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Out of Their Classical Depth: From Pathos to Bathos in Early English Tragedy, or, The Comedy of Terrors

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We—and this includes Stephen Greenblatt in *Hamlet in Purgatory* (pp. 152-53)—tend to take for granted the creaky neo-Senecan machinery of the ghostly framing device in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, if not to snicker at its naïveté, as Beaumont found it easy to do in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*: "When I was mortal, this my costive corpse/Did lap up figs and raisins in the Strand…" (V.303-4).[1] I propose to listen attentively to those creaks and to some of their reverberations through English tragedy from the late 1580s on. My excuse for doing so in the present context is that the spectre of Don Andrea and his companion Revenge are conspicuous "outsiders within" in at least two senses: with respect to the dramatic action, obviously, but also as instruments for superimposing a pagan eschatology upon a play-world that is nominally Christian.

That eschatology, I think, is not just classically kitschy decor; its very kitschiness is functional. So it more clearly is in, say, *Antonio's Revenge* ten years later, where a mannerist Marston evokes "Tragoedia Cothernata" (II.ii.220) by way of obtrusive Senecan scraps and grotesque postures—witness Andrugio's Ghost: "I taste

1. Faser and Rabkin (p. 547, n. 29) also cite the echo of Clarence's ghost in Shakespeare's *Richard III*, V.iii.125.

the joys of heaven/Viewing my son triumph in his black blood" (V.iii.67-68). At such moments, encouraged by our sense of the boy-actors who played the roles, we can with reasonable confidence affix the label of parody. By comparison, the pagan trappings of *The Spanish Tragedy* seem to take themselves seriously, as if claiming to delineate a valid and coherent metaphysics. It is in this sustained cause that they protest too much, and, whether or not the pagans themselves took such fictions seriously—Seneca himself, in fact, pronounced them to be childish[2]—the cause is by definition a lost one for an Elizabethan audience.

Not only is the pagan eschatological framework of *The Spanish Tragedy* richly detailed—Andrea's narrative account of Hades impressively confines in little room the mighty underworld descents of epic—but it gets the first and last words, and very extravagant ones they are. Its paganism also obtrudes regularly into the main action, notably by way of Hieronimo—from his multiply plagiarized Latin fantasia on suicide (II.v.67ff.), to the Senecan tags he opposes to the Bible's "*Vindicta mihi!*" (III.xiii.1ff.), to his resolution to "Knock at the gates of Pluto's court" (III.xiii.110), itself echoed by Isabella's "sorrow and despair", which "hath cited me/To hear Horatio plead with Rhadamanth" (IV.ii.28-29). It is Hieronimo's resolution, of course, to take the infernal work in hand that spectacularly prevails, and his infringement on the divine monopoly of revenge might have been expected to guarantee his damnation. Instead, it surprisingly engages the pagan machinery on his behalf: Andrea's ghost will personally "lead Hieronimo where Orpheus plays,/Adding sweet pleasure to eternal days" (IV.v.23-24), while his request that "sweet Revenge" (29) put his slain enemies in the place of mythology's archetypal sufferers—Tityus, Ixion, Sisyphus (31, 33, 40)—meets with eager assent:

> Then haste we down to meet thy friends and foes:
> To place thy friends in ease, the rest in woes.
> For here, though death hath end their misery,
> I'll there begin their endless tragedy. (45-48)

Thus pagan eternity eclipses the Christian version—except that the glow of truth shines just brightly enough to build in the reminder that this hell is indeed a stage fable, standing in to some unknowable extent for one that is not. Balthazar will be left "Repining at our joys that are above" (38); Pedringano will "live, dying still in endless flames/Blaspheming gods and all their holy names (43-44). The audience receives a parting kick, as it were, in its willing suspension of disbelief.

2. See below, n. 13.

Literal belief in this fabulous hell is never in question, and we are accordingly free to laugh away its excesses, rhetorical and otherwise, as sheer literary inventions. But the laughter will be uneasy, precisely in proportion as classical fable is felt to shadow Christian truth. I think that this uneasiness and uncertainty would attach to theatrical ghosts throughout the period, however vaguely or outrageously Senecan, even if, as Greenblatt insists (esp. pp. 236–54), Hamlet's father stands out as a purgatorial tease (at once declaring and withholding the horrible "secrets of my prison-house" and even using the word "purg'd" [Shakespeare, *Ham.*, I.v.13-14]). Even in his ultra-serious case, a nervous humour hovers in the air: "Alas, poor ghost!" (4). I would further extend this theatrical phenomenon to those early tragic protagonists whose grotesque excesses in both suffering and cruelty blur the distinction between serious and comic in dramatic universes nominally homogeneous, whether pagan or Christian. An Elizabethan audience is regularly cued to respond with something like the mixed belief and disbelief structurally imposed in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Thus, in the thoroughly pagan *Titus Andronicus*, Aaron imports a nagging Christian diabolism, while in the Christian-dominated *The Jew of Malta*, where religion is nevertheless up for grabs, Barabas' destiny as a human tea-bag assimilates damnation to pagan "endless tragedy" by bringing, as it were, imagined underworld horror concretely, but also ridiculously, *up* to earth.[3]

Such mixed effects stem, ultimately, from a sign defiantly declaring its own disjunction from its signified, the deferral of meaning through the intervention of signification. A classicized eternity can never *be* the "promis'd end" of the Christian promise (or threat) but rather is doomed to remain the "image of that horror" (Shakespeare, *Lr.*, V.iii.264, 265)—a point self-reflexively made by the exchange of the pagan Kent and Edgar. Intervention in what? In, essentially, that unified medieval symbolic system that called a spade a spade, a devil a devil. Self-conscious representation changes the equation, humour included, by making the whole indeterminately greater, because infinitely less, than the sum of its

