Early Modern Terrorism

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Literary historian Timothy Hampton opens his well-known book *Writing from History* with a story from the annals of Renaissance Milan. In 1476 Duke Galeazzo Maria Sforza was murdered in a church by three assassins, who were then caught and brought to trial. Although two of them had personal motives for killing the duke, a third, Girolami Olgiati, claimed to have wanted to "follow" in the "footsteps" of the ancient Romans "in the cause of liberty."[1] In Olgiati's eyes, in keeping with Roman ideas, Sforza was a tyrant; and it was the duty of a virtuous citizen to put an end to him.

According to Hampton, Olgiati was a little confused about which ancient model he was following and why. (He chose Catiline instead of Marcus Brutus.) But if we flash forward some sixty years we find another Italian assassin who seemed to understand perfectly what he had done. Having killed his distant cousin, Alessandro de' Medici, who was the Duke of Florence at the time, with the help of a henchman, Lorenzino de' Medici then wrote from exile an "Apology":

> men ought not to desire anything more than they desire civic life, a life lived in liberty ... Since tyranny is totally contrary to civic life, they should therefore hate it above all things ... Those who have liberated their father-land from tyranny have been considered almost as worthy of suitable honours as those who have established their father land in the first place ... Not only did I perform a deed incumbent on any good citizen, but ... I would have failed in my duty to my fatherland and to myself if I had not performed it.[2]

Lorenzino's contemporaries and historians have argued about Lorenzino's true motives. He said that he wanted to restore the Florentine Republic, but he did not make his public declaration until a few years after the fact, and no insurrection followed the murder. (Alessandro was quickly replaced by Cosimo I de' Medici, an ally of the Pope.) Many have believed that his motives were primarily personal, having to do with family honor or jealousy or even hope for preferment by the de' Medicis' rivals, the

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Strozzi. But still, the Roman explanation for Lorenzino's conduct was in the air. It suggested that Lorenzino acted on behalf of impersonal, defensible political principles, with a view toward shocking them into perpetuity. And it was not long before the example of Brutus was attached to his name – Michelangelo Buonarroti apparently being among those who wished to memorialize Lorenzino in that way.[3]

Premodern Europe was almost inconceivably violent from our twenty-first-century point of view, especially at the highest levels of society. Literally thousands of princes and magistrates were killed or captured for ransom over the course of the Middle Ages.[4] Famous assassinations, like the murders of Charles the Good in Bruges in 1127 and Thomas à Becket in Canterbury in 1170, shocked Western Christendom and played decisive roles in political history.[5] But the kinds of principles to which Lorenzino alluded were usually missing. So too was the sense that committing an act of violence might communicate the power and justice of those principles. The Middle Ages were not lacking in values – feudal chivalry, of course, was a complex system of value, and the moral doctrines of the Catholic Church were disseminated from Poland and Scandinavia to Ireland. Charlemagne, leading campaigns against the independent Lombards, the Muslims in Spain, and the pagan Saxons of Eastern Europe, was dubbed "The Holy Roman Emperor" by Pope Leo III in the year 800 for having reunited Europe under a Latinizing power structure. Then came a surcharge of political innovations. During the Renaissance of the twelfth century, city-states began to appear in Italy, Switzerland, and around the Baltic, autonomous and semi-autonomous polities governed by charters and constitutional mechanisms, operating with post-feudal economies and chains of command. In approximately 1160, John of Salisbury wrote his treatise, *Policraticus*, which envisioned the body politic as a constitutional arrangement, and which hinted that it was just to slay a tyrant for the good of humankind.[6] In 1215, the Magna Carta was signed in England, re-codifying the law on principles of equity. In the fourteenth century, major peasants' revolts broke out in Flanders, Denmark, France, and England, largely over economic grievances. According to one fictionalized but nearly contemporary account of the English Peasants Revolt of 1381, the leader Jack Straw confessed when apprehended that "our plan was to kill all the knights, esquires and gentlemen who came with [the king]. Then we would have taken the king around with us from place to place in the full sight of all; so that when everybody, and especially the common people, saw him, they would willingly have joined us and our band."[7] The theatricality of the violence being imagined here over an economic

