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de Pierre Troterel

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The Tragedy of Saint Agnes

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The Tragedy of Saint Agnes

by

Pierre Troterel, Seigneur of Aves

ARGUMENT OF THE PRESENT TRAGEDY

Saint Agnes was a native of Rome, issued of noble parents, who, as Christians, nourished her from infancy in their faith. At that time, the governor of Rome under Diocletian was Simphronius, a great persecutor of Christians. This Simphronius had a son, who no sooner saw Saint Agnes than he fell passionately in love with her, and for that reason enquired into her parentage. Having found this out, he resolved to offer her his service, and to do so he took the opportunity of meeting her as she was returning from school. But the girl was no more moved by his speech than if she had had a heart of stone, so filled was she with holy love for Jesus Christ. The young man, seeing himself so disdained, reacted with such disappointment that he became wholly melancholic and brooding. His father, perceiving this, desired to know the cause, and, his son having informed him, sent for the father of Saint Agnes, to whom he communicated his son's love and wish to marry his daughter, which he urged upon him strongly. The father of the saint made a show of finding this match most agreeable, but said that he had to know his daughter's mind before making up his own. He then found out, and it was such that she did not wish to marry at all, desiring no other spouse than Jesus Christ. That resolution known, the father of Saint Agnes failed to inform Simphronius, and this greatly upset his excessively amorous son, who determined to find out for himself the maiden's intention. For this purpose he went to see her, and cajoled her with all the artifice that love could invent, but he wasted his time, just as on the first occasion, which caused him such sadness that he fell gravely ill, imagining from Saint Agnes's ambiguous answers that she was in love with someone else. Consequently, he and his father informed themselves more particularly about the girl and found out that she was a Christian. This pleased them greatly, for they believed that by this means they would soon prevail. To this end, Simphronius caused her to come and speak with him, whereupon, having long harangued her to shake her from her faith and discovering her constancy, he had her stripped naked and sent to the brothel. But she was no sooner there than her Good Angel came to protect her. Simphronius' son, having learnt where she was, went there in order to force her, accompanied by several lechers, who had also come for the same purpose. As he was preparing to execute his intention, the Angel of the saint killed him. His father, hearing of his death, came to find the maiden, beside himself with grief, and abused her vehemently, but seeing that this was in vain, had recourse to prayers and begged her to resuscitate his son. So she did, and he, resuscitated, preached the truth of Jesus Christ, which caused a riot to break out among the people of Rome and the priests of the gods. Finally, the rebellion having been calmed by Simphronius, the saint was condemned to be martyred, and for this purpose was delivered to Aspasius, a cruel man who was lieutenant to Simphronius. This wicked person caused a great fire to be lit and had her thrown into it. By virtue of her prayer, a storm broke out which put out the fire, and it burnt all those who approached

to rekindle it. Aspasius, becoming more enraged at this miracle, and to put an end to the saint more quickly, caused her throat to be cut, and in this way she rendered her soul to God. That is the subject of this tragedy. Further, I inform you, Reader, that I have not included any choruses in it—not that I could not have done, but because it would have been useless effort for me, since I have seen over a thousand tragedies represented in different places without ever having seen those choruses recited.

SPEAKERS

Martian, in love with Saint Agnes
Censorin, friend to Martian
Simpfronius, father of Martian and governor of Rome
Father of Saint Agnes
Mother of Saint Agnes
Trumpeter
Lechers
Bawds
Angel of Saint Agnes
Saint Agnes
Priests (Sacrificers to the Idols)—in a single personage
The Roman Populace—in a single personage
Messenger
[Aspasius, lieutenant of Simphronius]¹

¹ Non-speaking; not included in the original list.

Act I

SCENE I²

Martian, Censorin

MARTIAN

1 Solitary mountain, you cave with gloom deep-dyed,
 2 Where over my sad thoughts I constantly preside,
 3 Ever since Cupid, that tyrant none dares defy,
 4 Took my liberty by the stroke of a fair eye.
 5 Alas, if some animate spirits in you dwell,
 6 As widely is surmised, and I believe it well,
 7 May they be pleased to hear my tones of bleak distress
 8 And piteously to the pains I feel bear witness,
 9 For worshipping at an ingrate mistress's feet,
 10 Whose endless stock of rigour I cannot deplete.
 11 Instead, the more insistently I press my suit,
 12 The more her eyes my overtures of love refute,
 13 As with tyrants who, when you have done as they willed,
 14 Reward you in the end just by having you killed.³

CENSORIN

15 This is the very spot where they said he would be,
 16 And indeed I know well that he values it greatly:
 17 We often come to find the freshness of this shade
 18 And hear the sweet chirping that by the birds is made,
 19 And sometimes, as well, with all freedom to converse
 20 About whatever came to mind in thoughts diverse.
 21 But I cannot see him: his great uneasiness

2 The original does not divide acts into scenes. The translation follows the divisions supplied by Pasquier, ed.

3 A commonplace of statecraft, often illustrated by historical examples, such as Caesar's treatment of the murderer of Pompey, and enshrined proverbially, as in "A KING (prince) loves the treason but hates the traitor" (R. W. Dent, *Shakespeare's Proverbial Language: An Index* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981], K64 [p. 147], who mentions a precedent in Tacitus). Cf. *Guillaume, Duke of Aquitaine*, Vi.1403-6. For dramatic examples, see Henry IV's reaction to the murder of Richard II in Shakespeare, *Richard II*, V.vi.38-44, and Octavius' treatment of Seleucus in Samuel Daniel, *The Tragedy of Cleopatra, Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, vol. 5 (London: Routledge; New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), ll. 837-38.

22 Means he is only pleased with solitariness:
 23 He's in some cavern, lost in complaint and lament,
 24 Yet I must stay here and listen with ear intent,
 25 In case I can hear him.

MARTIAN

So, then, you sacred band,
 26 Who make your dwelling on this hill of verdant land,
 27 Learn of my sufferings, learn of my miseries,
 28 And see the fierce assaults my sorrows make on me:
 29 Then, if you are moved and touched with commiseration,
 30 Alas, comfort me with some word of consolation.

CENSORIN

Unless I am deceived, I seem to recognise
 32 The very tones and accents of his mournful cries.
 33 The gods be praised, for earnestly I wish to know
 34 The reason why his sighs so copiously flow.
 35 For twenty days already he has had no peace,
 36 On Atropos⁴ the cruel calling without cease,
 37 But he hides his woe, for as soon as I'm discovered,
 38 With an aspect calm and serene his face is covered.
 39 I must come on him unawares, and so entreat
 40 That the story of his sorrow he will repeat,
 41 Holding back nothing at the bottom of his heart.
 42 That is why on this journey I first chose to start.

[Enter Martian, and they see each other.]

43 You have not gained anything by staying concealed,
 44 For after a long search, to me you're now revealed.
 45 Why, my dear friend, if your soul endures miseries,
 46 Why do you keep these things from me, your Pylades?⁵

4 Atropos: among the three sisters representing the operations of destiny (Roman Parcae, Greek Moirai), she was the one who cut the thread of life, hence becoming metonymic for death. Cf. below III.iii.1198.

5 Pylades: in mythology (and the *Oresteia* of Aeschylus), the cousin and unwaveringly faithful friend of Orestes, whose sister Electra he eventually married. Their proverbial friendship is obviously the

47 Ah, have I ever deceived you? What have I done?
 48 Am I a fair-weather friend, a scornful false one?
 49 In this perverted age, when almost all abuse
 50 With failure of faith,⁶ with subtlety and ruse,
 51 Have you not known what great fidelity I bear,
 52 And how I am committed wholly to your welfare?

MARTIAN

53 Certainly, I have known it and felt it expressed
 54 Through many good actions, not in vain words professed,
 55 Which just deceive the minds of those more innocent,
 56 As a whistle draws birds with deceitful intent.⁷

CENSORIN

57 Then quickly now reveal to me, since that is so,
 58 The care I see causing your heart to sigh with woe.
 59 What is on your mind? Say without hesitating,
 60 For I lack the capacity of longer waiting—
 61 Besides which, the affection that you have me vowed
 62 Means you can hold nothing back: all must be avowed.

MARTIAN

63 Rather than fail in that, I would prefer to die.
 64 I will tell you, then: it's the shock of love that I
 65 Received from two fair eyes⁸ that makes my spirit groan,
 66 Causing me to keep in this barren rock alone,
 67 With nothing but my thought for company all day,
 68 Which means that before my eyes still constantly play
 69 Those two love-torches, appearing just as before
 70 I once perceived them when I stepped out of my door.

issue here, to the exclusion of the more violent elements of the story, but the bloody and vengeful background of pagan antiquity may be to the point as a contrast with the Christian ethos represented by Agnes.

6 “[F]ailure of faith”: orig. “manquement de foi”. Again, the true faith to be manifested by Agnes seems ironically anticipated.

7 Ll. 55-56: The repetition in “deceive”/“deceitful” imitates the original (“piper”/“pipe”).

8 “[T]he shock of love that I / Received from two fair eyes”: the enjambement is unusual but modeled on the original: “l’amoureux effort / Que m’ont fait deux beaux yeux”.

CENSORIN

71 Having heard your plaintive discourse poured out at
length,
72 I plainly see that the God of Loves, by his strength,
73 Has wounded your heart for some beauty so rare
74 That perhaps to sweet Venus one may her compare.
75 For I cannot believe that someone you embroils,
76 Except a Cyprian,⁹ in Love's compelling toils.
77 What leads me to say so is that, until this hour,
78 As I know very well, no one has had the power
79 To subdue beneath her sway your rebellious heart,
80 Which has always against such pleasures proved a rampart.

MARTIAN

81 The way you have just put it is only too sound:
82 A youthful beauty, whose like is not to be found
83 Within Rome's empire, holds me in such a state
84 Of servitude that a slave has a better fate.

CENSORIN

85 What, then, is the name of that prettiest of girls
86 Who ties you so tightly with her beautiful curls?

MARTIAN

87 Her name is Agnes.

CENSORIN

She's not known to me at all.

MARTIAN

88 Her charming attractions have got me so in thrall
89 That I cannot any longer my strength maintain,
90 If sweet possession of them I cannot soon gain.

9 Cyprian: that is, another Venus (the island of Cyprus being sacred to the goddess). Allusions to Venus and Cupid are frequent below in figuring carnal, as opposed to spiritual, love.

CENSORIN

91 Say, for how long has this love within you been seated,
92 That your vital spirits are so sadly depleted?

MARTIAN

93 A month has gone by, or a slightly greater space,
94 From the happy day when I first perceived her face.

CENSORIN

95 Since then, between you what has been the situation?

MARTIAN

96 Nothing at all has come of it except frustration.

CENSORIN

97 Frustration? How is that?

MARTIAN

98 Alas, she uses me
With cruel contempt and utterly refuses me.

CENSORIN

99 So she is disdainful?

MARTIAN

100 Gods! She is so much so
The most constant could not such treatment undergo,
101 Not even one who had subdued to his command
102 All perils of the world, whether by sea or land.

CENSORIN

103 Oh, what are you telling me?

MARTIAN

I am quite sincere.

CENSORIN

104 By the gods, that treatment is overly severe!
105 But, my dearest friend, tell me what success

106 Your summons met with, given in all gentleness,
 107 To render you her heart.

MARTIAN

Oh, bitter memory,
 108 Which does nothing but rekindle my misery!
 109 These were her very words: "Away, dust¹⁰ that you are;
 110 Get yourself away from me; take yourself off far,
 111 And trouble me no more with speech that gives offence,
 112 For another lover has ravished all my sense:
 113 I wear his favours fashioned of the finest gold,
 114 And no other than he will ever lordship hold
 115 Over my affections, as long as I shall dwell
 116 In these terrestrial spaces, for, truth to tell,
 117 He is such a great lord that none exists exceeding,
 118 Whether in riches or in greatness of his breeding;
 119 In sum, he comes attended by such happiness
 120 That if it were to value him but slightly less
 121 To put you in his place, still everyone would say
 122 That I had seized the worse and thrown the good away."
 123 There it is, dear friend; that is how that lovely maid
 124 By her cutting remarks to me her pride displayed,
 125 Which managed to hurt me with a wound so profound
 126 That I can only sigh and complain all around,
 127 Having for that very reason to this place come,
 128 Which seems made for a heart that suffers martyrdom¹¹
 129 From sadness and from sorrows.

CENSORIN

My friend, solitude
 130 Is not the means to free us from the servitude
 131 That holds you fast but rather aggravates our cares,
 132 And believe me, who am expert in such affairs,

10 "[D]ust": orig. "poussiere"—an especially effective instance of the double discourse throughout Agnes's speech, since it suggests a contemptuous worldly-minded suitor while conveying *contemptus mundi* in stark biblical form. Cf. Genesis 3:19: "dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." (Unless otherwise specified, biblical citations refer to the Authorised Version.)

11 "[S]uffers martyrdom": orig. "martyré"—a term that resonates ironically in the circumstances.

133 For often I have had the sure experience
 134 That places remote and consecrated to silence
 135 Have great power to cause to be imprinted on us
 136 The object of which Cupid makes us amorous,
 137 The more so because our minds, of nature divine,
 138 Without other occupation ever incline
 139 To imagine a thousand ways the pleasing object,
 140 To which the God of Love seeks to render them subject:
 141 And, by imagining it with no opposition,
 142 The object and his will produce the same condition,
 143 So that from that point on one cannot easily
 144 Distinguish one from the other separately.

MARTIAN

145 What you have said, dear friend, to me makes perfect
 sense;
 146 But against such folly who can make a defence?

CENSORIN

147 Anyone in that position would be confused.
 148 But listen, friend: casually to be refused
 149 By a certain young girl must not all at once make you
 150 Suppose that better fortune will always forsake you.
 151 Do you not know that a supremely happy state
 152 Can only be reached by effort commensurate?

MARTIAN

153 Only too well I know from long experience.

CENSORIN

154 Well, then, now let that knowledge be in evidence:
 155 Constantly advance the amorous course you planned;
 156 It's possible some god will lend a helping hand.

MARTIAN

157 I'll say a prayer for that.

CENSORIN

Indeed, so I foresee.

158 But is it with marriage in mind, I pray you tell me,
159 That you are pursuing in love that youthful beauty,
160 Or is it just to trifle with her chastity?

MARTIAN

161 To have her in marriage is my hopeful intent.

CENSORIN

162 Have you thought of obtaining your father's consent?

MARTIAN

163 Not yet. I do not dare.

CENSORIN

And why that inhibition?

MARTIAN

164 For this reason, alas: I fear his opposition.

CENSORIN

165 How is that? Against your welfare is he so set?

MARTIAN

166 No, but he does not wish that I should marry yet.

CENSORIN

167 Regardless, by no means neglect to let him know.
168 For never due respect for him should you forego.

MARTIAN

169 Is that your advice?

CENSORIN

Yes, categorically.

170 Perhaps he will not react identically
171 As he has done in the past: a man often changes
172 In wishes and opinion, as the wind that ranges
173 Across different regions, with a breath that will blow
174 Sometimes on the sea, sometimes on the plain below.

175 The gods alone are constant, free from alteration,
 176 But mortal men are ever subject to mutation.
 177 The gods speak, and their work appears with clarity;
 178 But as for poor mortals, the case is clean contrary.¹²

SCENE II

Martian and Simphronius

MARTIAN

179 After a time of rumination, in the end,
 180 The counsel of Censorin, proffered as a friend,
 181 I have determined to be good, and salutary,
 182 But I do not esteem it really necessary
 183 (Unless he judges otherwise) that I present
 184 The prodigious passion that holds her in its torment¹³
 185 For another lover, since my father, no doubt,
 186 Were he informed of that, in anger would break out,
 187 Being so quick-tempered and apt to violence
 188 That any contempt or disdain would give offence.
 189 So I will keep mum: the dictates of prudence teach
 190 That, when appropriate, we should refrain from speech.
 191 But here he comes; I'll go meet him as he comes by.

[Enter Simphronius.]

192 O great gods, please cast on me an auspicious eye!
 193 And you, Love's mother,¹⁴ goddess incomparable,

12 Ll. 177-78: orig. "Disent-ils, à l'instant leur œuvre paroist claire, / Mais des pauvres humains, c'est bien tout le contraire." Different senses are possible, depending on what the referent of "ils" is taken to be (the gods, men or an impersonal "they"). The translator is obliged to choose, and I have done so according to the apparent logic of the statement.

13 "[H]olds her in its torment": orig. "la va tourmentant". The only language Martian knows to apply is that of the conventional suffering lover, which, ironically, is wholly inappropriate to the love of God; in a further irony, "torment" looks forward to the tortures of martyrdom. "[P]assion" (identical in French) likewise functions resonantly in both the worldly and religious registers.

14 I.e., Venus, mother of Cupid.

194 Aid my purpose now, to me be favourable.
 195 Sir, having received of the heavens the great grace
 196 To be born of you in this terrestrial space,
 197 Ingratitude, rank arrogance would I display
 198 If I did not in everything you obey,
 199 And if I were to do something before I knew,
 200 As is my duty, if it is acceptable or not to you—
 201 Duty I will hold to till Mercury as guide
 202 Leads my spirit where the good forever abide.
 203 That is why, since feeling myself mortally maimed
 204 By a dart which Love, using two fair eyes, had aimed,
 205 At once, although no cure by time can be expected,
 206 I came to ask you if the blow could be accepted.

SIMPHRONIUS

207 My friend, that you conduct yourself so pleases me,
 208 And don't, like some, abuse excessive liberty;
 209 In this I recognise the signs of your good nature,
 210 And see what profit you've gleaned from the wholesome
 nurture¹⁵
 211 We provided for you; your living always thus
 212 Will constitute for me a greater impetus
 213 To do you good, devoting my every care
 214 To have you marry that beauty beyond compare¹⁶
 215 Who holds you captive—that is, though, if it appears
 216 Nothing in her rank or religion interferes.

MARTIAN

217 I think the match is suitable: I understand
 218 Her father holds great riches in Rome and in land,
 219 That he is noble and of a great family,
 220 And can compare with anyone in dignity.

15 “[N]urture”—orig. “nourriture”. As often in English in the period, evoked is the distinction between education or upbringing and “nature” (l. 209; identical in French).

16 “[B]eyond compare”: orig. “plus qu’humain” (“more than human”), which resonates on the spiritual level.

SIMPHRONIUS

221 If that is so, it seems quite feasible to me,
222 And trust me, he'll find it no less pleasing than we,
223 Given the rank that here by us is occupied.
224 For no one can have pretensions to greater pride.
225 But how, then, did you come to make that girl's acquaintance,
226 Who has such force your soul to capture and entrance?

MARTIAN

227 The other day, after with pleasures of the chase
228 I'd whiled away the time, which dragged with a slow pace,
229 I saw her making her way back alone from school,
230 And in that same instant my soul became her fool.

