

Henry Heller — *Iron and Blood: Civil Wars in Sixteenth-Century France*. Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. Pp. xiv, 191.

Henry Heller's *Iron and Blood* is a natural sequel to his *Conquest of Poverty: The Calvinist Revolt in Sixteenth-Century France* (Leiden, 1986). In his earlier book, he attempted to portray the rising tide of French Calvinism in the first half of the sixteenth century as being fomented by economic hardship and distress and suggested that the groundswell of support for the new religion was composed primarily of artisans and the urban lower orders. In *Iron and Blood*, Heller picks up where he left off, and moves on to discuss the French religious wars of the second half of the century. Neither a detailed narrative history of the civil wars nor a short survey for beginners, the book is a brief personal interpretation of why the wars were fought and who benefitted. Although many principal figures and key incidents are recounted within, this is not the book to turn to for factual information or a detailed account of a particular campaign. It is above all else a 150-page sustained argument.

The argument runs as follows. The rising level of social conflict and discontent in the first half of the sixteenth century, as represented by the numerous evangelical communities established throughout the kingdom, led directly to the political, social, and religious upheavals of the civil wars (1562-1598). As those most attracted to the new religion were from the lower orders, it was inevitable that the outbreak of violence in the early 1560s would display "certain characteristics of a class conflict" (12). Thus, aristocrats and notables from both church and state found themselves pitted against an alliance of craftsmen, lesser merchants, and plebeians. As was the case in the revolution of 1789, sixteenth-century society "was divided by class hostility, beset by growing poverty and economic crisis, and menaced by the spectre of royal bankruptcy.... Like the eighteenth century, the sixteenth century had created a class of merchants and craftsmen who were prepared to challenge the religious as well as the political and social foundations of the existing order" (47). With the outbreak of war in the 1560s, the plebeian rank and file of the Huguenot movement gave way to the leadership of the bourgeoisie. Calvinist notables, wealthy merchants, and professionals provided the organization and leadership that the earlier religious revolts of the 1520s and 1540s sorely lacked. This new alliance turned the revolution of the commoners into a counter-revolution by the aristocracy, as the nobles reacted to secure and sustain their rightful place at the top of society. As a result, control of both the Calvinist movement and the catholic reaction were seized by the aristocracy in order to guarantee the defeat of this plebeian-bourgeois alliance. Protestant and catholic nobles worked in tandem to ensure this end. Contemporaries were well aware of this aristocratic conspiracy against the lower orders, as "Catholic nobles step aside so as to allow those of the new religion to sack, pillage, and ransom the places inhabited by Catholics. In like manner, the Protestant nobles allow the Catholics to do the same in areas inhabited by Protestants" (62). Clearly, "religion is beside the point", as "nobles were using the religious wars to serve their ends at the expense of the rest of society" (60, 65). In short, the civil wars "were a feudal reaction masterminded by the nobility" (70).

The result of this class war was never in doubt. Unlike the revolution of 1789, the class war of the sixteenth century was a revolution *manquée*. Even though commoners of both religions railed against the ravages of troops and the unfair burdens of excessive taxes and subsidies, they were never to achieve their goal of a "society of equals" (101). As the radical democratic implications of the Huguenot republic in the Midi following the St. Bartholomews massacres were paralleled on

the catholic side by the popular, democratic, and equally urban League in the 1580s and early 1590s, aristocrats of both religions ultimately managed to wear down and defeat the urban popular movements. Indeed, the structural weakness of both the Huguenots and the League was the tension and contradiction between the radical, popular movements in the towns and their aristocratic leadership (119). The conclusion of this socio-economic war occurred in the mid-1590s as popular movements all over France erupted into anti-seigneurial insurrection. The Croquants in the southwest were only the prototype as commoners everywhere abandoned all rhetoric of religion and revolted “against the continuation of the civil wars”, viewing their actions as “a repudiation of the nobility as well as the clergy” (120). The result was rallying around the royalist cause of Henry of Navarre, who the commoners hoped would end the aristocratic suppression and the nobles hoped would restore the social order. It was a pyrrhic victory for the aristocracy, however. Even though they retained their place at the top of society and managed to subdue further talk of democracy and equality, they had lost ground in the process. “It was the middle class — ranging from officers to merchants, well-to-do artisans, and rich peasants — that was the principal beneficiary of the civil war...[and] that seized the lion’s share of land taken from the Church or from the impoverished peasants.” Thus, the civil wars “were at one and the same time a seigneurial reaction and an important phase of bourgeois ‘primitive accumulation’” (138). In this sense, “the defeat of the middle class ought not to blind us to the fact of its relative ascension throughout the sixteenth century” (149). The bourgeoisie survived to fight another day in 1789.