3. What for me is the crucial question of jarring metaphysical systems is simply sidestepped in traditional discussions of Senecan elements in Elizabethan tragedy, most recently that of Miola, even where, for instance, he cites Aaron as at once "swaggeringly Senecan" and descended from "other progenitors including the Machiavel and Vice" (p. 27). Nor is Miola at all concerned with the possible inflection of Senecan influence on English practice by "parallel uses on the Continent" (p. 10). By the same token, Seneca does not appear in the index of Cox's work, the most recent full-length study of the diabolical tradition in English drama, which confines itself to "stage devils" and their direct descendants, viewed "in light of traditional demonological assumptions" (p. 2), both Catholic and Protestant.

parts. Of course, there was plenty of humour in the medieval stage imag(in)ings of that horror which purported to be not images at all but incarnations in action of "the thing itself" (*Lr.*, III.iv.106). The Last Judgement pageants abound in gleeful demonic recitals of sins committed and endless punishments in store; the Wakefield version is typical: "Now shall they have rom in pik and tar ever dwelland;/Of thare sorow no some, bot ay to be yelland/In oure fostré" (ll. 597-99). But, as a function of the divine comedy, to which the comic devils are in service, these are not endless *tragedies* in any pertinent sense of that term, and among the "warid wights" divided from the "chosen childer" (*Judgment*, ll. 528, 524), there is neither jesting nor cursing, but only the sorrowful echoing of the true Rhadamanth's awful Word:

> Alas, for doyll this day!
> Alas, that ever I it abode!
> Now am I dempned for ay;
> This dome may I not avoide. (ll. 512-15)

As for those comic caricatures of worldly tyranny often labelled theatrical ancestors of Barabas, the joke is naturally, supernaturally, and metadramatically, on them, as, in contrast to *The Spanish Tragedy*, the ending of false revels reveals true ones—witness Diabolus in the N. Town *Death of Herod*:

> This catel is min[e].
> I shall hem bring onto my celle.
> I shall hem teche pleys fin[e]
> And shewe such mirthe as is in helle. (ll. 233-36)

If they acknowledge their endless ends at all, it is, like the Wakefield Cain, by ventriloquizing the moral:

> Now faire well, felows all, for I must nedys weynd,
> And to the dwill be thrall, warld withoutten end.
> Ordand there is my stall, with Sathanas the feynd. (*The Killing of Abel*, ll. 464-66)

They may retain a touch of the bullying blindness that damned them—Cain can still manage to curse, "Ever ill might him befall that theder me commend" (l. 466)—but none goes out with boisterous defiance like Barabas ("Die, life! Fly, soul! Tongue, curse thy fill, and die! [Marlowe, *Jew*, V.v.89]) or Richard III ("let us to it pell-mell;/If not to heaven, then hand in hand to hell" [Shakespeare, *R3*,

V.iii.312-13]) or, for that matter, Macbeth: "Blow wind, come wrack,/At least we'll die with harness on our back" (Shakespeare, *Mac.*, V.v.50-51). In dramatic universes that multiply replace Medieval certainties with more or less fantastic "dreams" figuring "the dread of something after death" (*Ham.*, III.i.65, 77), such bluster is not comically absurd, like that of Herod, for whom Death and devils visibly wait in the background; it *un*-Herods Herod by taking on the thrilling charge of eschatological risk, the one most of us run. It is only a small step to rendering that risk explicit through conscious unknowing, the abyss that gapes uncannily for the lost souls of *The Duchess of Malfi*; Julia may serve as spokeswoman: "I go,/I know not whither" (Webster, V.ii.283-84).

In terms of literary history, the master narrative here is the invention of English tragedy by grafting medieval traditions of representing comic evil onto re-"discovered" classical stock, particularly the models of Seneca, which supply the revenge motif and the proliferation of horrors. It is not surprising that such mixed breeding should branch off in incongruous metaphysical directions. But I also want to suggest that this hybrid, which flowers so abundantly and variously in the English theatrical climate from around 1585, is actually a transplant, and that its origins shed light on the cultural work it continues to perform in its new soil.

Even in adapting this potted metaphor, I am conscious of trying to coax new life into a wilted perennial; as early as 1911, after all, Elizabeth Jelliffe Macintire opined in *PMLA* that "English classicism", which "made firm roots in Elizabethan soil", was an "exotic" plant that "came of French stock" (p. 496). But her idea of what that meant was a rather restrictive one, to say the least:

> The French mind tends to orderliness of idea and rule of procedure. It is the land of *convenance*. Hence, it is not strange that the notion of developing literature on some definite and well-conceived plan appears early in France. (Macintire, p. 498)

Quaint as the expression now seems, the prejudice is still built into official literary history and, with respect to drama, it continues to exercise much the same influence as it did on Macintire, who does not allow her discussion of dramatic literature to stray in the unruly direction of the theatre. The French contribution remains firmly circumscribed within what used to be conceived as the Sidney-Pembroke sphere of influence, decorously extending from Philip Sidney himself, who set out the rules in *An Apology for Poetry*, to Fulke Greville's closet drama, to the Countess of Pembroke's translation of Robert Garnier's *Marc Antoine,* and more or less finally, to Samuel Daniel, with his unstaged *Cleopatra* and *Philotas*.

This is the neat little garden planted by Macintire (pp. 523-24), and subsequent criticism, by and large, has kept it carefully tended and free from weeds, on the comfortable assumption that flowers and weeds are different species. That assumption deserves to be delved to the root, and I propose to do my part here, not merely by extending French neo-classical influence to the Elizabethan theatre in its most public and popular form, but by de-classicizing, with due caution, French drama itself.