SIMPHRONIUS

231 So this is some mere child that's got you in a bind?

MARTIAN

232 Yes, in body, but far different is her mind,
233 For her wisdom's great store and her perfected judgement
234 Savour not at all of youth's rash temperament,
235 But rather of age mature, for to hear her discourse
236 Makes one feel both of wonder and of love the force.

SIMPHRONIUS

237 Then you have often been able in speech to sound her,
238 Since so gentle and so ravishing you have found her?

MARTIAN

239 On just one occasion, then only a brief moment,
240 For when I made an effort the vow to present
241 I had made to love her ever as she merited,
242 After two or three words she turned away and fled.

SIMPHRONIUS

243 Naturally, she felt shame, being so addressed,
244 She who lived still in a state of peaceable rest,
245 Free of the piercing darts that Cupid sends our way.

MARTIAN

246 I recognise the likelihood of what you say.
 247 I think indeed that love, in her more tender years,
 248 Does not make her feel the flame that delights and sears
 249 As I do, yet I have a certain confidence
 250 That soon she will come to have the experience.

SIMPHRONIUS

251 However do you know that?

MARTIAN

252 A sooth-sayer told me,
 One who has a great deal of credit in this city.

SIMPHRONIUS

253 Such people, my friend, are mere purveyors of lies;
 254 It is ridiculous to think they might be wise.
 255 Do not believe them: they are charlatans, deceivers
 256 Of heedless young fellows, of whom they make believers.

MARTIAN

257 How comes it, then, that many of substantial show
 258 Greet them, when they encounter them, by bowing low?

SIMPHRONIUS

259 They proffer such honour of their frauds unaware,¹⁷
 260 But by Diana and Phoebus all-seeing, I swear
 261 That if, as to me, their foul practice of illusion
 262 Were known to them, they would give insults in profusion,
 263 And with a robust arm, in dexterous display,
 264 They would a hundred times cause a cudgel to play
 265 On their heads and backs. But leaving that filthy breed,
 266 Who will serve the eternal flames of hell to feed,
 267 Let's return to the subject that started this all,
 268 Regarding that beauty who holds you in her thrall.

17 Ll. 259-65: The failure to distinguish the referents of the pronouns ("they", "their", "them") follows the original, but the sense is never confused.

269 Well, then, since heaven has on her its graces lavished
 270 And everyone by her is thoroughly ravished,¹⁸
 271 I grant your suit to her in marriage may be tried.
 272 But at the start do not become preoccupied
 273 Excessively with her beauties; then, should it be
 274 That she will not submit to love's captivity,
 275 To disengage your feelings will not prove so trying,
 276 And I need not listen to you ardently sighing,
 277 As I see with some whom the fickle deity
 278 Deprives of discernment, courage, vitality.

MARTIAN

279 Since you accord me your permission in such fashion,
 280 Sir, you can put your fears to rest: never shall passion
 281 So carry me away, nor to such a height soar,
 282 That against your will I'll go and break down her door.¹⁹
 283 For no power could ever my mind so subdue
 284 As to make me forget the honour I owe you.

SIMPHRONIUS

285 Good words, which I must hope the sequel justifies.

MARTIAN

286 Sir, you need not fear that it will be otherwise.

SIMPHRONIUS

287 I perceive in you such agitation already
 288 For the little of her that Love has let you see,²⁰
 289 That I greatly doubt whether all that you declare,
 290 Is, as with all lovers, much more than empty air.
 291 Too much better than you that trade I understand,
 292 You who are a mere beginner, I an old hand:²¹

18 L. 270: Simphronius would seem to have no evidence of this, but the translation is faithful to the original ("elle est d'un chacun si hautement louée").

19 "[B]reak down her door": orig. "briser sa porte"; the translation is literal.

20 L. 288: orig. "Pour le peu qu'il y a qu'amour vous l'a fait voir"; the expression is elliptical but the sense seems clear.

21 "[A]n old hand": orig. "vieux routier", which lacks nautical associations; the image that follows, however, seems to justify introducing them.

293 The lover is just like some sailing vessel's master
 294 Whom a west wind from astern pushes to go faster
 295 And, when ahead a distant strait his eyes detect,
 296 Is eager to view it, though without being wrecked;
 297 Yet coming too near, the current sweeps him off course,
 298 And to resist his vessel lacks sufficient force.²²
 299 So it is when we catch sight of some youthful beauty:
 300 We think we can approach her in security,
 301 But then with his intentions events interfere,
 302 As with him who attempts in vain the ship to steer.

MARTIAN

303 All men are not identical in cast of mind;
 304 Quite different ways of thinking and acting we find:
 305 For one that Love in his toils keeps so tightly bound,
 306 A hundred spirits of high courage will be found
 307 Who will remain aloof except as pleasure serves,
 308 For from such bondage sacred reason them preserves.

SIMPHRONIUS

309 Never has reason been seen to impose a plan
 310 Upon the sweet archer of the fair Cyprian.
 311 To witness that fact I cite Antiquity's heroes,
 312 Whose virtue never allowed them to take repose.
 313 Valiant Theseus, invincible Hercules,
 314 Had their souls set on fire by thousands of beauties.
 315 But enough has now been spoken on such a subject;
 316 You must pay a visit to that delightful object.
 317 Go, and don't hesitate to wear your very best;
 318 A lover is more highly valued when well dressed,
 319 At least by certain persons of poorer discernment
 320 Who merely on outward appearance base their judgement.

MARTIAN

321 I shall obey you, O dearly beloved father.

22 Ll. 293-98 are marked typographically in the original text for special attention, as is frequent in the period for passages deemed sententious or aphoristic.

322 Please, gods, bring it about that my intentions prosper!

SIMPHRONIUS

323 But no, stop a moment. Let us first ascertain
 324 The will of her father and his consent obtain.
 325 For although we exercise a great deal of sway,
 326 We must avoid acting in a high-handed way:
 327 Of everyone we must respect the quality,
 328 And never with abuse wield our authority.
 329 I will go summon him to come with diligence
 330 So I may broach a matter of great consequence.
 331 Then, once he has come, as we take a turn or two,
 332 I shall reveal the new love that possesses you.

MARTIAN

333 Then while you the subject of the marriage are airing,
 334 My handsome attire I will see to preparing.

SCENE III

The Father of Saint Agnes, Simphronius

FATHER

335 O God, you who, with a forever-open eye,
 336 Into all corners of this round universe spy,²³
 337 Who know all things past, and what the future will yield,
 338 And from whom nothing in all our thoughts is concealed,
 339 Tell me, holy Father, to whom honour is due,
 340 Alas, what has this cruel governor in view,
 341 Who has one of his servants a summons declare,
 342 Someone capable and knowing (such was his air)?

23 Ll. 335-36: orig. "O Dieu, de qui les yeux incessamment ouuers, / Penetrent tous les coins de ce rond uniuers". Cf. John Donne, "Holy Sonnet [No. 165]", *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, ed. John T. Shawcross (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1967), ll. 1-2: "At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow / Your trumpets, Angels", where the image is apocalyptic (derived from Revelation 7:1) and coincides with contemporary map illustrations.

343 O Father Almighty, might he then have found out,
 344 That I bless your name ever as I go about,
 345 That your dear only Son I hold in adoration,
 346 Who from the tyranny of hell brought liberation?
 347 Whatever the case, great God, I am always ready
 348 Staunchly to endure your immutable decree.
 349 But lend me your help, Lord, for must I do without,
 350 Of my own strength, and myself, I stand in great doubt.
 351 For without your succour, Lord, what do we remain?
 352 Nothing but creatures subject to sorrow and pain.
 353 Therefore, accord me aid; the strength of your hand yield;
 354 Then I shall fear no longer, having you as my shield.
 355 And to bear witness, I'll go without more delay
 356 To that fell tyrant, if with my head I must pay.
 357 But here he comes; I'll go with a cheerful look now
 358 And render (in spite of myself) a humble bow.
 359 O Saviour of human kind! Ah, how disinclined
 360 Is a virtuous man to counterfeit his mind!
 361 O Monarch of Heaven, what a struggle to feign!
 362 But when strength is lacking, circumstances constrain.
 363 We don't know what to do—the truth we must conceal
 364 And never, imprudently, our anger reveal.
 365 Our thought is known to the caring divinity,
 366 Who makes allowance for dire necessity.
 367 [*to Simphronius*] Sir, quite disposed your sudden summons to
 fulfil,
 368 I come to receive your commands and hear your will.

SIMPHRONIUS

369 Sir, your effort puts me under great obligation;
 370 You may be assured I will give you compensation.²⁴
 371 You have only to let me know, at your best leisure,
 372 What I may do, and when, to give you greatest pleasure.

24 "I will give you compensation": orig. "Je m'en reuengeray". Although neutral usage of the verb was common, it is difficult to exclude a sinister foreshadowing.

FATHER

373 To do you service is enough for me, my lord,
 374 Without troubling you to imagine some reward.

SIMPHRONIUS

375 Now, you do not know what the occasion might be
 376 For my asking you to pay this visit to me?

FATHER

377 Not at all, my lord.

SIMPHRONIUS

Well, all suspense to withdraw,

378 My eldest son seeks to become your son-in-law,
 379 If you judge it good.

FATHER

I would count myself content

380 If only such indeed, my lord, were his intent,
 381 But I fear that his soul to greater heights aspires.

SIMPHRONIUS

382 Excuse me—it is the sole thing his heart desires.
 383 The perfect beauty, allurements and gracious parts
 384 Of your dear daughter have now embedded the darts
 385 Of the Paphian²⁵ archer so deep in his mind
 386 That no other pleasure in thinking can he find,
 387 Whether golden Phoebus is plunging in the ocean,
 388 Or when he rekindles the day, reversing motion
 389 Above the horizon. He studies no affair,
 390 In brief, has no other occupation or care.
 391 That is why I ask you to decide rapidly
 392 To lessen somewhat his torment's extremity.²⁶
 393 Bestow upon him your daughter in a chaste marriage
 394 And so make an alliance with our lineage.

25 From Paphos on Cyprus, hence alluding to Cupid.

26 L. 292: ironic, especially given the regular application of the word “torment”/“tourment” to physical torture.

395 You should not, I believe, think that a detriment,
 396 Since this sovereign city boasts none more eminent,
 397 Whether by virtue of wealth or of ancient status,
 398 Being descended from Scipio Africanus,²⁷
 399 One as such a bold and wise warrior renowned
 400 That his head is ever with a laurel wreath crowned.²⁸

FATHER

401 My lord, I know it, and possess a thorough sense,
 402 And also know how much I owe obedience
 403 To your supreme authority, which, by God's grace,
 404 You exercise humanely in this pleasant place.
 405 But my daughter, my lord, is still extremely young
 406 By Love's importunate wound to feel herself stung,
 407 As your son does; she is merely a child, in truth.

SIMPHRONIUS

408 You need not fear that Love, who triumphs over youth,
 409 Will not of Hymen's pleasures offer her the taste—
 410 Provided that the span of twelve years she has traced.
 411 Experience taught me, for at that tender age
 412 My dear other half came to me in faithful marriage,
 413 And I am quite certain that we were scarcely paired
 414 When parenthood as mother and father we shared.

FATHER

415 But also, my Lord, a great risk one may incur
 416 That such a friendship may not last and always nurture
 417 The hearts of those married with a flame that is equal.

SIMPHRONIUS

418 Again, such an outcome is hardly a miracle.
 419 Of very many friends I could give you a list

27 On the spectacular military career of Publius Cornelius Africanus Major (236-184/3 BCE), who defeated first Hasdrubal, then Hannibal, and captured Carthage in the Second Punic war, see *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed., N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), s.v. "Scipio Africanus Major"; hereafter *OCD*.

28 Figuratively, of course, but also in statuary. Evoking him here is part of Semphronius' identification with *Romanitas*, including the ancient religion.

420 Whom one has seen always in faithful love persist,
 421 Though in their tender years, according to their fate,
 422 They came to know the pleasures of the married state.

FATHER

423 My lord, against you I offer no argument:
 424 I am wholly yours—you must not doubt my intent.
 425 You have only to command; I will make you see
 426 Never master had a better servant than me.

SIMPHRONIUS

427 I honour you too highly to treat you that way.
 428 But if you so desire my care to allay,
 429 Out of generosity grant my fervent prayer
 430 And give your daughter, in virtues beyond compare,
 431 To my belovèd son, languishing at death's door,
 432 So incessantly does he those beauties adore.

FATHER

433 If that is all it takes from woe to set him free,
 434 I will give her to him, you have my guarantee—
 435 Provided she wishes it; otherwise I may not,
 436 For then nothing but pain and grief would be their lot,
 437 Whereas we are bound, with a most sanctified will,²⁹
 438 To wish their joy, while life lasts, may continue still.

SIMPHRONIUS

439 Unless her heart a rich diamond's hardness presents,³⁰
 440 She will think well of my son's amorous intents,
 441 For he is well-deserving, and by all renowned
 442 As the most accomplished in our Rome to be found.
 443 Regarding gifts of fortune, his riches appear
 444 As great as—or more than—anyone's dwelling here.

29 “[O]ur most sanctified will”: orig. “d’vne bien sainte enuie”. It seems important to preserve the religious resonance.

30 Diamond (“diamant”) was often assimilated to adamant as the ultimate hard substance (see below, III.ii.1094), but “rich”/“riche” mandates retaining the original.

FATHER

445 My lord, I know it, and have not the slightest doubt,
 446 And moreover I know how he spreads fear about,³¹
 447 As does a thunderbolt of Mars, which detonates
 448 In the midst of combat and squadrons devastates.

SIMPHRONIUS

449 It is true: his valiant spirit far exceeds some
 450 And by the enemy was never overcome.
 451 But let us leave this subject, for it wearies me
 452 To tell the glorious deeds of my family.
 453 I much prefer to have them by another named,
 454 For when one praises oneself one is merely shamed.

FATHER

455 You speak truly, my lord: never a noble mind
 456 That loves to recount his warlike feats do we find.

SIMPHRONIUS

457 And therefore on that subject silence I maintain.
 458 But let us leave all that behind to turn again
 459 To our first discussion. Do you not feel the wish
 460 To save my son from the clutches of mortal anguish
 461 By granting him your daughter, whose beauty is matchless?

FATHER

462 Certainly I do. In this world no happiness
 463 Would be greater for me, as I will make appear
 464 Before much time has passed, for my duty is clear.
 465 But now farewell, my lord; already my tasks press.

SIMPHRONIUS

466 May eternal Jupiter keep you from distress
 467 And cause you above others in favour to stand.

31 “[H]e spreads fear about”: orig. “chacun le redoute”, which seems to imply more than prowess on the battlefield.

FATHER

468 Lord, I tender you my thanks, and I kiss your hand.
[*Exit Simphronius.*]

469 That great God, all potency over all possessing,
470 May the outpourings of my voice be ever blessing!
471 Thanks to his help, once again I have gotten free,
472 Managing to deceive that cruel tyrant subtly
473 With meek words. Had I tried with boldness to behave,
474 No doubt he would have treated me as a base slave,
475 But with trimmed canvas like some mariner I sailed
476 When by Boreas³² and high seas he is assailed.
477 Great God, continue; do not cease me to protect,
478 And ensure that my promise proves of no effect.
479 Preserve your Agnes so your servant she may stay,
480 And do not permit him to ravish her away,
481 Wholly against her will, by force her to espouse.
482 To you alone her dear virginity she vows,
483 Well knowing that your high and sacred Majesty
484 Loves, above all the other virtues, chastity.

32 Boreas: the north wind.

Act II

SCENE I

Martian, Saint Agnes

MARTIAN

485 I have endured too long, longer I cannot wait;
 486 Half of me is burnt up—mere ashes are my state—
 487 By the love flames that are cast on me by the eyes
 488 Of perfect Agnes, fair masterpiece of the skies.
 489 Her good old father, whose grim looks put vice to flight,³³
 490 Has given his word to mine he will us unite.
 491 But his lengthy delays the performance prolong,
 492 And that causes my passion to become more strong,
 493 As thirst always declares itself more violent
 494 If too much time before relieving it is spent.
 495 Alas, he has scarcely felt, it is clear to see,
 496 The little archer's darts, which bring no guaranty,³⁴
 497 He does not know, moreover, how too long a wait
 498 For something we so crave will torment and frustrate,
 499 And that a little moment lasts a month for me,
 500 A month lasts quite a year, one year as much as three.
 501 Had the immortal gods been pleased to make him know
 502 In tender youth the rude effects of such a blow,
 503 Undoubtedly he would bestow on me compassion
 504 And hasten to my aid, afflicted in this fashion,
 505 Which before long the river will bring to my eyes
 506 That we know as Lethe,³⁵ unless soon I devise
 507 Some honest means whereby my suit I may obtain
 508 And not sickly, frustrated, languishing remain.

33 "[W]hose grim looks put vice to flight": orig. "sous qui le vice tremble"—meaning, I take it, that his serious attitude banishes all thought of relations outside wedlock. The distinction also seems to be implied below in l. 507: "honest means" (orig. "honneste moyen").

34 "[W]hich bring no guaranty": orig. "dont rien n'est garanty". The point seems to be the pain of uncertain aspiration.

35 Lethe: the underworld river of forgetfulness, hence metonymic for death.

509 Now, because this worthy fellow³⁶ drags his heels so
 510 About yielding his daughter, myself I must show
 511 Before her and, the tenor of her words not fearing,
 512 Relate to her again my grievous suffering.
 513 Who can tell? The same great gods who the tempests scatter
 514 Can perhaps her stubborn spirit to softness batter.
 515 She would not be the first in whom their deities
 516 Had driven clear out of the heart harsh cruelties.
 517 How many have been seen in show to take offence,
 518 How many have deployed a mockery intense—
 519 Then within two days, converted in rapid fashion,
 520 Returned their servants' ardour with vehement passion?
 521 Girls are every bit as fickle as a bird,
 522 Changing moment by moment as their hearts are stirred.
 523 That is why, in the force of precedents believing,
 524 I hope her fervent love some day to be receiving.
 525 But who comes here? O great gods, my belle she resembles—
 526 There can be no doubt of it! My whole body trembles,
 527 I am so ravished now with pleasure and content:
 528 Be bold, my tongue, and in your speaking confident.

[*Enter Agnes.*]

SAINT AGNES

529 Unhappy encounter! O you Divinity,
 530 Do you not see him who seeks the ruin of me,
 531 Who would ravish from me what is to me most dear?
 532 O God, do not let him touch me or come too near,
 533 So that his filthiness may foul me and pollute,
 534 I who for your love wish purity absolute.

MARTIAN

535 Fair one, whom one can call divine yet sin eschew,
 536 Burning with your love, I have come in search of you
 537 To know whether time, in the course of his swift progress,
 538 Has at all changed that humour of great haughtiness

36 "[T]his worthy fellow": orig. "ce bon homme", which likewise conveys condescension.