dispute (theatricality is often thought to be a key feature of terrorist violence) is astonishing. But not to be outdone, in 1417 Hussites in Prague protesting religious persecution stormed the New Town Hall and undertook what has come to be known as the First Defenestration, killing fifteen magistrates, and eventually inciting the Hussite Wars that lasted from 1419 to 1434. There are many reasons for sustaining the "continuity thesis," according to which the Renaissance proper, or the "early modern period" as many historians now prefer to call it, was an outgrowth, not a sharp break from the medieval past, and the use of shocking, asymmetrical violence to adjudicate political and social conflict was an inheritance, not an innovation.[8] But in Lorenzino's words we hear the iteration of something new, a clarity about the role of the individual, the emulative hero, in the active life of the state – and a clarity too about the individual's right to violence, a right which, once exercised, both *violated* and *restored* the principles of justice. Lorenzino, it may be added, was a literary man, the author of several plays and a friend to such literary figures as Giovanni della Casa in Venice and Marguerite de Navarre in France. Lorenzino's own account of the murder circulated only in manuscript, but one of the earliest printed accounts of his story occurs in Marguerite's own *Heptameron*, a collection of *novelle* in the fashion of Boccaccio.[9] Lorenzino did not only commit an unusual kind of murder, but he did so in the age of print and vernacular literature, when an act of violence could acquire a public character by virtue of the publicity that emanated from it.

Many students of terrorism today are inclined to think of tyrannicide as a precursor of terrorism rather than the thing itself. For does not terrorism today by and large attack the innocent, or attack indiscriminately, and not specific, supposedly guilty individuals, like that tyrant in Florence or those magistrates in Prague? Maybe that is what terrorism does most spectacularly – today – although caution is warranted, since what is indiscriminate to *us*, whoever we are, may not be indiscriminate to *them*, those who have attacked "us." Indiscriminate victims (infidel partygoers in Paris or Orlando, Shia Muslims in a Baghdad shopping district, white police officers in Dallas) can, for the terrorist, be representative of a social order, or even a sovereignty: They are killed as parts symbolizing a whole. But even putting the question of contemporary mass attacks aside, it may be argued that if the concept of terrorism does not include tyrannicide among its referents, then it is impossible to make sense of a great many historically important assassinations: for example, the murders of Abraham Lincoln in 1865, of Alexander II of Russia in 1881, of Yitzhak Rabin of Israel in 1995. All these murders were cases of political

violence, undertaken asymmetrically, and aimed at communicating political messages that were at once disruptive, theatrical, and hortatory, with strong measures of intimidation thrown in; they were all aimed at changing government policy, and for that matter the structure of government itself. They were, in a word, acts of terror.

Back to Lorenzino then. What I have pointed out is that Lorenzino, in his own words, attempted to make a public statement with the assassination of his cousin. That his statement failed – that the de' Medicis remained in power and Lorenzino himself was hunted down, killed by an assassin in Venice in 1548 – does not diminish the fact that, no less than the killers of Lincoln, Alexander, Ferdinand, and Rabin, he attempted to engage in an act of political terror, and ultimately trigger the fall of a government. A good deal of terrorism fails. What was significant were three things: In the first place, he believed that murdering the duke was justified by political principles, even though the murder was openly a crime; in the second, he himself felt entitled to commit the act, not because of who he was but because of whom he wished to emulate; and third, he believed an uncanny power resided in murder, that it was not just murder but tyrannicide, and not just destructive but also creative: an act (hopefully) with the power of changing power.

Not all terrorist violence in the early modern period was committed by lone wolves, or by rebels emulating the ancient Romans. Not all terrorism was committed by dissidents; rulers sometimes got in on the act too, not to mention their henchmen. And not all terrorism, for that matter, was simply assassination. Historian Le Roy Ladurie tells the story of an "uprising" in Romans in Southern France, in 1579–1580 – a revolt of the peasantry and urban laborers against the large landowners, powerful burghers, and government officials of the area. It ended, for the rebels, in disaster. But on the way to the uprising, there were incidents in 1578 like "the burning of the noble landlord of Dorbain's castle, followed by his murder."[10] Assassination, yes; but this murder was part of the larger gesture of destroying a castle, and of communicating their (violent) disagreement with national policies on the subject of taxation. The attackers made an example out of the property of the landlord, and of the landlord too.

So assassination wasn't the only course that terrorism could take. Property damage was in play. There was even the sort of property damage that today we are inclined to call vandalism, but which frequently took on the form of iconoclasm, the destruction of idols for the sake of religio-political ideals, or else the form of the desecration of houses of Protestant worship.[11] We thus hear of an infamous incident in Paris in 1561, an attack

on the Church of Saint-Médard in Paris, as told by a supporter of the
church and of Catholicism, decrying the violence:

> On the day of Saint John, two days after Christmas, this great flood of
> debauchery [i.e. Parisian Huguenots] went to hear a preaching at the Place
> of the Patriarch, and because it was a feast day the Catholics sounded
> Vespers, after the sermon, in their church, Saint Médard, where the people
> had assembled as usual. The Huguenots took offense at the sound of the
> bells, and alleged that they had been rung in order to interfere with the word
> of the Lord. And without other provocation they ran to sack that poor
> church, which was not yet finished, breaking down all the doors, entering
> with swords in their grips, pistols in their hands, striking without scruple
> and committing outrages against the poor naked people, thinking of noth-
> ing but making war.
>   They dashed the holy sacrament into pieces and threw it on the
> ground, destroying it. They did not leave a single image alone, striking
> against its head, as if against a live and sensible saint. They smashed
> most of the windows, broke many of the altars, stole ornaments,
> chalices, relics, and generally anything they could get their hands on.
> Gabaston, a knight of the Guard, entered the church on horse, coming
> up to the main altar and cried out in the corrupted tongue of Gascony:
> *Sack everything, sack everything.*[12]

There were human victims of the violence, but the main effect was massive
property damage, committed against what many people considered a holy
place, and even striking against images as if they were real and living saints.
Such violence against a scene of civic life – against an edifice which is also
a home of ceremony and sanctity, or of power and wealth – has long been
a terrorist tactic. There are examples of it in the Hebrew Bible – most
famously the story of Samson bringing down the temple of the Philistines.
And here we find French Huguenots accused of such a crime. The actual
facts on the ground may have been more complicated. Huguenots told
a different kind of story. But for one writer, at least, the Huguenot project
was to terrorize a building.

   And then there was that monumental (or rather anti-monumental)
conspiracy known as the Gunpowder Plot, where in 1605 a clutch of
disgruntled English Catholics endeavored not only to kill maybe 200
people, including the royal family, Parliamentarians, and visiting digni-
taries, but also to blow up the building that housed them, the House of
Lords. The Plot was supposed to be at once strategic and symbolic, at once
a mass assassination of political enemies, an ironic erasure of a symbol of
English government, and a divine retribution. We find these motives tied
together in the official confession of one of the leaders of the Plot, Thomas

Winter, telling how he was recruited by his old friend and fellow Catholic Robert Catesby:

> [Catesby] said that he had bethought him of a way at one instant to deliver us from all our bonds, and without any foreign help to replant again the Catholic religion, and withal told me in a word it was to blow up the Parliament House with gunpowder; for, said he, *in that place have they done us all the mischief, and perchance God hath designed that place for their punishment.* I wondered at the strangeness of the conceit, and told him that true it was this strake at the root and would breed a confusion fit to beget new alterations, but if it should not take effect (as most of this nature miscarried) the scandal would be so great which the Catholic religion might hereby sustain, as not only our enemies, but our friends also would with good reason condemn us. He told me the nature of the disease required so sharp a remedy, and asked me if I would give my consent (emphasis added).[13]

In that place: strategically, had the Plot succeeded England would have been bereft of a central government, and anarchy may have ensued; but symbolically, the important thing was that the Parliament was the seat of (unjust) English legitimacy. To destroy the place was to destroy a major icon and apparatus of England's imagined community. That in the second place it was also to effect retribution, to punish those men who had passed oppressive laws against English Catholics, was as it were a side effect, what today we call "collateral damage." But in addition, if killing the royal family, parliamentarians, servants, and visitors was in one sense strategic and in another sense collateral, it was possibly also a sign of divine providence. It was thoughtful of God to gather all these people together in one room, making them vulnerable to a gunpowder explosion.

So there was assassination; there was mass killing; there was violence against property; and there was a kind of collective violence that combined all three elements.

And there was at least one more type of early modern terrorism that needs to be taken into account: the massacre, especially as it broke out sporadically in France. In a situation where supposed enemies of church and state, the Protestant Huguenots, lived side by side with the majority Catholics, and when weapons of mass destruction (those gunpowder barrels aside) were not available or feasible, a way to change the political order seemed to be the mass killing of fellow citizens and the pillaging of the houses and institutions they owned. If in London in 1605 all the leaders of Protestant England were to be gathered, conveniently, in a single place, during the religious strife in France and the Low Countries, especially in

the sixteenth century, for want of a single gathering space to attack, a more surgical form of assault would sometimes seem the best "remedy" for a bad situation, a surgical form of killing and destroying that has paradoxically come to acquire the name of "massacre." The massacre (a word that was coined by the French and then adopted by the English in this period, from an Arabic term indicating an abattoir)[14] was usually surgical to the extent that it singled out a specific group of people for slaughter – usually Catholics picking on Protestants, or Protestants picking on Catholics. It could even be thought that the effect of such a slaughter would have a kind of medical benefit vis-à-vis the health of the body politic; the metaphor was often applied to the killings. But of course, the massacre was also "massive" (usually): it was an unfair, brutal killing of the chosen many. The most important include the Massacre at Vassy in 1560 (Catholic soldiers against Protestant worshippers, leaving 60–90 victims), the Massacre at Nîmes (led by Protestants against Catholics, leaving hundreds of victims), and the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre in Paris in 1572 (about 3,000 victims, followed by copycat massacres, leaving another 30,000 victims).