There is no question but that the Italians and the French were first off the Neo-Senecan mark, putting in place the generic scaffolding that enabled Sidney to praise *Gorboduc* (1561) as a trail-blazer, though more for its poetry "rising to the height of Seneca's style" than for its faulty "circumstances" (p. 134). It is striking that Sidney, writing about thirty years later, found no more recent example of English neo-classical tragedy to praise, despite the appearance in the interim of translations of Seneca's plays, while the corpus of original works in Italy and, especially, France was already considerable. The Italian avatars, beginning with Cinthio's *Orbecce* (1544), are an obvious source of extravagant and sensationalistic horror. What the French ones, especially those of Garnier, most obviously contribute is serious political thought with immediate, if cautious, applicability, given the profuse bleeding of the body politic from those "wounds of civil war" whose very thought was painful to the English.[4] The apparatus of classical mythology, including the omnipresent motif of vengeance, is justified by classical historical settings but becomes a way of figuring the self-immolation of France through a concept that *anglicistes* are likely to think of as quintessentially Marlovian: the scourge of God. Diabolical forces of division are unleashed upon a nation that has abused the divine favour, with the implicit promise that, once due humility, piety, and virtue are restored—as seems never to have been the case in ancient Rome, at least—the incendiaries of discord will be consumed in the flame of God's righteous wrath.

Garnier's first tragedy, *Porcie*, first published in 1568, then again in 1574—a play that Kyd must have known, since he proposed to translate it as a sequel to his rendition of *Cornélie* in late 1593 or early 1594—proclaims its civil war theme through an opening invocation of discord by the Fury Mégère. The politico-reli-

4. Hence my allusion to the title of Thomas Lodge's play (c. 1587-92) on the wars between Marius and Sulla, a precedent the French did not fail to apply to their own situation (though not, to my knowledge, in dramatic form).

gious redeployment of the Senecan device is striking compared with its use in *Gorboduc*, even if the latter's preoccupation is likewise civil war. There it is in the Dumb Show preceding Act Four that the three Furies (Alecto, Megaera, and Tisiphone) rise from hell, "each driving before them a king and a queen"—these include Tantalus, Medea, and (perhaps in compliment to Thomas Preston) Cambyses—"which, moved by Furies, unnaturally had slain their own children" (Sackville and Norton, p. 92). The origin of public discord then, true to the Senecan model, is perverted personal passion resulting in unnatural crime. Not so with Garnier's Mégère, who lays her curse upon the whole Roman nation in envious despite of its collective "arrogance" (Garnier, l. 82):

> C'est trop, c'est trop duré, c'est trop acquis de gloire,
> C'est trop continué sa premiere victoire:
> Rome, il est ore temps que sur ton brave chef
> Il tombe foudroyeur quelque extreme mechef. (ll. 89-92)

A splendid curse it is, moreover, rolling on in "the height of Seneca's style" for one-hundred-and-fifty Alexandrines, complete with the invocation of Alecto and Tisiphone, asked to give a respite to Tantalus, Sisyphus, Prometheus and company "Pour faire devaler ces troupes magnanimes/De leurs mortels tombeaux aux eternels abysmes" (ll. 69-70).

The accomplished rhetorical performance of Garnier's Mégère is neither a laughing matter nor incongruous as the induction to a sustained tragic treatment of a Roman theme. Such high seriousness in recuperating classical mythology in service to French national preoccupations is likewise sustained in the Pléiade's most notable effort at epic, the *Franciade* of Ronsard. But the all-too-obvious French relevance of rich Roman evocations of carnage—not only by Seneca but, explicitly in the context of civil war, by Lucan—as well as the temptation to dish out religious polemic in transparent pagan guise, also exerted a strong pull on writing of a less exalted kind. The result is neo-classical deviations from high seriousness—some no doubt inadvertent, but others not—that strike a chord with the grotesque comic element in early English tragedy.

In the year of *Porcie*'s first publication, a certain Pierre Du Rosier published a verse-pamphlet entitled *Déploration de la France sur la calamité des dernieres guerres civilles, aduenues en icelle, l'an 1568*. This is an unabashed Catholic attack on Huguenot "rebels" as responsible for France's ills, and it is significant that the introductory

sonnet[5] puts the author in the company of both Ronsard and Garnier as hurling "vers foudrayans" at their adversaries: that is, then, what at least some contemporaries thought those two gentlemen of letters were doing at least some of the time. The mythological framework is a mingling of Christian and classical, complete with angry Jupiter, Bellona, and Furies, on the one hand, appeals to "Dieu" the "Seigneur", on the other. Jupiter is asked why he wastes his thunderbolts on innocent rocks when he could be blasting the new race of Titans and the "periure teste" of the "Tyran" who leads them.[6] The partial answer comes in a comparison of this monster to a new Tamburlaine, "ce grand fleau/De nostre Chrestienté" (sig. B^{v} [p. 10]).

The villain in question is named only indirectly, but straightforwardly enough for contemporary readers. When the rebel army is urged, "Retirés le fer de vos propres entrailles/Et croisés sur le Turc, comme ce grand Billon [i.e., Godefroy de Bouillon]/Eternisés l'honneur de vostre Chastillon" (sig. Ciii^{r} [p. 24]), the main target, already sketched in outline, comes into full view as Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral Châtillon, widely blamed by Catholics for igniting sectarian strife in general and the third civil war in particular, which broke out in August 1568. It is he, therefore, whom the author's wishful thinking dooms to a series of pagan underworld punishments that, to say the least, teeters on the brink of absurdity:

> Puis vous Demons affreus, satelites fidelles
> Du Roy Tartarean, punisseur des rebelles,
> Ne vous lassés iamais, iamais ne vous soulés
> De batre incessamment ses membres martelés
> A coups de grosse barre, & d'infecter ses leures
> De Crapaus, de Lesars, de sifflantes Couleures,

5. Signed "Iaqves Moysson". Page numbers are those of the BnF digitalized electronic facsimile of Du Rosier's poem.

6. Et toy grand Iuppiter, qui portes en tes mains
Les traits Vulcaniens pour punir les humains,
Pourquoy vois tu silent ceste pariure teste,
Que tu ne la gremis [*sic*—"gémis"?] d'vne iuste tempeste?
Et auec ce Tyran, sa race, à celle fin
D'eteindre tout d'vn coup vn genre si mutin,
Dresse toy contre luy, ride ton front seuere,
Enfonce tes sourcis, enflambe ta colere,
O grand Saturnien, & n'amuse tes bras
A batre les Rochers qui ne t'offencent pas… (sig. Aiiii^{r-v} [pp. 7–8])

Qui luy beuront le sang, & dedans & dehors
Enfleront de poison son miserable corps. (sig. Aiiii^{v}-B^{r} [pp. 8-9])

Obviously, the Christian poet, restrained, pious, and humble when praying for divine mercy, takes the avowedly fictional status of the classical underworld as an imaginative licence to over-kill; he can thus give retributive fantasy free rein without infringing on the principle of "*Vindicta mihi*". The resulting mixture of both metaphysics and tones is not far from Kyd's, the persona's impotent sorrow and rage not far from Hieronimo's.