539 That showed disdain for me when, seeing you that day,
 540 I was by your loveliness so ravished away
 541 That since I have done nothing else but recollect
 542 Your harshness in floods of tears, and my arms neglect.
 543 Answer me now, fair one; my heart, do answer me,
 544 And do not treat me further with proud cruelty.
 545 Speak to me these sweet words: "My anger is effaced,
 546 And as lord of my heart you are securely placed."

SAINT AGNES

547 Before I ever speak to you such gracious words,
 548 We will see swim in the waves the air's gentle birds
 549 Instead of fish, and moist Nereus³⁷ occupy
 550 The farthest ethereal region of the sky;
 551 The day will become the night, and timorous night
 552 Will flame forth with brilliance, as when Phoebus shines
 bright.

MARTIAN

553 Alas! What are you saying? Beauty, I appeal
 554 That sentence, which as too harsh and cruel I feel!

SAINT AGNES

555 It may be so or not, but I have no desire
 556 At all to retract it.

MARTIAN

 What sorrows now transpire
 557 Through my soul entire! Oh misery, oh pain!
 558 Alas, just a little your hard anger restrain;
 559 Do not treat me so badly; have on me some pity,
 560 And weigh somewhat the value of my amity.³⁸
 561 Here—accept this emerald (a fortune alone),
 562 This precious diamond, along with this turquoise stone,
 563 These pearls from the orient, this necklace of rubies,

37 Nereus: in Greek mythology, a divinity of the sea and the father of the Nereids; here metonymic.

38 L. 560: orig. "Considérant un peu quelle est mon amitié". The shift from the pathetic to the venal in Martian's plea is noteworthy.

564 And this lovely tissue to make dresses that please.
 565 Take them: that I bestow them with such a free hand
 566 Displays my soul so ardently at your command.³⁹

SAINT AGNES

567 You can keep your presents—I want them not at all.
 568 No, do not trust to them to make me trip and fall.
 569 For someone somewhere else your trap and lines devise,
 570 Since at another's expense⁴⁰ I've made myself wise.
 571 You have not caught me, so your presence don't prolong;
 572 I am no more my own: to my spouse I belong,
 573 Who in virtues and riches you so far surpasses—
 574 In sheer beauty, in spirit, in all wisdom's classes,
 575 In potency, in justice, in majestic grandeur,
 576 Indeed in firm constancy and amorous ardour—
 577 As one perceives a magnificent prince surmounts
 578 A gentleman, or above a mere peasant counts.
 579 In short, His father is true God celestial,
 580 Himself held as such in this world terrestrial.
 581 His mother is a virgin, a most holy maid,
 582 Whose equal in this universe was never made;
 583 She is the dawn from which this sacred sun⁴¹ was born,
 584 Whose bright radiance our sorrow away has torn.
 585 His pages, His valets, His every domestic,
 586 Are all not merely spirits, but spirits angelic,
 587 Whose motion resembles a windy turbulence,
 588 Such as frequently He causes His friends to sense
 589 When there is need to travel with the speed of wings
 590 To preserve them from danger, or bring word of things
 591 That have newly occurred. In short, He is so perfect
 592 One could not enhance Him if wishes had effect.

39 Ll. 565-66: orig. "Prenez, ie vous les donne avec telle franchise, / Que mon âme est de vous ardan-temment esprise." What he ostentatiously presents as showing her power over him, she will expose as his attempt to gain power over her.

40 "[A]t another's expense": orig. "aux despens d'autrui", with the same double meaning as in English, which here ironically calls attention to the contrast between God's spiritual gifts and the material ones offered by Martian.

41 "[S]un": orig. "soleil", which obviously does not contain the pun ubiquitous in English religious discourse and impossible to exclude in translation.

593 Now, Martian, judge in what a blissful state I live,
 594 When to such a lover my chaste passion I give.
 595 Judge well, I pray you, so your future may be free
 596 Of any recollection that you once loved me.⁴²

MARTIAN

597 How unhappy I am! Oh, poor and miserable!
 598 Another enjoys an object⁴³ so desirable,
 599 And wretched I rejected with asperity,
 600 Like some peasant rich only in his poverty.
 601 O potent Jupiter, our great god tutelary,
 602 For pity's sake, say what to do: inspire me!
 603 And you, too-lovely Agnes, the name let me know
 604 Of your precious lover, the one you exalt so
 605 As great and perfect; this person, my life, please show
 me:
 606 For my part, surely, I wish him to get to know me.⁴⁴

SAINT AGNES

607 If I did not by certain inspiration know
 608 Your forthright words to be untrustworthy and hollow,
 609 I would tell you the name of Him by me adored.
 610 But, having no doubt He is by your soul abhorred
 611 Like poison, I am resolved that I shall conceal it.

MARTIAN

612 Oh, my heart! How horribly afflicted I feel it
 613 With rage and fury. And so to see her prefer
 614 Another lover over me? I burst with choler!

SAINT AGNES

615 While his anger is making him breathe forth the fire

42 Such judgement would effectively take the place of the water of forgetfulness conventionally administered to hopeless lovers in romances.

43 "[O]bject": orig. "bien", which (like English "good") has material connotations.

44 L. 606: orig. "D'estre connu de luy, certes i'ai bien enuie." As Agnes's reply and his subsequent tantrum confirm, the supposed desire for acquaintance is a pretence.

616 Of rage and fury⁴⁵ absolute, I will retire
 617 From here discreetly. You who maintain firmly tied
 618 The actions of the evil, great God, be my guide!

MARTIAN

619 I am beside myself, wholly out of my mind;
 620 If I can see him, if him I can ever find,
 621 Such a tempest down on his head I will deploy
 622 That never will his lady his presence enjoy:
 623 Yes, by the god Pluto, I'll bring him to his end,
 624 Even if a squadron its aid to him should lend—
 625 That darling pretty boy,⁴⁶ whom her soul in its craze
 626 Calls Great God, Saviour, makes the idol⁴⁷ of her days
 627 (So has the wine of love, with no water diluted,
 628 Befuddled her reasoning and her brain polluted).
 629 But what are these words, good gods? What fury bizarre,
 630 What fantastic delusions transport me so far,
 631 Into torment unequalled my senses propel?
 632 O good gods, what is this? Alas, I am not well:
 633 Strength fails me; I feel myself with weakness collapsing;
 634 Something I sense—I do not know what—wound and sting
 635 My heart to the quick; I must go lie down and rest.
 636 O gods, I cannot walk, with feebleness oppressed;
 637 My legs are trembling like a leaf upon a tree,
 638 And marble-cold is turning my entire body.

45 “[R]age and fury”: the terms (“rage”, “fureur”) are repeated from l. 613 and reinforce Martian’s passing resemblance to a mystery-play devil, for whom the assertion in l. 614, “I burst with choler!” (orig. “ie creve de colere”), would be typical.

46 “[P]retty boy”: orig. “beau fils”.

47 “[I]dol”: orig. “idolle”—an especially ironic term in the context.

SCENE II

Censorin, Martian

CENSORIN

639 I never would have believed that the childish arms
 640 The Cyprian boy wields would bring us to such harms—
 641 That because our belovèd cannot be possessed,
 642 A wound would be opened so deeply in our breast,
 643 With such great cruelty, that we would be constrained
 644 In bed upon our backs to languish, sorely pained,
 645 In just the same state as Martian, my faithful friend,
 646 Is now found, wretched and sick, as if at his end,
 647 With sighs pouring forth, with weeping and lamentation,
 648 For Agnes's refusal without mitigation.
 649 Alas, what a pity! Must it be that the harshness
 650 Of those we love overwhelms us with floods of sadness,
 651 With a thousand woes and infinite forms of torment,
 652 Instead of filling us brimful of all content?
 653 Oh, hard decree!—and worse than unendurable,
 654 Such as the world has never seen so terrible!
 655 To love a person as much as oneself, and more,
 656 And nothing to receive from her but pain galore:
 657 Oh, barbarous severity—or tyranny
 658 Whose like with Hyrcanian lions⁴⁸ one won't see!
 659 Martian, my friend, how afflicted am I with sorrow,
 660 At hearing the news that you have been brought so low,
 661 Are now so pale and wasted! I doubt if my sight
 662 Will be able to greet you and withstand the blight
 663 Of a million horrors—no, when I see you so,
 664 Certain I am my eyes with tears will sadly flow.
 665 But let us now make our journey nevertheless;⁴⁹
 666 A friend's kind words can often comfort our distress,
 667 Possessing no less strength our spirits to make sound,
 668 When by a hundred thousand woes they have been drowned,

⁴⁸ "Hyrcanian lions": the wild beasts (more usually tigers) of Hyrcania (now a region of Iran) were proverbial for savage cruelty since antiquity. Shakespearean examples occur in *3 Henry VI*, I.iv.155, and *Hamlet*, II.ii.450.

⁴⁹ The action indicated by ll. 665-75 reflects the fluid conventions of mystery-play dramaturgy.

669 Than the ingredients of any medecine
 670 May claim to rid us of an ill that threatens ruin
 671 To our entire body with humoral banes⁵⁰
 672 Provoking within us excruciating pains.
 673 Now I will go to see him with the hope in view
 674 That some relief of his suffering may ensue.
 675 Ah, his room is closed? It seems I must knock and wait.⁵¹

MARTIAN (*lying in bed, lamenting*)

676 How miserable I am, how unfortunate!
 677 No, I doubt that on earth, where fit for habitation,
 678 Anyone can be found in a like situation!
 679 To prize a beauty's love much above one's own heart,
 680 And nothing but harshness receive in counterpart—
 681 Is that not a torture this world cannot exceed?

CENSORIN

682 I hear his complaint from his sorrow's depth proceed.
 683 Alas, what pity I feel! Certainly, I sense
 684 Piercing pangs of my own whenever he laments.

MARTIAN

685 Well, all right, ingrate, since you manage the affair
 686 So as to consign my doleful life to despair,
 687 I will die, I will die, resolved entirely,
 688 Because you have proved unwilling to marry me.

CENSORIN

689 That mournful voice I can no longer stand to hear;
 690 Charitable consolation must meet his ear.
 691 [*entering the room*] Martian, my friend, I am most terribly
 distressed
 692 To see you supine like this, with sorrow oppressed.

50 "[H]umoral banes": orig. "pécantes humeurs", with reference to traditional medecine based on the theory of humours.

51 "I must knock and wait": orig. "il faut heurter à l'huis". The translation adds his expectation of an answer, which matches his delay in entering until l. 691, when he can no longer hold back his "[c]haritable consolation" ("discours charitable"). The parody of Christian piety is evident.

693 I pray the great god of the Eternal Empire⁵²
 694 Will soon, in pity, with health and strength you inspire.

MARTIAN

695 I pray to him, too, but with both my feet extended,
 696 So that such great pain as this may at last be ended.

CENSORIN

697 My God, do your words the fatal sister⁵³ denote?

MARTIAN

698 Would I were already in Charon's sombre boat!⁵⁴

CENSORIN

699 In time of need, then, does your courage let you down?
 700 Where is that lofty heart of valiant renown?

MARTIAN

701 You ask me that? Alas, go and the question put
 702 To her who as her trophy keeps me underfoot:
 703 She holds it.

CENSORIN

704 Back to your possession it must come,
 Since she takes pleasure only in its martyrdom.⁵⁵

MARTIAN

705 Get it back how? For me that is impossible.

CENSORIN

706 If you go forward with a courage invincible,
 707 You will get it back; of that I am well assured,

52 Especially ironic language for a contemporary audience, accustomed to contrasting the ruins of pagan Rome with the truly eternal city of God.

53 "[F]atal sister": orig. "Parque", from the Parcae, i.e., the Fates; the singular is often used metonymically for death.

54 "Charon's sombre boat": orig. "la funeste barque". As the translation makes explicit, the reference is to the ferryman who transported souls in the underworld.

55 L. 704: orig. "Puis qu'elle ne se plaist qu'à le voir martyrer". The language is starkly ironic.

708 For your ill is hardly hopeless of being cured.
 709 Help yourself, I beg you.

MARTIAN

For the ill that grips me,
 710 Mere courage is not a sufficient remedy.

CENSORIN

711 Then what other remedy for it might be found,
 712 To induce you at least to see if it is sound?

MARTIAN

713 Alas, I've no idea, for it's incurable.

CENSORIN

714 Never say that; everything is mutable,
 715 Jupiter willing: even when borne by diseases
 716 To the tomb's brink, one will be cured, if he so pleases.

MARTIAN

717 And so I well believe. But to perform the cure
 718 Of this disease, whose cruel hurting I endure,
 719 To convert⁵⁶ her haughty spirit one needs,
 720 From sweet Agnes banishing the contempt it breeds,
 721 And also then to liberate her ravished soul
 722 From some lover, whom as her life she dares extol.

CENSORIN

723 You are sure, therefore, that her love-enkindled heart
 724 Burns for another? Who did that to you impart?

MARTIAN

725 She herself.

CENSORIN

How is that? Can she display such boldness?

56 "[C]onvert": orig. "conuertir"—clearly with ironic significance in the context.

MARTIAN

726 Only too much, to my misfortune. And this illness
 727 Which torments me has no other basis besides
 728 The fact that this lover's identity she hides.

CENSORIN

729 Someone had indeed informed me in words obscure
 730 That the sweet pangs of love she had come to endure,
 731 But the lover's name he would not reveal to me,
 732 Which made me, for no little while, extremely angry.

MARTIAN

733 That's the source of my torment, the cause of my pain;
 734 That is why, alas, in despair I still remain.
 735 For if kind heaven had me such favour procured
 736 That I found myself of that galant's name assured,
 737 By the sword in the field we would settle the question
 738 Of which of us two will have her as his companion.

CENSORIN

739 Do not trouble yourself more—think of getting well;
 740 Your tribulations you will soon see me dispel.
 741 Just help yourself: I swear and promise without doubt,
 742 To see your affront avenged, I'll find his name out.

MARTIAN

743 How you console me! Already I feel less aching,
 744 Now you assure me that revenge I will be taking
 745 On my rival.

CENSORIN

Maintain your confidence well seated:
 746 You will see him presently by my arm defeated.

MARTIAN

747 No, no, I beseech you! It is strictly my place
 748 To make him look death's terror starkly in the face.

749 Just discover who he is, of what quality,⁵⁷
 750 Then you will see me put down his audacity.

CENSORIN

751 Then since you judge you will gain greater satisfaction
 752 From seeing him struck down by your own martial action,
 753 The plan of killing him myself I will forego.

MARTIAN

754 How to tell what pleasure that gives I scarcely know.
 755 For I am the sort of man who despises one
 756 Who by another's arms will have his vengeance done,
 757 Which shows his soul too base and sluggish for the task,
 758 And of manhood possessing nothing but the mask.

SCENE III

Simphronius, Censorin

SIMPHRONIUS

759 So there is someone who would dare the rival play
 760 To my son's power? Is it possible to stray
 761 So far from reason? Is he quite out of his mind,
 762 Or merely to our sovereign potency blind—
 763 To the fact that in this place, the world's perfect jewel,
 764 My arm, as Mars's thunder, bears absolute rule?
 765 Ah, if only I manage his name to obtain,
 766 I will make him suffer the very cruellest pain;
 767 I will raise the torture he feels to such a height
 768 It will his brainsick boldness, his fine pride, requite.
 769 And to lend that fearsome threat a more solemn air,
 770 By the triple-headed dog of Hades I swear;
 771 I swear by Cocytus, by the boatman's grim freight;
 772 By Acheron I swear, and the rock of great weight

57 "[Q]uality": orig. "race".

773 Rolled uphill, only to roll back, by Sisyphus;
 774 More, I swear by the thirst of wicked Tantalus⁵⁸—
 775 Just regard the temerity and impudence!
 776 Was ever such shamelessness so in evidence?
 777 Surely, I do not think so, even at that time
 778 When Jupiter chastised the most insolent crime
 779 Of the proud giants, who in their bold opposition
 780 Sought from the celestial throne his deposition.
 781 More than sixty-years old, I have no memory
 782 Of ever hearing tell of such audacity.
 783 How strange it is: the more the weary world declines,
 784 With age advancing, the more its motion inclines
 785 To frightful fecundity in forward devices—
 786 To put it in two words, in all scandalous vices.

CENSORIN

787 To listen to you—yes, even to look at you—
 788 Your eyes ablaze with angry fire they spew,
 789 It is my firm belief you have a wounded soul,
 790 By poisoned arrows filled with hate beyond control.
 791 Now, is this not the truth? Please, speak to me quite
 frankly.
 792 Are you not in the grip of a violent fury?

SIMPRONIE

793 Well, who would not be, faced with grossness⁵⁹ so immense?

CENSORIN

794 It seems, then, that someone has done you some offence?

58 Simphronius' diabolical character is developed by his virtual invocation of infernal spirits in the form of underworld geography and punishments. Cocytus and Acheron are two of the rivers of Hades (another is the Styx, mentioned below at V.i.1751); its "triple-headed dog" is Cerberus; the "boatman" is Charon (see above, II.ii.678 and n. 54). Sisyphus and Tantalus earned their notorious punishments from Zeus (or Jupiter), with whom Simphronius obviously identifies, essentially by offending against the divine power. Cf. his grief-stricken rage when he imagines himself the victim of such power after his son's death: see V.i.1685 ff. and 1744 (where Agnes is identified with the Fury Alecto).

59 "[G]rossness": orig. "imprudence".

SIMPRONIE

795 Do you really not know?

CENSORIN

Nothing with certainty.

SIMPHRONIUS

796 In that case, I will tell you with stark clarity.
 797 Not only Martian feels a ravishing transport
 798 For the gentle Agnes: another pays her court.
 799 Another pursues her with passion⁶⁰ of his own,
 800 Which her powerful affections amply condone.

CENSORIN

801 Indeed, someone made me aware that love had cost
 802 Her reason, that for a lover she was quite lost.

SIMPHRONIUS

803 But why did you not tell me this some time ago?

CENSORIN

804 At that moment, his name I simply did not know.
 805 But I know it at present as a certain fact.

SIMPHRONIUS

806 Come on, then, tell me, so revenge I may enact.

CENSORIN

807 He is named Jesus, otherwise known as the Saviour,
 808 Who styles himself the son of God, the great Creator.

SIMPHRONIUS

809 What? Great Jupiter! So she is a Christian?
 810 I supposed her surely to be, like us, a Pagan.⁶¹

60 “[P]assion” (identical in French): the Christian connotations obtrude ironically.

61 “[P]agan”: orig. “Payenne”. In opposition to “Christian” (orig. “Chrestienne”), the term helps (with the support of capitalisation in the original printed text) to mark the unwitting internalisation of a Christian perspective, as is also found in the medieval mysteries.

