

*Tous ceux qui tombent.*  
*Visages du massacre de la Saint-Barthélemy*

Jérémie Foa  
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Jérémie Foa's book seeks to reconstruct the individual stories of those involved in the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in August 1572. The author undertakes a significant mission: despite the frequent anonymity of these figures, 'it is our duty to name them' (212). He thus presents a 'history of the small, the ordinary, the mundane', to examine the event 'from below, at ground level, through its anonymous protagonists—victims or killers, mere passersby and fervent slaughterers—within their human triviality' (7). The book is structured into twenty-six short chapters, without an introduction or conclusion, and supplemented at the end with footnotes, bibliographic suggestions, and references to various sources.

This book is highly engaging for its focus on the participants, their life paths, and their actions during the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre. This 'history from below' is, above all, an exercise in identification, akin to a police investigation (242). While some well-known perpetrators were already documented—ordinary men such as Thomas Croizier (31 and 275), Nicolas Pezou (55 and 269), or Jean Tanchou (197)—Jérémie Foa introduces us to others like Claude Chenet (93 and 266), Pierre Coullon, André Mornieu (161 and 264), among others. The book also highlights a few victims, such as Louis Chesneau (69), Pierre de La Ramée (81), Abraham Baillet (211), François de la Martellière (226), and more. It also recounts acts of rescue, some heroic, like those of the Burlamacchi children (163), the goldsmith Augustin Cerize (167), or the last-minute salvation of Claude Puget (193).

Foa explores the notion of solidarity, whether local or professional (170), coexisting with the worst atrocities of 'domestic slaughter' (189) and 'neighbourly violence' (234). This proximity between neighbours, between the killers and their victims, is central to the book: all share the same local knowledge and familiarity with the area (39). The historian's work of identification is geographical as well: the rue de l'Homme-Armé (53), the vallée de la Misère (48), and so forth. Beyond merely identifying people and places, Foa aims to show that the St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre was a 'neighbourly massacre' (8, 41, and 256), carried out between neighbours on a 'micro-local' scale (157). He argues against the idea that the massacre

was premeditated, suggesting instead that it was the result of long-standing grievances—cumulative vexations, sometimes minor (‘micro-persecutions’: p. 142), sporadic imprisonments (such as at the Conciergerie between 1567 and 1570), and various conflicts among neighbours who knew each other well. Thus, the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre appears as the unpredictable culmination of prolonged tension (35).

What might initially seem like a history of anecdotal ‘news items’ (139) involving ordinary men and women gains significance under two conditions. The first is to situate the ‘neighbourly crime’ within a broader historical context. Foa devotes several passages to clothing (such as the fashion of embossing: p. 158), food (21), the term ‘the said opinion’ (*ladite opinion*) (27), the inferior status of women (134), the Paris militia (33), the precarious status of scholars (75), the baptismal names given by Protestants to their children (207), and the miniaturisation of watchmaking (255). The second condition involves a critical examination of the sources. The author used notarial records (8), the prison registers of the Conciergerie, and writings from contemporaries like Montaigne, L’Estoile, De Thou, and Aubigné. Of these sources, he heavily relies on *Mémoires de France sous Charles neuvième* by Simon Goulart (91, 108, 144, 208, 244, etc.): this text enables him to compile lists of names that he then traces in the archives.

However, these archives also reveal surprises, pitfalls, and disappointments, which Foa carefully notes. The banality of evil is reflected in the notarial acts that continue to be recorded during the massacre: marriages, sales, and purchases carried on in St. Bartholomew’s Paris (116). The author observes the same ‘archival indifference’ in Lyon or Toulouse (123), although it is not possible for him to document those who did not participate in the massacres (216). Confronted with sources that are sometimes tedious or incomplete (245), Foa advises ‘long browsing’ (50 and 253), relying on the serendipity of research (222) to make a ‘fortunate find’ (92). He stresses the importance of caution, noting that the archives distort reality and often neglect ‘humble’ people—the weak, the small, the poor, and women (219). The author admits he often resorts to hypotheses (148), for instance, regarding the death of François de la Martellière (233), and imagination serves as ‘the primary driver of [his] curiosity’ (220). Despite all his efforts, the sources sometimes leave him with a sense of incompleteness (65), powerless before the ‘faces we have not recognised’ (213). It is to this personal journey that Jérémie Foa invites us, to his dreams of knowledge (65) or digging beneath the Eiffel Tower (101), and to the echoes of the present his research inspires, such as the assassination of Samuel Paty (84).

This is what makes this book so unique and compelling.