I am distinguishing here between military-led and civilian-led massacres, however, and it is important to keep the difference in mind. One of the most useful ideas introduced by students of political violence is the distinction between "low-intensity" and "high-intensity" conflict.[15] High intensity may refer to war, where competing military units contend over territorial control. It may refer to armed insurrection. It may also refer to a military atrocity, when an armed force wreaks havoc on a population. A case in point was the Sack of Antwerp in 1576, when the Spanish army, in one of its periodical "Furies," ran amok on the streets of the already pacified city, leaving over 7,000 people dead.[16] The English poet, George Gascoigne, a horrified eyewitness, compared the spectacle of the dead and dying in the streets of Antwerp to the spectacle of hell in Michelangelo's painting, *The Last Judgement*.[17] That was a high intensity campaign indeed. Other cases in point include atrocities committed in France at Mérindol in 1547 (uncounted thousands of victims), Ireland in the 1640 and 50s (again, uncounted thousands), and in Piedmont in 1655 (1,700 victims). But there are also low-intensity situations, where a condition of more or less easy or uneasy peace is in place. Such situations may sporadically break out into unlawful violence but they may also be controlled through law enforcement and constitutional or extraconstitutional negotiation. Now not all conflict – not even all political conflict – perhaps subscribes to the categories of high or low intensity. From vendettas between ruling families in

medieval Italy to tax riots in seventeenth-century France, many outbreaks of collective violence may fit into other categories of behavior. But "low intensity" is a useful idea. When the concept of terrorism is fruitfully applied to violence or the threat of violence, it usually involves a case where low-intensity conditions prevail, which is to say where conditions of peace prevail, sustained even in spite of latent tensions and sporadic manifestations of armed struggle. And so it was, I am suggesting, in early modern Europe. There were many incidents where armies clashed, where, having established power, armies ran amok, or where, as in Mérindol and Piedmont, armies were given overt command to obliterate a people. Genocide we call it today. But there were situations where conditions of peace, or of uneasy peace, prevailed, and where one or more individuals took it upon themselves to challenge the balance of power through signal acts of violence, whether by assassination, the desecration of property, mass murder, or a massacre.

There were also incidents of political abduction and extortion in this period, it should be added, though it is not always clear whether terrorism is the best word to describe them, since dynastic and family rivalries so often played a part. What shall we say of the abduction of the Duchess of Malfi in 1510 by her two brothers, a duke and a cardinal, the story of which was immortalized in a novella by Matteo Bandello and later in plays by Lope de Vega (1609) and John Webster (1612)? In Bandello's story the political relevance of her abduction lingers in the background, but only just; and in the two plays political relevance is missing in action except so far as the plays construct parables about the tyrannical abuse of power. More overtly political were the abductions of James VI of Scotland, eventually to become James I of England as well. He was abducted twice, once in 1582 and once in 1600. The later attempt, now known as the Gowrie Conspiracy, failed, and its purposes are unclear. But in the first case, known as the Ruthven Raid, the young king was held captive for over a year, and the main political purpose of the abduction was unmistakable: to promote the Protestant cause in Scotland, and marginalize the power of Mary Queen of Scots.

More spectacular still was the Amboise Conspiracy of 1560 in France, also known as the Tumult of Amboise. The king of France at the time was the sixteen-year-old Francis II, who had recently acceded to the throne after the accidental death of his father, the redoubtable Henry II. With dubious legal justification, the young king had been placed under the regency of his uncles, François the Second Duke of Guise and Charles, Cardinal of Lorraine. But the Protestant gentry were appalled and defiant.

On March 17, a large band of Protestant soldiers gathered to storm the palace at Amboise, kill the king's guards, abduct the king, and free the king from the regency of the Guises. According to pro-Protestant literature, which called the Conspiracy a "tumult," the aim was to let the French people communicate their will directly to the king, having freed the king to act in their interests. Although there was no doubt a religious grievance at the heart of the conspiracy, that is not how spokesmen for the conspirators themselves, after the fact, explained it. The attack was supposed to be for the good of the nation as a whole, in keeping with the constitutional principles of the ancient kingdom.[18] But in any case, the conspiracy was an abysmal failure. The conspirators were routed, and over 1200 soldiers were caught and killed; many of their corpses were publically hung from the walls of the palace and nearby trees as a warning to dissidents. This failed abduction was meant to reconfigure the balance of power in France. Instead, it helped incite what would come to be known as the Wars of Religion. But it is important in the present context to observe that the Tumult was not an attempt at insurrection, so far as the conspirators were concerned. It was rather an attempt, under low intensity conditions, to shock the nation back into obedience to its legitimate sovereign.

