

# British Journal for Military History

Volume 6, Issue 2, July 2020

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**ISSN:** 2057-0422

**Date of Publication:** 15 July 2020

**Citation:** Benjamin Deruelle and Laurent Vissière, 'Tears of blood: War and Grief at the End of the 15th and the Beginning of the 16th Centuries', *British Journal for Military History*, 6.2 (2020), pp. 53-74.

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# Tears of blood: War and Grief at the End of the 15<sup>th</sup> and the Beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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## ABSTRACT

*Contrary to what traditional historiography asserts, the expression of emotions was not absent from the narrative and literary sources that provide information on the condition of men of war at the turning point of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. While the art of war underwent unexpected metamorphoses, tears manifested mourning and sadness, but also compassion, joy or anger. They demonstrated the changing sensitivity to death, to the necessary commemoration of officers of high birth, as well as to the more humble laments linked to the disappearance of a parent, a comrade-in-arms, or even a beloved animal. A symptom of a real emotional wounds, grief also sometimes lead to murderous fury and revenge. Tears then come along with emotions considered as an objective parameter of war.*

As Monsieur de La Palisse might have said: in battle, it is blood which flows; but at day's end, when the dead and the wounded are counted, then flow the tears'. The purpose of a man-at-arms might be to strike or be struck down, yet dying often seemed to him an unjust fate, something to be feared. Whether in the army or the city, death engendered great displays of ostentatious mourning, collective outbursts of tears or a profound sense of despair. And during the Italian Wars, it seems, the French aristocracy wept a great deal.

In the tradition of the *grands rhétoriciens*, great figurative 'monuments' were erected to dead heroes. The virtues of the glorious dead were extolled in poems, prosimetra and heroic epics brimming over with pathos. Their authors (court poets and their patrons) shed many a tear over the loss of a protector, as did the 'actors' in the dramas

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DOI : <https://doi.org/10.25602/GOLD.bjmh.v6i2.1418>

<sup>1</sup>On tears, see especially Anne Vincent-Buffault, *Histoire des larmes*, (Paris: Rivages, 1986).

(family, friends and companions).<sup>2</sup> To what extent can we trust their torrents of tears? The question must first be asked of the sources. But as might be expected, it is never quite so simple. Chroniclers and men of war recorded manifestations of mourning every bit as ostentatious as the poets, though some were more discreet. In correspondence and memoirs, whether faithful or pure fantasy, aristocrats and captains sometimes talked of their profound despair and of tears shed for fallen companions.<sup>3</sup> It is not only in conventional literary corpora that these sentiments are expressed. Though the sources are heterogeneous, a certain uniformity within can be found in the identities, culture and writing objectives of the authors.

They were men who set pen to paper in order to bear witness, memorialise or self-justify, but also to instruct or pass on skills, knowledge or a set of values. Some were memorialists, historiographers and military theoreticians, while others were philosophers, poets, doctors or humanists. There were educated combatants of noble birth, camp followers, and those who served the nobility or sought their protection. Some wished to share with others the experience of war, campaigns and the routines of camp life. Their experiences and accounts were stamped with the omnipresence of violence and death, the boredom of long periods of waiting, and the hardships of forced marches and sieges. They were shaped by privations, sickness and injuries that became engraved on the flesh or in the soul. But these men also experienced plenitude in times of pillage and, sometimes, the joy of victory. The authors shared a moral code and an emotional reality, which often transcended social, denominational or 'national' differences. They were all part of an 'emotional community', an 'affective culture' developed in the same way as within families or between neighbours, members of communes, parishes and monastic communities.<sup>4</sup> Martial, masculine episodes of weeping were not simply anecdotal accompaniments to campaign casualties. They were the expression of this 'affective' culture, though such emotionality in the military man seems foreign to us today.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Christine Martineau-Génieys, *Le thème de la mort dans la poésie française de 1450 à 1550*, (Paris: H. Champion, 1977); Claude Thiry, *Recherches sur la déploration funèbre française à la prérenaissance*, 2 vol., PhD thesis on Roman philology, Université de Liège, 1973.

<sup>3</sup>Hélène Monsacré, *Les larmes d'Achille*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1984); Dominik Perler, *Feelings Transformed. Philosophical Theories of the Emotions, 1270-1670*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>4</sup>Barbara Rosenwein, *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, (Ithaca-Londres: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 2; Damien Boquet and Piroska Nagy, *Sensible Moyen Âge: une histoire des émotions dans l'Occident médiéval*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2015).

<sup>5</sup>The works of Elina Gertsman, Gerd Althoff and other anthropological studies have helped to distinguish grief from tears and their study as a social as well as a natural phenomenon. See for example Elina Gertsman (ed.), *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of*

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This article seeks to reconcile the paradox of a historiography that has long discarded literary and narrative sources – still often viewed as either self-serving justification or the shameless vindication of the ruling class<sup>6</sup> – and the richness of this documentation, in which emotions are expressed in all their diversity and complexity. This paradox seems all the more striking when we consider how the codes governing gender, propriety or modesty in the late Middle Ages and early modernity restricted their expression. This paper will therefore explore the way in which tears are expressed and exhibited in the sources, what it is they express, what norms they reflect, and what they say about the condition of men of war. Suffering and death are ubiquitous in war and can determine the outcome of combat. Were tears consequently a subject of reflection in martial literature? However, in order to address this, we must first understand why the warrior elites of Renaissance France wept in the context of war, examine the manifestations of emotion and assess how they were named (physical or psychological pain, sadness, anger, or even joy), and finally, understand the extent to which they were considered an objective parameter of war.

### Of Ink and Tears

Emotions associated with death and the manly expression of grief have long been the poet's domain: Achilles, the quintessential hero, unashamedly wept over the body of Patroclus. Before deciding on the authenticity of such displays of grief, however, it is important to examine their literary *mise en scène*.

The eulogy had always been fashionable, but it gained new life toward the end of the fifteenth century under the *grands rhétoriciens*. Tributes were not only for those who died in combat. Women were lamented as much as men and princes as much as artists or writers. In this era, heroic death was but one theme in the vast genre of *tombeaux littéraires*. Eulogies were peopled with countless allegorical characters and provided a theatrical framework for the ceremonial shedding of tears. Poets often portrayed themselves in the role of the narrator, and the tearful allegories were obvious polyphonal incarnations of the poet himself, who single-handedly comprised the entire funeral choir.

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*History*, (Ithaca-London: Cornell University Press, 2011); Gerd Althoff and Regis Ira, 'Prolegomena to a History of Royal Anger', in Barbara Rosenwein (ed.), *Anger's Past. The Social Uses of an Emotion in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Ithaca, 1998), pp. 59-74. <sup>6</sup>Jean Delumeau, *La peur en Occident (XIV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles). Une cité assiégée*, (Paris: Fayard, 1978). For references to the scholars who have questioned this perspective, see the article by Paul Vo-Ha in this volume, Paul Vo-Ha, 'The Wages of Fear: Fear and Surrender in The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *British Journal for Military History*, 6.2 (2020).