811 Now all is well; I am not in the slightest pained,
 812 Since for that heinous sin⁶² we will have her arraigned—
 813 That is, if I see her stubbornly still prefer
 814 To spurn my son, who too much idolises her.⁶³

CENSORIN

815 There is no doubt she will maintain her constancy
 816 In loving.

SIMPHRONIUS

Oh, really? No, that will never be.

CENSORIN

817 Will she not? You'll see.

SIMPHRONIUS

I have no wish to do so.

CENSORIN

818 Wait: such ravishing by this Jesus does she show
 819 That far sooner (from all that I have understood)
 820 You will soften the tigresses that haunt the wood.

SIMPHRONIUS

821 And yet the fear of death, which all the world abhors,
 822 Will make her abandon that Jesus whom she honours;
 823 I'll make use of that threat, and to increase her fright,
 824 I'll have a Christian stoned to death within her sight.

CENSORIN

825 That you may do readily: there's a prisonful.

SIMPHRONIUS

826 For in witnessing his penalty so terrible,
 827 I have no doubt that a quivering fear will seize her,

62 "[S]in": orig. "peché"—obviously, another word ironically charged.

63 "[I]dolises her": orig. "l'idolastre"—a further irony.

828 And ensure in short order that the change will please her.

CENSORIN

829 But has it passed so rapidly out of your mind?
 830 Death is the greatest glory these Christians can find.
 831 For the love of Jesus they are eager to perish,
 832 And menaces meted out they joyously cherish,
 833 When told they must descend into the gloomy grave,
 834 For worldly fame they thus resplendently engrave.
 835 They make themselves immortal by firmly enduring
 836 The most varied pains one can imagine procuring,
 837 The more because, according to their cockeyed creed,
 838 In proportion as sufferings on earth succeed,
 839 The higher in the sky, gleaming with brilliant light,
 840 For all eternity one will enjoy delight.
 841 And just to prove to you the truth of what I say,
 842 Beyond this awe-imposing place I need not stray,
 843 Where once one saw a certain Paul death undergo,
 844 As did a Peter, and indeed a Thomas also
 845 ('Though the last was subjected to his martyrdom
 846 In fields from which the sun's rays to our sight first
 come.⁶⁴)
 847 And if I were to seek all to enumerate,
 848 A far greater number you would soon hear me state.

SIMPHRONIUS

849 Those were aged men, hardened in their constancy,
 850 But this fair Agnes is scarce out of infancy;
 851 Her courage is not stalwart enough to sustain
 852 Cruel pangs and tortures, the rigours of such pain.

CENSORIN

853 The young woman Prisca⁶⁵ I would bring to your mind,

64 The Apostle Thomas was martyred in India, according to legend. See *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, online version (<<https://www.catholic.com/encyclopedia>>; accessed 25 March 2022), *s.v.* There may also be resonance, ironically, with the Christian tradition of prayer facing eastward.

65 Prisca (orig. "Prisce"), or Priscilla, was venerated as an early Roman martyr, although her history is uncertain; she may have been interred in a catacomb neighbouring that of St Agnes. See *The*

854 Who at Agnes's age bore torments of that kind,
 855 So constantly, indeed, it seemed her flesh and bone,
 856 Insensible to pain, were merely made of stone—
 857 A sight that caused to sigh, and with tears overflow,
 858 Those who had often witnessed such a public show.⁶⁶

SIMPHRONIUS

859 What you say is true.

CENSORIN

 That is why you must be prudent
 860 In pursuing a course that leads to punishment.

SIMPHRONIUS

861 Your counsel is good; it shall surely be applied.
 862 I would be most sorely put out if Agnes died.
 863 I will give order to have her brought here to me
 864 To soften her hardened spirit, if that may be.

CENSORIN

865 That will be a good thing, for it would be a shame
 866 If by justice to such horrid slaughter she came.
 867 I'd find that pitiful, knowing as I have done
 868 How she is idolised and cherished by your son
 869 More than his own eyes, and more than the very light
 870 Of that heavenly Phoebus who by day shines bright.
 871 For though she causes him incomparable woe,
 872 Still, I am certain he would be stricken with sorrow,
 873 Which, perhaps touching his soul to the very life,
 874 Would make him fall victim to a cold sword or knife.

SIMPHRONIUS

875 You're right; such a story no novelty possesses:
 876 Many tumble into the tomb from love's excesses.
 877 In my tender youth I have seen some meet that fate.

Catholic Encyclopedia, online version, s.v.

66 "[S]uch a public show": orig. "de tels vacarmes".

CENSORIN

878 That is the reason why, while you stay and await
 879 That young beauty, whose eye possesses so much power,
 880 I will go see your son, who languishes each hour.

SIMPHRONIUS

881 Go, my Censorin, go, to his side quickly sweeping
 882 To console him, for it may be that he is weeping
 883 Even now in his room, or in some hidden recess,
 884 Lest any should be a witness to his distress.⁶⁷
 885 For the truth is that he bears a burden of shame
 886 At the fact that his passion so him overcame.

CENSORIN

887 But why such shame? He need not have any at all,
 888 Since he is not alone in becoming the thrall
 889 Of Venus's great son: creatures without exception
 890 Suffer his vexatious pangs, just as he has done.

67 L. 884: orig. "De peur que de son mal, aucun ne soit tésmon." The language makes for an ironic contrast with Agnes, given the original meaning of "martyr" ("witness").

Act III

SCENE I

Mother of Saint Agnes, Saint Agnes, Simphronius

MOTHER

891 Let us go, dear daughter, let us go, my dear care;
 892 To show ourselves to that hardened heart, let us dare—
 893 To that cruel tyrant full of subtlety and ruses,
 894 Who is satisfied only when blood he effuses
 895 In foaming streams from the followers of Christ's way.
 896 Before, though, to the Holy Spirit let us pray
 897 To grant his grace, and in his goodness us inform
 898 As to what we must say and what we must perform.

SAINT AGNES

899 Gentle Lord Jesus, who redeemed us to salvation,
 900 Never abandons us in times of tribulation,
 901 When we serve him with a soul both holy and pure;
 902 And if he permits us some tortures to endure,
 903 We must believe good from this will to us befall.

MOTHER (*kneeling*)

904 Great God, who caused to be born of nothing this all,
 905 Pity us, not so that our lives we may prolong
 906 (For to die for your sake our desire is strong),
 907 But with strength may it please you our hearts to sustain,
 908 Sufficient their conquest of torments to maintain.
 909 Confirm our faith, bestow on us the constancy
 910 To bless your name while we endure our agony,
 911 So that the final word perceived to issue from us
 912 May be the precious name of the most gentle Jesus.

SAINT AGNES

913 Amen, so be it. Now let us go without fear;
 914 The Saviour of mankind inclines our plea to hear.
 915 He will lend us his succour, I firmly believe,
 916 For suddenly great bliss within me I conceive,
 917 All my senses surprised and ravished by well-being,

918 As if in the heavens myself already seeing,
 919 Led by those spirits divine who unceasingly
 920 Exalt with loud voices the name of the Almighty.

MOTHER

921 O dear half-myself, that is a promising presage!
 922 Myself too, in these last moments, I feel my courage
 923 Much increased—the great God’s sure sign by which we know
 924 That his pitying eye regards us here below.
 925 Now may his sacred goodness vouchsafe us his guidance!
 926 But who is that?

SAINT AGNES

He, full of rage and arrogance,
 927 Who had us summoned.

MOTHER

Ah, seat of impiety,
 928 Grossly adoring false gods in profanity!

SAINT AGNES

929 The cruel Laestrygon,⁶⁸ faithless and barbarous,
 930 Who is for human blood many times more voracious
 931 Than are the most savage beasts—panthers, bears and
 lions,
 932 Brutal tigers, wolves, greedy vultures, even dragons:
 933 O torturer worse than Acheron’s ghosts,⁶⁹ more fearsome,
 934 Would that I were able your killer to become
 935 To avenge so many saints!

MOTHER

Daughter, hold your tongue,
 936 Lest, when he meets us, the darts by his fury flung
 937 Should storm ferociously and render devastated

68 Laestrygon: orig. “Lestrigon”, a byword for cruelty. The Laestrygones were giant cannibals who attacked the hero and his sailors in Homer’s *Odyssey* (bk. X.80-132). See *OCD*, *s.v.*

69 Agnes seems to associate Simphronius, as a pagan tyrant, with the mythological monsters that such pagans imagined. Cf. Simphronius’ diatribe above, II.iii.770-80 and n. 58.

938 Either your tender body or my snow-white head.

SAINT AGNES

939 His efforts inhumane by no means frighten me;
940 Let him do as he pleases with this earthly body,
941 As long as the soul leaves it in pure innocence
942 To rise to the palace of the eternal essence.

MOTHER

943 Well spoken, darling: one could say no better thing.
944 But know, nevertheless, that the heavens' great King
945 Contrary to our forward will his law appoints,
946 Should we rush ourselves upon pallid death's sharp points,
947 Except when it is time himself to glorify
948 And with voice loud and clear his name to magnify.

SAINT AGNES

949 Let all his glorious name unceasingly bless.

SIMPHRONIUS

950 Who is that coming towards us? Is it some goddess?
951 Certainly, if in a large troop she met my sight,
952 Accompanied by tender-eyed fair nymphs, snow-white,
953 I would truly think it Diana with her train:
954 For her bearing, divine, is far from the profane,⁷⁰
955 While that youthful nymph accompanying her paces,
956 And who carries in her eyes such amorous graces,
957 Leads me likewise to conclude, or at least surmise,⁷¹
958 Some sacred power comes from the radiant skies.
959 I must go to them and with a respectful motion,
960 Kiss the hem of their garment to show my devotion.⁷²

70 "[P]ropane" (identical in French): pointedly recalled, with irony, is the Mother's disdain for his "profanity" in 1.928, above.

71 L. 957: orig. "Me fait aussi iuger, ains me donne creance". The point seems to be that, despite being trapped within his pagan blindness, he experiences a sense of the genuinely sacred.

72 A gesture of deference to female royalty still practiced in the seventeenth century (Pasquier, ed., n. 108).

MOTHER

961 What are you doing, sir? It should not be your care
 962 To greet us thus.

SIMPHRONIUS

The honour that to you I bear
 963 Compels me to adopt this form so reverent,
 964 Thinking you deities from the bright firmament.

MOTHER

965 My lord deludes himself if he believes we trace
 966 Descent from heaven, and not from the human race.
 967 I am a mere woman.

SIMPHRONIUS

And this one I perceive?

MOTHER

968 A simple young girl, whom adversities aggrieve.

SIMPHRONIUS

969 On hearing you speak this way, I am stupified,
 970 For, when first your forms and your fair faces I spied,
 971 I thought, by my faith,⁷³ that beneath their gravity
 972 There lay hidden the greatness of divinity.
 973 And so, madam, say who it is you are, I pray,
 974 And this girl, too, who straight to my soul makes her way
 975 With her attractive charms. What makes you journey here
 976 At this time?

MOTHER

The only reason is to appear
 977 Before your Highness.

73 “[B]y my faith”: orig. “par ma foi”—a common and usually casual oath, ironically charged in the context; cf. l. 1001 below.

SIMPHRONIUS

What causes you to do so?

MOTHER

978 Your express command of a little while ago
979 To come and seek you out.

SIMPHRONIUS

Well, then, now I know you.

980 You belong to those who the law scornfully view
981 Of the sacred emperors, in your soul adoring
982 Other deities than those we have been imploring
983 From ancient times here. Come, a truthful answer give.

MOTHER

984 Yes, surely, governor, and as long as I live,
985 And this girl, too, with all our strength and our whole
heart
986 To our God Jesus humble homage we'll impart.

SIMPHRONIUS

987 Do not speak so, for fear that language of that kind
988 Should bring about disturbance of your peace of mind.

MOTHER

989 We have no fear that such a state we will incur.
990 Let us be put in chains, our bodies prisoner
991 Within a cell—yes, still we would much sooner die
992 Than ever cease Jesus our God to glorify.

SIMPHRONIUS

993 Madam, there is too much arrogance in your speech.
994 What? Have you no fear of our laws' power and reach?
995 To speak more humbly I would as a friend advise you,
996 For fear that a dreadful punishment may chastise you.
997 For—our Capitol's gods to witness this I call—
998 If that manner of speech became known overall
999 Within our city, frankly, you may be assured
1000 With horrible forms of torment you would be tortured.

1001 That is why, be prudent, for by my faith I swear,
 1002 To see you harmed would be pain I would gladly spare.⁷⁴

MOTHER

1003 You make us obliged to you beyond our desert,
 1004 But I affirm to you that whatever the hurt
 1005 We have to suffer, our constancy will appear,
 1006 Remaining God's humble servants while we are here.
 1007 We have not the least fear death's pains to undergo,
 1008 For sooner or later this world we must forego.

SIMPHRONIUS

1009 Yes, so we must, but if it's at all possible,
 1010 We're bound to shrink away, for Death⁷⁵ is terrible
 1011 And its hideous aspect would even strike horror
 1012 Into tigers and serpents in the grip of furor.

MOTHER

1013 Those who serve Jesus can just set that fear aside:
 1014 Its dart touches nothing but the merest outside,
 1015 Their earthly body, for the spirit, far more precious,
 1016 The Creator's gift, regains Heaven glorious,
 1017 Where forever in blithe assurance it survives,
 1018 And sweet enjoyment of all the pleasures derives—
 1019 But pleasures that are of another quality
 1020 Than those of these regions full of infirmity.
 1021 For the soul which tastes them always such rapture feels,
 1022 That never the least desire for change appeals.

SIMPHRONIUS

1023 Then, since those pleasures are of such intensity,
 1024 I do not see why in privation you need be
 1025 Any longer: therefore, die. But for this girl's case,
 1026 Whose eyes are so lively, so beauteous her grace,
 1027 I rather counsel her against rash eagerness

74 L. 1002: orig. "Que ie serois fasché que l'on vous fist iniure." The translation sharpens the irony, but only slightly.

75 "Death": orig. "la parque"; cf. above II.ii.697 and n. 53.

1028 To suffer death for gaining of such happiness.
 1029 She must, she must, before she leaves this world below,
 1030 The playful games of fruitful Venus come to know
 1031 With a husband, who, after two or three years' passing,
 1032 Pretty children into the world will make her bring.

MOTHER

1033 My daughter was never for love in this world born:
 1034 Of Jesus Christ she is the destined servant sworn;
 1035 Such is her vow, and therefore it is quite in vain
 1036 Her intention, so righteous, to try to restrain.

SIMPHRONIUS

1037 At an age so tender there is no likelihood
 1038 That she should yet be able to judge her own good.
 1039 For what she does and says, she must on you rely.
 1040 But when golden Phoebus, who sees all with his eye,
 1041 Has given her another year or two, quite soon
 1042 I have no doubt at all that she will change her tune.
 1043 Is that not so, my dear? She answers not a word,
 1044 A token that her mind with my speech has concurred.
 1045 Here, here—just give me a moment with her apart:
 1046 How now, my pretty one, how now, my little heart?⁷⁶
 1047 Would you not rather choose the married state one day,
 1048 To taste the sports love's little god knows how to play?

SAINT AGNES

1049 No, no, and never! Such sports I abominate
 1050 Worse than mortal poison, more than the black plague hate.
 1051 I wish to spend my days in purest chastity,
 1052 With all devotion serving the divinity.
 1053 You waste your time when you differently advise,
 1054 For I will face death before I do otherwise.
 1055 If I had wished that love my conqueror should be,
 1056 Of my heart your son would have had the mastery.

76 L. 1046: orig. "Hé bien mon petit cœur, hé bien ma mignonnette"; Pasquier, ed., n. 115, indicates the resemblance to humanist poetic language.

SIMPHRONIUS

1057 Then if you choose virginity, and always will,
 1058 With no amorous spark to mitigate the chill,
 1059 A place among that holy troop why don't you claim
 1060 That cares for the temple of Vesta and that flame?⁷⁷

SAINT AGNES

1061 Never will I! A mere idol to ridicule!

SIMPHRONIUS

1062 Express yourself more wisely; do not play the fool,
 1063 For fear of calling down on you her mortal ire,
 1064 Whose slightest blow would strike you with violence dire,
 1065 Piercing more deeply than the lightning-bolt, and louder,
 1066 Which shatters strong buildings and smashes them to
 powder.

SAINT AGNES

1067 Governor, abused by evil spirits that dwell
 1068 Within the precincts of the very depths of hell,
 1069 Do you suppose that copper, wood and alabaster,
 1070 Or mere marble and tiles, or clay hard-baked and plaster,
 1071 Twisted into grotesque images, can do harm?
 1072 No, no, that should not be believed or cause alarm.
 1073 Or if they do some harm, by pure chance it befalls,
 1074 As when wood tumbles down or some solid stone falls.

SIMPHRONIUS

1075 This girl is raving, of that there can be no doubt.
 1076 I must dismiss her; hearing her, I can't hold out
 1077 Longer as she blathers. Go to your mother, then,
 1078 And return to be with your father once again.
 1079 But beware: your intention you must countermand,
 1080 For fear of feeling how heavily weighs the hand

77 On the hearth-goddess Vesta and the virgins who served her cult, see *OCD*, *s.v.* "Vesta, Vestals". The translation of ll. 1057-60 accentuates Simphronius' scornful contrast of sexual heat with chastity's coldness.

1081 Of him to whose law, at present, I go contrary.⁷⁸

MOTHER

1082 O my Saviour Jesus, and you, too, Virgin Mary,
1083 With all our might our thanks we offer you today.

SAINT AGNES

1084 Let us go, good mother, and no longer delay.

SCENE II

Martian, Censorin

MARTIAN

1085 Dear friend, still dearer to my heart than is my heart,
1086 Alas, to cure this fierce torment, where do I start?
1087 What will become of me? Alas, what further room
1088 Is left me than confinement in a lonely tomb?
1089 But did I say entombed? Death, which can freedom give
1090 To others from griefs, compels me, alas, to live,
1091 And whatever harsh pain, whatever malady
1092 May come of strength and body's heat to ravage me,
1093 I cannot die: my life proves more impenetrable
1094 Than adamant rock⁷⁹ by nature insensible.

CENSORIN

1095 Our days are strictly numbered, Martian, my friend.
1096 Prescribed by the divinities their span, their end.
1097 One cannot by an hour speed or slow the pace.

MARTIAN

1098 But many have left behind this fair dwelling-place
1099 When they so desired: Mark Antony and Cato,

78 Seemingly an allusion to the emperor or to Jupiter (Pasquier, ed., n. 118). The former explanation is favoured by Vii.1905, 1907 and 1928-29 below.

79 "[A]damantine rock": orig. "un roc de diamant"; cf. above, Iiii.439 and n. 30.