This effect may be Neo-Senecan but it is not technically dramatic. Moreover, Du Rosier's Tamburlaine *redivivus* is portrayed strictly from the outside. Still, if one were to evoke the mentality of such a ruthless overreacher, one might approach Marlowe's conception of that figure, or, for that matter, other scourges such as Barabas or Richard III. Again in response to the outbreak of hostilities in 1568, a certain Antoine Fleury attacked Coligny, this time in prose, but inventing for him an extended self-disclosing soliloquy: "Voila en somme le langage que le dit Admiral tient en son cueur, & dont nous voyons les desseigns & effects si confirmes, que nous n'en pouvons plus douter" (Fleury, sig. Hiii^{r}). The combination of Machiavelism and atheism in this speech has such a multiply familiar ring for students of early English tragedy as to justify citing it at length. The Admiral actually begins by addressing God, who, he admits, has preserved France united in one true religion for fifteen hundred years; he then determines, however, to go his own way:

> Toutesfois puis que je voy et appercoy les hommes selon la révolution des temps tendre et incliner à changement, soit par le regard de la religion, ou de la police, et discipline civile, qui m'empeschera de troubler et pervertir l'ancienne obéissance? Et si un Mahomet de simple pâstre, s'est fait premier autheur et fondateur d'un si grand empire que celuy des Otomans: si un citadin Romain a conquis et subjugué les Gaules en dix ans: si tant de Rois ont esté despouillez par de petits compagnons de leurs subjects: Et si pour parvenir à nostre temps, un cousturier s'est faict Roi des Anabaptistes en la Germanie: si un bastard par subtils moyens s'est attribué la couronne d'Escosse: et si desia j'ay remué l'estat d'Espagne, révolté celuy de Flandres et esbranlé si avant ce Royaume, qu'un bon nombre de la Noblesse et du peuple s'est asservy et soumis à mes voluntez, pourquoy aiant un si beau subject ne pousseray-je ma fortune jusques au bout: et mesmes qu'estant vaincu je ne puis rien perdre que la teste, que j'ay ainsi par mes forfaicts engagée au roi

et à la justice: vainqueur je demeure maistre de la plus grande et opulente Monarchie du monde? (sig. Hii^{r}-iii^{r})[7]

This is a soberly sinister self-portrait, of course, not a grotesque caricature, and the pagan mythological machinery is missing. What would result if the Colignys of Du Rosier and Fleury were fused into one and furnished with a suitable theatrical "world … to bustle in" (Shakespeare, *R3*, I.i.152)? The answer is succinctly provided by François de Chantelouve in his dramatic apology (composed 1574, published 1575) for the Saint Bartholomew massacre, *La tragédie de feu Gaspard de Colligny*, where, as far as I know—and to judge, necessarily, from the extant texts—he produced European theatre's first comic Machiavellian villain. He did so, essentially, by dragging "the height of Seneca's style" down to the depths, half- (but only half-) paganizing the medieval model of the hell-bent blustering tyrant in a way that puts new (gnashing of) teeth into the old alliance between the energy of laughter and the awe of divine mystery.

In Coligny's opening monologue—he appears with a noose, ready to hang himself in shame at his recent defeats—the villain invokes the standard torments of the classical underworld upon himself in lines recalling the despair of Garnier's Porcie over Brutus' death (ll. 1603ff.)—that play, we recall, received its second edition in 1574. But the underworld Coligny invokes is inhabited, not only by Sisyphus, Ixion, the Furies, and so forth, but also by Satan and Calvin, as well as his own predeceased brothers. Porcie's invitation to the pagan gods to punish "mon chef blasphemeur" (l. 1607) for protesting againt their injustice becomes a far different matter—and approaches the "blaspheming" of Kyd's damned Pedringano—when the punishment of Coligny's fellow heretics enters the picture: "blasphemés en hurlemens horribles,/[aux supplices] du juste punisseur" (ll. 10-11).[8] Du Rosier's appeal to "Jupiter" not to expend his thunderbolts on rocks is reformulated as an explicit challenge to divinity:

… s'il y a nul Dieu qui ait puissance adonques,
Car en mon cœur meschant de Dieu je ne creus onques,
Qu'il monstre son pouvoir, & darde sur mon chef
Et non sur un rocher, des foudres le mechef. (ll. 15-18)[9]

7. The fictive monologue is also cited by Crouzet, p. 473, as an example of the discourse deployed against Coligny in the years prior to the Saint Bartholomew massacre.
8. "blaspheming with horrible shrieks — / . . . as He just vengeance wreaks". Translations are supplied from my translation and edition of the play.
9. . . . if there is any God upon whom to call
(For in my foul heart I believe in none at all),

Coligny's half-ridiculous, half-horrendous daring of God out of his heaven and alliance with the powers of darkness, which he summons to swallow him up, is the standard stuff of Elizabethan theatrical villainy. It finds an especially close echo in some mighty lines of Marlowe split between the hubris of Tamburlaine and the despair of the defeated Bajazeth:

> *Tamburlaine*. . . . Stoop, villain, stoop! Stoop, for so
> he bids
> That may command thee piecemeal to be torn,
> Or scattered like the lofty cedar trees
> Struck with the voice of thundering Jupiter.
> *Bajazeth*. Then, as I look down to the damned fiends,
> Fiends, look on me; and thou, dread god of hell,
> With ebon scepter strike this hateful earth,
> And make it swallow both of us at once! (IV.ii.22-29)

Also to the point, though the comic potential is muted, or transmuted, is *Doctor Faustus*. Chantelouve shows the Admiral goaded into the regicidal attempt that finally provokes the king's reaction (and fulfils the divine vengeance) by a smooth-talking diabolical embassy aimed at snatching his soul. The objective is falsely to convince the Admiral of the king's responsibility for his wound, which has in fact come, more or less directly, from God, presented—in the thinnest of disguises—as Jupiter. The chief ambassador is the spirit of Coligny's slain brother, Andelot, who is backed, as in Seneca's Thyestes, by a Fury. Chantelouve's dramaturgy is avowedly Senecan here, overdetermined by way of *Thyestes* and *Agamemnon*, but it pulls all the more conspicuously in superficially contrary Christian and comic directions. And while no one could accuse Chantelouve of being less Catholic than the Pope, it does so without so much as raising the spectre of Purgatory, even as Andelot sports the "'piteous' looks" that Greenblatt would deny to "Spirits loosed out of Hell" (Greenblatt, 239).

In fact, although Andelot rises from hell, he is never "out of it", for he confesses to being tortured by alienation from "the face of God" (Marlowe, *Faustus*, iii.78, 79; cf. Chantelouve, ll. 901-2), and this brief respite from physical torments (Chantelouve, ll. 909-12) is overlaid on his eternal condemnation to them. In contrast to the refractory ghost of Tantalus, Andelot performs his evil willingly, thus

> Let him show his power, and pour upon my pate,
> Instead of some pointless rock, his thundering hate.
> Du Rosier is also more straightforwardly echoed by the Chorus in ll. 301-6.

showing himself naturally at home among the damned. He even shows himself psychologically astute, exploiting his brother's vulnerability—"Et le voyant ainsi blesphemer & desplaire,/Il sera plus enclain à ma volonté faire" (ll. 917-18)[10]—and his pride. The accompanying Fury (ll. 971ff.), in pointed contrast to that of *Thyestes*, keeps her whips out of sight (even if she probably cannot do much about her hair), and her only speech is a parodic masterpiece of the rhetoric of persuasion, in which flattery and pleading turn on the theme of honour. Andelot and the Fury both absurdly obscure the extravagant horrors to which they seek to lure their victim: Andelot actually depicts the underworld as a sort of genteel rest-home where swords are not permitted (ll. 965-68), while the Fury incongruously envisages the repose of his soul (l. 1002). The result is a through amalgam of classicism and Christianity, with grim humour binding them together, that adds up to exactly what Hamlet imagines when he fears that the seeming spirit of that person nearest and dearest him "may be a dev'l" that "[a]buses me to damn me" (Shakespeare, *Ham.*, II.ii.599, 603). And it may be to the point that the incitement in both cases is to the vengeful killing of a king.

When it comes to the pains of hell themselves, the pagan fiction is again stretched to parodic limits. The Fury's reference to Andelot's reposing soul is so absurd because that character has just delivered, in soliloquy, the ultimate catalogue of the underworld tortures to which he is everlastingly doomed. Indeed, with Andelot, Chantelouve pushes neo-Senecan infernal embellishment beyond Du Rosier's involuntary bathos—including his "Crapaus" and "sifflantes Couleures"—into what can only be deliberate burlesque:

> Si donques je me veux reposer à mon aise,
> Je me couche en un lict couvert de chaude Braise.
> Si j'ay froid j'ay le glas tout prest pour me chaufer,
> Et si quelque appetit a mon ventre en enfer,
> De crapaux, & Serpens, ma table plus insigne
> Se couvre, pour pouvoir appaiser ma famine. (ll. 881-86)[11]

10. "finding him thus blaspheming, with downcast mind, / I know that to my will he'll be the more inclined". Cf. Marlowe, *Faustus*:
> For when we hear one rack the name of God,
> Abjure the scriptures and his saviour Christ,
> We fly, in hope to get his glorious soul;
> Nor will we come unless he use such means
> Whereby he is in danger to be damn'd. (iii.49-53)

11. If then to repose at my ease I should desire,
I recline on a bed of coals glowing with fire.

To a play that is all talk, like almost all French sixteenth-century tragedies, the comic extravagance of Coligny, Andelot, and the several other figures of evil adds an impressive quotient of imaginative theatricality. On the one hand, that theatricality is in active service to the highest of causes, an absolute religious truth imposing a clear division between good and evil human creatures, heaven and hell. On the other hand, the recourse to pagan eschatology to validate that truth inevitably raises the destabilizing spectre of different ways of believing. The Wars of Religion, after all, were just that. Nor were they essentially foreign, either politically or ideologically, to the English spiritual experience, as scholarship is coming increasingly to appreciate. We can perhaps approach more closely by this route to historicizing the metaphysical doubt and questioning in which Elizabethan tragedy engages, not least through the comic portrayal of evil.