An example of this eulogistic genre is *La Plainte du Désiré*. Composed in 1503, it features Jean Lemaire de Belges lamenting Louis de Ligny, Comte de Luxembourg, who had died in his bed of sickness, or despair.<sup>7</sup> The author-performer presents the scene in prose, while two allegorical female mourners, *Peinture* and *Rhetorique*, sing over the deceased in verse. As is often the case, the poem is lengthy and complex. Filled with architectural metaphors, it speaks of ‘*tombeaux*’ and even ‘*temples*’. A monument must be created, of words and images, to eternalize the glory of the noble deceased. In 1503, Lemaire de Belges also composed *Temple d’Honneur et de Vertus* to honour the death of Pierre II, Duke of Bourbon.<sup>8</sup>

In the same vein, Jean Bouchet composed *Le Temple de Bonne Renommée* (1516), an indigestible work of several thousand lines on the death of Charles de la Trémoille at the Battle of Marignano. Bouchet declaimed that he wished to ‘lament and weep in tragic form’, an intriguing expression that underlines the theatrical aspect of the text.<sup>9</sup> The author inserted himself into the poem and brought several allegories into play, amplifying *ad nauseam* the model of Lemaire de Belges. A whole chorus of professional mourners can be found intoning, their harrowing sobs gradually evolving into the voices of a celestial choir.<sup>10</sup> According to the poetic conventions of the time, tears of this type could accompany mourning the physical body, but were always followed by a fully Christian exultation of the soul.

These tears proved to be as much mercenary as literary. After all, what a writer such as Jean Bouchet needed was a protector. The tears wept over his lost patron were a calling card presented to Charles de la Trémoille’s successors. The poet singing the praises of Charles de la Trémoille was almost caricatural; his quarry was Trémoille’s next of kin. Unfortunately for him, Gabrielle de Bourbon died before Bouchet could complete the poem and Louis II perished at Pavia, though Bouchet would later dedicate a monumental *Panegyric* of the perfect knight to Louis’ grandchildren.<sup>11</sup> Moral,

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<sup>7</sup>Jean Lemaire de Belges, *La plainte du Désiré*, ed. by Dora Yabsley, (Paris: Droz, 1932).

<sup>8</sup>Jean Lemaire de Belges, *Le temple d’honneur et de vertus*, ed. by Henri Hornik, (Geneva: Droz, 1957).

<sup>9</sup>Jean Bouchet, *Le temple de bonne renommée*, (Paris: Galliot du Pré, 1516), p. 28 [Henceforth *Le temple de bonne renommée*]. See also *Le temple de bonne renommée...*, ed. by Giovanna Bellati, (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1992).

<sup>10</sup>On Antique models of epics and funeral orations in official funerals of citizens who died for the city, see Nicole Loraux, *L’invention d’Athènes, histoire de l’oraison funèbre dans la cité classique*, (Paris: Ed. EHESS, 1981); Maurice Sartre, ‘Les Grecs’, in Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine and Georges Vigarello (ed.), *Histoire des émotions*, vol. I: *De l’Antiquité aux Lumières*, (Paris: Seuil, 2016), p. 28.

<sup>11</sup>Jean Bouchet, *Le panegyric du chevalier sans reproche...*, (Paris: Enguilbert de Marnef, 1527) [Henceforth *Panegyric*].

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mournful allegories are not the focus of this discussion. Yet these figures do at times pose as stand-ins for actual people, whose bereavement Bouchet thought to illustrate. Again, it seems more than just a question of theatrical masks: the individuals to whom the poet alluded did indeed exist and were evidently his potential audience. The author was therefore not in a position to ascribe untruthful sentiments to them. That their emotions were represented reflects a certain conception of bereavement and as such is deserving of analysis.

A poet might choose to portray the dead hero's brothers in arms or peers. Here, we are truly in the realm of virile tears. For the death of Gaston de Foix, an anonymous author related, in a poem of several hundred lines, how one night he met despairing noblemen dressed in black.<sup>12</sup> 'I saw,' he said,

[...] deux hommes fort touchéz  
De grant douleur à veoir leur contenance,  
Car de plourer ne font nulle abstinence,  
Vestuz de noir et bonnetz sans rebratz  
Et chapperons de deul dessus leurs bratz.  
Lors je m'assiéz et leur façon j'advise,  
Que je trouvoy d'assez estrange guise,  
Car ilz gectoient force larmes et criz,  
Més de leurs plains gueres je n'entendiz,  
Fors seulement qu'ilz maudioient la  
mort,  
Fortune aussi, qui tant leur a fait tort.  
(v. 246-256)

Two men, by their countenance  
Quite touched by a great sorrow,  
For they held not back their tears.  
Black they wore, with brimless caps  
And hoods of mourning above their  
arms.  
As I sat, their features, which I found  
strange in semblance, leapt to my eyes,  
For tears and cries erupted from them.  
But I scarcely heard their complaints,  
Save that they cursed death  
And Fortune, who had wronged them  
so.

The author sought to console the mourners but was nearly pummelled by one of them, who did not want to be distracted from his grief (v. 279-285). In the end we learn that they were mourning the death of Gaston de Foix, who had fallen at Ravenna in 1512. Of the three mentioned – they were Pierre de Foix, De Belleville and Haubourdin –, the last was a soldier, the only one to have participated in the Battle of

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<sup>12</sup>*Le regret des trois gentilzhommes, collaudant et desplorant le triumphant et infortuné trespas de feu de noble et immortelle memoire, tres hault, tres puissant, illustrissime et victorieux prince, Monseigneur Guaston, en son vivant conte de Foix et d'Estampes, duc de Nemours, nepveu du tres crestien roy Loïs douziesme de ce nom, son lieutenant general en Italie et gouverneur de sa duché de Milan.* Bibliothèque nationale de France, mss fr. 1710, ed. by Laurent Vissière in 'Gaston de Foix dans les poèmes contemporains', in Joana Barreto, Gabriele Quaranta and Colette Nativel (ed.), *Voir Gaston de Foix (1512-2012). Métamorphoses européennes d'un héros paradoxal*, (Paris: Presses de la Sorbonne, 2015), pp. 17-30 and pp. 223-237.

Ravenna. The poem then centres on the dialogue of the three men, who afterwards head back into the night wrapped in their eternal despair.

Their grief might have been excessive, but oh, how masculine! And akin to the grief that *La Chanson de Roland* attributes to Charlemagne when he discovered the battlefield of Roncevaux.

Et Charles de s'arracher la barbe, comme  
un homme en grande colère;  
Il pleure, et tous ses chevaliers d'avoir  
aussi des larmes plein les yeux.  
Vingt mille hommes tombent à terre,  
pâmés. [...]

[CCVIII]La douleur est grande à  
Roncevaux:  
Il n'y a pas un seul chevalier, pas un seul  
baron,  
Qui de pitié ne pleure à chaudes larmes.  
Ils pleurent leurs fils, leurs frères, leurs  
neveux,  
Leurs amis et leurs seigneurs liges.  
Un grand nombre tombent à terre,  
pâmés.<sup>13</sup>

Seeming enraged, his beard the King doth  
tear.

