CHAPTER 1

Killing Coligny:
Staging the Admiral's Death in Sixteenth-Century France and England

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Introduction

An act of killing on a theatrical stage represents death as a sensational finality — perhaps all the more so when it is based on historical events still live in the memory of the play's first audiences. So what happens when that finality is undone, when the brutal act of killing is reduced to the barest of allusions? And what will be gained by reinstating the death onstage with quirky violence in a subsequent play? These questions underpin my enquiry which focuses on the repeated spectacle of killing an important military leader, in sixteenth-century tragedy and beyond.

During the 1560s, Gaspard II de Coligny, Seigneur de Châtillon and Admiral of France, emerged as a key player in France's Wars of Religion (1562-98). He became the leader of the Huguenot (Protestant) opposition to the Catholic monarchy; he was declared a state traitor, and was eventually assassinated in 1572. His decease soon provoked multiple and conflicting interpretations. The death of Admiral Coligny was one of very few murders to be represented in two stage plays composed during the Wars of Religion; moreover, during this period, in the years surrounding his murder, the Admiral had been subjected to ritual hanging (twice) and dismemberment. These ritual performances were notorious public events in 1570s France, but modern scholars have yet to enquire how far they shaped theatrical interpretation of Coligny's death. That is my task. I shall begin with the Coligny killings *outside* the theatre, to show how aspects of them were recuperated — to strikingly different ends — in the two plays to feature his gory demise.

Coligny's murder on the night of the Saint Bartholomew Feast (23-34 August, 1572) triggered what is now called the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre.[1] What began as a wave of mob violence against Huguenots in Paris spread across France and became one of the

[1] The most thorough analysis is Jean-Louis Bourgeon, *L'Assassinat de Coligny* (Geneva: Droz, 1992).

worst mass killings to have ever been perpetrated on European soil.[2] The historical events of the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre are one chapter of Coligny's death. To understand its longer cultural significance, however, we must consider the enactment of criminal proceedings against Coligny before, during and after the Massacre. Thus, Coligny's killing was performed and re-enacted in a series of spectacles of retribution. Each spectacle might be considered a symbolic 'staging' of Coligny's 'death' before a public audience: the people of Paris. The first spectacle was of an effigy of Coligny hanged to assuage Catholic hatred of his treason. This occurred in 1569, some three years before he was physically slaughtered. Once the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre was under way, a second spectacle took place: the Admiral's dismembered body (according to some accounts) made a degrading sight as it was dragged off to the gallows of Montfaucon outside Paris, where criminals were strung up to rot. Two months later, a third spectacle of Coligny's death was enacted: this time he was posthumously tried for treason, and another effigy of him was hanged. Details of these spectacles flowed into the pamphlet polemic that engulfed Coligny's posthumous commemoration: did he die as a traitor or as a martyr? Was his death good riddance or a tragic loss?

These questions cried out for theatrical responses — which they duly received in France and England. Coligny's death inspired François de Chantelouve's *La Tragedie de feu Gaspard de Colligny* (1575), and Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* (c. 1593). The Marlowe and Chantelouve plays belonged to an era in which the portrayal of lethal violence in theatrical representation was haphazardly evolving, incorporating rhetorically charged description of bloodshed, and, in some cases, the enactment of death onstage. In Coligny's France, the leading tragedians, Robert Garnier and Jean de la Taille, followed Horace and Aristotle in their insistence that deaths onstage were unseemly and unbelievable. Others disagreed. Indeed we now know that a good number of late sixteenth-century French tragedians put deadly violence centre-stage in forms that were popular across the Channel, especially in the genre of revenge tragedy: beheadings, bodily mutilation, duels, battles, murder, assassinations, and executions.[3] Thus, the killing of Coligny entered a theatrical

[2] The historiography is ever expanding: for an overview, see Barbara Diefendorf, *The St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre: A Brief History with Documents* (Bedford: St. Martin's Press, 2008).

[3] For the French context, see Michael Meere, *Onstage Violence in Sixteenth-Century French Tragedy: Performance, Ethics, Poetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Christian Biet and Marie-Madeleine Fragonard (eds), *Le Théâtre, la violence et les arts en Europe (XVIe-XVIIe s.)* (Paris: Champion, 2010); François Lecercle (ed.), *Réécritures du crime: l'acte sanglant sur la scène (XVIe-XVIIIe s.)* (Paris: Champion, 2009). For the English context, see Timothy Reiss, 'Renaissance Theatre and the Theory of Tragedy', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism: III: The Renaissance*, ed. by Glyn Norton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 229-47; Mike Pincombe, 'English Renaissance Tragedy: Theories and Antecedents', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Renaissance Tragedy*, ed. by Emma

environment in which stage violence was an option, but not a necessity, for various different settings: biblical and mythological subjects; ancient and (as in our case) recent history. Chantelouve dramatizes the reporting of Coligny's violent death, which occurs offstage; Marlowe has Coligny killed onstage, visibly but briefly. In their different ways both dramatists sought to avoid 'overkilling' Coligny. If this avoidance of overkill was not overtly motivated by dramaturgical concerns about decorum and verisimilitude, it does seem to have been provoked by the vindictive public spectacles (and their attendant pamphlets) that represented Coligny's death prior to its appearance in the theatre.