1100 To end their tribulations, sought the realm of Pluto.⁸⁰

CENSORIN

1101 Yes, but so the fierce destinies did stipulate,
1102 Who intervene the spun thread of our years to truncate
1103 When they think it good.

MARTIAN

1104 Then, unless they grant the right,
One cannot simply vacate this fair world of light?

CENSORIN

1105 Surely you speak the truth. Such is their ordinance.

MARTIAN

1106 I wish to appeal that and register a grievance,⁸¹
1107 For I do not esteem that is sufficient reason
1108 To compel us to live when we are out of season—
1109 Out of season, I mean, when endless blows of fortune
1110 Present themselves our mournful days to importune,
1111 As I feel them falling on me moment by moment
1112 Without the least ability to circumvent
1113 Their unrelenting fury for a single hour.

CENSORIN

1114 So you will always be in your delusion's power,
1115 Which makes you account a pretty young girl's disdain
1116 A huge misfortune—O what a cowardly stain!

MARTIAN

1117 One quite exempt from burning by my daunting flame
1118 May well despise it, maintaining it is a shame

80 The famous Roman exemplars of suicide for honour's sake following military and political defeats, Marcus Antonius and Cato Uticensis ("the Younger"); Martian is still casting his passion in a heroic light.

81 "[A]ppeal ... grievance": orig. "appeler ... doléance"—legal terminology in keeping with the imagery of the passage. See *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, online at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/>> (accessed 29 March 2022), s.v. "appeler", "doléance".

1119 To let such love-affliction one's spirit subdue—
 1120 That one needs to muster greater courage and virtue,
 1121 That one must show constancy, be noble and brave,
 1122 And never to any passion become a slave.
 1123 But if he had felt the miseries of my plight,
 1124 Which cause me to suffer both by day and by night,
 1125 Overfullness of sadness it would surely send
 1126 And in his state forlorn, he'd be at his wits' end.⁸²

CENSORIN

1127 Love to me, as well as you, has suffering brought:
 1128 Beneath his banner many battles I have fought;
 1129 The fine points of his many stratagems I know,
 1130 But I've never experienced such dire woe
 1131 As you say you endure.

MARTIAN

You were born to a state
 1132 More fortunate far than I: all-powerful Fate
 1133 On you looked more kindly; the stars their radiance
 1134 Poured down on you, replete with gracious circumstance,
 1135 While I, poor wretch, I, as my sole portion was served
 1136 Nothing but what for tempests and storms they reserved.
 1137 That is why, seeing myself reduced to this plight,
 1138 I wish to close my day with everlasting night.

CENSORIN

1139 Oh, what a brave expedient! The proper cure
 1140 For every ill! That way one purges for sure
 1141 The most overwhelming pains, the most bitter torments,
 1142 The eating cares, the sorrows and the discontents—
 1143 In brief, all that wounds us and causes us distress.
 1144 It is also, however, to display great weakness.
 1145 No, no, live rather, since now to the point life brings
 you
 1146 Of enjoying that love whose absence plagues and stings
 you.

82 "[A]t his wits' end": orig. "au bout de sa finesse".

MARTIAN

1147 How, alas, am I at that point, since Agnes spurns me,
1148 And to hit her Love's dart has no capacity?

CENSORIN

1149 Undoubtedly, but those facts by no means require
1150 You to forgo enjoying her as you desire.

MARTIAN

1151 What is your meaning?

CENSORIN

Now let me explain the ruse.

1152 If to adore our gods she should starkly refuse,
1153 By law she will be to the brothel relegated,
1154 And there with her body's graces⁸³ you can be sated.

MARTIAN

1155 To enjoy her in that way will bring me no pleasure.

CENSORIN

1156 Be that as it may, it gives relief in some measure.

MARTIAN

1157 I would much prefer to gain her by gentleness,
1158 In order that forever I may her possess.

CENSORIN

1159 But of two evils, one must the lesser advise.
1160 Since you cannot be brought together otherwise,
1161 Better surely thus to douse the flames of your anguish

83 "[H]er body's graces": orig. "son corps gent et beau"—a formula harking back to medieval courtly love language. See *Dictionnaire du moyen français (1330-1500)*, online at <http://zeus.atilf.fr/scripts/dmfX.exe?LIEN_DMF;LEMME=gent2> (accessed 26 March 2022), and A. J. Greimas, ed., *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Larousse, 1992), s.v. ("II. gent adj"), citing Gauthier de Coinci (12th-13th cent.): "Son cors bel et gent". Censorin is crudely bringing Agnes's attractions down to earth, as is reinforced in the translation by "body's graces".

1162 Than continually consumed by them to languish?

MARTIAN

1163 I would be too cruel, too barbarously coarse,
1164 Were I thus to take a beauty so rare by force.

CENSORIN

1165 It's not cruelty, since her heart's ingratitude
1166 Dismisses your love with a scornful attitude.

MARTIAN

1167 Force is to be detested, whatever the case.

CENSORIN

1168 Yes, if it's applied to a soul displaying grace,⁸⁴
1169 But to an ingrate—no.

MARTIAN

But all those less aware

1170 Than we would strongly accuse me in this affair,
1171 Calling me a rapist, without restraint or shame,
1172 One who rekindles Nero's tyrannical flame.

CENSORIN

1173 If you do not restrain your mind from such inventions,
1174 You will by no means reap the fruit of your intentions.
1175 Therefore, get rid of them, and keep within your soul
1176 The extinction of love's flame as your only goal,
1177 The flame consuming you: that is the point to gain,
1178 If you wish to be healed of your amorous pain.

MARTIAN

1179 That drastic remedy I can scarcely prefer:
1180 First, I wish to see her again and speak to her.
1181 My father summons her; she obeys his behest,

84 “[A] soul displaying grace”: orig. “une ame gracieuse”. The ironic contrast is sustained between terrestrial and spiritual understandings of “grace” and indeed “soul”.

1182 One final time to put her courage to the test.

CENSORIN

1183 Since the occasion seems to be so opportune,
 1184 Take your chance once more with this offering of Fortune.
 1185 But then, without having for her the least compassion,
 1186 Extinguish the violent ardours of your passion.

SCENE III

Simphronius, Saint Agnes, [Guards or Attendants⁸⁵]

SIMPHRONIUS

1187 And so, my young girl, have you at all changed your mind?
 1188 Have you not in the least before our laws inclined?
 1189 Have you not finally abandoned your religion
 1190 And come to adore the gods worshipped in this region?
 1191 Come, speak now and answer me.

AGNES

Before my faith flees

1192 From the love of my God, our Tiber and the Ganges
 1193 Shall reverse their courses, and that Aventine Hill
 1194 The wave-traversed Ocean as its booty shall fill.

SIMPHRONIUS

1195 Could you be made fewer absolutes to affirm?⁸⁶

AGNES

1196 Even as a rock, I will always remain firm.

SIMPHRONIUS

1197 Moderate your speech, for if so boldly you spoke,

85 If these are not present from the beginning of the scene, they presumably enter at III.iii.1315

86 L. 1195: orig. "Sçauroit-on vous reduire à quelque meilleur terme?". Simphronius had earlier warned her against outspokenness. The translation aims at capturing the gist.

1198 Untimely sight of Atropos⁸⁷ you might provoke,
 1199 Which would, more than for other girls, cause me
 distress—
 1200 Of all who dwell here—because of your gentleness.
 1201 Change, then, pretty one, both belief and attitude,
 1202 And no longer let your ravished senses be skewed
 1203 By that false Jesus Christ, whom those of Jewish race
 1204 Justly, for wickedness, put to death in disgrace.
 1205 They are nothing but rogues, people lacking all honour,
 1206 Who follow the law of that cowardly imposter.
 1207 Persons of quality, the greatest the world knows,
 1208 Adore Jupiter for the thunderbolts he throws.

SAINT AGNES

1209 Oh, horrid blasphemy! Oh, what impiety,
 1210 What infamous sin, what vicious malignity!
 1211 Could one even conceive of its equivalent?
 1212 Does there exist in hell a worthy punishment?
 1213 Certainly, I think not. Ah, I tremble with horror
 1214 Merely at hearing those words spoken, full of furor,
 1215 Full of gross impudence—script for a madman's part,
 1216 And issued, I quite believe, from a Fury's heart.
 1217 O God holy, and wholly just! Ah, how, I wonder,
 1218 Can you for so long restrain your ireful thunder
 1219 Without blasting with it the head, with violence,
 1220 Of this man replete with rage and with impudence?
 1221 I know what my God is: good in everything!—
 1222 Slow to punish us, but prompt our pardon to bring.
 1223 You do not wish the sinner's death when miserable,
 1224 But his conversion, authentic and profitable.
 1225 Thus Saint Paul⁸⁸ by your hands received no penalty,
 1226 But only was rebuked, then taught humility,
 1227 So that after one of your own he was elected,
 1228 For the highest rank of dear apostles selected,
 1229 Into a vessel transformed of holy election

87 Atropos: as in I.i.36 above; cf. below, IV.iii.1644 and V.ii.1931.

88 Paul: it is significant that Agnes singles him out, with Peter (see below, l. 1243), given that the two apostles were traditionally martyred at Rome. Cf. above, II.iii.843-44.

1230 To preach your law to others with heartfelt affection.
 1231 Thus, even thus, Lord, may you correct Simphronius,
 1232 Converting to good his evil fierce and tyrannous!

SIMPHRONIUS

1233 Ha, ha! How learnedly she has just sermonised!
 1234 What well-structured discourse, with reason harmonised!
 1235 Those flowing discourses, put forward in a contest,
 1236 Great Cicero, rhetoric's past-master, would best;
 1237 Even Aeschines⁸⁹ at this all speaking would cease,
 1238 And Demosthenes, too, the leading light of Greece.
 1239 But give me some idea of your knowledge's source.

SAINT AGNES

1240 Within from the essence eternal springs its force,
 1241 In an instant to the ignorant wisdom giving,
 1242 To the wickedly-minded good will and good living.
 1243 Saint Peter knew it when he preached upon the shore
 1244 And found himself filled with high doctrine, when before,
 1245 I tell you, he know only how his fishing nets
 1246 To cast to the bottom.⁹⁰

SIMPHRONIUS

Now your vain babble gets

1247 On my nerves. Come, resolve yourself you simply must
 1248 To adore our great gods or be dashed into dust.
 1249 The point is settled, that of no return soon passed.
 1250 Come on, then, come—and hurry up: the die is cast.
 1251 Without further ado, I shall have you produced
 1252 To the base hangman's hands and to ashes reduced.
 1253 What, turned pale? Already trembling, or I'm mistaken:
 1254 You are moved through and through, and your senses are
 shaken!
 1255 Consider your case well—do not be obstinate;

89 Aeschines (389–314 BCE): a famous Athenian statesman and rhetorician, the political and oratorical antagonist of Demosthenes (384–322 BCE). See *OCD*, *s.v.*

90 On (Simon) Peter, the fisherman, summoned with his brother Andrew to become “fishers of men”, see Matthew 4:18–19, Mark 1:16–17 and Luke 5:1–11.

1256 Do not cut short the time allotted you by Fate.
 1257 Death has a bitter taste and cannot but appal;
 1258 No wonder, then, that it is greatly feared by all.
 1259 Fear it, then, my daughter, and do not heedless race
 1260 Yourself to present in front of its pallid face,
 1261 Which one philosopher⁹¹ has said brings much more fear
 1262 Than all that may in the sulphurous gulf appear.

SAINT AGNES

1263 Such posturing,⁹² such flowing speech—and all in vain!
 1264 Nothing frightens me: I shrink from no torture's pain.
 1265 If you see me turn pale, that does not fear confess
 1266 But rather disappointment, suffering, distress,
 1267 At hearing you direct such blasphemy outright
 1268 Against the God of Heaven, the Father of Light.
 1269 Death does not daunt me, and God can well testify
 1270 That the least of all my cares is fearing to die.
 1271 On the contrary, my true happiness would be
 1272 For Jesus' sake to suffer death in agony—
 1273 He who to cleanse our sins, and to redeem our loss,
 1274 Accepted its bitter taste, nailed upon a cross.

SIMPHRONIUS

1275 You dishonour the essence of eternity
 1276 To make it subject to cruel mortality.⁹³
 1277 The gods do not die; nothing their existence stays;
 1278 That is why, if Jesus met the end of his days,
 1279 Be sure he was not of the celestial band

91 “[O]ne philosopher”: Simphronius is obviously presenting a non-Christian view of death and the afterlife, but if he (or Toterel) has a particular philosopher in mind, his identity is not obvious. While the implicit scepticism regarding underworld terrors echoes both Epicurus and Seneca, the evocation of the horror of death does not conform to their consolations. A contemporary audience might have recalled the widely diffused *Zodiacus Vitae* of Palingenius (i.e., Pietro Angelo Manzolli), whose Book VI (Virgo) precedes a consoling evocation of death-as-sleep with an image of death’s terrifying power and aspect: “*visu et falce cruenta / Horribilis* [horrible to the sight and with his bloody scythe]” (VI.70-71). (Cited is Palingène [Pier Angelo Manzolli], *Le Zodiaque de la vie* [*Zodiacus Vitae*], Latin text ed. with a French trans. by Jacques Chomarat, Travaux d’Humanisme et Renaissance, 307 [Geneva: Droz, 1996].)

92 “[P]osturing”: orig. “artifice”.

93 “[M]ortality”: orig. (as often) “Parque”.

1280 But of human kind, subject to Fate's harmful hand.

SAINT AGNES

1281 Jesus our Saviour, to this world below translated
 1282 From Heaven's realm, both God and man incorporated:
 1283 Human, in that he had a virgin as his mother,
 1284 Yet the God of Heaven his father, and no other.
 1285 Being his mother's son, certainly death he felt,
 1286 But as his father's, did not fear the stroke it dealt,
 1287 As he showed well, for after perishing in pain,
 1288 By no means in the tomb did he enclosed remain,
 1289 As we mortals do, but his mortal sojourn ended,
 1290 Then, after some time spent, into Heaven ascended,
 1291 Where he is placed, seated in great magnificence,
 1292 On the right-hand side of the divinity's essence.
 1293 From there he contemplates mankind with ardent eyes,
 1294 And equally their good and bad designs he spies;
 1295 From there, in time of need, his chosen he assists,
 1296 Takes care that each of them in doing good persists,
 1297 Until with him to the heavens he elevates them,
 1298 Where a banquet of blissful benefits awaits them.

SIMPHRONIUS

1299 After treating you so patiently for too long,
 1300 Having with gentleness rebuked you for your wrong,
 1301 As I would my child, and correction not inflicted,
 1302 At last I see that you must be harshly afflicted
 1303 To make you leave off this abrasive attitude,
 1304 With which our prayers and urgings make more you imbued;
 1305 First, though, I will give you a final chance to see
 1306 How I have offered you utmost civility:
 1307 I recall one day when the desire you stated
 1308 To spend your whole life to chastity consecrated;
 1309 Go to the temple: with that troop fulfil your aim
 1310 Which watches over Vesta's holy, sacred⁹⁴ flame—
 1311 Otherwise (I swear to the gods with oath unfeigned)

94 "[H]oly, sacred": likewise redundant in the original ("sacré saint").

1312 To be brought to the brothel I'll have you constrained.

SAINT AGNES

1313 Never to such a troop do I wish to belong.

SIMPHRONIUS

1314 Then right now to the brothel you shall go along.
 1315 [*to attendants*] Send to have a public trumpeter come to me,
 1316 So she may be conducted with great ceremony.
 1317 But first, to soil her, have her with disgrace reproved
 1318 And thoroughly shamed, I want her clothing removed.
 1319 Tear off those garments, strip her naked to the skin
 1320 For all to see, as she is conveyed and brought in.

SAINT AGNES (*praying by herself*)

1321 O, my Lord Jesus, please you pity on me take:
 1322 All this evil I suffer is for your faith's sake.
 1323 Do not, O my God, let these people's wickedness
 1324 Inflict upon my body their mad filthiness.

SIMPHRONIUS

1325 Hurry up, now, you fellows. See how you delay!
 1326 You seem struck senseless. Why look upon her that way,
 1327 As if with pity? Come on, let her be laid bare—
 1328 And at once!—without either dress or underwear.
 1329 Go into that room and, not flinching in your will,
 1330 As happened to you just now, your duty fulfil.
 1331 By the gods, you shall see, my pleasant little lady,
 1332 What pleasure one gets from stirring anger in me!

Act IV

SCENE I

Saint Agnes, the Trumpeter, the Lechers, the Bawds

SAINT AGNES

1333 O my God, you cause me to realise at this hour
 1334 What store of marvels lies in your infinite power!
 1335 Miserable is anyone who would defy you—
 1336 Miserable, too, if he does not glorify you.
 1337 That treacherous tyrant, teeming with villainy,
 1338 Had them take off my clothes, expose my nudity
 1339 For exhibition to the common people's view,
 1340 As with an infamous adulteress one would do.
 1341 But O my Creator, listening to my prayer,
 1342 You have caused to increase the length of my blond hair
 1343 In such a fashion that all the parts of my person
 1344 Now from gazes profane have found complete protection.
 1345 I give you thanks for this, O God both just and clement!
 1346 And to you, Heaven's Queen, of virgins ornament,
 1347 I make a vow to you of everlasting service,
 1348 Knowing it comes by you that Jesus is propitious.
 1349 But alas, what sounds on my ears now loudly fall?
 1350 Ah, they belong to an inviting⁹⁵ trumpet call.
 1351 O God, my heart beats and all my body perspires;
 1352 O Jesus and Mary,⁹⁶ what distress this inspires!
 1353 Alas, they seek me to force me to prostitution.
 1354 Lord, assist me now. Come strengthen my resolution!

[*Enter Trumpeter.*]

TRUMPETER

1355 Pretty one, I'm going, and you're following after,
 1356 To a place of pleasure, full of nothing but laughter,

95 "[I]nviting": orig. "doux" ("sweet", "soft", "gentle"), whose connotations seem less appropriate in the context. The motif of sounding the start of a hunt suits the imagery developed below in ll. 1369-72.

96 "Jesus and Mary": orig. "Iesus Maria".

1357 Singing, dancing—and those delights one further spices
 1358 By offering Venus many sweet sacrifices.
 1359 How's this? Do you resist? You can loudly protest,
 1360 You can pray, your prayers with pleading tears invest,
 1361 Yet you must come, you must! Now, my sweet, let us go.
 1362 How sparkling your eyes are, what winning grace you show!⁹⁷
 1363 [*addressing the public*] You champion jousters who in
 lists take your chances,
 1364 Come enter Venus' tournament—and break your lances
 1365 On an alluring model,⁹⁸ which can stand the shock,
 1366 But first you'd better arm yourself with a fresh stock:
 1367 Otherwise never hope to carry off the prize.