Weep from their eyes barons and  
chevaliers,  
A thousand score, they swoon upon the  
earth; [...]  
CLXXVIII

[Sadness is great at Ronceveaux]  
No chevalier nor baron is there, who  
Pitifully weeps not for grief and dule;  
They mourn their sons, their brothers,  
their nephews,  
And their liege lords, and trusty friends  
and true;  
Upon the ground a many of them  
swoon.<sup>14</sup>

Grief could in fact be every bit as excessive as fury in battle. There existed a state beyond that of tears: loss of consciousness, possibly leading to death. It is the destiny Aude faced. It is also the end the friends of Gaston de Foix set for themselves. The tears shed for the same 'heroes' of the Italian Wars, in the *Lamenti*<sup>15</sup> were quite different, however. Indeed, they represent an antithetical model of chivalry, in which tears were a mark of the regret, pain and fear felt by the knights, who were otherwise described as brave and beyond reproach.

Other characters cast in mourning could include close kin, such as fathers and most especially mothers:

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<sup>13</sup>*La chanson de Roland*, ed. by Léon Gautier, (Tours: A. Mame et fils, 1876).

<sup>14</sup>The Song of Roland. (n.d.). Project Gutenberg.

<http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/391/pg391.html>. Accessed 1 April 2020.

<sup>15</sup>Florence Alazard, 'Son stato Colonnello & generale: soliloques militaires dans l'Italie en guerre au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Benjamin Deruelle and Bernard Gainot (ed.), *Les mots du militaire*, (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2020), pp. 35-55.

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O quel grant deul fera  
La mere, quant saura  
La mort de son seul filz !  
Sur l'heure perira  
Et de deul languira...

How great shall be  
The mother's grief when she  
discovers  
The death of her only son!  
Within the hour shall she perish,  
Languishing from sorrow.

At least, that is what Jean Bouchet affirmed in *Le Temple de Bonne Renommée*.<sup>16</sup> This was a premonition perhaps, since Gabrielle de Bourbon did languish, though it was a few short months following the demise of her son before she died. The poet had not anticipated her death – it was to her that the text had been dedicated. In *Panegyric*, Bouchet resumed the tale of Marignano, pointing out the difference between paternal and maternal reactions. For example, Louis II remained stoic when François I announced the death of his son, though he could not prevent his eyes 'from distilling tiny tears despite his determination'.<sup>17</sup> His wife had quite the opposite reaction. She collapsed, broke into tears and lamented, 'for I have lost my son, my progeny, my likeness and my only consolation'.<sup>18</sup> When she wrote to her husband, her tear-soaked letter was rendered nearly indecipherable.<sup>19</sup>

In *L'Apparition du Mareschal sans reproche*, Guillaume Crétin imagines a chorus of women mourning the disaster of Pavia.<sup>20</sup> 'Lo, look upon these poor suffering mothers,' they wail,

Lors veissiez vous paovres dolentes meres  
Porter douleur et angoisses amaires,  
En regrettant la mort de leurs enfans,  
De leur vieillesse appuys et seurs deffens;  
Oultre veissiez ung tas de femmes veufves  
Larmes getter de leurs yeulx comme fleuves,  
Ayant les cueurs contristés et transis  
Pour leurs maris en la bataille occis;  
Jeunes enfans ayans perduz leurs peres,

Full of pain and bitter anguish,  
Regretting the loss of their children,  
Their comfort in old age, and their  
protection.  
Beyond see you a heap of widows,  
Tears gush from their eyes like rivers,  
Their hearts desolate and paralysed  
For their husbands dead in battle.  
Young children have lost their fathers,

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<sup>16</sup> *Le temple de bonne renommée*, v. pp. 318-322.

<sup>17</sup> *Panegyric*, f. 149 v.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, ff. 152 v-153r.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 158 r.

<sup>20</sup> Guillaume Crétin, *L'apparition du Mareschal sans reproche, feu messire Jaques de Chabannes*, in *Œuvres poétiques*, ed. by K. Chesney, (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1977), pp. 143-181, loc.cit. v. 1159-1167, p. 180.



N'esperant plus recouvrer jours  
prosperes...

All hope lost of prosperous days  
ahead...

In courtly circles, where everyone was related, such a chorus of widows was not at all improbable.

Guillaume Crétin's innovation was his use of the device of a ghostly apparition in his poem. Instead of a cast of family members, the poet imagined the hero's pale, trembling spectre standing tearfully before him. The old captain was not weeping over his own death, but over the defeat of the royal armies and, more particularly, the capture of François I. As his litany rose to a crescendo, he intoned his terrible words, 'The king is taken'.<sup>21</sup> In this instance, the proud paladins had failed.<sup>22</sup>

A virtuous hero deserved to live. But like Roland and Olivier, or the knights of the Round Table falling on Salisbury Plain, in death were heroes also created. Even so, the passing of a great man was perceived as an injustice, an absence of order. That a captain as young and brilliant as Gaston de Foix should meet his end at the age of 22 was unthinkable for his companions. Charles de la Trémoille's parents certainly found nothing normal in their only son's death at Marignano. And that the son should die before the father! 'Better that he should have been without a father than I without a son,' La Trémoille is said to have declared to François I.<sup>23</sup> The natural order of things had been overturned. True, the two young warriors had fallen in loyal combat, but that was of little consolation.

Upon reflexion, the death of a literary hero was typically the result of duplicity. At Roncevaux, disaster was caused by Ganelon's treachery. On Salisbury Plain, tragedy struck from Mordred's betrayal. This theme of treason and disloyalty was every bit as potent on the cusp of the sixteenth century. In the *Panegyric*, Jean Bouchet attributed the defeat at Pavia to the apathy of the French soldiers who had left the king and his paladins to the mercy of the Spanish. In reality, most knights fell without having exchanged a single blow. Artillery fire was becoming the norm on the battlefield. Since Charles VII, French kings had been increasing the size of their artillery parks, and no campaign was envisaged without cannons. Nevertheless, poets remained faithful to the archaic structures and continued to denounce the thunderous cannons as arms of the devil. The best of the world's knights fell to these weapons, their miserable ends a

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., v. 1028, p. 176.

<sup>22</sup>Jean-Marie Le Gall, *L'honneur perdu de François I<sup>er</sup>: Pavie, 1525*, (Paris: Payot, 2015), pp. 118-122.

<sup>23</sup>*Panegyric*, ff. 149 v<sup>o</sup>-150 r<sup>o</sup>.

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negation of their virtue in life: Jacques de Lalaing (1453), Bayard (1524), La Trémoille and La Palice (1525) are but a few examples. Artillery annihilated not only the hero, but also his very *raison d'être*.