The character of terrorist violence in early modern Europe can be summarized as follows. Terrorism was not entirely new, but it often featured a new clarity of purpose, where violence was undertaken, in conditions of low-intensity conflict, on behalf of political principles, often in emulation of heroic forebears, with a view toward a victory that was both symbolic and real: symbolic because it was supposed to change the meaning of political life, real because real relations of power were supposed to be transformed, usually at the cost of life and property. In addition, this violence was undertaken during a period when literacy was growing rapidly, and both print literature and professional theatre were thriving. The meaning of this new violence could be rapidly disseminated, disputed, and even fictionalized – placed in the service of the early modern imagination, pro and con or also in between.

It was in France, as is probably already evident, that many of the most spectacular acts of terrorism took place. Two monarchs were assassinated, Henry III (1589) and Henry IV (1610), along with such high-ranking figures as François Lorraine the Second Duke of Guise (1563), Admiral Gaspard de Coligny (1572), Henry Lorraine the Third Duke of Guise (1588), and Concini Concino the Marquis d'Ancre (1616). The circumstances surrounding these murders have always been suspicious and controversial. Apart from the murder of the Second Duke of Guise (who was shot from

behind just outside his own quarters during the siege of Orléans) the assassinations took place in public or quasi-public spaces, and all of them were widely publicized, discussed, agonized over, and, by their supporters, celebrated. All of them also were at least in some eyes principled murders.

The case of the Second Duke of Guise deserves special mention, if for no other reason than that it set in train a series of events that would lead to other assassinations and atrocities. After being captured and arraigned, in a deposition to the court, the Duke's killer, one Jean de Poltrot de Méré, claimed that he assassinated the duke because the latter was an obstacle to peace between the Huguenots and the Catholics in France. He killed the duke, in other words, because he was fighting on behalf of peace.[19] A Huguenot himself, who pretended to the duke that he was switching sides, and was treated by the duke as a useful confidant and spy, he was said to have expostulated in private to his supporters the following: "*voilà le bras qui, par une si velle action, mettra fin* à *tous nos malheurs.*"[20] It was as if all of the problems besetting France could be laid at the door of a single individual, and that once that individual was removed the problems would go away. This was an illusion apparently shared by all the assassins of the period. And if causes and effects were thus so muddled in the minds of assassins and their supporters, the illusion was warranted in many minds by our old friend exemplarity. Poltrot de Méré was compared by his supporters not only to Marcus Brutus, but also to biblical assassins, like Ehud in the Book of Judges and Judith in the Book of Judith. On the one hand, Poltrot de Méré acted on principle; on the other, he acted according to a model of history where individuals could resolve a bitter conflict by a single act of heroic murder. An anonymous advocate could thus write as a memorial to the assassin the following lines:

> As David slew the giant Philistine,
> As Judith beheaded Holophernes
> So Méré you bravely killed this mutineer
> Who had done such wrong to the children of God.[21]

Religion, obviously, in this period of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, was almost always at issue in early modern terrorism, but not simply in the form of religious hatred. In France, especially, terrorist violence came against a backdrop where religious differences were being expressed as political differences, and religious conflicts were turned into political conflicts. The prominence of the political was generally promoted by all sides. Because the state, in the wake of the Reformation, was now in principle in charge of regulating, within its territories, the practice of

religion, people of all confessions could now make the claim the state had to be of such-and-such a nature in order to protect or promote their confession.

One version of this new rationalization of the relation between church and state saw dissidents, like Poltrot de Méré, articulating political values that were thought to be rooted in the political values of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. In other words, the state was to become (or was already in part) like the ancient kingdom of Israel, uniting and protecting a religious community through political action. And perhaps most importantly, the disaffected were entitled to take biblical heroes as their models, who came to sit beside, and in some cases replace, the Roman models. Ehud (to whom Poltrot and others were also compared) was the Hebrew judge who went on a mission to assassinate the governor of his people. The people of Israel, Scripture says, "having done evil in the eyes of God," were conquered and ruled by Eglon the king of Moab for eighteen years. But then the people of Israel "cried to the LORD" and "the LORD raised up for them a deliverer, Ehud . . . a left handed man." Ehud was given the job of delivering tribute to Eglon, who was by now the well-established peacetime ruler of the Jewish territory. So Ehud "made for himself a sword with two edges, a cubit in length; and he girded it on his right thigh under his clothes." After delivering the tribute to Eglon, he turned to him privately and said, "I have a secret message for you, O king," The king sent his attendants away, "And Ehud came to him, as he was sitting alone in his cool roof chamber. And Ehud said, 'I have a message from God for you.'" Eglon rose from his seat. "Ehud reached with his left hand, took the sword from his right thigh, and thrust it into his belly."[22] The king immediately died. The people of Israel soon rose up and defeated a demoralized Moabite army, and regained their independence. Although Roman history provided very complex examples of political action – including countless cases where heroic action amounted to nothing, or where they ended up leading to very mixed and even catastrophic results, the history in the Hebrew Bible could be read selectively to provide models where faith won over reason, and the heroic action of an individual could bring about a miraculous result, for the sake of a godly nation. There was a flip side to this idea, however: for detractors of any kind of violence inspired by this model could respond by saying that unlike the biblical heroes individuals like Poltrot had no real warrant from God to kill a legitimate political leader. In fact, they were deluded. They may have actually gotten their inspiration from the devil. Or they may have suffered from a mental illness. Or they may have even used religious idealism as