Coligny's death altered considerably as it was (re)enacted on the street, on the scaffold, on the gallows — and in the theatre. To capture this process of re-enactment over time and in different social spaces, I shall base my analysis on a performance-anthropological model: that of the 'social drama' of conflict conceived by Victor Turner and since developed by others, most notably Richard Schechner.[4] If all the world's a stage for the performance of everyday interactions,[5] then, for Turner, the dramatic phase properly begins at the point when conflicts arise. These social dramas, as Turner named them, are a kind of metatheatre, in which role-playing itself becomes more and more intensely articulated, and integral to the outcome of the conflict.[6] Turner then proceeds to identify four typical phases of public action. The social drama comprises firstly, a flagrant breach of regular societal relations; secondly, a period of crisis (or a succession of crises) widening that breach; thirdly, a phase of redressive action ranging from personal advice and informal arbitration to formal legal machinery. The fourth and final phase may have opposite outcomes — either the social reintegration of the pariah group/individual, or the recognition that the schism between the opposing parties is irreparable. The four phases of the Turnerian model underpin my thinking, but it is the fluidity between them that matters most: the transitions, or, as Turner would say, the liminal — 'that which is betwixt and between' — the many killings of Coligny.

Smith and Garrett A. Sullivan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 3-16; and in the same volume, see Tanya Pollard, 'Tragedy and Revenge', pp. 58-72.

[4] See principally Turner's posthumous book, *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1988), and Schechner's much-revised *Performance Theory* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[5] I take performativity as 'the potential for enacting self-awareness, or the possible thematization of an event sequence' (J. Lowell Lewis, *The Anthropology of Cultural Performance*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 7). Framed as such, performativity relates either to an event that constitutes a performance proper – a particular sequence of actions witnessed and acknowledged as a spectacle by others – or to an action that is consciously enacted whether or not anyone is watching.

[6] Turner, *The Anthropology of Performance*, pp. 74-76. Schechner has applied this model of the social drama to *Romeo and Juliet* (see Schechner, 'Ritual and Performance', ch. 22 of *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, ed. by Tim Ingold, London: Routledge, 2002).

Overkill: Coligny's Death(s) in Paris

In an era of mass violence in France, Coligny's gory death stands out for its multiple endings. Before he died in 1572, he was already 'dead' to a vocal faction of French society. That is to say, from the early 1560s he was despised by numerous Catholics, particularly those siding with the Guise family: the powerful clan leading the charge to eradicate Protestant belief in France. In February 1563, during the first War of Religion, François de Guise was shot by the Huguenot Jean de Poltrot de Méré: some of his confession by torture implicated Coligny, although the latter emphatically denied involvement. Our social drama reached crisis point as the second War of Religion (1567-68) got underway, and the image of Coligny as a Machiavellian villain with regicidal intentions became a staple of Catholic propaganda.[7] By the summer of 1568, Coligny had fled the royal court to play a key role in Huguenot resistance to the Catholic monarchy in a third War of Religion.[8] In September 1569, the Parlement de Paris, France's foremost seat of legal authority, pronounced him guilty of *lèse-majesté* (high treason).[9] Parlement's *arrest* specifies the charge and the redressive action it entailed. Coligny was to be stripped of all honours and titles, then strung up to hang — like a common criminal — on the time-honoured stage of public executions, the Place de Grève.[10] But since Coligny could not be physically apprehended in this case, an effigy would be gibbeted instead.

This practice of execution in effigy was quite common in Ancien Régime France. Effigies were free-standing, portable objects: they could be nailed to scaffolds, hung by a noose, or beheaded then burned in a pyre, all ways of symbolizing the destruction of the criminal's body during the punishment process.[11] Early modern execution in effigy could be seen as a form of secular ritual constituting, in the words of Sally Falk Moore and Barbara

[7] See Denis Crouzet, *La Nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy: un rêve perdu de la Renaissance* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), pp. 472-73.

[8] Coligny became *de facto* leader of the Huguenots upon the death of the Prince de Condé (Louis de Bourbon) at the Battle of Jarnac (13 March 1569).

[9] *Arrest de la Court de Parlement contre Gaspart de Colligny, qui fut admiral de France [13 sept. 1569]* (Lyon: M. Iove, 1569).

[10] The erstwhile Place de Grève is today the site of La Place de l'Hôtel-de-Ville – Esplanade de la Libération. It was Ancien Régime Paris's largest site of criminal executions and it was here that the guillotine was first used in 1792. Sloping towards the Seine, the Place de Grève was a trapezoid esplanade covered in gravel. Up till the reign of Henri IV, it afforded broad and semi-enclosed spectator viewpoints of executions, many of which were conducted upon the gibbet that stood in the centre of the esplanade in full sight of the Hôtel de Ville.

[11] Allie Terry-Fritsch, 'Execution by Image: Visual Spectacularism and Icononclasm in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe', in *Death, Torture and the Broken Body in European Art, 1300–1650*, ed. by John Decker and Mitzi Kirkland-Ives (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp. 191-206.

Myerhoff, 'a declaration of form against indeterminacy',[12] to compensate for the unknown whereabouts of the live criminal, and to legitimate confiscation of his goods and property. It was also a form of liminal performance, simulating the crossing of the all-important threshold from life to death. According to Allie Terry-Fritsch, the effigy was considered 'properly' punished if its form was fully destroyed during the ritual; justice was then seen to have been served and the populace assuaged.[13] Crucially, that is *not* what happened in Coligny's case, as we learn from a contemporary witness, who saw the effigy erected on the Place de Grève — and noted that it was left hanging there for almost a year.[14]

Thinking about this spectacle as a staging of retributive action in the social drama, we have an oddly amorphous performance lacking a dénouement: Coligny the effigy is ceremonially traduced along the streets of Paris — but there is no climatic moment of 'death' on the scaffold signifying the full expenditure of ritual violence. Instead, contrary to the expectations of modern Girardian effigy theory, the sacrificial double here increases rather than displaces violent desire.[15] The lingering post-dramatic presence of the effigy on the Place de Grève was insulting, more than enough to keep Parisian hatred of the Admiral ticking over. In the wider social drama, the effigy hanging prolonged a subplot of petty grievance, where the only retributive measure was carried out discreetly by officials: the deliberate confiscation of Coligny's property.[16] The real drama, however, was ongoing elsewhere: Coligny was still at large, rampaging his way through villages in the south of France and heading northwards towards Paris.