Symphorien Champier imagined the arquebusier who had killed Bayard filled with regret, cursing the inventor of the firearm, and deciding to enter into religion.<sup>24</sup> It is a familiar trope alluding to Lancelot, who became a monk after causing the death of some of his comrades, an act which spelled the end of the Round Table. Jean Bouchet gave La Trémoille's retainers a long 'invective against artillery' following the Battle of Pavia

the meanest and lowest of men, the puniest and most ignorant of fools might now strike down, with one blast of an arquebus, the grandest, richest, strongest, most hardy, prudent, magnanimous and experienced of warriors.<sup>25</sup>

These tears have a morality to them. In weeping over the death of paladins mowed down by firearms, the poets were doubtless lamenting the end of an age. But in this 'new regime of death' which became the norm at the end of the Middle Ages, singing the glory of heroes shot to death was perhaps a way of exorcising the unpredictability and suddenness of this *mors repentina*.<sup>26</sup> And in this way, acolytes of Petrarch thought to avert an infamous and shameful death. Humanists rehabilitated the classical ideal of dying for one's nation, adding to it their Christian belief in immortality gained through glory, to found a temple for the glorification of the great captains.<sup>27</sup> Their discourse on death also played a role in the expression of social emotions, creating bonds by fostering collective emotional experiences.<sup>28</sup>

### **Professional Mourners: the Social and Political Practices of Tears**

Tears were therefore not mere literary artifice. Ancien Régime societies truly did weep. But if we now understand the why, the how still needs to be demystified. The expression of psychological distress in narrative sources remained subject to social

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<sup>24</sup>Symphorien Champier, *La vie de Bayard*, ed. by Denis Crouzet, (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale Éditions, 1992), pp. 209-210.

<sup>25</sup>*Panegyric*, f. 190 v.

<sup>26</sup>Michel Vovelle, *La mort et l'Occident de 1300 à nos jours*, (Paris: Gallimard, 2000 [1983]), p. 98; Philippe Ariès, *L'homme devant la mort*, (Paris: Seuil, 1985 [1977]), vol. 1, p. 18.

<sup>27</sup>Ernst Kantorowicz, 'Mourir pour la patrie (*Pro Patria Mori*) dans la pensée politique médiévale', in Ernst Kantorowicz, *Mourir pour la patrie et autres textes*, (Paris: Fayard, 2004 [1984]), p. 133.

<sup>28</sup>William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

constraints and the control dictated by contemporary emotional models. Christian, philosophical, classical and medieval medical traditions were also intertwined in the mix, if not always in obvious ways.<sup>29</sup> Together, these traditions formed the belief that emotions, and particularly psychological pain, were a disrupting force, inevitable perhaps but to be tempered.<sup>30</sup> For if these emotions conserved their fundamental duality – potentially troubling, but at the same time a stimulating force for the human spirit – men had the power to ‘make use of them’.<sup>31</sup> Emotions also fostered complex interrelationships: grief, where contrary emotions intertwine, led as much to love and sadness as to anger or even fury. Jean Fernel affirmed that

melancholy leads to mania, which we call fury, or furious frenzy. It is a state in which thoughts, speech and actions come close to the extravagances of melancholics. But it has this besides, that it stirs the patient to anger, to quarrels

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<sup>29</sup>Among which, we find Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism, Thomism and the Hippocratic-Galenic model. On the necessary control of emotions in Stoicism, see especially Seneca’s *De Ira* (On Anger) (I, 12, 2) and *On Consolation: To Polybius*; Cicero’s *Tusculanae Disputationes* (*Tusculan Disputations*, IV, 6, 13), inspired by Stoic morality; and Pliny’s *Natural History* (see for example X, LXXXIII-1; XVIII, 1-4; or XXXIII, II). Cf. Plato’s *Timaeus*, Aristotle’s *Physics* and *De Anima* (*On the Soul*), as well as the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, Saint Gregory the Great and Thomas Aquinas (esp. the *Treatise on the Passions* in *Summa Theologica* I-II, Qu. 22-48). On the medical viewpoint of passions as perturbations in the mechanics of bodily fluids (humours and spirits), see the works of Nicolas de la Chesnaye, counsellor to Louis XI, Charles VIII and Louis XII; Ambroise Paré, physician of François I<sup>er</sup> and of the armies; and Jean Fernel, physician of Henri II: Nicolas de La Chesnaye, *La nef de sante avec le gouvernail du corps humain [...]*, et le *traictie des passions de lame*, (Paris: Anthoine Verard, 1507) [hereafter *La nef de santé*], especially the translation of the treatise on the passions of the soul by Benedetto Reguardi – physician of Sixtus IV and of Francesco Sforza –, f. 94 et seq.; Ambroise Paré, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Joseph-François Malgaigne, (Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1840), vol. I, pp. 75, pp. 78-79; and Jean Fernel, *Pathologia [...]*, (Paris, Veuve Jean le Bouc, 1646), pp. 3-4 [hereafter *Pathologia*].

<sup>30</sup>See Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling*, p. 32; and more particularly Léontine Zanta, *La renaissance du stoïcisme au XVI<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 2007 [1914]); Margaret Graver, *Stoicism and emotion*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007); Thomas Dixon, *From Passions to Emotions: The Creation of Secular Psychological Category*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); and on the medical perspective Georges Vigarello, *Le sain et le malsain: santé et mieux-être depuis le Moyen Âge*, (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1993); Sébastien Jahan, *Les Renaissances du corps en Occident (1450-1650)*, (Paris: Belin, 2004).

<sup>31</sup>Luc-Thomas Somme, ‘Passions et temporalité chez Thomas d’Aquin’, *Revue d’éthique et de théologie morale*, 254, 2, (2009), p. 57.

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and to shrieks, giving him a terrible aspect, before finally exerting on his body and spirit much agitation and impetuosity, wherefrom he may throw himself upon all who cross his path, furiously and with an extraordinary rage, like a cruel and ferocious beast, biting, tearing with nails or beating with fists.<sup>32</sup>

Good emotions are those which, mastered, lead to re-action; negative emotions are those which annihilate reason and dehumanise the individual.<sup>33</sup>

The expression of emotions was also coloured by social and sexual distinctions. In accordance with Stoic morality, self-control was a nobiliary virtue, an indicator of social quality and hierarchy. Unsurprisingly, commoners seem more sensitive to emotions, and particularly to collective emotion. In narrative sources, it is the soldiers who first succumbed to fury.<sup>34</sup> Equally unsurprising, excessive manifestations of grief remained associated with women, whose cries and disproportionate displays accompanied their tears: when, in 1552, Henry II sent for François de Scépeaux, sieur de Vieilleville, who had but recently returned home, his wife ‘was unable to contain her tears, failing to hide her sorrow and despair.’ The entire household of women then followed suit, ‘and all through the house there was nought but wailing and weeping, for this sex collectively discharges all its passions and anguish through its eyes.’<sup>35</sup>

And yet, in certain circumstances, the expression of grief was neither improper nor unjustified – especially in war, where loss was omnipresent. But if, contrary to popular perception, some tears were a personal expression of emotion, they were rarely documented. Whether anonymous and externalised when exhibited by the masses or identified and discreet when rolling down the cheeks of noblemen and great captains, they were no less the expression of intense emotion and personal grief. In 1507, after the revolt in Genoa against Louis XII failed, Jean d’Auton relates that the city was filled with ‘tears, cries and lamentations of the poor desolate women who had lost their husbands, brothers or sons in the battles.’<sup>36</sup> In 1553, when the emperor took

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<sup>32</sup>*Pathologia*, pp. 313-314.

<sup>33</sup>Pascal Briostat, ‘La gestion de peur et de la fureur dans les traités d’escrime à la Renaissance’, in Bernard Andenmatten, Armand Jamme, Laurence Moulinier-Brogi and Marilyn Nicoud (ed.), *Passions et pulsions à la cour*, (Firenze: SISMELE – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2015), pp. 339-358.