To say the least, this is a novel view of the Wars of Religion, indeed a Wars of Religion without religion at all. The old corpse of “the rise of the middle class”, slain by J.H. Hexter more than four decades ago, was long thought to be dead and buried. Professor Heller has not only attempted to breathe some life back into it, but he has got it twitching and trying to sit bolt upright. To be sure, my encapsulation of his argument above, though I think fairly representative of his views, is not as nuanced or as subtle as he might wish. Nevertheless, I think it fair to say that early modernists have abandoned the unreconstructed marxist approach to history about as thoroughly as scholars of the French Revolution. So, Heller’s explanation of the Wars of Religion raises a number of questions in light of both the evidence and much recent research. If religious discontent in the first half of the century was truly built upon economic hardship, why did an overwhelming majority of artisans, craftsmen, and plebeians all over France choose to remain loyal to the traditional church? If class rather than religion divided Frenchmen in the civil wars, why did noble slay noble, merchant slay merchant, and artisan kill artisan by the score? Was it just coincidence that Philip II and the pope supported one side while Elizabeth and William of Orange aided the other? Rather than trying to snuff out the popular movement of the Huguenots around mid-century, did not the conversion of scores of nobles to the new religion provide it a lifeline, without which it would have succumbed to royal suppression? Is *all* the violence of the civil wars (or even most of it?) best explained by class war? I would venture that most historians find Natalie Davis’s “rites of violence” a far more plausible explanation. And it is really fair to argue that the civil wars were finally brought to an end in the 1590s because of “concerted popular protest” (149)? Did the abjuration of Henry of Navarre and his settlement with the towns and aristocrats really play only a minor role? These are all questions that are raised by the book’s conclusions but left unanswered. The recent books by Denis Crouzet and Barbara Diefendorf, for just two examples (and they appeared too late for Professor Heller to consult), both argue very persuasively in slightly different ways that religion was at

the heart of the violence of the civil wars. And this does not even take account of similar views of many of the authors that Heller does cite.

The book is not without merit, however, and it would be a pity if readers dismissed Professor Heller out of hand because of his unorthodox views. It is useful to be reminded from time to time that social tension was a permanent feature of the Ancien Régime, and that whatever vertical bonds existed to bridge the social gulf — and religion was one such bond in the sixteenth century — that class tension was a structural component of this hierarchical society. This tension often erupted into violence during times of economic hardship, as the many examples Professor Heller cites from the fifteenth century to the end of the Ancien Régime attest. Moreover, I would agree with him that the most extreme interpretations of Roland Mousnier's "society of orders" tend to underplay or even eliminate the tension altogether. Thus, in my view, chapter 6 on the Croquants and other revolts of the mid-1590s is the strongest of the book. Here, the evidence does support his view that there were many Frenchmen (and even a few women) all over France who were tired of war, disillusioned by the League, and ready to use force to protect their families and property from all armies. All the anecdotal evidence compiled by Professor Heller, however, is still not enough to persuade me that "from start to finish, the wars represented a kind of class war from above" (136).

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Bruce W. Hodgins et Jamie Benidickson — *The Temagami Experience: Recreation, Resources, and Aboriginal Rights in the Northern Ontario Wilderness*. Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1989, 370 p.

Au Canada, comme à l'étranger, les problèmes des Amérindiens ne laissent plus les historiennes et les historiens indifférents. Les abus des gouvernements fédéral et provinciaux ont abouti dans de nombreux cas à leur conférer une attitude renonciatrice en ce qui concerne le respect des droits des Autochtones ainsi que de leur environnement. C'est dans ce contexte que s'inscrit le livre de Bruce W. Hodgins et de Jamie Benidickson, *The Temagami Experience*.

Cet ouvrage est bourré d'informations qui permettent de comprendre l'évolution du territoire des Temeaugama Anishnabai, situé au nord-est de l'Ontario. Le « peuple de l'eau profonde » était installé dans la région de Temagami, sur une étendue d'environ 9 840 km², depuis au moins 5 000 ans. Les contacts avec les Français d'abord, puis avec les Anglais, bouleversèrent leur vie paisible, occupée jusque-là par la chasse et la pêche, et les entraînèrent dans l'impitoyable compétition de la traite des fourrures. La « Proclamation » du roi George III en 1763 et le traité Robison-Huron en 1850 furent les deux premières tentatives gouvernementales de délimitation du territoire des Temeaugama. La signature du traité est à la source de la dispute qui s'est développée entre les Autochtones et le gouvernement. En effet, les Temeaugama partent du principe que n'ayant pas signé le traité Robison-Huron, ils ont le droit de reprendre leurs terres. Selon les auteurs, il n'existe aucune preuve que les Autochtones aient participé aux réunions préliminaires ou même à la signature du