In its extraordinary conflation of classical and Christian mythologies and dramatic techniques, of the comic and tragic, of cosmic process and current events, Chantelouve's play is unique among the surviving texts of French sixteenth-century tragedy. The only candidate for a rough companion piece is Pierre Matthieu's equally ultra-Catholic *La Guisiade*, which deals with another "massacre", Henri III's 1589 less than scrupulously legal execution of the Duke and Cardinal of Guise. There, moreover, another component of the Elizabethan mixture, which had been part of French controversialist discourse for years, finally receives a name: the counsellors that instigate the king to his crime are identified as Machiavels. Chief among them is Matthieu's equivalent of Chantelouve's Coligny, the Duke of Épernon, who, in a lengthy soliloquy, conjures the dark powers of a hell at once pagan and Christian:

> O peste de ce Tout, execrable Megere,
> Par mon ame qui t'est fidelle messagere,
> Par Cocyte et Tantal, par l'ardent Phlegeton,
> Par ces deux autres seurs Thesiphone, Alecton,
> Par le cruel Minos, par le grand Rhadamante,
> Par le poison qui sort de ta bouche beante,
> Par tant et tant d'esprits qui talonnent mes pas,
> Par le Luxe, et l'Orgueil, qui sont mes chers esbas,

> If I am cold, to warm me I have lots of — ice;
> And if I feel, in hell, that a meal would be nice,
> All of serpents and toads my prodigious collation
> Is made ready, which serves to keep me from starvation.

Par l'Erreur insensé, par l'infidelle Schisme,
Par l'infecte Heresie, et le sale Atheisme. . . (Matthieu, ll. 867-76)[12]

It is very probably more than coincidence that Marlowe's dramatic intervention in French religious politics a few years later, *The Massacre at Paris*, violently yokes the events of Chantelouve's and Matthieu's tragedies and turns their id eological orientation inside-out. Marlowe, of course, transfers the role of Machiavellian atheist from Coligny and Épernon, respectively, to the Duke of Guise—the epitome, for both Chantelouve and Matthieu, of Catholic heroism and, for the latter, of martyrdom as well. The function of hero and martyr is recuperated, in accordance with long-standing Protestant hagiography, for Coligny, while Épernon becomes a loyal and respectable counsellor of his monarch. "O Satan: o Calvin" (l. 9) is virtually taken out of the mouth of Chantelouve's Coligny and given to Guise: "Religion! *O Diabole!*" (Marlowe, *Massacre*, ii.63). In sum, the Prologue to *The Jew of Malta*, in announcing that Machiavelli's spirit, "now the Guise is dead, is come from France" (Marlowe, *Jew*, Pro. 3), may well be tracing, not just a moral, but also a literary pedigree.

I have explored Marlowe's connection with Chantelouve and Matthieu at some length elsewhere (*Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France*, esp. pp. 72-111). My focus here on the neo-classical component of comic villainy imposes a conclusion along a different line. The example of Du Rosier shows the pagan machinery of underworld punishment used as non-dramatic invective against a contemporary politico-religious enemy, and theatre historians do well to bear in mind that even when such elements figure in plays, they do not necessarily, or simply, derive from Senecan dramaturgy. In grotesquely combining the diverse famous torments of mythology for Andelot, on the premise that no single one would do justice to his egregious evil, Chantelouve might equally have been

12. The following is my translation, which appears in the same volume as that of Chantelouve's *Coligny*:
Megaera, . . . you fell harbinger,
By my soul, which acts as your faithful messenger,
By Cocytus, Tantalus, burning Phlegeton,
By your two sisters Alecto and Tisiphone,
By Minos the cruel, Rhadamanthus the potent,
By the poison that from your gaping throat you vent,
By the numberless demons that with me consort,
By Lechery and Pride, which provide me with sport,
By outrageous Error, by infidel Schism,
By stinking Heresy and filthy Atheism. . . .

taking his cue from Claudian's extended poetic assault on his contemporary *bête noire*, Rufinus, governor of the eastern Roman Empire under Theodosius and his son Arcadius. (This work was widely available in humanist editions: the two books *In Rufinum* begin the collected works of Claudian as issued by Taddeo Ugoleto in Parma, initially in 1493; they were published on their own in Vienna in 1518, edited by Philipp Gundel.) According to Claudian, Rufinus was a monster nurtured by the fury Megaera and sent by the infernal powers to plague the world. After the bloody vengeance wrought upon his body by a mob of soldiers and citizens, his spirit descends to the underworld and comes before its judge, who is so revolted that he sentences Rufinus to undergo all the famous torments, and worse, since his crimes surpass all others (II.498ff.). The horrors are evoked in splendiferous detail, attached to the usual names, and the rhetorical excess lends the attack a satirical quality not remote from the comic grotesquery of Chantelouve or even, for that matter, of Kyd. But also to the point is that the whole sequence, the spectacular meting out of vengeance in this world and the next, despite the variable and uncertain favour of the gods in the short term (II.440-41), is framed by the poet (I.1ff.) as vindicating, not merely divine justice, but the very existence of the gods and thereby converting him from his Epicurean atheism. This is to out-Seneca Seneca himself, who, in his *Epistulae Morales* (*Letters to Lucilius*), takes Epicurus' dismissal of the infernal myths so profoundly for granted that he will not stoop to repeating it.[13] The lesson of Claudian is that the pagan lesson in its crudest forms is eminently adaptable to Christian polemic.

It is this adaptability that Ben Jonson intertextually exploits, within a framework that remains nominally pagan, when, as has been recognized by editors (though Jonson did not signal the point in his own notes), he borrows from *In Rufinum* his vivid account of the mutilation of Sejanus by the Roman mob:

> Old men not staid with age, virgins with shame,
> Late wives with loss of husbands, mothers of children,
> Losing all grief in joy of his sad fall,
> Run quite transported with their cruelty—
> These mounting at the head, these at his face,

13. See letter 24.18:
Non sum tam ineptus ut Epicuream cantilenam hoc loco persequar et dicam vanos esse inferorum metus, nec Ixionem rota volvi nec saxum umeris Sisyphi trudi in adversum nec ullius viscera et renasci posse cotidie et carpi: nemo tam puer est ut Cerberum timeat et tenebras et larvalem habitum nudis ossibus cohaerentium. Mors nos aut consumit aut exuit.