<sup>34</sup>Except in song, romances and chivalric biographies, which are part of another emotional regime.

<sup>35</sup>Vincent Carloix, *Mémoires de la vie de François de Scépeaux, sire de Vieilleville*, ed. by Claude-Bernard Petitot, (Paris, Foucault, 1822), pp. 6-7.

<sup>36</sup>Jean d’Auton, *Chronique de Louis XII*, ed. by R. de Maulde La Clavière, (Paris: s.n., 1895), vol. 4, p. 225.

Théroutanne, the land was cast in 'mournful grief. Fathers lamented over the loss of their sons, brothers over brothers, families their friends and wives their husbands.'<sup>37</sup> The heartache was one of families, but also that of companions, who found the emotion difficult to accept. In 1528, Vieilleville, commander of the *Régente*, was abandoned by his seamen on the bridge of an enemy galley off the coast of Naples. When Comte Philippin learned of the situation, he ordered a search for Vieilleville, 'with extreme grief and regret, among the dead floating on the water, but could not find his body. He thought he would die of despair.'<sup>38</sup>

The men also seemed to form strong attachments to some of their animals, particularly dogs and war horses. In 1541, in order to save their warships caught in a storm off the coast of Algiers, Spanish soldiers resignedly threw overboard 'the ships' dead weight, everything save the men.'<sup>39</sup> Not even the horses were spared. Years later, Brantôme related that Genoese mariners on the expedition still recalled the soldiers whose 'hearts had broken from pity and grief seeing [the horses] swim in the open seas [and] drown and perish piteously before their eyes.'<sup>40</sup>

These tears expressed personal grief and distress. They bear witness to the love borne for a son, husband or father, or to the friendship for a lost companion considered a kindred soul. They reveal 'great loss', that the living '*regrettent*' and '*plaignent*', 'deeply', 'eyes filled with tears'. The experience was one of 'sad', even 'extreme' grief, deep 'regrets' or 'distress', at times to the point of 'believing one would die' 'of chagrin', of 'despair', of 'melancholy', or of 'grief'. These terms, once strong with meaning, have lost their intensity over time: '*despit*', '*ennuy*', and '*deuil*' were characteristics of psychological or even physical suffering, linked with profound sadness, sometimes touched with torment, bitterness and anger.<sup>41</sup> The expression '*mourir de tristesse*' represents how much survivors must often have felt cornered by these extreme emotions.

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<sup>37</sup>François Rabutin, *Commentaire des dernières guerres en la Gaule Belgique*, ed. by C.-B. Petitot, (Paris: Foucault, 1823), vol. 1, p. 200.

<sup>38</sup>Carloix, *Mémoires de la vie de François de Scépeaux*, pp. 38-39. Their friendship dates from the time Vieilleville was *enfant d'honneur* to the Queen regent and Pillippin a page in the King's Chamber.

<sup>39</sup>25 October 1541. Antonio Magnatoli, the Pope's Legate, affirmed that the next day, the bodies of men and animals littered the shore. Daniel Nordman, *Tempête sur Alger: l'expédition de Charles Quint en 1541*, ([Saint-Denis]: Bouchène, 2011), p. 510.

<sup>40</sup>Pierre de Bourdeille, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Ludovic Lalanne, (Paris: Vve J. Renouard, 1866), vol. 1, pp. 71-72 [Désormais Bourdeille].

<sup>41</sup>*Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330-1500)*, consulted 3/10/2018 (online: <http://www.atilf.fr/dmf/>) [henceforward DMF].

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When nobles mourned, the intensity of the pain expressed was at odds with the propriety of the descriptions. This depended not only on the degree of mourning, but on the author's own personality and intentions. Sorrow was nonetheless present, though far from the exacerbated manifestation of mourning found in literary sources or described in collective grieving. It appeared on the fringes, like stolen moments or stray thoughts buried under often vast documentation. For noblemen, honour was also a consideration: honour lost, or honour stained. Tears might be legitimately expressed only when circumstances, injury or sickness prevented combat and thus the possibility of a heroic death (*la belle mort*). They were permitted in cases of betrayal by friends or when men refused to mount an assault, thus depriving their captain of his assured victory. And they were licensed if defeat in battle, personal failings or rumour cast doubt on one's honour or brought shame or disgrace.

Every now and again, the shedding of tears conveyed more than merely suffering. Tears became political acts of communication, objects of social usage, expressed by design. This is particularly the case with royal tears.<sup>42</sup> They appeared at the death of a great captain and accompanied public stagings of grief at court or even grand ceremonies reminiscent of royal or princely funerals, and observers did remark upon them. The purpose of public tears, staged and symbolic, was to create or preserve allegiance.<sup>43</sup>

The sacredness of the monarch rested on the image of a sacrificial king, his *imitatio Christi*, and his ability to defy death in battle and safeguard his nobility.<sup>44</sup> War was therefore an opportunity to amplify his majesty, but it was also a great gamble. The great wars at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Early Modern era made noble blood flow. Louis XII felt the death of Gaston of Foix, who had been 'as a son' to him, like a great blow. In 1528, when François I learned of the death of Lautrec in Naples, he was deeply affected 'by the loss of such a great man, [...] he ordered the service held in Notre Dame of Paris', in the presence of every prince of the blood and 'in mourning as if for the death of the Dauphin.'<sup>45</sup> And in 1553, when the news of the capture of Théroouanne reached Henry II, he

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<sup>42</sup>Laurent Smagghe, *Les Émotions du prince. Émotions et discours politique dans l'espace bourguignon*, (Paris: Classique Garnier, 2012); Damien Bocquet and Piroška Nagy (ed.), *Politiques des Émotions au Moyen Âge*, (Firenze: SISMEL-Galluzzo, 2010).

<sup>43</sup>Bernard Rimé, *Le partage social des émotions*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005).

<sup>44</sup>Denis Crouzet, 'Désir de mort et puissance absolue de Charles VIII à Henri IV', *Revue de synthèse*, 112 (1991), pp. 423-441.

<sup>45</sup>Martin Du Bellay, *Les mémoires*, ed. by C.-B. Petitot, (Paris: Foucault, 1827), vol. 2, p. 75.

was seized by such a bitter sadness that he remained unable to speak. But at length he expressed his great regret, and the grief His Majesty displayed was not for the loss of the city and the surrounding lands, but for the great number of virtuous men he estimated had died therein.<sup>46</sup>

Unlike familial grief, princely pain and regret were 'aigres' (violent, difficult and intensely felt), 'grands', even 'merveilleux' (in the sense of terrible or extraordinary), and sometimes to the point where they 'could not be appeased'.<sup>47</sup> Superlatives such as these described the unquantifiable intensity of public grief, which was so inconsistent with the archetype of emotional mastery. It was present in the exacerbated manifestations of pain, or conversely, in the equally extraordinary speechlessness. Like the afflictions expressed in literary sources, it was incorporated in the transforming conceptions of death,<sup>48</sup> and the emerging notion of sacrifice for one's nation,<sup>49</sup> propagated through fiction, histories, annals and chronicles, and embraced by men of war in their treaties and memoirs.<sup>50</sup> In this way, princely tears reaffirmed the political as much as the emotional bonds with the old nobles of the sword. The representation of nobiliary legitimacy and its ideal of good government equally emphasised the superiority of the sovereign, who decreed the mourning period and publicly recognised its virtues.

