the *Commentaires*. In general, the increased output of military memoirs was dismantling the opposition between the two activities even as the writers of those accounts continued to deploy it as a rhetorical device. Rather than superseding his military identity, Monluc's literary identity emerges as a new and *necessary* dimension of the former. Writing becomes part of the job, so to speak, such that, even when taking into account the apologetic character of the text, the *Commentaires* remains outwardly oriented and solidly connected to a professional identity that he maintains until the end. Writing about soldiering is as important as doing it.

Montaigne's digressive and contemplative *Essais* are the product of his withdrawal from public life; d'Aubigné's epic is the poet's response to a higher calling. The *Commentaires*, while evocative of a distinctive personality, is first and foremost an analysis of the state of the profession. Monluc's writing is not an exercise in personal accounting; he does not seek to make himself stand out as what we think of as an "individual"—with all the attendant subjective dimensions that word implies.⁵ War narrative and life story are indissociable for Monluc.

In his comprehensive study of Renaissance military memoirs as a genre, *Renaissance Military Memoirs*, Yuval Harari distinguishes between facts and experiences in personal accounts of warfare. He contends that sixteenth-century memoirs are, for the most part, devoid of narratives that capture, or attempt to capture, the experience of battle; instead they present only the facts, "briefly narrating the place and date of battle, the composition and disposition of the opposing armies, the main maneuvers, and perhaps some notable deeds of arms" (79). He cites Monluc's account of being wounded while storming the town of Rabastens during the third religious war in 1570, with its more vivid description of the action and personal impressions, as an exception that confirms the rule. Harari concludes that, in light of such examples and the existence of literary models for this kind of writing—available in the form of the gory descriptions found in the romances of Ariosto and Boiardo—Monluc and others like him were uninterested rather than unable to convey the experience of war.

The implication that Monluc does not convey the experience of war is problematic and overly influenced by modern notions of a genre that has flourished in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It is anachronistic to try and understand Monluc's text as a "retrospective attempt by [a combatant] to construct a

⁵ The absence of interiority is a serious limitation of reading him as a prototype for modern-day first-person war writing, as Yuval Harari tries to do in *Renaissance Military Memoirs*. However, in judging the importance of his text as part of that tradition we can't be disappointed by the absence of anachronisms.

meaningful narrative of [his] war” (Harari “War in History” 290). Monluc’s account is based entirely in experience, just not in the subjective way that we are accustomed to as modern readers. In his writing, Monluc does not grapple with the kinds of broader questions about the ethics of warfare that Montaigne tries to work through in the *Essais*. He is not trying to make sense of the wars for himself; he is trying to cement his place, and the place of those like him, in the ongoing narrative of the French military establishment. The facts that Monluc gives us about the wars in which he fought, and the way he presents those facts, do give us an idea about the experience of war from a very specific perspective—that of a new historical (and literary) figure, which could be called the professional hero.

I. The professionalization of the hero, or the hero as professional

In early modern literature the hero is associated most closely with epic; we saw, however, in Chapter Three how the religious wars in France affected the epic tradition by complicating the idea of the hero. The equation of heroic behavior with noble status was further complicated as nobles were incorporated into a new centralized state system that altered the terms of their military service.⁶ In terms of literary development, this results in dramatic heroes like Rodrigue, the protagonist of Corneille’s play, *Le Cid* (1637), whose personal code of honor put him at odds with the state, creating a conflict of interest which can only be resolved through an act of public heroism on behalf of that state (Hampton 202-203). Reading against this literary history, the *Commentaires* could be said to be anti-heroic to the extent that it seeks to resolve, rather than struggle against the tensions of social change. In fact, Monluc turns the now-familiar narrative of the subjugation of the martial aristocratic class by a centralized nation state on its head. Far from demonstrating nostalgia for the glory days of the Italian War, or the even more distant chivalric or classical past, Monluc actually seeks to instruct the king as to how to best consolidate power over his army and ensure its efficacy and discipline under the present conditions. The best way to accomplish this, Monluc believes, is to use the so-called old guard of warrior aristocrats to his best advantage instead of cutting them out; his antidote for nostalgia is to incorporate the best of the old into the new. He reminds the king that everything will run better if there is a rigorous system of training led by “experts” and if entry into the profession of arms is strictly controlled from the top.⁷