FIRST LECHER (*to his companion*)

1368 Do you hear that, my friend? Just listen to those cries.

SECOND LECHER

1369 And am I still standing here? Why, that is fresh prey,
 1370 The portion that madam Venus sends us today.
 1371 Let us get to it quickly and seize it before
 1372 Other hunters get wind of it, and in the door.⁹⁹

FIRST LECHER

1373 What farce is being played? It's some beast from its lair
 1374 The clown is presenting with such triumph and fanfare.
 1375 What does he mean by this? Let's ask what's happening.

97 "[W]hat grace you show!": orig. "vostre grace est bonne". The double meaning of "grace" is obviously beyond the Trumpeter. One may compare the plays on the physical and spiritual senses of the word in Shakespearean tragicomedy, especially *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*.

98 "[A]lluring model": orig. "fort beau facquin" (mod. "faquin"). The reference is to a dummy made of straw, reeds or wood for jousting practice. The translation enhances, but does not introduce, the sexual suggestiveness of the passage.

99 "[G]et wind of it": orig. "en ayent eu le vent"—an expression from hunting, which refers to picking up the scent of the game. The suggestive reference to the door (introduced by the translator) anticipates the stage business below (ll. 1423 ff.), which is indeed suggestive of "farce [French identical]" (l. 1373).

SECOND LECHER

1376 Gosh!¹⁰⁰ There's no way that I will meddle with that thing.
 1377 O gods, how hideous she is! A trailing mane
 1378 Hides her body front and back—no glimpse can one gain.

TRUMPETER (*sounds instrument again, then cries out*)

1379 Who'll come, who'll have a go? The prize is great and
 tempting,
 1380 As long as one aims at the middle of the ring.¹⁰¹
 1381 So come, you champions, who can well wield the lance.
 1382 With a bold heart come manifest your strength and valiance.

FIRST LECHER

1383 Trumpeter, my friend, what has stirred you in this way
 1384 To bring along this beast and put her on display?

TRUMPETER

1385 What beast? Truly, now, are your eyes in the right places?
 1386 A young beauty endowed with abundance of graces¹⁰²—
 1387 You do wrong to make a beast of her. O, you fools!
 1388 Here, you see her now?¹⁰³ The Dame that over Love rules
 1389 Would be unable to offer again her equal.

FIRST LECHER

1390 O gods, what is it I see there? What a rare marvel!

100 “[G]osh”: orig. “corbieu” (the first of several occurrences), a “minced oath” in the place of “corps de dieu”, hence ironic in a pagan context. (The same phenomenon is frequent in the English medieval drama.)

101 This was part of a tilting contest—here, of course, with a *double entendre*.

102 “[A]bundance of graces”: orig. “cent graces”. Cf. the perverse appearance of “grace” attributed to Antiochus’ incestuous daughter in *Pericles*—“As heaven had lent her every grace” (I.Pro.24); “See where she comes, apparelled like the spring, / Graces her subjects” [I.i.12-13)—which prepares a contrast with Pericles’ own daughter, the saint-like Marina,
 who hath gain’d

Of education all the grace,
 Which makes her both th’ heart and place
 Of general wonder. (IV.Pro.8-11)

As I have proposed, Troterel’s representation of Agnes seems to reflect the English tragicomedy; see Hillman, “Laughing (Last) in the Brothel”.

103 At this point he evidently forces her to show her face. Cf. below, ll. 1393-97.

SECOND LECHER

1391 My senses all ravished, I am carried away.
 1392 Never of such great beauty have I felt the sway.

FIRST LECHER

1393 Gods, I'm in ecstasy! O gods, how I'm in bliss
 1394 To see such a beautiful face—which I must kiss.

SAINT AGNES

1395 Back, you villain! The touch I could not bear to feel
 1396 Of your profane hands.

FIRST LECHER

You try in vain to conceal

1397 Your mouth and your eyes—yes, I'll take that privilege!

SAINT AGNES

1398 Let me go, leave me alone! Profane sacrilege!
 1399 I am vowed to God.

SECOND LECHER

Then it's to the god of Love.

SAINT AGNES

1400 To him who made this earthly abode—him above.

FIRST LECHER

1401 Trumpeter, my friend, will you make what she says plain?

TRUMPETER

1402 Listen, and in a word or two I will explain
 1403 Her circumstance in full. She is one of that kind
 1404 Who serve Jesus Christ with an unwavering mind,
 1405 And because she denies our gods' divinity,
 1406 I'm bringing her here to sell her virginity.

FIRST LECHER

1407 Give her to us instead: we'll purchase her outright,

1408 And presently count out the money in your sight.

SECOND LECHER

1409 Indeed, what's more, we'll offer you so much to drink
1410 That all your cares into oblivion will sink.

TRUMPETER

1411 Your proposal has a great deal to recommend it.
1412 But in truth, my friends, my assent I cannot lend it:
1413 She lies within our governor's prerogative,
1414 By whose order her to the pleasure-house I give.
1415 If, then, you desire to have her maidenhead,
1416 You have to go raise the amount that's been appointed.

FIRST LECHER

1417 So how much is needed?

TRUMPETER

A large sum is required.

FIRST LECHER

1418 That is?

TRUMPETER

Five talents.

SECOND LECHER

 Then I'm not the man desired.
1419 Gosh,¹⁰⁴ I want no more of her.

FIRST LECHER

 As for me, the price
1420 Does not spoil my taste or her power to entice.
1421 I'll go straightaway and the money try to find,
1422 While safe within the brothel she remains confined.

104 "[G]osh": orig. "corbieu".

TRUMPETER (*again sounds a fanfare, then knocks
at the door of the brothel*)

1423 Hey you, bawds, open up, and quick! Too long I've waited.

BAWDS¹⁰⁵

1424 Patience, sir!

TRUMPETER

1425 Eh, if ever I get irritated,
I swear by the Cypriot¹⁰⁶ that I'll make you pay.

BAWDS

1426 Enter, enter, sir. This open door shows the way.
1427 Restrain your anger—what needs such terrible haste?
1428 Hearing you, some dreadful assault I feared I faced,
1429 And my colleague here, as well.¹⁰⁷

TRUMPETER

Here, you stupid cow,
1430 Take this young beauty I deliver to you now.
1431 In a short while you'll see come a lecher famishing
1432 To enjoy her body so pert and ravishing.¹⁰⁸

BAWDS

1433 Enter, dearie, enter into this paradise.

SAINT AGNES

1434 Rather—alas, alas!—a foul sewer of vice.

BAWDS

1435 We'll lead you to a little room you'll find most sweet;
1436 It is so exquisitely pleasant, clean and neat,

105 The original consistently uses the plural, and although only one of them appears to speak, ll. 1428-29 indicate the presence of two on stage. Perhaps some form of alternating speech or delivery in unison was intended for comic effect.

106 Cypriot: i.e., of course, Venus; cf. below, Vi.1762.

107 The insinuation of fearful innocence threatened by sexual aggression is clearly played up for comic effect.

108 "[P]ert and ravishing": orig. "gaillard".

1437 And finely furnished, with both bed and couch purveyed.
 1438 There you will be put on view, just as you were made.

SAINT AGNES

(shut off alone in the room, kneeling)

1439 O God, my Redeemer, who with your brilliant eye
 1440 Into the suffering and tribulation spy
 1441 Of every human being, even those whose souls
 1442 The flame of your sacred love devoutly enrolls—
 1443 Alas! You see, my God, you see the harsh distress
 1444 And abject misery which now upon me press.
 1445 Pity me, your poor servant, now poorer than most;
 1446 Ensure that no lecher—please, O my God—may boast
 1447 Of plucking the flower of my virginity,
 1448 Which I have consecrated to your sanctity.
 1449 And you, blessed Virgin, spouse, daughter and mother also
 1450 Of my Saviour—alas, see what I undergo
 1451 And pray to your Son, whose beneficence redeemed me,
 1452 To send me succour in this place of infamy,
 1453 Or else, if I am not deserving of such grace,
 1454 This body's life at a single stroke to efface,
 1455 Together with its honour, for I far prefer
 1456 Loss of the celestial brilliance to incur
 1457 Than shamefully to live—however innocent,
 1458 For this damnable sin was far from my intent.

SCENE III

The Good Angel of Saint Agnes, Saint Agnes

ANGEL [*entering*]

1459 Obeying the command of the Monarch Eternal,
 1460 Who, for those living well, displays a care paternal,
 1461 I, with high rank as essence made intelligent,¹⁰⁹

109 “[E]ssence made intelligent”: orig. “essence intelligible”. As in l. 1509 below, this is standard theo-

1462 Come here below, visibly myself to present
 1463 To Saint Agnes's¹¹⁰ eyes, to furnish her assistance
 1464 And make her meet her troubles with constant resistance,
 1465 As well as to protect her from all injury
 1466 In this profane place of hateful debauchery.
 1467 The very first who comes by force her to subdue
 1468 May be assured that he will find himself run through
 1469 By this sword's point, for God's justice, to be content,
 1470 Provides that he should suffer that harsh punishment,
 1471 Then after be sent down into the depths of hell,
 1472 There, laden with many thousands of chains, to dwell.
 1473 Thus plainly one may see how those for whom God cares
 1474 Unfailingly from harmful accidents he spares;
 1475 Thus plainly one may see how fully he protects them,
 1476 Making sure that nothing with injury affects them—
 1477 Unless he so desires, so that all may know
 1478 That lasting joy does not abide with those below,
 1479 Nor pleasant peace, but in Heaven's supernal space,
 1480 Of glorious spirits the blessed dwelling-place.
 1481 Of that number am I, and of a hierarchy
 1482 Enriched with excellence of virtues and of glory.
 1483 But too much speech in human style I have deployed:¹¹¹
 1484 Together with the voice, one's hands must be employed.
 1485 Therefore, this pious saint I will carefully guard,
 1486 So by the lechers' violence she won't be marred.

SAINT AGNES

1487 My God, you have said that one should never grow tired
 1488 Of wakefulness and prayer, with renewal required
 1489 Constantly of orisons, lest the idle soul
 1490 Should be made captive, falling under the control
 1491 Of some black sin, the burden of whose heavy weight

logical terminology; cf. *The Oxford English Dictionary Online* (hereafter *OED*), s.v. "intelligence", def. 5.a, citing George Puttenham (1589): "The diuine intelligences or good Angels".

110 "Saint Agnes": orig. "sainte Agnes". To quibble over the point that at the period portrayed she had not been canonised would ignore both the original sense of "sainte" ("holy one") and the status she possesses *sub specie aeternitatis*.

111 L. 1483: orig. "Mais c'est par trop usé du parler des humains."

1492 Would tumble it forever where deep gulfs await.
 1493 So, my sweet Saviour, as your example instructs me,
 1494 This place profane I make a site of sanctity,
 1495 Waiting for the succour that your promise extends
 1496 To those who by their actions show themselves your
 friends.

ANGEL

1497 Daughter, now be comforted. The Father of Lights
 1498 In his gentleness your prayerful ardour requites:
 1499 Your plaintive sighing, inflamed by your fervent worship,
 1500 Moves him to take you under his guardianship.
 1501 He is your sure bulwark; he is your solid rampart
 1502 Against any and all who take a hostile part.
 1503 He is wholly on your side: he is your defence—
 1504 And for your enemies has bitter recompense.
 1505 From his seat imperial he had me descend
 1506 In order that I might you from all harms defend.

SAINT AGNES

1507 O God, I thank you, as much as is in my power:
 1508 You have pitied my troubles in the present hour;
 1509 And you, Angel divine, blessèd intelligence,
 1510 Whom my Saviour Jesus sends me for my defence,
 1511 Be welcome—you who in my life until this point,
 1512 As the living Monarch did by order appoint,
 1513 Have, present constantly, with safety provided me,
 1514 And in the true way of virtue ever guided me.
 1515 Persevere unfailingly in that pious function
 1516 And let me not be baffled by the Evil One—
 1517 This I pray you in the great Lord of Hosts'¹¹² dread name,
 1518 Who with terror summons up, all blazing with flame,
 1519 Sulphurous thunderbolts, which he knows well to hurl
 1520 On those who their profanity to him unfurl.¹¹³

112 “Lord of Hosts”: orig. “Dieu des armées”. This is the standard translation of the Old Testament epithet. Especially to the point here seems Isaiah 29:6:

Thou shalt be visited of the Lord of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.

113 L. 1520: orig. “Sur ceux, qui contre luy, profanes vont grondant”. As elsewhere in the text, profanity is

ANGEL

1521 As long as you stay in this place of misery,
 1522 Inseparable from you, Agnes, I will be.
 1523 Then after death has passed by with its cutting blade,
 1524 And your body within a dark tomb must be laid,
 1525 Into holy Paradise, our dear heritage,
 1526 I will transport you to see the ravishing visage
 1527 Of your gentle Saviour, who has such love for you.

SAINT AGNES

1528 Oh, that already I delighted in that view!
 1529 How I hunger for it, long for the time to come!
 1530 Tyrant, why are you delaying my martyrdom?
 1531 Summon your torturers, apply to me your torments:
 1532 They are my means of arriving at all contents,
 1533 The means of enjoying my love, modest and chaste,
 1534 And by which my one dear lover may be embraced—
 1535 A lover by whom my spirit is so enthralled
 1536 That, dead in myself, I'm to life in him recalled,
 1537 And he lives within my heart, but in such a way
 1538 That he will make me live forever—not a day!

ANGEL

1539 That is very well spoken, for in him we live;
 1540 To us his vital spirits breath and motion give.
 1541 He is the first to be—from him we have our being;
 1542 It is he the Lord and Master, all overseeing.
 1543 If his power divine abandoned for a moment
 1544 Whatever dwells within this lower element,
 1545 One would see it perish; even his angels, we
 1546 Who are his messengers to many a far country,
 1547 If he did not our being with his own sustain,
 1548 It would be the end of us: nothing would remain.
 1549 That is why these pagans of detestable race,

essentially a spiritual state. It is not incongruous, in the Christian rhetoric of the period, that the evocation of the divine wrath should resonate with the myth of the Giants' rebellion against Zeus—and in a way, moreover, that exposes the pagans' deployment of the myth (cf. above, III.iii.1208).

1550 From arrogance, or ignorance, themselves disgrace
 1551 When, humbly getting down to pray, we see them kneeling
 1552 To objects lacking all capacity for feeling.
 1553 They can make no claim reasonable to be styled,
 1554 For the most savage beasts that through the woods run wild
 1555 Know well by natural instinct that they are sent
 1556 By a great all-powerful God their nourishment.
 1557 O race of all gratitude and goodness deprived,
 1558 Not to know him from whom your comforts are derived!

SCENE III

Martian, Censorin, the Lechers

MARTIAN

1559 Because my faithful devotion, my sighs, my tears—
 1560 All this like passing Zephyrs vainly disappears,
 1561 And by that fair object to whom my soul's enchained,
 1562 Far from being cherished, I am flouted, disdained;
 1563 Because, as I say, I am so scorned and rejected
 1564 That by her my captivity is quite neglected,
 1565 Tell me, my dear friend, who comfort me with your
 presence,
 1566 Must I not have recourse to force and violence?
 1567 Tell me, must I not, now that she is in my hands,
 1568 Enjoy her, achieve what my desire demands?

CENSORIN

1569 Yes, yes, you must! It's nothing more than reason
 dictates:
 1570 Too long already the world your story relates,
 1571 And for too long they have found you ridiculous,
 1572 Claiming your heart is simply pusillanimous;
 1573 So then, get going—there's no need to reconnoitre;¹¹⁴

114 “[R]connoitre”: orig. “reconoistre”; the term could be used, in the context of hunting, to refer

1574 Show her who's master, willy-nilly, and don't loiter.
 1575 Put out your amorous flame with that stroke of vigour;
 1576 And if you once were gentle, display now your rigour—
 1577 I mean, if she persists in treating you with scorn.
 1578 Go play now—she's waiting, naked as she was born.

MARTIAN

1579 All right, but it's far from her freely chosen pleasure.

CENSORIN

1580 So be it, then, since every honourable measure,
 1581 Practised with endless repetition on your part,
 1582 Has not managed to move her stubborn faithless heart.¹¹⁵

MARTIAN

1583 Then it's settled. My desire I'll go fulfil.

CENSORIN

1584 But do so now—no more delay!

MARTIAN

1585 As soon as I have finished, for it's only right
 1586 You should have a share in this object of delight.¹¹⁷

CENSORIN

1587 If I'm so stirred, I'll take over, not stay aloof,
 1588 And join in combat just like you to show my proof—

to scouting for suitable game—see *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, s.v. “reconnaître”. The language points to Martian's hesitancy in entering the brothel, even as Censorin urges him on.

115 “[F]aithless heart”: orig. “courage infidelle [*sic*].” The notion of a resistant mistress as faithless, a commonplace in the language of courtly love, carries ironic spiritual resonance in the context.

116 Ll. 1583-84 are likewise linked by identical rhymes in the original (“iour”/“resiouyr”).

117 “[O]bject of delight”: orig. “bien delectable”. Martian's language confirms his depersonalisation of the woman whose love he once aspired to.

1589 But, what in the name of... ?¹¹⁸ We haven't been awake!¹¹⁹
 1590 Here are two champions, who well their pikes can shake.¹²⁰

[*Enter the two lechers, leaving the brothel.*]

1591 I fear that into her castle they've forced their way.
 1592 Quick, now, after them! [*to the Lechers*] Hey, for gosh
 sakes,¹²¹ down boys—stay!¹²²
 1593 What? Keep it for yourselves when such booty you strike?
 1594 We want some too. Come on, let's share and share alike.

THE LECHERS¹²³

1595 Stop shouting, gentlemen—take it all, if you will;
 1596 For we swear it to you: that *all* is intact still.

CENSORIN

1597 What do you mean by that? Is this your way of mocking?

MARTIAN

1598 You bloody scoundrel,¹²⁴ do you want a thorough knocking?

118 “But, what in the name of...?”: orig. “digne vertubieu”—a “minced oath” (for “vertu-dieu”), expressing astonishment, real or feigned (as in l. 1620 below). See *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, s.v. “vertubleu”.

119 “[W]e haven't been awake!”: orig. “l'on nous a fait la nique” (lit. “we've been made fools of”). See *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, s.v. “nique”.

120 L. 1590: orig. “Voilà deux champions, deux bons branleurs de picque.” The recurrent evocation of sex as heroic combat is tinged with sarcastic contempt. “Branleur” (“shaker”) is still a current term for an idler, “se branler” for masturbate (see *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, s.v.), and that such connotations of this particular phrase were well established is confirmed by Randle Cotgrave, *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues* (1611), Anglistica and Americana, 77 (fac. rpt. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1970), who gives: “Bransler la pique. *To frig, to wrigle it*” (s.v.). Cf. *OED*, s.v. “frig, v.”, def. 3b, “To masturbate”, citing also John Florio, *World of Wordes* (1598): “*Fricciare*, to frig, to wriggle”.