A pacification edict ratified at Saint-Germain-en-Laye in August 1570 put a stop to these depredations, concluding the third War of Religion. Only then was the Parisian effigy of Coligny taken down. But there was to be a twist in the plot that many found baffling. In 1571, Coligny would be pardoned. He was even received at court with a view to advising the royal council. In the eyes of Catholic Parisians this rehabilitation of a traitor was incomprehensible, and reeked of 'behind-the-scenes' politics.[17] Parisian bewilderment and

[12] Moore and Myerhoff (eds), 'Introduction: Secular Ritual: Forms and Meanings', in *Secular Ritual* (Amsterdam: Van Gorcum, 1977), pp. 3-24 (p. 17).
[13] Terry-Fritsch, 'Execution by Image', pp. 191-92.
[14] *Mémoires de Claude Haton (1553-1582)*, ed. by Laurent Bourquin, 4 vols (Paris: Editions du Comité des travaux historiques et scientifiques, 2005), II, p. 286.
[15] A classic formulation of effigy theory is Girard's 'monstrous double', in his *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Éditions Bernard Grasset, 1972); see also Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 39-40.
[16] Coligny would later complain about his difficulties in recovering it, particularly the Châtillon abbeys: see Arlette Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre: The Mysteries of a Crime of State (24 August 1572)*, trans. by Joseph Bergin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 25.
[17] See Stuart Carroll, *Martyrs and Murderers: The Guise Family and The Making of Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 199-200.

resentment of these manoeuvres represents another liminal moment in the social drama's phase of redressive action. For partisan Catholics, it was Coligny who, by virtue of his metamorphosis from rebel leader to royal counsellor, epitomized the 'rotten peace' that had to be shattered.[18] Yet Coligny's renewed presence in Paris led many to hope that he *could* be physically killed — and that his death would restore the social and religious cohesion of the community.[19]

The opportunity came when Coligny and other leading Huguenots amassed in Paris to celebrate the royal wedding of Henri de Navarre and Marguerite de Valois on 18 August 1572. Four days later, the Admiral was targeted by a sniper as he returned to his lodgings in the rue de Béthisy. Coligny was wounded — but less than 48 hours later, he would be well and truly butchered by a squadron sent to his lodgings to finish him off. A decision had been taken at the highest level to eliminate Coligny and the Huguenot leadership, on the pretext that they were plotting together in Paris to overthrow the monarchy. The social drama comes to life gruesome prints such as Fig. 1.

Figure 1: *Assassinat de Coligny et massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy* (1572). Département des estampes et de la photographie de la BnF. Wikimedia commons.

Figure 1: Frans Hogenberg, *Assassinat de Coligny et massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy (1572)*. Reproduced with permission of the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

This scene captures several stages of the process of overkill that brought about Coligny's physical demise at the beginning of the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre: firstly the shooting (on the left), secondly the defenestration (top right), and thirdly, the dragging of Coligny's corpse through the streets (centre) along with other bodies hurled from the surrounding buildings. Historically, what happened next is unclear. Two recurring threads in Protestant sources hold that Coligny's hands and feet were dispatched to the Pope, and that his remains were taken away to the gallows of Montfaucon.[20] Looking at the reactions to Coligny's death in militant Catholic hymns and pamphlets, the historian Denis Crouzet argues that as the Admiral's body was paraded across Paris over the next three days, an

[18] Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*, pp. 87-88.
[19] A recurrent theme of clerics: see Barbara Diefendorf, 'Simon Vigor: A Radical Preacher in Sixteenth-Century Paris', *Sixteenth-Century Journal*, 18 (1987), 399-410.
[20] The key pamphlets in this regard were François Hotman's *De furoribus Gallicis* (1573) and *Vita Colinii* (1575), both with vernacular translations in English and French.

irresistible wave of sacral violence was unleashed.[21] This, for Crouzet, was *the* liminal moment where retributive action was 'miraculously' transposed from a human to a divine level. Crouzet's interpretation harmonizes with the Girardian notion that sacral violence operates as a kind of expenditure through which society prolongs its sense of coherence. In Paris and then throughout the nation, Catholic zealots took Coligny's killing as an eschatological portent: as news rapidly spread, it was reported that the *Dies irae* had begun. God's terrifying vengeance was being unleashed; one could only be caught up in it. Each and every Huguenot became a Coligny to massacre.

Mystical rapture and the enactment of 'extraordinary' justice (execution without a judicial sentence) do not account for every performative aspect of Catholics attempts to overkill Coligny and his Huguenot brethren. One should not overlook the irony of recourse to 'ordinary' justice (i.e. bringing Huguenot suspects to trial by the normal legal procedures). Even though Coligny had been massacred, King Charles IX still came under pressure from the Parlement de Paris to foreclose the criminal proceedings that had been instantiated against the Admiral back in September 1569. Thus on 27 October 1572, the remains of the Admiral were judged post mortem and again he was declared guilty of *lèse-majesté.* With a strange sense of déjà vu, he was hanged in effigy; his coat of arms was dragged through the streets of Paris and all his property was confiscated. This repeat ritual was no parodic staging of the original performance three years earlier, at least not in the minds of Parlement's senior magistrates, for whom it regularized the executive political action taken more recently on 23 August 1572 to eradicate Coligny and his alleged co-conspirators.[22] Besides the Coligny effigy, a pair of the Admiral's associates were tried and hanged for treason on 27 October: François de Briquemault and Arnaud de Cavaignes, who (unlike Coligny) had hitherto survived.