Sire, vous devez plus desirer d’accomplir ces choses, et y tenir l’œil, qu’à tout le reste qui depend de l’art militaire; car tout ce qui consiste en la guerre, soit

⁶ For two different accounts of this narrative, see Norbert Elias, *The Court Society* and Arlette Jouanna, *Le devoir de révolte: la noblesse française et la gestion de l’état moderne*.

⁷ For an explanation of the evolution of the command structure in the French Army during this period and its relation to the monarch, see Chapters One and Two of David Potter, *Renaissance France at War*.

le bien ou le mal, depend du choix que vous faites de ceux qui ont le commandement. (813)

In Monluc's ideal system there would be no more coming in through the window to receive high military placement simply based on one's family name. To not institute a meritocracy is to compromise the performance of the army and to put the glory and reputation of the monarch and the security of the nation at risk.

Monluc employs another rhetorical strategy to bolster his claims *vis-à-vis* the monarchy. Unlike many nobles from the south of France who were querulous and bitter, Monluc doesn't position himself as a discontent (*mécontent*). Instead, he cleverly deflects this contentious label by openly and repeatedly declaring his contentment. Thus, where we might expect to find an account of the ways in which he feels he has been undervalued, underpaid, or in some way wronged, he proposes instead to count his blessings:

Pour ce...que je pense estre ung des plus contents hommes (de Dieu et du Roy et de ma fortune) qui soit aujourd'huy en ce monde, j'ay voullu coucher icy toutes mes raisons pourquoy je diz que je suis content, et aussi pour monstrier à tout le monde le contraire de ce qu'on m'a voullu charger. (17)

The apologetic character of the text as a vindication of his employment takes a back seat to an expressed appreciation of his uncommon good fortune during his long service; he is a sort of accidental hero whose heroism is the result of the opportunity his state-sponsored career gave him to shine, not the result of intrinsic hero-qualities. In many ways, the *Commentaires* reads like a love letter to his career, but of course this is a rhetorical tactic used by Monluc to achieve his aims, which include validating his conduct during his career.

The model of war as a kind of state-run business that was developing in early modern Europe lends an important sense of context to what appears to be Monluc's deviation from the standard heroism model that valorized innate, abstract qualities such as courage and virtue. While he certainly wants to be recognized for his courage and service, pragmatism and professionalism trump any romantic, literary, or ethical conception of the hero in his writing. The title of *Commentaires* is an *homage* to Caesar, but Monluc's style lacks Caesar's aesthetic flair. His prose is brusque, straightforward, and unadorned.

II. The butcher of Guyenne: cruelty and competing narratives

If the *Commentaire's* first-person narrative form makes it stand out among the corpus of this dissertation, it also creates a different set of expectations for the reader. In order for the text to effectively perform its function as a defense, it has to tell a coherent story. Not only does Monluc's narrative have to compete with unflattering and erroneous accounts of his conduct that jeopardize his reputation and financial security, it is competing, albeit indirectly, with other accounts of war. For example, despite being an episodic epic poem, *Les Tragiques* participates, along with other Protestant texts, in the construction of a larger narrative about the religious wars, including their meaning and their heroes and villains. So too, as we

have seen, humanist tragedy and Montaigne's *Essais* add dimension to the experience of the Wars of Religion. Now that we have seen how Monluc proposes an alternative to hero-driven war narrative, how does his use of narrative transform the relationship between violence and the body?

In the following passage, Monluc describes his reaction to the news that the enemy has fled from Toulouse during his approach to the city (1562).