121 “[F]or gosh sakes”: orig. “corbieu”—low language now taken up by the socially elevated characters.

122 “Hey, one second, down boys—stay!”: orig. “tout beau corbieu tout beau”—“tout beau” being an expression commonly employed to restrain dogs. The sequel farcically shows the Lechers equally concerned to placate the gentlemen, whose vulgar language confirms their reduction to the same moral level, as does Martian's bluster in ll. 1598-99.

123 Presumably they speak confusedly together or one after the other. In l. 1597 Censorin uses the singular “you” (“tu”); Martian shifts from singular to plural in l. 1598, while the lechers' interventions are subsequently differentiated.

124 “You bloody scoundrel”: orig. “Par le corbieu coquin”; despite its uncertain derivation (see *OED*,

1599 You've got some nerve to come like this and make fun of
 us.

FIRST LECHER

1600 Calm down, sir, calm down¹²⁵—forbear (at least with one of
 us).¹²⁶
1601 Appease, if you'll be so kind, this terrible fury.
1602 What I have told you is not at all mockery.
1603 I pray you, listen to me: by my faith¹²⁷ I vow
1604 To tell you the truth, for I've never lied till now.

CENSORIN

1605 Now tell us, fellows—what it is you have to say?

FIRST LECHER

1606 As you have already seen, we came here to play,
1607 Our lusty pleasures to perform with that great beauty,
1608 Who holds the very mirror up to lechery.¹²⁸
1609 But being on the point of getting to our sport,
1610 A blazing spark—strange, but that's the only word for
 it—
1611 Loomed up in front of us to bedazzle our eyes,
1612 Such, neither more nor less, as one sees in the skies,
1613 Tracing with long lightning-flashes the thunderbolt
1614 That crashes seconds later to earth with a jolt,
1615 Or falls upon some tower, or upon some rock,
1616 The fear of which makes everyone flee from the shock.
1617 So, when in her chamber we saw flaming such fire,
1618 We speedily took flight to circumvent her ire.

s.v.), the common intensifier “bloody” carries enough religious resonance to qualify as a “minced oath”.

125 “Calm down, sir, calm down”: orig. “Tout beau, monsieur, tout beau”.

126 I take it that from his concentration on himself (“garder de me blesser”), when Martian has threatened them both (“Vous estes bien hardy”), that in typical farcical fashion he is dissociating himself from his fellow, but various stagings are possible.

127 “[B]y my faith”: orig. “ma foy”, here again ironically charged—doubly so, since he obviously protests his truthfulness too much (hence the ambiguous joke the translation insinuates into l. 1605). Cf. below, l. 1643.

128 “[That great beauty, / Who holds the very mirror up to lechery”: orig. “ceste beauté vray miroir à paillards”. The wording makes for an ironic echo of moralistic works.

MARTIAN

1619 What brave champions! O what valiant warriors!
 1620 O my goodness,¹²⁹ what hot-blooded adventurers!
 1621 A few more such and we'd bring Carthage to its knees.
 1622 Here now: I'll go see if I have more courage than these.

CENSORIN

1623 He's gone inside; here, until he returns, let's wait.

FIRST LECHER

1624 Now he's been so long, love's fruit must be on his plate.¹³⁰

SECOND LECHER

1625 Right, and to serve guard-duty here is all he'll ask.

CENSORIN

1626 The duty brings you honour: it's a faithful task.¹³¹

SECOND LECHER

1627 You can stuff the honour—its price is overrated.

FIRST LECHER

1628 What's the problem, comrade? Why are you irritated?

SECOND LECHER

1629 Who wouldn't be? We're the ones that drove out¹³² the beast?

CENSORIN

1630 Just hold your tongue, fellow; you'll be in on the feast
 1631 After Martian himself has finally finished.

129 "O my goodness": orig. "O digne vertubieu", here with ironic scorn; cf. above, l. 1589 and n. 118.

130 [L]ove's fruit must be on his plate": orig. "il gousté au fruit d'amour".

131 Doubtless an ironic remark, as proposed by Pasquier, ed., n. 175—perhaps also at Censorin's expense, given the spiritual resonance of "faithful" ("fidelle").

132 "[D]rove out the beast": orig. "lancé la beste"—i.e., from its lair (a hunting term).

FIRST LECHER

1632 Eh, tell me, sir, has your own appetite diminished?
 1633 What, don't you want any? So tender, in her prime?

CENSORIN

1634 Yes, of course, no question. But we must bide our time.
 1635 [*calls to Martian within*] A little too long, no? Hey,
 isn't that enough?
 1636 Not growing weary of so much amorous stuff?¹³³
 1637 Martian, my friend, just lend me your place to fill!
 1638 You're not answering? Then oh, what an icy chill
 1639 Begins by stages my body and heart to claim!
 1640 My fear is that he has been smothered by that flame
 1641 You mentioned to us.

FIRST LECHER

Of that there can be no doubt.

SECOND LECHER

1642 Before, it threw us into panic, chased us out.
 1643 By my faith, I swear, were we not light on our feet,
 1644 Harsh Atropos's stroke we were likely to meet.

FIRST LECHER

1645 Everything that he told you is truer than true;
 1646 Never has anything so daunting met my view:
 1647 For a long time my teeth were chattering with terror.

CENSORIN

1648 Wait, fellows, I'll go in to see if we're in error,
 1649 If he's not just sleeping. [*He leaves and returns.*] O good gods,
 what a sight!
 1650 He is dead, my friends—alas!—and motionless quite.
 1651 His spirit has left his body all cold and pale.

133 “[O]f so much amorous stuff”: orig. “d'estre tant embrassez”.

SECOND LECHER

1652 Then all's been said. He now along the shores must trail
 1653 Of gloomy Acheron, as hell that stream traverses.

CENSORIN

1654 Help, my friends! You murderess, worthy of all curses,
 1655 Can you have had the heart to his death to pursue
 1656 A lord so noble?¹³⁴ Well, I'll be the death of you,
 1657 If I can find you out: the search all over press,
 1658 And let us put to death this youthful sorceress! [Exit.]

FIRST LECHER

1659 For my part, I'll not chase after her.

SECOND LECHER

Nor will I,
 1660 For fear and anguish all my senses occupy.

CENSORIN [*returning*]

1661 O good gods! Whatever has become of her? Nowhere
 1662 Can I find her.

FIRST LECHER

It may be that into the air
 1663 A cloud transported her, for she knows well the art
 1664 Of conjuring demons in the forests apart.

SECOND LECHER

1665 All these wicked Christians are expert in that science.

CENSORIN

1666 You good gods, what is this? I'm dying with impatience,
 1667 With sorrow, with spite, with pain and with crushing care.

134 “[N]oble”: orig. “gentil”; both terms in the period covered approximately the same range of meanings, which are here notably at odds with Martian’s recent presentation.

FIRST LECHER

1668 My heart is pierced through and through—all that grief I
share
1669 To witness such misfortune, such a sad event.

SECOND LECHER

1670 Why am I not an Achilles in bold intent?
1671 I swear by Lachesis, Pluto, Proserpina,¹³⁵
1672 That then with this club I would make some brouhaha
1673 To avenge this hero's demise that so offends.
1674 But to tell you the truth, my line instead descends
1675 From that Greek Thersites, who by nature preferred
1676 To withdraw far away when a battle occurred,
1677 Or when he saw someone engaged in argument.

CENSORIN

1678 But we tarry too long. This news let us present
1679 To our governor, so that with the least delay
1680 He may assign the punishment fitting to pay
1681 For a crime so cruel. O warriors' ideal!¹³⁶
1682 What sighs you will heave out, what tears show what you
feel,
1683 When you learn that your son, for whom your heart so
cared,
1684 Is only for his funeral pyre prepared!

135 Lachesis: among the three Fates, the one who measured the thread of life. Pluto and Proserpina were, respectively, king and queen of the underworld. Thersites (l. 1675) is a repugnant cowardly foil to the heroic warriors of Homer's *Iliad* (see bk. II.211-77).

136 "O warriors' ideal!": orig. "ô l'honneur des gendarmes". Censorin is clearly, in his apostrophe, anticipating his subsequent encounter with Simphronius; cf. below, VI.1729-30.

Act V

[SCENE I]

Simphronius, Saint Agnes, Censorin, Martian

SIMPHRONIUS¹³⁷

1685 O sorrow, O sorrow! O dire chance ill-starred,
 1686 You that rack my heart with grief unceasing and hard;
 1687 Destiny, cruel destiny, O Fates that spin thread,
 1688 Cocytus, Phlegethon, the rivers of the dead—
 1689 Alas, that stunning blow I took: it came from where,
 1690 Imposing a burden of griefs I cannot bear?
 1691 From where, alas, came that evil so deplorable,
 1692 Which makes me forever feeble and miserable?
 1693 What demented demon, with fury aimed at me,
 1694 And cruelty, plunged me in this adversity?
 1695 So my son is really dead? O maddening pain,
 1696 Which makes me seek for my pulse and my speech in vain.

CENSORIN

1697 Alas, sir, and you were such a courageous one...

SIMPHRONIUS

1698 O Death, make me take that leap along with my son;
 1699 Let me no longer time these miseries endure,
 1700 But both of us closely in the same tomb immure.

CENSORIN

1701 Sir—

SIMPHRONIUS

Alas, my cherished son, whom I held so dear—

CENSORIN

1702 Sir, I would hardly now presume to interfere,

137 The disjointed style of Simphronius' speech mirrors his distraction, which is compounded by his compulsive search for a sinister supernatural explanation of his son's death.

1703 While you weep for your son at this murderous act,
 1704 Sure, indeed, it would be said that feeling you lacked
 1705 If your true mourning did not issue forth in tears.
 1706 Just, sir, see that moderately your grief appears
 1707 And do not allow its excesses to efface
 1708 From your mind your high rank, your grandeur or your
 race;
 1709 You who as a brave warrior have gained the honour
 1710 Of being of a peerless place brave¹³⁸ governor—
 1711 Of this brilliant Rome, on which the heavens, propitious,
 1712 Have lavishly poured forth their benefits auspicious,
 1713 Such that before her sacred laws she's caused to fall
 1714 Both Parthian and African, German and Gaul.

SIMPHRONIUS

1715 Alas! Would that Jupiter, the father of nature,
 1716 Had pleased to make me a mere poor and simple creature,
 1717 And that my precious child, whose loss I so lament,
 1718 Had still of Phoebus' welcome light possessed enjoyment!
 1719 Would the gods had bound me a peasant to the plough,
 1720 If only my son were spared and were living now!
 1721 Alas, dear child! So from my life you disappear
 1722 In your young springtime, greenest season of your year!

CENSORIN

1723 The anguish that wounds you now with doleful excess
 1724 Makes you utter such language out of human weakness.
 1725 But I'm sure that, your attention otherwise taken,
 1726 You would not let yourself be so profoundly shaken.
 1727 Your heart is too brave, too magnanimous, too great,
 1728 To count such lowly matters at so high a rate—
 1729 You, I say, who a hundred times with sword in hand
 1730 Have made the Roman Empire's borders expand.

138 “[B]rave” (orig. identical) is likewise repeated from l. 1709, here with stronger overtones of “stalwart”.

SIMPHRONIUS

1731 Alas, from that happy state, chance has turned away!

CENSORIN

1732 Your destiny you can't do other than obey;
1733 It's all that one can do, and patience one must show:
1734 You never will change its course by complaining so.

SIMPHRONIUS

1735 That is why I lament, with sorrow and with weeping.
1736 But let us go to that house right now—what is keeping
1737 Us?—where that poor body lies, so that they may take it.

[They go to the brothel.]

CENSORIN

1738 The door is shut up tight, and we will have to break it.
1739 Aha, it has opened at the very first blow!
1740 Come on—see that the chamber is searched high and low
1741 To lay hands on that deadly plague, that cruel bane
1742 By whose efforts the friend of Censorin was slain.
1743 Here, let me—I've got the creature and won't let go!

SIMPHRONIUS

1744 O fury out of hell, O pitiless Alecto,
1745 Why, tormenting fiend, have you caused my child to die?

SAINT AGNES

1746 It was the Angel triumphant did that, not I,
1747 Whom Jesus, the Saviour, vouchsafed me as protector.
1748 Your son, accounting me no better than a whore,
1749 Supposed he would ravish my precious chastity,
1750 But he has been punished for his lubricity.

SIMPHRONIUS

1751 O sulphurous demons that Styx's waves exhale,
1752 Do you not see my son extended dead and pale?
1753 O good gods, what a sight! O what terrible woe!
1754 O great gods, what pain and torment I'm forced to know!

1755 Alas, my precious¹³⁹ child! My young and tender offspring,
 1756 I see time prematurely your mournful tomb bring.
 1757 Alas, I see you lie dead in your April years,
 1758 Because of which my pain still more pierces and sears;
 1759 If only Clotho¹⁴⁰ had closed your eyes when your hand
 1760 Brandished your sword in the midst of our warlike band—
 1761 But I must see you killed by a hand of no worth,
 1762 By the effects of Cypris, not Mars, struck to earth.
 1763 O you wretched girl, with evil filled to the brim,
 1764 Alas, your Medean arts were the death of him!¹⁴¹

SAINT AGNES

1765 Quite wrongly you accuse me: of that profane trade
 1766 Of conjuring spirits no study have I made.
 1767 Of your son's state I am in no manner culpable:
 1768 The blows came from my Angel indomitable.

SIMPHRONIUS

1769 Alas, then it's to you I'll make a conjuration,
 1770 By your great god Jesus, so held in adoration,
 1771 To bring him back to life.

SAINT AGNES

1772 So it may be revealed
 To all no vengeful wish lies in my heart concealed,

139 “[P]recious”: orig. “cher”, likewise with an ironic echo of l. 1749 (“chere”).

140 Strictly speaking, of the three Fates, it was Clotho who spun the thread of life, Atropos who cut it once it was measured, but the assimilation of all three to Clotho was widespread. See Jean Galaut, *Phalante, Sidney's Arcadia on the French Stage: Two Renaissance Adaptations*, trans. and ed. Richard Hillman, Scène Européenne - Traductions Introuvables (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2018), p. 73, n. 51 to l. 1060.

141 As Pasquier, ed., points out (n. 179 to l. 1665), the accusation of magical practices was a standard charge levelled against Christians during the Roman persecutions. In Troterel's immediate source, the association between Christianity and magic is fundamental, and the prefect orders that Agnes should be proclaimed “*Sorciere & Magicienne*” as she is dragged through the streets to the brothel (Ribadeneira, I: 220 [col. b]). The accusation was subsequently adopted by Christians for “heretics”. With Simphronius' charge and Agnes's refutation here, cf. the extended passage in the trial of the (as-yet-uncanonised) Jeanne d'Arc, as rendered in 1580 by Fronton Du Duc, *The Tragic History of La Pucelle de Domrémy, Otherwise Known as the Maid of Orléans*, trans. and ed. Richard Hillman, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation, 39 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005), ll. 1919 ff., where Medea also figures (l. 1934).

1773 To my God for his restoration I will pray.
 1774 But first you must take yourselves some distance away,
 1775 And out of my sight, for you by no means deserve
 1776 This action of the goodness divine to observe.

SIMPHRONIUS

1777 Let us go, Censorin, my friend; we must be absent. [*They withdraw.*]

SAINT AGNES

1778 Spirit of Martian, into sombre slumber sent,
 1779 From that sleep of death that has fastened his two eyes,
 1780 In the name of the Creator of earth and skies,
 1781 Suddenly abandoning your prison in hell,
 1782 Reanimate once more the dust in which you dwell;¹⁴²
 1783 Arise, recount, and so make pagan ears incline
 1784 To hear of mankind's Saviour miracles divine,
 1785 Who, at the costly price of his precious blood's loss,
 1786 Gained us a heavenly heritage on the cross.

MARTIAN

1787 What divinity with shining rays of his light
 1788 Opens little by little my weak eyes to sight,
 1789 Withdraws me, blessed, from the fires, and unchained,
 1790 Where in the darknesses of hell I was restrained—
 1791 There where the hands of implacable demons torment
 1792 Incessantly the souls that merit punishment.
 1793 It is you, great God, moved by incredible love,
 1794 Who return to me use of fair daylight above,
 1795 And from whom I receive most certain evidence
 1796 Of the miracles wrought by your omnipotence.
 1797 Hear me, only God benignant, God just, God clement,
 1798 Deliver my spirit from that eternal torment!

SAINT AGNES

1799 Your son is living, Simphronius, so return,
 1800 The wonder of God's infinite power to learn.

142 “[T]he dust in which you dwell”: orig. “ta poudreuse maison”, i.e., the body.

[*Re-enter Simphronius.*]

SIMPHRONIUS

1801 O great immortal gods, what feat unprecedented—
1802 From the depths of the tomb to bring back someone dead,
1803 Constraining mighty Pluto, that terrible king,
1804 To reanimate a body and give it feeling!
1805 I am beside myself, wholly carried away!
1806 What is this, great gods? To enchantment am I prey?

SAINT AGNES

1807 No, no, chase far off that suspicious thought that grieves
you:
1808 Your son is alive—neither charm nor dream deceives you.
1809 Come close to him, look at him carefully, and touch.

MARTIAN

1810 Father, approach, and from this moment know thus much:
1811 That the true Christian God the world to his rule bends;
1812 That all upon him—the sky, land and sea—depends.
1813 It is he who made us. Those of your fantasy
1814 Are demons, the vomit that hateful hell sets free.
1815 They must be banished, with all sacrificial rite,
1816 And Jesus exalted, God of justice and right.

SIMPHRONIUS

1817 O son, what have you said? I am quite stupefied!

MARTIAN

1818 It is Jesus Christ who now must be glorified.
1819 Those images of plaster must be overthrown,
1820 And idolatry, as Christians, no longer known.
1821 Otherwise, expect to encounter ruination:
1822 In a word, look for nothing less than stark damnation.

SIMPHRONIUS

1823 You make me afraid, my son, and my face turns pale;
1824 So please, let us of that room there ourselves avail

1825 To let me know still more about your situation.

[*Exeunt Simphronius and Martian.*]

SAINT AGNES (*alone*)

1826 O my Saviour Jesus, bestow by inspiration
1827 Faith upon these people; grant that your miracles
1828 May cause them to abhor the false gods' oracles.

[SCENE II]

The Priests [Sacrificers to the Idols], the Roman Populace, Simphronius, Martian

PRIESTS

1829 Come on, let's go punish those superstitious fools,
1830 Who would make of a hanged man the king that gods rules;
1831 With a thousand stones hurled let us go see them downed
1832 And their wretched bodies trampled into the ground.
1833 Come on, let's diligently gather stones to throw
1834 And put them to death with countless blow upon blow.
1835 Let's go, fall on them! With a blow of this I've found
1836 The first one that I meet, I'll strike him to the ground.¹⁴³
1837 See, companion—oh, what a magnificent shot!
1838 That shows what a strong and vigorous arm I've got!