So did these judicial rituals constitute a final, 'proper' expending of the public's retributive desire? Niggling indeterminacy remained. Had all the conspirators been eradicated? What further symbolic gain was there in overkill, in conducting a *second* trial of a Coligny effigy, three years on from the first, and two months after his actual body had been ritually defamed in various Parisian localities? To what extent were these performances of killing Coligny in Paris now a distraction from the Massacre that had spread throughout France — and in which many Catholics as well as Huguenots were now losing their lives? These were significant doubts, not least because they spanned the confessional and political

[21] Crouzet, *La Nuit de la Saint-Barthélemy*, pp. 518-19.
[22] Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*, p. 106.

divide.[23] Without their persistence in the minds of many French people (and foreign observers), the killing of Coligny could not have made a lasting mark on the theatrical stage.

Underkill: Chantelouve's *La Tragedie de feu Gaspard de Colligny*

By 1575, Catholics, even partisan Catholics, were viewing the death of Coligny in an equivocal manner. Notable among these was François de Chantelouve, an erudite nobleman and a Knight of Malta, who had seen his Order's commanderies in Gascony sacked by Huguenots during uprisings that had followed the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre.[24] Chantelouve was angered by this Huguenot resurgence post-1572, and was all too aware of its wider socio-cultural implications. Fired by idealizations of their martyred leader,[25] the Huguenot faction was putting military pressure on the French monarchy to pardon Coligny's crimes.[26] That, for the likes of Chantelouve, was unthinkable; Catholics must oppose any posthumous legal rehabilitation of Coligny just as they had opposed his rehabilitation at court in 1571. For Chantelouve, Coligny *had* to be remembered as a failed traitor — and yet one whose treachery had proved tragically persistent, despite his certain death. Stage tragedy incorporating some neoclassical elements (five acts, chorus, reported deaths) was the medium through which Chantelouve strove to dramatize this conundrum and thereby create an artefact of cultural longevity.

The play-text of Chantelouve's *La Tragedie de feu Gaspard de Colligny* usually receives a passing mention in historical surveys of French theatre.[27] *Colligny* was hastily ushered into print, probably in Paris, in 1575; no further editions followed until the publication of a scholarly edition in the eighteenth century (which underpins three modern critical editions).[28] *Colligny* may not have had a rich family of printed editions, but that did not stop the nineteenth-century historian Jean-Baptiste Capefigue claiming that Chantelouve's tragedy was performed in cities all over France to popular acclaim in the years

[23] See especially Jouanna, *The Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre*, ch. 4.
[24] I use Keith Cameron's edition, *La Tragédie de feu Gaspard de Colligny* [hereafter *Colligny*] (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1971), and Richard Hillman's English translation, *The Tragedy of the Late Gaspard de Coligny/François de Chantelouve; And, The Guisiade/Pierre Matthieu* [hereafter *Coligny*] (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 2005).
[25] Especially Hotman's *Vita Colinii*.
[26] See further Cameron, *Colligny*, p. viii.
[27] For instance: Charles Mazouer, *Le Théâtre français de la Renaissance* (Paris: Champion, 2002), pp. 238-39.
[28] Those of Cameron, Hillman, and Lisa Wollfe (the latter's text is in *La Tragédie à l'époque d'Henri III, vol.1 (1574-1579)*, ed. by Enea Balmas and others, Florence: Olschki, 1999).

following the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre.[29] Modern scholars are split on the veracity of Capefigue's claim: Charles Mazouer finds it very plausible, whereas Richard Hillman remains sceptical.[30] Both, however, agree on *Colligny's* stage potential: it requires but a small cast and entails no complex theatrical machinery. This simplicity would make it viable for the sixteenth-century school stage, at a time where *collège* performances of humanist and neo-Latin tragedies were well documented.[31] My premise is Chantelouve's play-text allows for performance in schools and private houses; more importantly, the minimal stagecraft necessitates a willingness to imagine what takes place on, and — crucially — offstage.

In Turnerian terms, *Colligny* sits at a crucial threshold between stage and page. In this liminal space, where the reintegration of the villain hangs in the balance, we are afforded a hurried glimpse of the Admiral's death. Chantelouve's tastes are not obviously neoclassical; but he does clearly affirm — and then depart from — anti-Coligny polemic. Act V seems at first glance conventionally vituperative, dramatizing Coligny's final demise in two brisk scenes: first, the discovery of a wicked plot hatched by the Admiral and his henchmen to assassinate King Charles IX and all his royal line; second, the king's severe yet expedient response. Looking more closely at the second and final scene, however, we see a distinctive de-dramatization of the action taken to eliminate Coligny et al. In short, they are *underkilled*. Chantelouve stages their passing with heavy dramatic irony. Not only does he decline to have Huguenots murdered onstage (in stark contrast, as we shall see, to Christopher Marlowe); he moreover refuses to relay a lengthy report of the Massacre taking place offstage. The People of France (several actors who comprise a chorus) desperately want to know what action their king has taken to smash the plot and the plotters (1129-30). Chantelouve's Messenger gives them barely five lines of narrated violence (1135-40):

> En gaignant le devant, il envoya grand force,
> (Tandis que tout Paris és cantons se renforce)
> Qui Piles, l'Admiral, Pardaillan, & Pinos,
> Et autres, envoya souz les stiges flos;
> Bien que Dieu ait permis que Lorges à la fuitte,

[29] Capefigue, *Histoire de la réforme, de la ligue, et du règne de Henri IV*, 8 vols (Paris: Duféy, 1834), III, pp. 242-23.
[30] Mazouer, 'Chantelouve et la Saint-Barthélemy: *La Tragédie de feu Gaspard de Colligny* (1575)', in *Les Ecrivains et la politique dans le sud-ouest de la France autour des années 1580*, ed. by Claude-Gilbert Dubois and others (Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux, 1982), pp. 129-40 (p. 132); Hillman, *Coligny*, pp. 32-33.
[31] See Madeleine Lazard, *Le Théâtre en France au XVIe siècle* (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1980), pp. 77-89, 99-104.