These digging out his eyes, those with his brain,
Sprinkling themselves, their houses, and their friends.
Others are met, have ravished thence an arm,
And deal small pieces of the flesh for favours;
These with a thigh; this hath cut off his hands;
And this his feet; these, fingers, and these, toes;
That hath his liver; he his heart; there wants
Nothing but room for wrath, and place for hatred.
What cannot oft be done is now o'er done.
The whole, and all of what was great Sejanus,
And next to Caesar did possess the world,
Now torn and scattered, as he needs no grave;
Each little dust covers a little part. (Jonson, V.824-41)[14]

The prelude to the villain's downfall is a series of divine portents, most spectacularly the averting of the face of the statue of Fortune, the only deity that Sejanus had worshipped, in true Machiavellian style. Her role is highlighted by Arruntius' sardonic rhetorical questioning in the final lines: "Dost thou hope, Fortune, to redeem thy crimes?/To make amends for thy ill-placéd favours/With these strange punishments? (V.901-3); this translates, as editors do not seem to have noticed, an interjection in the midst of Claudian's narrative of mayhem:

criminibusne tuis credis, Fortuna, mederi
et male donatum certas aequare favorem
suppliciis? una tot milia morte rependis?
[Does thou hope, Fortune, thus to right thy wrongs? Seekest thou to atone
by this meting out of punishment for favour ill betowed? Dost thou with one
death make payment for ten thousand murders?] (II.421-23)

Editors have also failed to realize that Jonson was not original in adapting the passage from Claudian. In the poem, it is the soldiers that go at the corpse head-first, then the body (II.410-15), and are said to lack only scope for their vengeance (II.415-16); they then carry the pieces triumphantly on spears. Only then do the ordinary victims of Rufinus, the widows and mothers, join in, stamping on the limbs and stoning the head as it is borne aloft (II.431-35). Jonson's rearrangement confirms what might be inferred from his making of Sejanus' fall, in part, a matter of blasphemy—namely, that he read Claudian, not just in the original (as he certainly

14. See Jonson, *Sejanus*, ed. Ayres, nn. to V.824-42 and 828. Cf. nn. to *Sejanus*, Herford, Simpson, and Simpson, eds., vol. IX.

did), but also through the adaptation that had already been made—this borrowing, too, has eluded critical notice—by the Huguenot poet Guillaume de Salluste, seigneur Du Bartas, in the latter's rendition of the biblical Book of Judith. There the object of a vengeance administered by the true God on behalf of, and by means of, his chosen people is the pagan tyrant Holofernes, who undergoes mutilations unprecedented in the biblical account, first of the severed head, then of the body. When Judith first brings the head back to Bethulia, it is set up on the wall—Jonson's mention of the people "mounting" at the head of Sejanus, which has provoked editorial puzzlement,[15] may well reflect this—whereupon

> . . . les peres, les fils, les pucelles, les vefves,
> Tristes d'avoir perdu par les ethniques glaives
> Leurs enfans, leurs parens, leurs amis, leurs espoux,
> Esperdus de tristesse et fumantz de courroux,
> Pellent son menton palle, esgratignent sa face,
> Crachent dessus son front, arrachent de sa place
> La langue qui souloit mesme outrager les cieux
> Et d'un doigt courroucé luy pochent les deux yeux. (VI.215-22)

("Pellent", incidentally, must be picked up by Jonson's "digging", which has no equivalent in the Latin—or in the 1584 English translation by Thomas Hudson.[16]) The mutilation of the body takes place later, after the Hebrew victory over the discomfited Assyrian host, wh en the headless corpse of Holofernes is discovered on the battlefield and torn, not merely limb from limb, but—as in Jonson, though not Claudian—atom from atom, by a vulgar mob lacking only scope for vengeance and eager for souvenirs:

> Car il n'a nerf, tendon, artere, veine, chair
> Qui ne soit detranché par le sot populace
> Et si son ire encore ne trouve assés d'espace.
> . . .

15. See Ayers, ed., n. to V.828.

16. Cf. Hudson's translation, VI.213-20:

> There, fathers came, and sonns, & wives, & mayds,
> who erst had lost amongst the *Heathen* blayds,
> There sonnes, their parens, maks, & louers deare,
> with heauie harts & furious raging cheare.
> They pilde & paird his beard of paled hew,
> Spit in his face & out the toung they drew,
> which vsde to speak of God great blasphemies,
> And with their fingers poched out his eyes.

Il n'y a dans Jacob si malotru coquin
Qui de sa chair ne vueille avoir quelque lopin. (VI.310-12, 317-18)

In all three texts, the sequence concludes with the ironic contrast between the tyrant's vast ambition and the little room, less than a grave, now needed for his remains (Claudian, II.47ff.; Du Bartas, VI.345ff.), although Du Bartas, naturally, points the moral in Judaeo-Christian terms: "O grand Dieu . . ." (VI.345). Still, the classical roots of Du Bartas's epyllion of vengeance show through, as when the doomed Holofernes falls drunkenly asleep and intuits the punishments awaiting him in the next world:

Ja se tourne son lict, ja mille clairs brandons
Luisent devant ses yeux, ja dis mille bourdons
Bruyent dans son oreille. Il voit des Minotaures,
Meduses, Alectons, Chimeres et Centaures. (VI.97-100)

Likewise, Rufinus "diu curis animum stimulantibus aegre/labitur in somnus [whose mind had long been a prey to anxiety, sank into a troubled slumber]" (Claudian, II.326-27) and had intimations of his death presented by the ghosts of his victims. And when Holofernes is dead, we are told that he, "deja, miserable,/A passé du noir Styx, la rive irrepassable" (Du Bartas, VI.251-52).