a cover for more nefarious purposes – such as revenge, or murder for hire. Some of Poltrot's detractors accused him of having murdered Guise at the behest of Gaspard de Coligny, over an incident of family honor. Another Ehud-like figure, Jacques Clément, the killer of Henry III, was accused of being a simpleton who had been deluded into committing his crime at the behest of the Guises, in retaliation for the murder of the Third Duke. Religious rationalization, making agents of violence into agents of God, was a powerful incentive toward action, but it was also a can of worms.

Another version of the terror-inspiring rationalization of the state, and thus of the dangers of the state, came with the rise of what came to be called Monarchomach theory, which proposed that under certain situations the people had a right to depose a tyrannical monarch, or even kill one if necessary. In secularist versions of this theory, for example in George Buchanan's *De jure regni apud scotos* (1579) the "ancient constitution" of the state was the prime authority. The Scots had a right to depose their monarch when the latter violated the constitution – and imposing a false and foreign religion on its people (as Buchanan considered Catholicism, in a Scottish context) was only one of many violations of which a monarch might be guilty. Such an idea, Buchanan would later imply, may have justified the 1566 murder of court official David Rizzio in Holyrood Castle, in the presence of the Scottish Queen Mary. In a more religiously oriented version, for example the anonymous *Vindiciae contra tyrannos* (1579), a Protestant document published in Basel, a doctrine of popular sovereignty was made to fit inside a doctrine of regal authority, but regal authority was null and void when it was used to persecute or forbid the practice of true religion. Protestant Monarchomach doctrine was an incitement to violence for years to come. One notorious case was the assassination of George Villiers, the Duke of Buckingham, by the soldier John Felton, in 1628.[23] There were Catholic versions of the theory too, as in Juan de Mariana's *De rege et regis institutione* (1598), published in Toledo. This last book, or at least ideas culled from it, may have encouraged both the Gunpowder Plotters and the assassin of Henry IV of France, François Ravaillac, in 1610. But again, it also inspired opponents to come up with alternative visions of political society, and to argue that no people had any right to take law into its own hands, much less to do so by killing a monarch.

There was still another version of rationalization, however, which worked in an opposite direction, in favor of state terrorism, the doctrine of "reason of state." The first full formulation of the doctrine was composed by the Jesuit Giovanni Botero, in *Della Ragion di Stato* (1589),

published in Venice. In it the preservation of the state as such becomes the dominant value. For how can a state preserve the prosperity, freedom, moral dignity, and religious integrity of its people if it has not first of all preserved itself? Since law and law enforcement are the sine qua non of civil society, the institutions of law and law enforcement come first. Interestingly, such principles were already being observed in the main states of Europe, including Spain, France, and England. And they too were behind a number of episodes of terrorist violence. When Henry III ordered the killing of Henry the Third Duke of Guise in 1589, reason of state was the justification. When, in more ambiguous circumstances, seventeen years earlier, that same Duke of Guise had been given the go-ahead to assassinate Gaspard de Coligny, and to oversee such other killings as triggered – possibly inadvertently – the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, reason of state was the justification too.

The connection between reason of state doctrine and state terror – that is, for the sake of argument here, the employment of terrorist means to solve political problems, under the auspices of a magistrate or prince – found a lively justification from the pen of one Gabriel Naudé, a French citizen living in Rome. *Considérations sur les coups d'états*, printed privately in 1639 in an edition of twelve, openly congratulated all those sovereign rulers who had recourse to the exceptional violence of the *coup d'état* – not a sudden regime change, as we use the word today, but an act of violence undertaken to save the state from irksome dissidence. His main examples include the Saint Bartholomew Massacre (allegedly ordered by Charles IX), the assassination of the Henry Lorraine Duke of Guise (ordered by Henry III), and the assassination of Concino Concini Marquis d'Ancre (ordered by Louis XIII). Violating "common law," as Naudé puts it, "without regard to any form or order of justice," these *coups* were meant to remake government in the image of their own violence and the higher principle they served, the "public good," or otherwise put "the safety of the people."[24]