Se soit sauvé bien loing sur sa cavale visite.

[Taking action first, he despatched a puissant band
(While having all parts of Paris more strongly manned):
They sank Piles, Pardaillan, Pinos, the Admiral,
And others deep down into Styx's gloomy channel,
Although God permitted Lorges, in desperate flight,
To ride off on his swift horse with all of its might.] [32]

For Richard Hillman, this report 'can hardly help evoking one of the central images of the Massacre, the casting of corpses into the Seine'.[33] And yet, the economy of allusion here is so marked as to suggest a deeply ambivalent act of recollection. Firstly, one might query how Coligny's corpse has ended up in the Stygian channel of the Seine, when other sources insist upon its displacement around Paris. And what of the other three named victims? Only the first bears a firm resemblance to an historical individual (Armand de Clermont, baron de Piles) known to have been killed in the initial wave of massacre.[34] With the advantages of hindsight, Chantelouve sows confusion and then turns our attention to the limitations of the king's 'puissant band' in enforcing extraordinary justice and thereby protecting their monarch. Chantelouve underscores the one Huguenot who got away — 'Lorges', alias Gabriel de Montgomery, who as it happened, already had the tragic distinction of killing a French King (Montgomery had committed involuntary regicide, fatally wounding Henri II in a jousting accident in 1559). Montgomery, as was well known, had escaped the Massacre and taken up refuge in England.[35] A morbid irony of displacement — Montgomery's, not the Admiral's — cuts short what could have been a triumphant narrative of Huguenot insurrection suppressed.

Chantelouve's sparse *récit* of underkill is staged as a sombre tempering of the initial outpouring of Catholic glee soon after the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre. Pamphlets such as the *Discours sur la mort de Gaspart de Coligny* (1572) had celebrated at much greater length the agonizing death of the Admiral in a mythological and dramatic register.

[32] *Colligny*, p. 41/*Coligny*, p. 136.
[33] Hillman, *Coligny*, p. 170, n. 167.
[34] 'Pardaillan' is presumably a variant of 'Pardaillon', a page of Henri de Navarre, rather than the better-known François de Ségur-Pardaillan (who did escape); 'Pinos' is untraceable – and for Hillman, potentially the name of one of Chantelouve's personal enemies added to the list for a dash of vindictive humour. See Hillman, *Coligny*, p. 170, n. 165-66.
[35] Cameron, *Colligny*, p. 69. In 1574, shortly before the publication of *Colligny*, Montgomery was caught and executed; it is unclear whether Chantelouve was abreast of this development.

Here, the Olympian deities, represented by Juno, harangue Coligny's corpse and refuse to bear it aloft to a heavenly resting place. The Seine is a far less accommodating portal to the underworld than she is in Chantelouve's *Colligny*. In this *Discours*, she refuses to admit Coligny through her Stygian gates: he has not yet suffered enough for his crimes, and deserves a still crueller dearth than either Water or Earth is prepared to grant. So the gods decree that Coligny's headless, handless corpse must remain indefinitely strung up by its feet on the gallows of Montfaucon: a grotesque *point de suspension* in the nation's cultural register of prodigious deaths.

Chantelouve was conversant with this sort of gallows humour. In *Colligny*, the Admiral makes his very first appearance anticipating a noose around his neck (I. 1. 5) should he fail in his treasonous plot. For Hillman, this calls for a halter prop which Coligny might have held onstage, or possibly even worn throughout Act I to symbolize his designation as a 'nouveau Judas' ['newfangled Judas'] (I. 3. 242).[36] A parodic reminder, furthermore, of the effigy hangings in 1569 and 1572. Nevertheless, Chantelouve's allusions to the gibbet remain minimal and ambivalent. When Montfaucon is finally mentioned, we hear none of the jubilation that rings out of the *Discours sur la mort de Gaspart de Coligny*. Instead, Chantelouve has his chorus of People briefly relay (v. ii. 1188) how Coligny's body now hangs at the heights of another stage — the tiered criminal scaffold outside Paris. Chantelouve has no time for prolonging the Admiral's suffering in accordance with divine vengeance (1187). Instead he moves towards a different moral outcome: cautionary contemplation. Coligny's demise connotes no revilement in reverse gear as suggested by Huguenot polemicists,[37] no paradoxical, Christ-like honour in a debasing death. As Coligny is raised up on Paris's Golgotha, the People of France are reminded of the saviour and pacifying Christ who Coligny is *not*.

But this dissociation, crucially, serves to remind Chantelouve's audience of 'Ambition des hommes la ruine' ['Ambition to whom men's downfall is due'] (1145) rampaging across the nation-stage. Therein lies the tragedy: Coligny may have been punished in full sight of all of Paris; but many other ambitious Huguenots remain at large. For Chantelouve, Coligny's fate has only exacerbated the ambition of those powerful individuals, whose will to dominate is irreconcilable with the ideal of 'la modestie d'or' ['golden moderation'] (1156) for the common good. In Turnerian terms, we are reminded of the schism, the final phase of the wider social drama that shapes *Colligny*, in which Huguenot rebels cannot be reintegrated

[36] Hillman, *Coligny*, p. 140, n.7.
[37] Simon Goulart, *Memoires de l'Estat de France, sous Charles Neufiesme*, 3 vols (Geneva: H. Wolf, 1578), I, fol. 416r.

into the French (Catholic) nation. For some twenty years or more, this would be the finale. Then, in the 1590s, Christopher Marlowe re-opened the wounds, to put the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre on the English stage.