But princes were not the only ones who knew how to use pathos. Ousted captains, affecting bafflement, knew well how to stroke the lachrymal nerve. Following the Peace of Cateau-Cambrésis in April 1559, François de Cossé, Maréchal of Brissac and Governor of Savoie, asked the king to dismiss him, 'as only with a regret which drew hot tears from his heart could he assume the role of minister of privation of that which had been conquered with such glory and blood'.<sup>51</sup> In November 1570, Blaise de

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<sup>46</sup>Rabutin, *Commentaire des dernières guerres en la Gaule Belgique*, vol. 1, p. 200.

<sup>47</sup>DMF.

<sup>48</sup>Cf. infra note 22, and Philippe Ariès, *Essais sur l'histoire de la mort en Occident du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, (Paris: Seuil, 1977 [1975]), pp. 21-35.

<sup>49</sup>In addition to the previously cited article by Ernst Kantorowicz, see Philippe Contamine, 'Mourir pour la patrie, x<sup>e</sup>-xx<sup>e</sup> siècle', in Pierre Nora (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire*, vol. 2: *La nation*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), pp. 11-43; Colette Beaune, *Naissance de la nation France*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), p. 324 et seq.; Nicolas Housley, 'Pro Deo et patria mori: le patriotisme sanctifié en Europe, 1400-1600', in Philippe Contamine (ed.), *Guerre et concurrence entre les États européens du XIV<sup>e</sup> au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1998), pp. 269-303.

<sup>50</sup>Benjamin Deruelle, *De papier, de fer et de sang: chevaliers et chevalerie à l'épreuve de la modernité (ca. 1460 – ca. 1620)*, (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2015), p. 263.

<sup>51</sup>François de Boyvin du Villars, *Mémoires du sieur François de Boyvin*, (Paris: Foucault, 1822), p. 313.

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Montluc, hated by the protestants and vilified by the Montmorencys,<sup>52</sup> justified himself in a letter addressed to Henri III, listing everything his service to the monarchy had cost him in his life. Though he apologised for exposing his pain, he claimed to find no other recourse

Having nothing else to mark my suffering and service, despite the years, but regret for the loss of my children who have died for your Crown, and seven arquebus wounds, daily reminders of the humble and affectionate devotion I have shown in my most humble service to your predecessors, and which I will show all my life to Your Majesty.<sup>53</sup>

Formulated in this way, his tears aimed to shift the balance of power or authority which pitted him against his enemies and the king. Blaise de Montluc used pathos as a ploy to provoke emotion in the reader, gain his support and sympathy, and reinforce the argumentative power of his discourse.<sup>54</sup> But do such tears diminish the anger and pain felt by these captains or the transgression suggested in the expression of personal grief?

### **Tears and Flesh: An Objective Parameter of War?**

Tears, and the emotions they conveyed, could not be confined to a period of mourning or to the public sphere. At times, they also had concrete consequences for how wars unfolded. Simple soldiers constituted the bulk of an army, and grief was omnipresent, but their sadness was rarely evoked in writing. When it was mentioned, it was more often to underline the attachment they had for a lost captain than to describe the manifestations of their emotions. The point here is not to reduce collective sentiment to the sum of individual emotions but to point out, like Nicolas Volcyr, that affection for a captain could also be a singular sentiment. The intensity of the emotion varied no doubt with the officer, the extent to which he conformed to the model of the fatherly captain presented in treatises and military memoirs, as well as the favour that some garnered or could expect from him.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>Paul Courteault, *Blaise de Montluc historien: étude critique sur le texte et la valeur historique des Commentaires*, (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Picard et fils, 1907); Jean-Charles Sournia, *Blaise de Montluc: soldat et écrivain (1500-1577)*, (Paris: Fayard, 1981); Serge Brunet, *'De l'Espagnol dedans le ventre!': les catholiques du Sud-Ouest de la France face à la Réforme (vers 1540-1589)*, (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).

<sup>53</sup>Blaise de Montluc, *Commentaires*, ed. by C.-B. Petitot, (Paris: Foucault, 1822), vol. 7, pp. 482-483.

<sup>54</sup>Raphaël Micheli, *L'émotion argumentée: l'abolition de la peine de mort dans le débat parlementaire français*, (Paris: les Éd. du Cerf, 2010).

<sup>55</sup>Nicolas Volcyr, 'Relation de la guerre des Rustauds', in *Recueil de documents sur l'histoire de Lorraine*, (Nancy: A. Lepage, 1856), pp. 172-173, cited in Nicolas Handfield,



The death or ill-health of a commander provoked turmoil in the ranks. In 1503, French troops lamented the illness which suddenly seized Louis de la Trémoille en route to Naples.<sup>56</sup> In 1522, the death of Marcantonio Colonna in Milan was 'sorely grieved over in the camp.'<sup>57</sup> Eight years later, the demise of Philibert of Chalon during the Siege of Florence was 'deeply regretted and wept over by those in the Spanish as much as the German armies, with whom he had much credit.'<sup>58</sup> The imperial soldiers had held him in great esteem ever since, after succeeding Charles of Bourbon, he had led the Sack of Rome.<sup>59</sup> They were filled with great or dolorous 'regret', 'grief' and 'moans' as a result. They were also 'tearful' or 'wept abundantly'. Just like princely tears, theirs were publicly and conspicuously expressed in funerals or in spontaneous processions. Their legitimacy was no doubt due to their social character and to the ritual nature of the ceremonies, in which the military community bonded over the illustrious dead. These ceremonies equally reinforced cohesion, camaraderie, and the feeling of belonging.

Occasionally, grief turned into anger and even fury. Though the mechanism is not yet completely understood, we can observe that the power of group emotion swept up everything in its path, sometimes changing the course of combat.<sup>60</sup> For, 'if there was nothing stronger than anger and ire to cause men to lose all reason,' wrote Ambroise

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'Ehrliche Kriegsleute': la construction de la représentation du lansquenet au royaume de France lors de la Renaissance (1486-1559), (master's thesis, Université de Montréal, 2018), p. 123.

<sup>56</sup>Auton, vol. 3, pp. 205-206.

<sup>57</sup>Robert de La Marck, *Mémoires du maréchal de Florange dit le jeune aventureux*, ed. by Robert Goubeaux and P.-André Lemoisne, (Paris: Librairie ancienne Édouard Champion, 1924), vol. 2, p. 59.

<sup>58</sup>Bourdeille, vol. 1, pp. 244-245. On his death, see also Pedro Vallés, *Historia del fortissimo, y prudentissimo capitán Don Hernando de Avalos marques de Pescara*, (Anvers: Juan Steelsio, 1558), f. 323 r°.

<sup>59</sup>Bourdeille, vol. 1, pp. 241-242; Paolo Giovio, *La Vita di Ferrando Davalo, marchese di Pescara*, (Firenza: L. Torrentino, 1551), p. 222.