Or, le matin, un'heure devant jour, comme nous commencions à marcher, nous arriva un capitoul de Thouluse...qui m'apporta une lettre...nous mandant la sortie et fuitte des ennemis; de quoy je fus bien marry, car s'ils m'eussent attendu, il ne s'en fût pas sauvé un couillon, et Dieu sçait si j'avois envie d'en faire belle despesche et si je les eusse esparnez. (505)

While this account contains an oblique reference to Monluc's reputed brutality, it does not depict a rogue commander with a raging bloodlust giving free reign to his hatred for Protestants. Despite being irritated at a missed opportunity to give the enemy a good beating, Monluc is clearly aware of his place in a hierarchy of command and of his responsibility to obey rules and follow orders—even when they conflict with his own instincts, judgments, or feelings. In this instance, the soldier's enthusiasm for war and for service is quite far removed from Montaigne's skepticism about political servitude and attempts to keep aloof from the duties imposed upon him by external authorities. However, it is this same enthusiasm for duty that imposes limits on Monluc's actions. Thus, we can see that even in its more heated moments, Monluc's story is not always one of unbridled violence.

In action, violence is limited by the constraints of Monluc's duty; in writing, the representation of violence is limited somewhat by narrative tense. Monluc uses the conditional past ("s'il's m'eussent attendu") to distinguish between what did happen and what would or should have happened if things had gone slightly differently, or if he had been in full control. As Nadine Kuperty-Tsur puts it, "[Monluc] mélange adroitement le réel, c'est à dire la description objective des faits, et l'iréel: échaffaudage de plans, de scenarios non réalisés et souvent non réalisables" (48). In other words, he creates two alternative versions of the war: the war as it did happen and the war as it could or should have happened. It is only in the second version that we see a commander who truly deserves his reputation as an *homme de sang*: had the enemy not fled, he would not have spared a single one of them.⁸ According to his own account, the legend of the butcher of Guyenne is based on hypotheticals rather than facts; Monluc neither tries to highlight nor downplay his violent reputation. To the contrary, his use of the conditional past seems to insist on his restraint, a quality that he links to professionalism.

⁸ Monluc's reputation for brutality was resuscitated by Jules Michelet in his *Histoire de France* (1856) in *Tome IX: Guerres de Religion* where he refers to "le dur Gascon Montluc [*sic*], homme de sang, qui se vante d'avoir garni de morts tous les arbres des routes" (190).

The coexistence in the same narrative of two different versions of a story, i.e., what happened, and what might have happened, demonstrates a remarkable sensitivity on Monluc's part to the extent to which he himself does and does not control events. The famous Machiavellian figure of *Fortuna* plays an important role in Monluc's conception of warfare, but so do the choices of kings and princes. Monluc sees violence as an appropriate tool for preserving political order, but in order for it to have the desired effect it must be managed and meted out properly. For this reason, delegation of command is very important, as it can determine the immediate outcome of a conflict as well as the enduring reputation of the prince himself.

L'eslection que [votre pere, Henri II] fit de moy pour la deffence de Sienne fut honorable au nom françois. La sureté d'une place, Sire, depend du chef, qui fera tout combattre jusques aux enfans, et sera cause que l'assaillant mal aisément l'attaquera. Voyez doncques, Sire, combien il importe pour vostre estat, pour vostre peuple et pour vostre reputation: car on dira toujours, et se trouvera par escript que c'est le roy Charles neufiesme qui a perdu une telle et telle place. (806)

Fortune can smile or frown upon anyone at any time, but she cannot make up for a king's poor choices in delegating the command of his forces. If managed properly, violence is a powerful tool for control and conquest; if not, it is the source of dangerous instability and chaos. This is as true for the king as it is for the soldier on the battlefield. While fortune does play a role in military campaigns, prudence and experience are essential to a positive outcome. Therefore it is up to the king to appoint commanders for the right reasons, i.e., in light of their experience and demonstrated qualities rather than their elite connections.

Further complicating the logic behind how warfare should be managed is the nature of the conflict itself. Like many of his contemporaries, Monluc differentiates between the foreign wars that made up the first part of his career and the civil discord that made up the second. In civil war, the question of honor, which is such an important driving force in other iterations of combat, is moot.