Dark Play: Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*

We have significant albeit patchy details of how *The Massacre at Paris* came into being.[38] The likely first performance was on 30 January 1593 by the Lord Strange's Men at the Rose Theatre in London.[39] Philip Henslowe (the proprietor of The Rose) subsequently records a number of performances by the Admiral's Men in 1594, with generally diminishing returns. *The Massacre at Paris* then seems to have dropped off the London stage repertoire until probable revivals in 1598, and 1601-02, after which Henslowe gives no further records. So what do we make of this play's genesis and its heyday at the turn of the seventeenth century? Modern scholarly reaction to *The Massacre at Paris* has been extremely negative; but there is a gradual shifting away from pointing out structural flaws and aesthetic demerits, with a move towards a deeper consideration of the play's potential for insight in performance-theoretical terms.[40]

The Massacre at Paris is a kind of history play which re-presents Coligny's death, the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre, and the high drama of French politics up to 1589. Marlowe compresses some seventeen years of French history into twenty-four scenes of uneven length. The resultant play capitalizes on English fears about French affairs: that England was being sucked into problems of tyranny, succession, and religious fanaticism that had all come to a head in France during the 1580s, culminating in the assassinations of Henri de Guise (1588) and King Henri III (1589). The latter half of *The Massacre at Paris* stages these events. Operating in English espionage, Marlowe had access to a number of pamphlets indicating how the political and theological fault-lines had extended since the Saint Bartholomew's Day Massacre.[41] Furthermore, Marlowe may well have had read

[38] Modern editors lament the poor state of the text (its 'corruption' owing to memorial reconstruction) and dispute the dating of the play's composition, first staging and first printing. See Edward Esche's introduction to his edition of *The Massacre at Paris*, in *The Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe* V (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 309-16; R. Carter Hailey, 'The Publication Date of Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*, With a Note on The Collier Leaf', *Marlowe Studies: An Annual*, 1 (2011), 25-40.

[39] Esche, *The Massacre at Paris*, p. 315, from which I reproduce the subsequent performance details relating to the period c.1594-1602. All quotations are from the Esche edition.

[40] See for instance Mathew Martin's re-evaluation of the play's brokenness and disorientation in *Tragedy and Trauma in the Plays of Christopher Marlowe* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), ch. 6.

[41] For the death of Coligny, Marlowe drew (though not exclusively) upon the English translation of Hotman's *De furoribus Gallicis.* Much material for the second half of the play has been identified as coming from pro-

Chantelouve's *Colligny*, to further his knowledge of topical French crises from the viewpoint of the partisan Catholic milieu. If not, he did an uncanny job of re-inscribing Chantelouve's tragedy, such that Guise wrests from Coligny the role of the godless murderer soon-to-be murdered.[42]

This role-swap, however, does not in itself explain how Marlowe saw potential for further dramatic innovation in staging the death of Coligny. Though over two decades old, the Admiral's murder still had not been *enacted* upon a theatrical stage. Marlowe's enactment of it instantiates a vital if awkward stretch of onstage action in *The Massacre at Paris* (scenes 6-11). The symbolic significance of these scenes, we shall see, differs noticeably from the instances of overkill and underkill we have hitherto encountered. Marlowe's sense of uncertain disarray in sequencing the murders of Coligny and other Huguenots throws into question the very performativity of death on stage. In an important contribution, Julia Briggs notes that:

> The scenes of the massacre may be viewed either as a subtle […] analysis of contemporary crowd violence and religious hatred, or as a black comedy that paradoxically invites its audience to laugh at helpless Protestant victims. Either way, it must be conceded that *The Massacre at Paris* is something more than a tract on their behalf.[43]

Briggs certainly has a point, although her analysis calls for further nuances. As well as affording something more than the numerous pamphlet polemicists, and the partisan French tragedy of Chantelouve, Marlowe offers something distinctly *less* than any of these. A closer look at the staging of the massacre scenes reveals Marlowe's art of less-is-more.

Scene 6 stages the famous defenestration of Coligny. It opens with the Duke of Guise and his assassination squadron entering the main stage area, discussing how to make the Admiral their initial victim. Guise, Anjoy[44] and their Swiss mercenaries will guard the street;

Catholic pamphlets: see Paul Kocher's two articles, 'François Hotman and Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*', *PMLA*, 56.2 (1941), 349-68; 'Contemporary Pamphlet Backgrounds for Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 8.2 (1947), 151-73.

[42] Richard Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), ch. 4; and Hillman, 'The Admiral, Upside-Down, or Apocalypse Now and Then: Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris* and François de Chantelouve's *La Tragédie de Feu Gaspard de Colligny* (1575)', in *Les Huguenots dans les îles britanniques de la Renaissance aux Lumières: écrits religieux et représentations*, ed. by Anne Dunan-Page and Marie-Christine Munoz-Teulié (Paris: Champion, 2008), pp. 61-85.

[43] Briggs, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris*: A Reconsideration', *The Review of English Studies*, 34 (1983), 257-78 (p. 278). Briggs builds on Natalie Zemon Davis's pioneering work on the rites of Reformation violence.