<sup>60</sup>The mechanisms of crowd psychology are indeed still largely debated. See Gustave Le Bon, *Psychologie des foules*, (Paris: Alcan, 1895). For an analysis of his reflections, see especially Vincent Rubio, 'Psychologie des foules, de Gustave le Bon. Un savoir d'arrière-plan', *Sociétés*, 100, 2, (2008), pp. 79-89. For a more recent study see for example Deborah B. Gould, *Moving politics: emotion and ACT up's fight against AIDS*, (Chicago: the University of Chicago press, 2009).

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Paré, it could also lead them to accomplish the most ferocious exploits.<sup>61</sup> Many physicians and men of war in the sixteenth century still followed the teachings of Plato and Aristotle,<sup>62</sup> for whom anger was one of the pillars of courage and ‘retaliation’.<sup>63</sup> Indignation and a desire for vengeance could also fuel soldiers’ drive and aggression. It is this anger in particular which memoirs and military treatises valorise. In the mid-1570s, Italian *maître d’armes* Angelo Viggiani affirmed that there were two types of anger

If you are alluding to furious anger such as obliterates the intellect and all rational discourse, then I see no difference between an infuriated individual and an irrational animal. I concede that fury is a noxious force and has no part in this discussion. But if we are speaking of anger which does not obscure all reason, then I say that it is an advantage [...] and so we may claim that a little anger favours the soldier and all who wish to train with weapons.<sup>64</sup>

Passionate reactions were therefore not all to be proscribed. Brantôme describes how the death of Charles of Bourbon during the assault on Rome brought ‘such a deep regret in his men, that out of rage and to avenge his death, they unceasingly cried out “*carne, carne! Sangre, sangre! Bourbon, Bourbon!*” and did not stop the killing until they were spent.’<sup>65</sup> The chronicler was completely unmoved by the vengeful fury of the troops. He considered it both legitimate and just, ‘for in war, when one’s general has died, one must always become a cruel avenger.’<sup>66</sup>

In no way did this mean that captains and noblemen should let themselves slide from grief into uncontrolled and uncontrollable fury. Their self-mastery should be such that it tempered their sadness and pushed them to consider their actions. Theirs must be a reasoned anger, upon which resolute action could be grounded. Sterile lamentations

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<sup>61</sup>Ambroise Paré, ‘Apologie et traicté contenant les voyages faicts en divers lieux’, in Ambroise Paré, *Les œuvres d’Ambroise Paré conseiller et premier chirurgien du Roy*, (Paris: Gabriel Buon, 1585), p. mcccviii. Cf. *Pathologia*, p. 69.

<sup>62</sup>*La nef de sante*, f° 99 v°. This same duality can be found in Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Paster Gail Kern, *Humoring the body: emotions and the Shakespearean stage*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago press, 2004).

<sup>63</sup>Plato, *Timæus*, trad. G. Bury, (Cambridge Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1956), 70a-d, pp. 181-183; Aristotle, *On the Soul*, (Cambridge Mass.: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 403a, p. 15.

<sup>64</sup>Angelo Viggiani, *Lo Schermo*, (Venezia: Giorgio Angelieri, 1575), p. 52. Cited in and trans. by Brioist, ‘La gestion de peur et de la fureur’.

<sup>65</sup>Bourdeille, vol. 1, p. 259. André Chastel, *Le sac de Rome: 1527: du premier maniérisme à la Contre-Réforme*, (Paris: Gallimard, 1984).

<sup>66</sup>Bourdeille, vol. 1, p. 329.

and apathy were to be given a wide berth. Emotional control was a sign of bravery, as much an attribute befitting a warrior as it was a social quality. It separated the nobleman from the commoner, the good captain from the bad. Princes must possess the same determination – just as Henry II had done after the defeat at Saint Quentin and Montmorency's capture in 1557, which had paved a way to Paris for his adversaries. Claude La Chastre noted that the king had been quite upset, but that

immediately afterwards, [...] instead of losing time in useless regret and complaints, and having called on God to aid him, [...] he resolved virtuously to give all possible order to addressing the present inconvenience.<sup>67</sup>

Catherine de' Medici, who had been needed to secure the kingdom's defence, and been 'left to overcome her justified suffering, [...] came to terms with her pain with a virile and noble heart.'<sup>68</sup> In surmounting these emotions, which was more expected of a man than of a woman, she proved her capacity to govern and the legitimacy of her political action in the crisis which followed. Appropriate sorrow was one that was not only mastered but that also provided impetus for action. If the legitimacy of one's emotions remained linked to social condition, anger and fury became encoded into the values of war during the Renaissance. Neither intrinsically good nor bad, they were deemed beneficial or detrimental depending on the character of the individual.

But there was another slippery slope which menaced soldiers. Affected by the horrors of war, the excessive compassion of some led to a sadness which descended into apathy or even melancholy. On very rare occasions, we find sources which record the inner struggles of soldiers and captains, resulting from the atrocities of combat or the difficulties of military life. Such anecdotes are found in the pages of chroniclers and memorialists or are mentioned by men of war seized by regret or by a fear of dying long after the events have occurred. For all of this, they are no less revealing of the emotional state certain soldiers felt at the time.

Above anything else, military men communicated their thoughts on civilian populations, the primary victims of war. In 1488, Jean Molinet relates, during the war between Maximilian of Habsburg and the rebellious cities of Flanders and Brabant, that many men, women and children took refuge in 'the church in Asque, two leagues from Brussels.' Though they were non-combatants, the church, with all its occupants, was assailed and set on fire. The soldiers heard 'the most pitiful cries of pain and lamentation that had ever been produced', of which they 'could not speak without a

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<sup>67</sup>Claude La Chastre, *Mémoire du voyage de M. le duc de Guise en Italie, son retour, la prise de Callais et de Thionville (1556 et 1557)*, ed. by C.-B. Petitot, (Paris: Foucault, 1823), p. 479.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 481.

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bitter heart, sighs or a flood of tears.<sup>69</sup> Nearly a century later, in 1555, Blaise de Montluc himself expressed regret over having evacuated Siena of its extra mouths to feed. Of ‘all the sorrows and desolations I have witnessed,’ he declared in his memoirs, ‘I have never before seen the like, nor do I believe I will again.’ But though he still regretted the event twenty years later, he concluded with the pragmatism he believed every great captain must possess, and also with great lucidity regarding the military condition, that ‘those were the rules of war: one must quite often be cruel to achieve triumph over one’s enemies. May God be merciful on us all, who do such evils.’<sup>70</sup>

In some cases, this compassion was also directed towards the enemy. Even before François de Guise raised the siege of Metz led by Charles V, the imperial troops were in such a disarray that the French army let deserters pass without seeking to seize them for ransom

We sojourned in the city until Monday [De Vieilleville communicated] with much rejoicing. Our joy would have been perfect and complete had it not been for the pitiable distress we witnessed in the camp of the Duke of Alva, which was so hideous, that there was not a heart that did not break. We found hordes of soldiers, death-sick, who had fallen over in the mud. Others sat on large stones, leg-deep in the mire, frozen to their knees, which were deadened, crying for mercy, begging us to finish them off.<sup>71</sup>

These terrible accounts are depicted in striking contrast to the images of ‘la guerre joyeuse’. The compassion they reveal troubles the conscience. Military conditions were extremely precarious, and emotions, particularly sadness, omnipresent in war. When too strong, they became uncontrollable or were never fully mastered. Melancholy, apathy and death were sometimes the result. Melancholy defined both black bile, one of the four cardinal humours, and the state of profound sadness which could result when in excess. It caused malaise, lassitude, even a depressed state, and was susceptible of provoking death or suicide.<sup>72</sup> According to physicians, this exacerbated form of sorrow manifested in symptoms such as whimpering, uncontrollable weeping and befuddlement, in a tendency towards apathy, fear and anxiety, and in a general enfeeblement resulting in lividity and emaciation, ‘following

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<sup>69</sup>Jean Molinet, *Chroniques*, ed. by J.-A. Buchon, (Paris: Verdrière, 1828), vol. 3, p. 482.