Where the story of early modern terrorism leads after (say) 1640 is unclear, since it has not yet been documented with any thoroughness. At the outbreak of the Thirty Years War in Germany (1618) – itself ignited by what may be considered an act of terror, the Second Defenestration of Prague – significant revolt by dissidents and oppression by rulers seems more to have become a matter of collective action than individual heroics and small-scale conspiracies. German princes banded together and gathered armies to defy the Holy Roman Empire – which responded by gathering armies of its own. Major armed rebellions broke out within the

five years before or after this date in Naples, Catalonia, and Portugal. Meanwhile, provoked by Parliamentarian and Scottish church opposition, Charles I of England was involved in armed wars against his own peoples, not in secret conspiracies – and his adversaries came to be involved in open war against him. In France the Fronde rebellions involved armed assaults against military opponents, the besieging of towns, and guerrilla warfare. In England, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 was led by an armed landing of troops from the Low Countries. The revolutions of the eighteenth century were similarly high-intensity insurrections and military contests. Yet in the colonies in America and elsewhere much small-scale violence, in times of low-intensity struggle, would seem to have been common. One well-respected historian has called the Jamestown Massacre of 1622 an act of terrorism.[25] Certainly, the famous Boston Tea Party of 1773 belongs in that category. And back in Europe in 1757 the last of the regicide attempts in France took place, when the domestic servant Robert-François Damien vainly attacked Louis XV with a pen knife, an event that inspired gruesome accounts of Damien's execution by both Giacomo Casanova and Michel Foucault. As long as large governments or conquering powers were thought to be vulnerable to small-scale attacks that could have disproportionate ideological effects, terrorism was an option. And there was probably a great deal of it: only, no one has documented it yet.

The legacy of terrorism in Renaissance Europe may nevertheless be more mythic than real. Terrorist events that do not succeed at all, or that do not succeed in fomenting the political change aimed for, are unlikely to have many imitators. (A great exception is the aforementioned John Wilkes Booth, who was enthusiastic about Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* and Thomas Otway's *Venice Preserved* [1682], which was modeled partly on *Othello*, partly on a Spanish conspiracy of 1618 in Venice, and partly on the Gunpowder Plot.) But the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries provided legacies of political thought, history, and fiction that became models for any number of succeeding generations, rivaling the influences of antiquity.

Fear – political fear – was no doubt one of those legacies. If early modern terrorism was undertaken for the most part by idealists and fanatics, sure of the justice of what they did, and if early modern terrorism had its fans even among establishment figures (a number of celebrations of the Saint Bartholomew Day's Massacre were even published), there were always detractors, bitter opponents, and people in the middle who were just plain appaled. Populations found themselves demoralized by the violence. The Saint Bartholomew Day's Massacre, which was followed by similar

massacres in the provinces, leaving a death toll of tens of thousands, changed the face of Protestant life in France forever. If one of the side effects of the Massacre was the development of Monarchomach theory, another was a kind of inexpressible dismay at what even a civilized people, in one of the most civilized cities in the Western world, were able to do to one another.

Fear, especially in France, may have encouraged the development of absolutism. Few on any side of the divides of the time wanted France to experience the traumas it underwent in the sixteenth century, or again in 1610 with the assassination of Henry IV. For that reason (among many others) a strong central government, concentrated in the person of a single great figure, gathering together in his court a new form of nation-uniting political symbolism, could seem to be an obvious solution. Wrote one observer who had no solution but who was an acute reporter of the mood of the nation, of the period of Henry IV's death, "During this month, and even before the death of the king, a number of maladies overtook Paris, frenetic illnesses, mental alienations, melancholic humours, hypochondrias, very strange and distressing, more than the doctors had ever seen before."[26] From the point of view of the victims of terrorist violence, even in 1610, terrorism could not only be the expression of a malady of the terrorists – deluded into thinking that they were incarnations of Brutus, Ehud, or Judith – but also the neurosis of a nation living in fear.