[44] The Duc d'Anjou, later to be King Henri III.

meanwhile Gonzago[45] leads the rest of the party offstage and into an upper acting area representing the interior of the Admiral's house.[46]

> GONZAGO Where is the Admirall?
> ADMIRALL O let me pray before I dye.
> GONZAGO Then pray unto our Ladye, kisse this crosse.
> *Stab him*.
> ADMIRALL O God forgive my sins. [*Dyes*.] (6. 27-30)

Blink and you miss it. This killing of Coligny is pared down to the bare minimum of martyrdom.[47] To that extent it speaks of 'a certain slap-dash efficiency' (to quote Neil Carson) in the pre-rehearsal preparation of parts.[48] Gonzago almost immediately confronts Coligny, whose request for a prayerful passing becomes an on-the-spot combination of murder and intercessory sarcasm. The lines are easily memorized, and they speak of an intuition shared by actor and dramatist for morbid religious satire — in moderation. In the act of killing, there is nothing of Marlowe's main source, François Hotman, according to whom the Admiral's main killer is of German (rather than Franco-Italian) descent. Hotman's version is replete with dramatic overkill: the blaspheming assassin Benuese stabs Coligny in the head and thigh, whilst another mercenary shoots him in the breast.[49]

Marlowe follows the Hotman accounts only once Coligny's corpse has been hurled down onto the main stage area (6. 36-48). Even here, the imitation is arrestingly inexact. Hotman had stressed how Guise kept on proclaiming that Coligny's death was the fulfilment of King Charles IX's wishes. Marlowe's Guise instead performs a grotesque victory dance upon a religious and dynastic rival (Coligny, we remember, was accused of assassinating Guise's father in 1563). Still, Marlowe knows when to switch off the grotesque, and he therefore avoids the further display of indecent overkill that his Protestant source invites. Marlowe's Guise orders Coligny to be dragged offstage for ritual dissection (head and hands

[45] Louis de Gonzague, duke of Nevers and Rethel, a military officer.
[46] The model reconstruction of the Rose Theatre at the Museum of London shows that the Rose had two doors at the back of the main stage area; above these doors was an upper tier with a protruding balcony. This balcony space would have been just large enough for the Admiral's bed (as required in scenes 5 and 6) and for his body to have been cast down upon the main stage (scene 6).
[47] See further Kristen Poole, 'Garbled Martyrdom in Christopher Marlowe's *The Massacre at Paris*, *Comparative Drama*, 32.1 (1998), 1-25 (pp. 14-15).
[48] Carson, *A Companion to Henslowe's Diary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), shows that for many plays performed at the Rose, pre-rehearsal preparations of a play (studying, annotating, transcribing, licensing, and preparing parts) took only about two weeks (p. 74).
[49] Ernest Varamund [alias Hotman], *A True and Plaine Report of the Furious Outrages of Fraunce* (London: H. Bynneman, 1573), pp. 55-56.

for dispatch to the Pope), whereas Hotman had described a free-for-all dismemberment of limbs and genitalia (the Admiral's 'secrete partes').

Dismemberment and decapitation both lay within the capability of early modern staging, as Margaret Owens has shown.[50] Indeed, Marlowe himself explored such possibilities in his *Dr Faustus*: the latter's shredded body is eventually scattered in pieces across the stage. So in refraining from such displays in *The Massacre at Paris*, Marlowe is testing the limits of stage violence in a different mode. This mode of experimentation seems attuned to the dynamics of religious mob violence, as Briggs suggests — but its character does not quite fit with what she sees as 'black comedy' inviting laughter upon the Protestant victims of the massacre scenes. Instead, I would venture, Marlowe comes closer to types of 'dark play' theorized by Richard Schechner in *The Future of Ritual* (1993) and latterly by Joseph Roach.[51] Dark play emphasizes risk and the sheer thrill of deceiving; it subverts order and breaks its own rules, so much so that playing itself is in danger of being destroyed. In practice, not all parties know the rules of the game they have entered into, or even that they are playing a game.

Playing dark is a highly suggestive concept for interpreting the mayhem orchestrated by Guise in scenes 6-11 of *The Massacre at Paris*. Guise is the master player — but even he struggles to make an efficacious combination of murder and play. Scene 9 features Guise indulging in an extended mockery of the scholar Petrus Ramus, whose chief crime is to have scoffed at Aristotelian logic (9. 25-38). Guise wants to take down Ramus with scholar's wit ('*Argumentum testimonii est inartificiale*. ['*the evidence of testimony is inartificial*'] | To contradict which, I say *Ramus* shall dye') — but he also forces Ramus to play along ('How answere you that?'). A bemused Ramus begs to get a word in edgeways — but, unsure of the perverse rules of the game that will certainly end with his death, he takes the risk of declaiming at length against Aristotle and the Sorbonne (41-53). Guise is both delighted and irritated by Ramus's pedantic self-defence, berating his henchmen for not slaying Ramus upon his initial command (38). The gamesmanship jars to a halt and becomes an act of stabbing; any audience laughter is likely to be directed not at the victim but at a situation that has degenerated to the point of absurdity.

[50] Owens, *Stages of Dismemberment: The Fragmented Body in Late Medieval and Early Modern Drama* (Newark MD: University of Delaware Press, 2005).
[51] See Roach, 'Deep Play, Dark Play: Framing the Limit(less)', in *The Rise of Performance Studies: Rethinking Richard Schechner's Broad Spectrum*, ed. by James Harding and Cindy Rosenthal (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 275-83.

Dark play's switch into plain murder is neither fully explicit, nor complete. A briefer example comes in scene 7, where Guise encounters a Huguenot preacher and suddenly breaks into liturgical parody: '"Dearly beloved brother", thus 'tis written. *He stabs him*' (7. 8). This time, for Guise, that little flash of ludic frenzy was enough — but Anjoy, unaware that the game is over, wants to prolong the dark play on liturgy: 'Stay my Lord, let me begin the psalme' (9). Guise refuses to let him. Playing dark in the midst of massacre, Marlowe show us, tends away from ideological unity and towards private gratification, in which not even co-belligerents are invited to share.[52] Once this level of selfishness has been reached, it affords a hollow laugh at the fleeting pleasures of getting away with murder. Marlowe's original spectators might just have managed a grin at the wasted opportunity for an irreverent parody of Psalm-singing (which had replaced the traditional Catholic liturgy in Protestant services).