<sup>70</sup>Montluc, *Mémoires*, vol. 2, pp. 267-268.

<sup>71</sup>Carloix, *Mémoires*, p. 102.

<sup>72</sup>DMF. In contemporary medical thought, an excess of black bile can also result in anger and ire.

which death was the most likely outcome.<sup>73</sup> The early sixteenth-century medical descriptions did not pertain only to men or nobles of course, nor did they relate exclusively to those in the military.<sup>74</sup> The stories and memoirs of men of war, however, often focus on a few representative cases of melancholy. It was rarely described as directly resulting from the experience of war or combat, but rather as the loss of a fellow soldier or of one's honour. Ostensibly, it was for this reason that many captains had been unable to surmount their pain, succumbing to 'despit', 'regret' or 'mélancolie'. But did Louis of Luxembourg really 'die from regret' in 1503, as Brantôme described, when Louis XII disavowed him by refusing him command of the Army of Naples?<sup>75</sup> Charles d'Alençon may have 'die of pleurisy and despair', as some maintained, when he quit Pavia without seeing combat, pursued by the rumour that he had shamelessly fled. Unless he perished from regret, as still others claimed.<sup>76</sup> Antonio de Leyva may have die of guilt and chagrin after failing in his invasion of Provence in 1536 – the very invasion on which he insisted the Emperor embark. And finally, did Oudard du Biez, accused of complicity in the surrender of Boulogne, stripped of his nobility on a public scaffold though reprieved of execution, die 'as much from regret as from old age [...] for who could bear to live after such an injury and such disgrace?'<sup>77</sup>

Grief did not invariably result in death, but the kind that led to apathy or inaction was to be averted. Nonetheless, in contrast to their treatment of fear, military treatises devoted few words to how to counter this pain which constantly affected combatants. Michel d'Amboise and Raymond de Fourquevaux did not speak of it, though their treatises overflow with details concerning the handling of troops and the need for a commander to consider the human nature of his soldiers.<sup>78</sup> In the theoretical literature, the requirements of grief appear only through discussions on fear or

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<sup>73</sup>Ambroise Paré, *Œuvres*, p. 78. While Paré describes melancholy, its symptoms and its possible outcomes, Nicolas de La Chesnaye speaks instead of 'sudden death', *La nef de sante*, f° 95 v°-96.

<sup>74</sup>Hélène Germa-Romann, *Du 'bel mourir' au 'bien mourir'. Le sentiment de la mort chez les gentilshommes français (1515-1643)*, (Geneva: Droz, 2001), pp. 184-195; Jean-Claude Schmitt, 'Le suicide au Moyen Âge', *Annales. ESC*, 31 (1976), pp. 3-28.

<sup>75</sup>Bourdeille, vol. 2, p. 355.

<sup>76</sup>Bourdeille, vol. 4, p. 11. On this story, cf. book 3, pp. 404-408.

<sup>77</sup>Montluc, vol. 3, pp. 217-218. Cf. Bourdeille, IV, pp. 22, 60; Michel de Montaigne, *Les essais*, (Paris: Abel L'Angelier, 1595), p. 29; and David Potter, *Un homme de guerre au temps de la Renaissance: la vie et les lettres d'Oudart du Biez, maréchal de France, gouverneur de Boulogne et de Picardie (vers 1475-1553)*, (Arras: Artois Presses Université), 2001.

<sup>78</sup>Raymond de Fourquevaux, *Instructions sur le fait de la guerre*, (Paris: Michel de Vascosan, 1548); Michel d'Amboise, *L'art et Guidon des Gens de la Guerre*, (Paris: Arnoul l'Angelier, 1552 [1543]).

## WAR AND GRIEF

violence. It is in their memoirs that commanders sometimes considered the sentiment. In 1553, Sebastian de Luxembourg-Martigues was captured at Théroouanne and hid his identity for several days to avoid an overly heavy ransom. The tears, cries and laments that poured forth upon learning that his brother, Charles, had died in the siege of Hesdin, would betray him.<sup>79</sup> During the siege of Thionville in 1558, the Duke of Guise ordered that the death of Pietro Strozzi not be revealed to Blaise de Montluc, his 'greatest friend', 'for fear that my regret would prevent me from doing my duty in combat on the morrow.'<sup>80</sup> Rare mentions such as these certainly reveal that controlling emotional pain was not as imperious a necessity as that of mastering fear.

### Conclusion

Contrary to common belief, military men do not seem to have been doomed to emotional muteness, whether social or literary. This preconceived idea is based on an essentialised understanding of the sources grouped under the generic term of 'military memoirs' despite their diversity. Though it is impossible to access the actual emotions, and though only written expression of these emotions subsist, their significance and social function remain. The words that military men, caught up in the chaos of conflicts, chose to speak or to transmit these emotions is important.

Grief and pain occupied a position which varied according to the documentary context, the personality and intentions of the author, and the events being reported. Far from becoming an archaism, the gift of tears, inherited from Christian morality and chivalric romance, was revisited through the prism of new representations of death, becoming a topos of Early Modern warfare. The social, political or ritualised character of the emotions expressed was not always antinomic to the real affection experienced at the death of a husband, brother, father, fellow soldier or captain.

The relationship to affect remains nonetheless ambiguous. But it was not the emotions themselves – good or bad – nor the inability to control them which drew the attention of authors, so much as their beneficial or detrimental consequences for military operations. If no universal thought was elaborated on the subject of sadness as had evolved regarding fear, the cases that are recorded demonstrate that military men were conscious of the importance of emotions and their influence on the conduct of war. However, while fear could be surmounted through training and experience (by acquiring the habitus of war), there seemed for them to be no means of surmounting grief other than will and virtue, which belonged foremost to gentlemen. But how many reacted instead as did Charles de Cossé, when he received the dispatch which relieved him of his duties as *lieutenant-général delà les monts*? Unable 'to make reason command

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<sup>79</sup>Paré, *Les œuvres d'Ambroise* (1585), pp. mcccxxxv, mcccxxxvi.

<sup>80</sup>Montluc, vol. 2, pp. 443-444.

his passions or his anguish, great sobs escaped him, and amongst them, three or four tears of blood.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Boyvin du Villars, p. 431.