...ce n'est pas comme ça aux guerres estrangères, où on combat comme pour l'amour et l'honneur: mais aux civiles il faut estre ou maistre ou valet, veu qu'on demeure sous mesme toit. Et ainsi il faut venir à la rigueur et à la cruauté; autrement la friandise de gain est telle que on desire plutost la continuation de la guerre que la fin. (519)

In this passage, pragmatism trumps nostalgia once again. Things are no longer as they were during the Italian Wars; in fact, civil war and foreign wars cannot be fairly compared. The power relationships are not of equals but of master and servant; thus there is no place for the chivalric qualities of mercy or "douceur." Furthermore, soldiers cannot be relied upon to be driven by the goal of winning; if they are not properly managed, they become like kids in a candy store and lose sight of the aim of the conflict, which is for one side to impose itself as the rightful master of the other. In the absence of the intrinsic restrainer of "l'amour et l'honneur," *rigueur*

and *cruauté*, or measures of extreme concentrated violence, actually serve to prevent acculturation to pervasive ongoing violence.

In this view, cruelty is neither a moral failing nor an abuse of power; it is not even a source of ethical quandary. Rather, cruelty is a necessary part of war or at least of a particular kind of war. But even more than that, Monluc avows this bent towards violence as part of his own nature, or “naturel” as a soldier. Yet despite these claims that he is acting in the line of duty, he assumes full responsibility without remorse for all the bloodiest parts of the job. For example, when he recounts the taking of Rabastens in 1570, he claims that his brutal treatment of the inhabitants was inspired not by revenge for the nasty wound he received but as a proper response to the enemy’s failure to capitulate at the first opportunity.

[E]t me semble que tout homme de guerre au commencement d’une conquête en doit faire ainsi contre celui qui oseroit attendre son canon; il faut qu’il ferme l’oreille à toute composition et capitulation, s’il ne void de grandes difficultez à son entreprise, et si son ennemy ne l’a mis en peine de faire breche. Et comme il faut de la rigueur (appelez la cruauté si vous voulez), aussi faut il de l’autre costé de la douceur, si vous voyez qu’on se rende de bonne heure à vostre mercy. (514)

If a commander can breach the defenses of a fortified town without risking too much, then he should do so, without regard for subsequent pleas for mercy. Although clemency has a place within the protocol for siege warfare, Monluc lists it here only after “rigueur,” that is, only *if* the defensive party capitulates to the mercy of their attackers at the appropriate moment. Moreover, whether or not to show mercy appears to be contingent less on the moral character of the besieging commander than on whether or not the besieged party conducts themselves appropriately according to an established protocol for siege warfare.⁹

In this instance, despite the harshness that earned him his formidable reputation, Monluc’s conduct actually serves as an example of how codified rules of warfare could limit the often-troubling violence of war. Whereas for Montaigne the difference between labeling something as *rigueur* or *cruauté* is the sign of a pernicious moral gray area, Monluc is unconcerned with these kinds of semantics. Monluc’s ethics, like his perspective on warfare, are practical and professional. The constraints of his charge dictate our expectations of his actions. (“Il n’en faut esperer moins aux entreprises que l’on luy baillera à executer” (807).) We must, however, be more cautious about how the form of his text dictates our expectations. Despite the seemingly autobiographical nature of the *Commentaries*, it is both anachronistic and unhelpful to attempt to read it as a key to Monluc’s inner workings. Thus, we must approach Harari’s claim that Monluc’s text is a “retrospective attempt by [a combatant] to construct a meaningful narrative of [his] war” (“War in History” 290) with some caution. Any meaning that Monluc is attempting to construct is directed outward. That is to say, there is no evidence that Monluc is trying to make his

⁹ See Chapter One on the rules of siege warfare.

combat experience meaningful for himself—to find sense in a senseless activity—which is what we think of when we think of contemporary military memoirs. Any truth claims are for historical rather than personal truth, although his idea of historical truth is firmly grounded in personal experience: “Historical truth, as Monluc understood it, could only be attained through experience of the battlefield; it was to be found, not in abstract speculation, but in the smell of gunpowder and blood” (Knecht, 116). Indeed, Monluc appears to take relatively little interest in analysis (especially political analysis—in contrast to someone like Commynes). Ultimately, Monluc is a public figure concerned with the outcomes of public actions.