Notes

1. Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), pp. 1–2.
2. Lorenzino de' Medici, *Apology for a Murder*, trans. Andre Brown (London: Hesperus, 2004), p. 1.
3. Manfredi Piccolomini, *The Brutus Revival* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 38; pp. 89–92.
4. Manuel Eisner has estimated that between AD 600 and 1800, 1513 monarchs in Europe succumbed to a violent death, about 22.5 percent of the total number of monarchs. That is a rate (including ambiguous cases) of between 700 and 1000 deaths per 100,000 – a rate far exceeding general homicides per 100,000 in any known population sample outside of warzones. Of these monarchs, 5.9 percent were killed in battle, and between 4.0 and 10.6 percent were murdered. The vast majority of these deaths, however, occurred before 1500, with declining peaks in the seventh, eleventh, and fourteenth centuries. Few of these killings, in Eisner's view, were ideologically motivated. Only two, in his view,

were committed by "politically radicalized outsiders" (p. 11), although that figure, in my view, is much too small. Manuel Eisner, "Killing Kings," *British Journal of Criminology,* 2011. 22 pages. Online http://bjc.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2011/01/29/bjc.azr004.full#content-block. Also see Franklin Ford, *Political Murder: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism* (Cambridge, MA: Hard University Press, 1985), pp. 107–133.

5. Galbert of Bruges, *The Murder, Betrayal, and Slaughter of the Glorious Charles, Count of Flanders*, trans. Jeff Rider. Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986), esp. pp. 225–250.

6. *John of Salisbury: Policraticus*, ed. Cary J. Nederman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. Book VIII, chapter 20, pp. 201–206.

7. Thomas Walsingham, *Historia Anglica* II: pp. 8–13. Cited in R. B. Dobson, *The Peasants' Revolt* (London: Macmillan, 1970), p. 365.

8. For a brief account of the continuity thesis, see Karl Fugelso, "Problems with Continuity: Defining the Middle Ages for Medievalism," *Studies Perspicuitas. Internet-Periodicum für mediävistische Sprach-, Literatur-und Kulturwissenschaft,* 2013. Online at www.uni-due.de/imperia/md/content/perspicuitas/fugelso_continuity.pdf.

9. Marguerite de Navarre, *Heptaméron*, ed. Simone de Reyff (Paris: Flammarion, 1982), XII, pp. 131–139.

10. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Carnival in Romans*, trans. Mary Feeney (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), p. 132.

11. Denis Crouzet, *Les guerriers de Dieu: La violence au temps des troubles de religion, vers 1525- vers 1610*, 2 volumes (Seyssel: Champ Vallon, 1990); Olivier Christin, *Une révolution symbolique: l'iconoclasme huguenot et la reconstruction catholique* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1991); Peter Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008).

12. Claude de Sainctes, "Discours sur le saccagement des églises catholiques par les hérétiques anciens et nouveaux calvinistes, en l'an 1562," in *Archives curieuses de l'histoire de France depuis Louis Xl jusqu'à Louis XVIII*, 27 volumes, ed. Louis Cimber and Charles Danjou (Paris, 1834–1848). 1re série, vol. 4: p. 372.

13. England and Wales, *His Majesties Speach: England and Wales, His Majesties Speach in this Last Session of Parliament as Neere His Very Words as Could Be Gathered at the Instant. Together with a Discourse of the Maner of the Discouery of this Late Intended Treason, Ioyned with the Examination of Some of the Prisoners* (London, 1605), sig.Iv.

14. See the essays collected in *Le massacre, objet d'histoire*, ed. David El Kenz (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

15. See for Charles Tilly, *The Politics of Collective Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

16. Peter J. Arnade, *Beggars, Iconoclasts, and Civic Patriots: The Political Culture of the Dutch Revolt* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press,

2008), pp. 244–258; Geoffrey Parker, *The Dutch Revolt* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

17. Gascoigne, *The Spoyle of Antwerpe* (London, 1576), C1.

18. See for example *Histoire du tumulte d'Amboise*. In *Archives Curieuses*: 1er série, 4.

19. Alphonse, Baron de Ruble. *L'assassinat de Francois de Lorraine, Duc de Guise*, pp. 192–193.

20. Jacques Auguste de Thou, *Histoire universelle depuis 1543. jusqu'en 1607. Traduite sur l'edition latine de Londres*. 16 volumes (London, 1734), 3:251–259.

21. *Poésies protestantes sur Jean Poltrot, Sr de Meré, 1563*, ed. Edouard Tricotel (Paris: A. Claudin, 1878), p. 23.

22. Judges 3:12–30, *New Revised Standard Version*.

23. See James Holstun, "'God Bless Thee, Little David!': John Felton and His Allies," *English Literary History* 59:3 (1992), pp. 513–552.

24. Gabriel Naudé, *Considérations politiques sur le coup d'état*, ed. Frank Marin and Marie-Odile Perulli (Paris: Édition de Paris), pp. 107–108.

25. J. Frederick Fausz, "First Act of Terrorism in English America," *History News Network*: http://hnn.us/article/19085 (accessed October 21, 2013).

26. Pierre de L'Estoile, *Journal du règne de Henri IV, roi de France et de Navarre*. 4 volumes (The Hague, 1741), vol. 3, pp. 109–110.