[*Enter Simphronius with Martian.*]

SIMPHRONIUS

1839 What noise is it I hear? What fearful storm is this?

PRIESTS

1840 Break open all their heads—don't a single one miss!

143 The line's rhyme-word (orig. "terre") is likewise repeated in the original from l. 1832. Notable in this speech is the modulation from a collective choric figure to the leader of the group.

SIMPHRONIUS

1841 Fathers, why this frenzy? What carries you away?
 1842 And what makes you attack the populace this way?

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1843 At a moment of need our courage must not yield!
 1844 Come, let's defend ourselves as on the battlefield,
 1845 Because the sacrificing priests, with hatred filled,
 1846 Without the slightest reason wish to have us killed.

PRIESTS

1847 What's this, great Jupiter? That wicked common villain
 1848 Takes arms against us, the mastery tries to gain?
 1849 For offending you is he not at all ashamed,
 1850 When he honours that Jesus whom Agnes proclaimed?
 1851 Hurl, hurl down on him your Liparan bolts of thunder,
 1852 And deep in the Gulf of Tenaerus sink him under!¹⁴⁴

SIMPHRONIUS

1853 Calm down, stay there. [*to the Populace*] For revolt, what's your
 motivation?

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1854 That they seek our destruction and extermination.

PRIESTS

1855 It's they—those treacherous Christians of Pluto's race—
 1856 That destroy our Republic's spiritual base.

SIMPHRONIUS

1857 This is not the means to deal with the situation—
 1858 For the fault of one to unleash such lapidation.
 1859 One must not for one guilty give the innocent
 1860 Into the power of Death's fearful punishment.

144 Ll. 1851-52: "Liparan", from the Aeolian island of Lipari (ancient Lipara) off the coast of Sicily, known for volcanic activity; Cape Tenaerus, at the extremity of Laconia in the Pelopennese, was reputed the site of the entrance to the underworld.

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1861 You speak forthrightly, and your sense of right is keen:
 1862 We are not Christians, and such have we never been.
 1863 We're brought here by a rumour flying everywhere
 1864 That gentle Agnes, by her speech alone, mere air,
 1865 First killed your son, then brought him back to life for
 you.

SIMPHRONIUS

1866 Indeed, my good friend, that is entirely true.
 1867 And if you should doubt it, here is my son in person
 1868 To tell you about it. Alas, the trial has done
 1869 Him harm, as his pallor shows, with effects adverse.

MARTIAN

1870 Romans, Christ Jesus is God of the universe!
 1871 It is he whom we must, with fear and reverence,
 1872 Devoutly serve, not gods of spurious pretence,
 1873 Those merely made of wood or any sort of metal,
 1874 Having less power than a feeble animal.

PRIESTS

1875 O great gods eternal! O goddesses supreme!
 1876 How can you stand to hear him so vilely blaspheme?

MARTIAN

1877 Your gods I fear not, but only His potency
 1878 Who holds heaven's motion within His regency.

PRIESTS

1879 That evil Agnes—oh, let us weep for his harms!—
 1880 Has corrupted his mind with her horrible charms.
 1881 Come, come, let's quickly seek her out and see her
 killed.

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1882 If you attempt that, we'll cause you to see fulfilled
 1883 A strange change in your fortunes.

PRIESTS

O people revolting!

1884 So you threaten us? No, you don't! Death's fearful sting
 1885 Shall hasten her down to Minos's house far under.¹⁴⁵
 1886 But too long we delay; let's break her bones asunder.
 1887 There she is, there she is! come rush on her and cut—¹⁴⁶

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1888 If to the high honour our minds we were to shut
 1889 That's owed your holy troop, then by the gods I swear
 1890 You'd have right now a heavy punishment to bear.
 1891 In spite of that respect, see to it that your fury
 1892 Does not, against our will, do you some injury.
 1893 You will not take a further step if you are prudent;
 1894 Otherwise you'll meet with a vexing accident.

SIMPHRONIUS

1895 What is this, my friends? You're taking great liberty:
 1896 Is this how you respect him in authority?

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1897 Hold on, then. Let's stop there and our weapons renounce.

PRIESTS

1898 Well, to get us to stop, the death sentence pronounce
 1899 On that false Christian, unworthy the world to share
 1900 And profit from the sight of Phoebus' golden hair.

SIMPHRONIUS

1901 You are cruel indeed when for the death you long
 1902 Of such a lovely creature: truly, you do wrong.

145 Minos: the judge of souls in Hades.

146 L. 1887: orig. "La voila, la voila, sus auant qu'on luy coupepe." In keeping with its rhetorically oriented (and often erratic) punctuation, the line ends with a full stop, but the sense is incomplete (without a direct object for the verb "coupepe"), and the speaker is evidently interrupted by the Roman Populace.

PRIESTS

1903 You yourself, my lord, to injustice give consent
 1904 In not condemning her to the ultimate torment.
 1905 You wrong the decrees of the sacred emperors,
 1906 Which condemn the Christians to death for all their errors.
 1907 If Maximilian¹⁴⁷ hears the news of what you've done,
 1908 He will accuse you of disloyalty and treason.

SIMPHRONIUS

1909 Fathers, that is well said, and you are in the right.
 1910 Therefore, I'll shut her in a prison dark as night;
 1911 Then I'll order to be put in writing the sum
 1912 Of charges, thus sending her straight to martyrdom.

PRIESTS

1913 Now you speak properly, as your duty commands;
 1914 Now your speech expresses the power in your hands.
 1915 Therefore, we pray that those great gods who watch over us
 1916 Will ever continue your fortunes prosperous.

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1917 O courageous governor, Mars's valiant son,
 1918 Whose warlike actions are the talk of everyone,
 1919 Sacred Palladium¹⁴⁸ protecting this strong town,
 1920 Who succour the just, the bad with terror put down,
 1921 Alas, we kneel to you and humbly supplicate—
 1922 Do not condemn the girl to that horrible fate.
 1923 Revoke the sentence you have upon her declared,
 1924 And order her to be sent home again, and spared.

SIMPHRONIUS

1925 I very much wish I could yield to your desire,

147 Maximilian: for Maximian (Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus Herculus Augustus), Emperor from 286-305 C.E.; he was co-ruler with Diocletian, who was especially notorious for his persecution of Christians. See *OCD*, s.v. "Maximian". On the hagiographic traditions surrounding Agnes's martyrdom, see Pasquier, Intro., pp. 8-9.

148 Palladium: he is compared to the armed statue of Pallas Athena that offered divine protection, first to Troy, then to Rome; see *OCD*, s.v.

1926 For, as much as you, to her welfare I aspire.
 1927 But assuredly, friends, I am not capable,
 1928 Because the Emperor is too implacable.
 1929 I would be dismissed from my office, were it known,
 1930 As someone who had excessive presumption shown.

THE ROMAN POPULACE

1931 Then, since the threat of Atropos dogs her so near,
 1932 So as not to see her end, let us not stay here.

[*Exeunt Priest and Populace.*]¹⁴⁹

SIMPHRONIUS

1933 A hundred thousand regrets afflict me with torment,
 1934 Because I must now hand over that girl to judgement.
 1935 But I am compelled. Oh, rigorous Destiny!¹⁵⁰
 1936 Alas, she has to be condemned in spite of me.
 1937 If my wishes were backed by my authority,
 1938 She would not be put to death. Oh, what cruelty!
 1939 Oh, barbarous savagery! Oh, fierce tyranny!
 1940 Banished far is all pity from humanity;
 1941 Mankind is no more gentle than a cannibal,
 1942 With murder and carnage as breathing natural.
 1943 Alas, what pity I feel! No, never can I
 1944 Stand to condemn that maiden dismally to die:
 1945 Alas, the mere thought shakes me. To my officer,
 1946 Aspasius, I'll go now and deliver her.

149 As is confirmed by the Messenger's role in the following scene, the handling of time and action in the entire final sequence is notably free, not to say inconsistent; cf. above, ll. 1910-12, and below, ll. 1951-52.

150 "Oh, rigorous Destiny!": orig. "ô fiere destinée". The successive exclamations of Simphronius are likewise reinforced in the original by repeated rhymes on the same sound.

Troterel expands here on Ribadeneira's characterisation of the conduct of Simphronius as typical of "*Juges pusillanimes, quand ils connoissent la verité, & ne se veulent pas engager à la défendre, comme ils deuroient*" [fearful judges, when they know the truth and are not willing to defend it as they should]" (Ribadeneira, I: 222 [col. a]). The model of Pontius Pilate is strongly present in the background.

MARTIAN

1947 Father, what are you doing? Alas, no! Stay—wait!
 1948 If you do that, you will soon meet a mortal fate.
 1949 By the great God Jesus Christ, her spouse truly plighted,
 1950 For your crime you will be with a thunderbolt blighted.

SIMPHRONIUS

1951 Let us go, therefore, and devise some means, my son,
 1952 To liberate that virtuous young girl from prison.

MARTIAN

1953 In God's name, so I pray you, hands joined as I kneel,
 1954 For thousands and thousands of piercing pains I feel
 1955 Whenever I come to think of those spirit-furies¹⁵¹
 1956 Who impious men with terrible tortures tease.
 1957 O God who fathered us, great Monarch of the skies—
 1958 Ah, send me no more where such horrors meet my eyes!

SCENE III

Mother and Father of Saint Agnes, Messenger

FATHER

1959 My well-belovèd wife, dear other half of me,
 1960 Let us supplicate the great God he may have pity
 1961 On our poor daughter, who in prison lies confined
 1962 For serving Jesus Christ with her whole heart and mind.

MOTHER

1963 Let us find, then, husband, some place in isolation
 1964 To offer humble prayers and voice our desolation.
 1965 For feeling as I do this sorrow so intense,
 1966 I cannot bear the thought of any other's presence.

151 “[S]pirit-furies”: orig. “spectres furieux”. The commonplace blending of Christian and pagan ideas of hell entails the evocation of the classical Furies.

FATHER

1967 I am the same: I have no wish to be on view
 1968 When I feel troubling thoughts my peace of mind pursue.
 1969 To seek some lonely spot is always my intent—
 1970 But what's this? God—Jesus! Lightning so violent!

MOTHER

1971 O Jesus, how loud it thunders! What a strange sound!

FATHER

1972 O good God—and now? Like night, with darkness profound!
 1973 Come, let's withdraw. I fear that this unforeseen tempest
 1974 Means, alas, we shall be by some new ill distressed.

[*Exeunt*; ¹⁵² *enter Messenger*.]

MESSENGER

1975 Any tiger, lion, panther or bear that strays
 1976 Through barren wildernesses, living out its days,
 1977 Harbours less deep malice, less crazed malignancy,
 1978 Less hatred and frenzy, and less ferocity,
 1979 Than these fierce tyrants, showing iron minds and hearts,
 1980 To whom nothing but hell malign commands imparts.¹⁵³
 1981 With passage of time one masters the lion's pride,
 1982 And the wrath of dragons also is pacified;
 1983 The sea becomes gentle after its turbulence,
 1984 And the bluster of winds after worst violence
 1985 Ceases its blowing and with a murmuring breeze
 1986 Stirs with soft breath the greenery amid the trees.
 1987 But these cruel tyrants never, at any season,
 1988 Recall for their own use the use to make of reason;
 1989 One and the same nature they constantly assume,
 1990 Crimes manifold commit till they are in the tomb.
 1991 God of the universe, holy Father of Right,

152 The couple's exit here, which implies their reentrance at l. 1995, is a conjectural staging; they may simply stand aside temporarily, although this seems less natural.

153 It will soon become explicit that the Messenger, too, is a Christian.

1992 Oh, how can you let them rule so in your sight,
 1993 You who hold the good virgin Astraea so dear,
 1994 She whom—oh, pity!—we no longer meet with here?¹⁵⁴

MOTHER [*re-entering with Father*]

1995 My dearest husband, I hear the voice of a person
 1996 Stricken to the heart by something that has been done.
 1997 Alas, O gentle Jesus!

FATHER

O Power Eternal!

1998 I fear the news he brings us will be sorrowful.

MOTHER

1999 If we wish to know, his attention we must call.

FATHER

2000 Please bring us some comfort, O Father of this All!
 2001 [*to Messenger*] Tell us, my friend, the cause that makes you so complain.

MESSENGER

2002 Alas, something has happened to cause you great pain.

MOTHER

2003 O Saviour Christ!

FATHER

My friend, what did you say to us?

2004 Ah, what evil is this?

MESSENGER

That curst Aspasius—

154 Astraea: in Greek mythology, the virgin goddess of purity, innocence and justice, who withdrew from earth to heaven at the end of the Golden Age. See *OCD*, *s.v.* Dike (1), and William Smith, *Smaller Classical Dictionary*, rev. E. H. Blakeney and John Warrington (New York: Dutton, 1958), *s.v.* The commonplace humanist assimilation of pagan myth to Christian truth (cf. the treatment of hell above in V.ii.1955-58) gains particular point here from the parallel with Agnes, whose purity renders her fitter for heaven than earth.

2005 Oh God, how to tell you this outrage I don't know!
 2006 Alas, what pity I'll feel to see your eyes flow,
 2007 When you hear it, with weeping streams that form a
 torrent.

MOTHER

2008 My stomach with a hundred thousand knives is rent.
 2009 O Mother of Jesus! What dire happening
 2010 Afflicts us then?

MESSENGER

Alas, a truly dreadful thing!

FATHER

2011 Friend messenger, let your tale be no more delayed.
 2012 Let us know quickly.

MOTHER

Please, Jesus, come to our aid!

MESSENGER

2013 Your daughter—oh sorrow!—has suffered martyrdom,
 2014 Then, in the empyrean, Christ's fellow become.

FATHER

2015 Alas, my poor girl!

MOTHER

 O daughter I loved more dearly
 2016 Than my own heart! O God, my speech is failing me.
 2017 I can no more, alas!

MESSENGER

 Jesus, she is unconscious!
 2018 Help to keep her from falling.

FATHER

 Wife of mine, most precious,
 2019 Rather than be aggrieved, by eating cares pursued,

2020 We must instead to Jesus turn with gratitude
 2021 For raising up our daughter to his habitation,
 2022 Where for ever and ever she will have salvation,
 2023 Sharing in those joys in which his elect delight,
 2024 As ravished Saint Paul said, who had of them a sight.¹⁵⁵

MOTHER

2025 May the great God with all the strength I have be praised!

FATHER

2026 Though this death of hers with suffering leaves me dazed,
 2027 Piercing my heart with countless pangs and strong sensation,
 2028 Yet, messenger, deliver us a bold relation
 2029 Of her most blessed end, with the means she was lent
 2030 To gain the seat of bliss in Heaven's firmament.

MESSENGER

2031 You have heard the townspeople in mutinous uproar
 2032 And witnessed of those pagan priests the cruel furor,
 2033 And how, so as their disruptive quarrel to quail,
 2034 Your daughter was conducted to the common jail.
 2035 The treacherous governor commanded it so,
 2036 Who appeared some signs of favour to her to show.

FATHER

2037 The rumours we heard reported him so inclined.

MESSENGER

2038 He, then, not wishing to display a bloody mind
 2039 (At least publicly) called to him his right-hand man,
 2040 Cruel Aspasius, faithless barbarian,
 2041 And ordered him expressly to put to the torture
 2042 Your innocent girl.

155 A reference to the so-called "ravishment" of Paul, who heard and saw indescribable divine glories: see 2 Cor.:1-7.

MOTHER

Oh, pain too hard to endure!¹⁵⁶

MESSENGER

2043 When she had borne with spirit indomitable
 2044 The cruel assault of such torment unbearable,
 2045 That curst criminal Busiris,¹⁵⁷ with fury fraught,
 2046 Had a pyre prepared, ordered her to it brought;
 2047 As the flames gathered force in the wood and rose higher,
 2048 He charged she should be cast in the midst of the fire.
 2049 But, as in the fiery furnace long ago
 2050 Those three Hebrew youths were preserved from any woe,¹⁵⁸
 2051 Your innocent daughter lifted up her fair eyes
 2052 To the bright palace of the Monarch of the Skies—
 2053 So wrought, as her tender and humble prayer entreated,
 2054 That the all-devouring flames backwards retreated
 2055 Without doing her harm. Aspasius, dismayed,
 2056 Seeing that blaze was not going to burn the maid,
 2057 Commanded his soldiers, just as angry as he,
 2058 To bring some fire closer, so as totally
 2059 To roast and consume¹⁵⁹ her, but—by a miracle!—
 2060 The flames leapt back upon them with a quick reversal,
 2061 And despite all defences that could be deployed,
 2062 Spectators saw them turned to ashes and destroyed.
 2063 This miracle, so great it was bound to astonish,
 2064 Did not cause the fierce tyrant's evil to diminish;
 2065 On the contrary, his rage, with poison replete,
 2066 It merely now rekindled with still greater heat.
 2067 He swore against God, threatened him, vented his ire
 2068 That the storm from heaven had extinguished the pyre,

156 “Oh, pain too hard to endure!”: orig. “O douleur par trop dure!”; the ambiguity seems functional, fusing the mother's suffering with the daughter's.

157 Busiris: in Greek mythology, a king of Egypt notorious for his cruelty; see *OCD*, s.v.

158 The reference is to the miraculous preservation of Shadrach, Meschach and Abednego, condemned by Nebuchadnezzar for refusing to pray to the golden image (Dan. 3:20-29)—a common *exemplum* of the power of true faith.

159 “[R]oast and consume”: orig. “cuire / Et consommer” (ll. 2058-59); a grotesque cannibalistic suggestion is thus present in the original, especially since, as Pasquier points out (ed., n. 21), the language of the period tended to conflate the two verbs “consumer” and “consommer”.

2069 But taunted that it made no matter, for a knife
2070 With one cruel wound would deprive that girl of life—
2071 That said, to the loathed executioner conveyed
2072 His command at once to cut her throat with his blade;
2073 Which when she heard, towards the ground your daughter
bowed,
2074 And her soul, lovely and divine, to God she vowed.
2075 So that was the manner in which her days were ended—
2076 Days that no further than her thirteenth year extended.
2077 Her body lies there on the dusty ground exposed:
2078 Go—see it in a grave’s obscurity enclosed.

FATHER

2079 May the great God be praised, may the great God be
blessed,
2080 Who his infinite love for all of us expressed
2081 In sending his Son for the sake of our salvation,
2082 He whose grace assured our Agnes’s preservation.
2083 Come, dear, we’ll bury her corpse, since it’s to be found
2084 Still resting, soaked in blood, upon the open ground.

END