Contrary to Montaigne, who makes a point of keeping himself distinct from his public persona—reserving a so-called *arrière boutique* behind his public façade for his private self—Monluc shows his identity to be entirely bound up in his military service to the king. As he constructs himself through his narrative, he does not appear to have, or even to want, an autonomous identity as a nobleman that is in any way separate from his *charge*. War is his job in both a professional and vocational sense, and as such it shapes entirely his view of the world and of his place in it. His declaration of forced retreat from active duty at the age of seventy because of his deteriorating physical condition is as telling as Montaigne’s much-discussed early retirement from public life at the young age of thirty-three. This comparison with the famously inward *Essais* highlights the outward orientation of the *Commentaires*. Interestingly though, it is in Montaigne’s text that we find a glimpse of Monluc’s more vulnerable, emotional side, which never appears in the *Commentaires*, i.e., the side that is deeply affected by death, loss, and a difficult life of combat. This is the side that we modern readers are so accustomed to seeing, and rather expect to see, in first-hand accounts of war. In his essay “De l’affection des pères aux enfants” (II:8) Montaigne provides a very moving account of the great warrior’s regrets about his relationship with his son that is worth quoting in its entirety:

Feu Monsieur le Mareschal de Monluc, ayant perdu son fils qui mourut en l’Isle de Maderes, brave gentil’homme à la verité et de grande esperance, me faisoit fort valoir, entre ses autres regrets, le desplaisir et creve-coeur qu’il sentoit de ne s’estre jamais communiqué à luy; et, sur cette humeur d’une gravité et grimace paternelle, avoir perdu la commodité de gouter et bien connoistre son fils, et aussi de luy declarer l’extreme amitié qu’il luy portoit et le digne jugement qu’il faisoit de sa vertu. Et ce pauvre garçon, disoit-il, n’a rien veu de moy qu’une contenance refroignée et pleine de mespris, et a emporté cette creance que je n’ay sçeu ny l’aymer, ny l’estimer selon son merite. A qui gardoy-je à découvrir cette singuliere affection que je luy portoy dans mon ame? estoit ce pas luy qui en devoit avoir tout le plaisir et toute l’obligation? Je me suis contraint et geiné pour maintenir ce vain masque; et y ay perdu le plaisir de sa conversation, et sa volonté quant et quant, qu’il ne me peut avoir portée autre que bien froide, n’ayant jamais reçu de moy que rudesse, ny senti qu’une façon tyrannique. (II, 66-67)

This intimate, familial moment from the *Essais* recalls the kind of wrenching personal loss that is staged to such great effect in Garnier's *La Troade*. This same intimate dimension of warfare, however, the dimension of personal devastation in the loss of family or close colleagues, is all but absent from the *Commentaires*. While the violence that took Monluc's son from him is not at all problematic in the *Commentaires*, this anecdote from Montaigne reveals even Monluc to be affected by war's paradoxical status as an inherently inhuman part of human nature.

The way that Monluc realizes he should have treated his son in this passage from the *Essais* is very similar to the way that he recommends those higher up in the military hierarchy should treat their inferiors in the *Commentaires*. He repeatedly admonishes the king and his commanders to establish a practice of praising their men, both verbally and with appropriate pecuniary recompense, for work well done. He writes, for instance, "Capitaines, et vous, seigneurs, qui menez les hommes à la mort, car la guerre n'est autre chose, quand vous verrez faire quelque brave acte à un des vostres, louëz-le en public, contez-le aux autres, qui ne s'y sont pas trouvez" (59). Monluc has no illusions as to the fundamental nature of warfare; no matter the underlying cause of the conflict, the substance of war is men being led to their deaths. If the early modern soldier was, as Michel Foucault suggests in *Discipline and Punish*, "someone who could be recognized from afar," someone whose marked body was "the blazon of his strength and valor" (125), then it was essential to the professional integrity of the soldier that the signs of his service, i.e., his wounds, be acknowledged and rewarded within the military hierarchy and beyond. By rendering the narrative of service inscribed on his body readable and by publishing it, Monluc carves out a textual space for the soldier's matter-of-fact relationship to violence.