The fallout from moments of dark play scattered throughout scenes 6-11 is, unambiguously, waste. That is, wasted humans amid other forms of detritus. On Guise's command, dead Huguenots are dragged offstage to be dumped in rivers and ditches. Scene 11 goes further still, offering a curious twist of this very process of wasting. Here we get our final glimpses of what has become of Coligny's body, which has ended up in the hands of two soldiers. By this point, the ritual killing has all but ground to a halt: the soldiers are paralysed with indecision as to how they should properly dispose of the Admiral. The scene reads almost as a parody of the *Discours sur la mort de Gaspart de Coligny*. The Admiral's corpse cannot be burned lest it poison the very air its captors breathe; likewise, it cannot be committed to the Seine lest it corrupt the water, the fish, and all those who consume the fish. In the end, the soldiers opt for what had always been the most popular form of killing Coligny: gibbeting him (9. 10-11) in full sight of the audience.

And yet — as ever — the performance of hanging fails to achieve symbolic closure. It is something distinctly less than a climatic suspension from the gallows of Montfaucon. Nor is there any hint that the Coligny who now hangs before us is Coligny the Protestant martyr, representing Christ 'that hangeth on a tree' (Galatians 3:13). Instead of spectacles of proper retribution that will bring legal and theological closure upon the drama, Marlowe is staging something quite different — something that modern anthropology would call an ominous performance of waste. A performance that sits on the dangerous cusp of violence and the

[52] Hence this is no 'Mardi Gras game' in which churchmen are ceremonially mocked (*pace* Briggs, 'Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris'*, 276). Dark play's inversions are cruelly private, unlike the inversions of carnivals whose agendas are vindictively public (see Schechner, *The Future of Ritual: Writings on Culture and Performance*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 36).

aesthetic, where people are consumed in catastrophically unproductive acts of expenditure.[53] Coligny's decomposing corpse rankles the nostrils of Guise and the Queen Mother — and so the offending body is (once again) ordered offstage: 'Sirs, take him away and throw him in some ditch' (9. 18).[54] No more performative overkill, nor even dramatic underkill: just waste. In the relentless acceleration of historical time that drives *The Massacre at Paris*, Coligny may be killed no more.

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If we view Coligny's death primarily as an instance of massacre, then it ends as a waste product of fervent civil-religious violence in 1572. Marlowe's play indicated as much. But Marlowe does more: re-inscribing Chantelouve's tragedy, he offers further dark plays on the wider social drama surrounding Coligny's death. This drama played out across the late sixteenth century and became an enduring phenomenon, whose multiple transitions always already left the door open to future interpretation. Each spectacle of retribution — consciously performed within a particular space, for a particular audience — had an essential role in making immediate sense of Coligny's death. But the unscripted open-endedness of these spectacles has necessitated a process of transcultural (re)valorization that has never fully run its course.

Since the mid-twentieth century, there have been sporadic revivals of Marlowe's *Massacre at Paris* in the US, the UK and France. Reviews of these productions have, unsurprisingly, emphasized the stage orgy of murder of the massacre scenes. Whilst the subtleties of Marlowe's religious-political allusions may have been lost, a convincing performance of death is still greatly prized: 'an ability to be killed and dragged across the stage',[55] without special-effects deficiencies that would add unwanted farcical touches to an otherwise chilling spectacle.[56] To retain that eerie sense of the macabre, one recent production used red strip lighting along the theatre floor, reflecting in a shallow pool to evoke the river

[53] Roach *Cities of the Dead*, pp. 41, 123. Roach elaborates on Georges Bataille's *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy* (1967).

[54] For Thomas Pettitt, Guises's instruction is evidence of a company unable to stage a hanging, the requisite stage prop being unavailable ('Formulaic Dramaturgy in *Doctor Faustus*', in *A Poet and a Filthy Play-Maker. New Essays on Christopher Marlowe*, ed. by Kenneth Friedenreich, Roma Gill, and Constance Kuriyama, New York: AMS Press, 1988, pp. 167-91). This may well have been a besetting difficulty in some early productions, but I am not persuaded that it was in every case. An effigy might have served as an expedient prop for this scene, for ease of hoisting the body upon a stage gibbet. This would put grotesque emphasis on Coligny's degraded state, and function as a burlesque of the actual hangings in effigy in 1569 and 1572. A handless, headless effigy-prop is a further option for staging the enactment of Guise's previous instructions in vi.43.

[55] Michael Ferguson's 1963 production at the Chanticleer Theatre, London, as reviewed in the *Daily Telegraph and Morning Post*, 31 January 1963, p. 13.

[56] Although the Ferguson production was generally well received, it was criticized for having sawdust rather than stage blood erupt from the stabbings (*The Times*, 31 January 1963, p. 4).

Seine flowing red with blood.[57] Patrice Chéreau (whose production ran May-June 1972 at the Théâtre National Populaire de Villeurbanne) sums up what was, and continues to be, the undying dramatic interest unfolding from the killing of Coligny: 'le passage sanglant d'une époque à une autre' ['a gory passage from one era to the next'],[58] in which a social drama degenerates into a fascination with the act itself of dying. Thus contextualized, the Coligny spectacles of retribution find their place in a much longer narrative of death: that confounding symbol of the never-ending ending and its staging in the Western World.

[57] James Wallace's 2014 production in the studio theatre adjoining the archaeological site of the Rose, as reviewed in the *Financial Times*, 16 March 2014. Online. https://www.ft.com/content/81c25de2-ab5e-11e3-aad9-00144feab7de [accessed 15/04/2021]
[58] See Michel Bataillon, *Un Défi en province. Chéreau. 1972-1982* (Paris: Marval, 2005), p. 147.