But if Jonson, the most rigorously and self-consciously neo-classical of English Renaissance playwrights, rewrote Claudian's exuberant verbal vendetta in light of Du Bartas's earnest *exemplum* of divine justice visited upon an atheistic criminal, a blasphemer, and an enemy of the truth, he had a French theatrical precedent even for such rewriting. We return once more to Chantelouve. *La Judit* swells the crowded ranks of controversial texts published just prior to *Coligny*, to which it stands in stark and pointed opposition. It would have been clearly understood, according to the contemporary encoding of political-religious issues and Du Bartas's religious affiliation, that the chosen people delivered by divine intervention represented the Huguenots. More specifically, the symbolism of Holofernes' miraculous demise before the walls of Bethulia was already in place: the allusion was to the 1563 assassination of François, duc de Guise, which rescued the besieged Protestants in Orléans[17]—a murder widely attributed to Coligny. So it is by Chantelouve (ll. 52-54, 235-37), as one of the egregious crimes for which

17. See Baïche, ed., XXI-CIXC. On this contemporary typological interpretation of events, see *Histoire et dictionnaire des Guerres de religion*, p. 120. Agrippa d'Aubigné, too, invokes it in *Les Tragiques*, V.381-86.

Saint Bartholomew was divine retribution. It is, then, across the narrative intertext of *La Judit* that the militant Catholic playwright recuperates the vindictive lesson of Claudian for his blaspheming Huguenot tyrant, who, by the grace of God, is finally beheaded, mutilated, and made to point, upside-down, the same ironic moral about his need for space:

> Il estimoit l'onde
> Les terres, le monde,
> Petites pour luy,
> Et or sa chair vaine
> Par la boüe traine,
> Sans los aujourd'huy. (ll. 1179-84)[18]

Yet Chantelouve's Coligny is also something that Du Bartas's villain is not: a fortune-worshipping Machiavel aspiring to royal power. To this extent he intertextually displaces Holofernes as a link between Claudian's Rufinus and Jonson's Sejanus, and also attracts, like Sejanus, the ironic moral along what might be termed its vertical axis:

> Bref, & celuy qui desiroit la France
> Seigneurier, en son desir felon,
> Est possesseur, ô divine vangeance,
> Du plus haut lieu qui soit en Mont-faulcon. (ll. 1185-88)[19]
>
> For whom the morning saw so great and high
> Thus low and little, 'fore the'even, doth lie. (Jonson, V.912-13)

18. He thought the huge sea,
Every territory,
For him was too small;
Now his vain flesh and blood
Is made in the mud —
And in scorn — to sprawl.
In turn, the Huguenot pamphlet *Le Tocsin contre les massacreurs* (1577) seems virtually to be reimagining Coligny's fate through that of Rufinus when it describes the treatment of his body at the hands of the Parisians: "ils portèrent le tout [tête et partie honteuses] sur des bastons par la ville et l'exposait ignominieusement en vente à qui en voulait" (cited Postel, p. 186).

19. And so, on that traitor whose spirit showed
To lord it over France such appetite,
Vengeance divine has finally bestowed
Possession of Montfaucon's greatest height.
Montfaucon, outside Paris, was the site of the public gallows, where Coligny's mutilated body was displayed in grotesque mockery. The irony was recorded approvingly by many Catholic partisans.

In this form, the moral has ample classical precedents, including Senecan ones.[20] But a highly specific link, if it is not palpable, can almost be smelt. Jonson's tragedy turns on the turning-away of Fortune during Sejanus' ceremony to propitiate her. The audience would have witnessed the rites described in the elaborate stage direction (V.183S.D.); these culminate in the offering of incense, the "begging smoke" (V.82) that Sejanus has declared himself, however grudgingly, willing to offer her alone among the gods. The violent reaction of Sejanus picks up this element and tinges his atheism with the comic grotesque:

> Nay, hold thy look
> Averted, till I woo thee turn again;
> And thou shalt stand to all posterity
> Th'eternal game and laughter, with thy neck
> Writhed to thy tail, like a ridiculous cat.
> Avoid these fumes, these superstitious lights,
> And all these coz'ning ceremonies. . . (V.195-200)[21]

In his final soliloquy, Sejanus dares, like Chantelouve's Admiral, "you, that fools call gods" to "let me be struck/With forkèd fire" (V.390, 397-98).

The Admiral, too, has problems with Fortune:

> O souveraine Royne, & princesse du monde,
> Qui le piéd mal-certain tiens sur la Boule Ronde,
> Que t'ay je fait affin d'ainsi me renverser… (ll. 63-65)[22]

In determining, as Fleury had put it previously for him, to "[pousser] ma fortune jusques au bout", Chantelouve's Coligny effectively anticipates Sejanus' desperate resolution—"Mais courage, ceux là qui n'ont plus d'esperance,/Fichent tout leur espoir sur la desesperance" (ll. 99-100)[23]—and promises the goddess the same offering if she will turn his way again:

> Que si à mes desirs tu respond, o fortune!
> Mon invincible cœur fera la mort commune,
> Et n'estant point ingrat d'Encens je couvriray
> Tes autels, & l'odeur aux astres envoiray… (ll. 103-6)[24]

20. See Ayers, ed., n. to V.912-13.
21. The subtle alignment here of the atheist Sejanus with Protestant iconoclasm fits with Jonson's Catholicism.
22. O most sovereign queen and princess of the world,
Who keep uncertain footing as the globe is whirled,
What have I done to you to be thus overthrown . . . ?
23. "But courage: those who have no further hope yet dare / To stake a kind of hope even upon despair".
24. If only, O Fortune, you deign to grant my prayer,

There used to be a perfume advertisement that went, "Promise her anything, but give her …". The respective sequels offer dramatic, highly theatrical proof that lady Fortune in both Chantelouve and Jonson is quite capable of recognizing their promises as *de la fumée*, which is another way of saying that there is nothing truly heavenly about her.

The point is not that Jonson may have known the tragedy of Coligny, though this is hardly impossible: if Marlowe did so, the odds are that Jonson and others did, too. Of course, we are dealing with commonplaces—and the most common of places, by proverbial definition, is Rome, to which all roads lead, or at least led. In the case of early modern English tragedy, however, the conclusion seems inescapable that one of those roads—which also, of course, led away from Rome—passed through Paris.

My invincible heart will spread death everywhere,
And, since I' m not stingy with incense in the least,
From your altars I'll send the stars a fragrant feast.

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