The self that emerges in the *Commentaires* does not need to work through its relation to violence in order to recover its identity. Contrary to the difficult relationship between violence and identity such as that explored in Susan Brison's *Aftermath* and other work done, for instance on post traumatic stress disorder, proximity to violence as evidenced by the scars it leaves on the body is the most important marker of identity for Monluc. Writing about soldiering, in his case, is not an attempt to recover a shattered self; on the contrary, the more the physical self is shattered, the more it demonstrates the integrity of the professional self and lends authority to the textual self. As Wolfe explains, "through bodily suffering, the battle moved inside the warrior to the very recesses of his being. Pain shaped his identity while scares covered his body with marks of honor" (112). Ultimately, then, writing about soldiering is as important as doing it.

Conclusion

The story that unfolds about war through closer examination of selected texts in French literature of the late sixteenth century is both singular and compelling. By looking at written texts across several distinct genres, we saw how literature contributed to both our view of war as a human activity and to the discussion of war as an important facet of cultural history. Indeed, through a closer examination of the connections that exist between language and war in representation I brought attention to the existence of evolving boundaries and limits in the practice of war and the uses of language to describe that practice. In effect, we saw how during the French Wars of Religion—a near half-century of incredible turmoil and violence, marked by intense discourse and debate over volatile issues such as the justification for war, the bleeding of the public sphere into private lives, and the increasingly visible infliction of violence on human bodies—literature about war changed form as war itself changed. Specifically, through study of selected texts, we witnessed how writing about war responds to, engages with, and transforms the very language and style of the literature used to describe or explain, and even, potentially, to justify or condemn war. Moreover, the exploration of how war and violence are framed in language through literature and history becomes, in conclusion, both relevant and important, not only to further study of issues of war representation in historical literary genre but also to contemporary thinking and writing about conflict engagements in general alongside, in particular, the ever present issues of war and peace.

I have argued for the value of reading these very different texts alongside each other as all dealing with the larger problem of how to represent war. The *Essais* highlights a disparity in ethics between action and subsequent commentary in a very personal mode, thus debuting a genre that is still today working out the problem of how to use language to talk about violence, or any difficult issue. It is no surprise that the *Essais* has been the subject of recent popular scholarship, notably Sarah Bakewell's 2010 study, *How to Live*, and continues to be translated for general reading audiences, including into Norwegian (bokmål) in 2013. While the other authors I have looked at do not possess the same cultural cachet as Montaigne, I have argued that their texts merit similar consideration as meaningful representations of the complications of warfare. For example, to shine a light on humanist tragedy is to see how the depiction of war in literature begins to both question and recast traditional ideas of virtue and heroism and, in particular, the intersection of the personal and the communal. Epic emerges not as an obsolete and irrelevant genre but as a vehicle for vivid and virulent critique of war. And in Monluc's hands, memoir gives voice to a new kind of hero who is neither glorified nor martyred, but is instead a professional man of arms who rejects all forms of sentimentality.

The literature of Renaissance France is not the only corpus with a story to tell about war that can help us examine how we, as humans who have always engaged and continue to engage in violent and destructive behavior against one another, shape and are shaped by our experiences. The legacy of war lives on long after the fallen are buried and physical wounds have healed. The more we are able to understand the ways in which literary form seeks to respond to or interact with the uniquely human experience of waging war, the more we can hope to make sense of the senseless. Recognizing and appreciating fundamental characteristics of war writing during this period will enrich our understanding of the relationship between the activity of war and literary production, which can then be traced and studied comparatively over subsequent centuries. One thing that remains to be done is a systematic reevaluation of how this period was appropriated both by historiography and as fodder for the romantic and nationalist imagination in post-revolutionary France.

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