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Two French Tragedies of Saint Genest

*The Famous Actor or The Martyrdom
of Saint Genest: Tragedy*
by Nicolas Mary, sieur Desfontaines

The Veritable Saint Genest: Tragedy
by Jean de Rotrou

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

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Translation

*The Famous Actor or The Martyrdom of Saint Genest:
Tragedy by Nicolas Mary, sieur Desfontaines*

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THE FAMOUS ACTOR

OR

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT GENEST:
TRAGEDY

By

Nicolas Mary, sieur Desfontaines

Act I

Scene i

Diocletian, Aquilinus, Rutilius, two Guards

AQUILINUS

1 At last, Caesar, none with your power can compete:
 2 In crowning you, Rome puts the whole world at your feet,
 3 While so encompassing your destiny with glory
 4 That only the gods may pretend to rivalry.
 5 Like them, you may doom all, or full pardon bestow;
 6 Your eagles are armed with thunderbolts here below.⁴
 7 Which, as desires move you, you can take in hand
 8 And use, like Jupiter, mortals to reprimand.
 9 Your power to command is of the same proportion:
 10 If he reigns in heaven, the earth is your own portion,
 11 And if his laws control a hundred deities,
 12 You see a thousand kings, when you like, on their knees;
 13 Whose power before your greatness supreme bows down
 14 And alters to respect at the sight of your crown.
 15 The Persians conquered, no Carinus to oppose,⁵
 16 Apart from a few Christians, you have no more foes;
 17 And that impious sect, although it may conspire,
 18 Aims only at the gods, and not at your empire.

DIOCLETIAN

19 Pointless, Aquilinus, to paint as less severe
 20 An evil that this empire is right to fear,
 21 For to go against the gods, of crowns the defenders,
 22 Undermines the state's most solid and surest pillars.
 23 Great I am, it is true: all things to my laws bow,
 24 And I may count some kings among my subjects now;

4 The eagle was the emblem and standard of the Roman legion.

5 Marcus Aurelius Carinus, who reigned briefly as emperor (283-85 C.E.), disputed Diocletian's rise to power and perished in a battle with him, killed by his own officers. Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 9, point out that the challenge from Carinus and a Persian uprising are mentioned as early troubles faced by Diocletian within two pages of Nicolas Coeffetau, *Histoire romaine* (Paris: Cramoisy, 1623).

25 But if even a single sect in Rome defies me,
 26 I live a slave—the show of Emperor belies me.
 27 Is it subjugation of the whole of mankind
 28 In the midst of my court other sovereigns to find?
 29 They don't aim, you say, the empire to reverse—
 30 They hate the gods only: what evil could be worse?
 31 And why would you imagine that they grant respect
 32 To kings, if they audaciously the gods reject?
 33 No, no: already too great when it shows its head,
 34 This evil we must stifle before it can spread,
 35 And avenge, by strictly applying our just laws,
 36 Of both the earth and the heavens the common cause.

RUTILIUS

37 Suspend a little, my Lord, a decree so dire;
 38 Moderate somewhat the force of your righteous ire.
 39 Spare Rome at last, and by other expedients
 40 Bring its citizens to lawful obedience:
 41 Your hangmen have sufficiently on them wreaked carnage;
 42 Tortures have sufficiently made proof of their courage;
 43 And so far your eyes, equitable Emperor,
 44 Have only seen too many spectacles of horror.
 45 It's not that the course of the rebels I affect:
 46 I have too much aversion to that upstart sect;
 47 The Christians I condemn, detest them as you do;
 48 Your wish is mine; I worship the same gods as you.
 49 But given that the errors which inflame that crew
 50 In the end are inward faults which the soul imbue,
 51 I find that we expend our efforts uselessly
 52 To heal their spirits by harming them bodily.
 53 That higher faculty, more noble and erect,
 54 By such inferior means is not rendered subject:
 55 It views with contempt its irons, laughs at its prison,
 56 Following no laws but the principle of Reason⁶—
 57 Reason that alone tames the soul, acts as its queen,

6 Cf. symbolism of chains and prison in Rotrou, esp. I.iii.126-28, II.viii.556 ff., III.ii.701-6, III.iv.815-18.

58 And over its impulses as sovereign is seen.⁷
 59 To direct these Christians to a dutiful course,
 60 Just this once, O Caesar, make the most of her force:
 61 Cause Reason to do her work; with examples feed them;
 62 Attempt by gentle means to the temples to lead them,
 63 And without more compulsion, offer them calm space
 64 In which to reflect somewhat on the choice they face.
 65 Your torturers' aspect makes their souls shut up tight;⁸
 66 Swords only turn them savage; blood fills them with
 spite,
 67 While you by your goodness may restore their good sense
 68 And cause them to offer the gods due prayers and
 incense.

DIOCLETIAN

69 Rutilius, your counsel offers a fair prospect,
 70 But let us see your notions put into effect,
 71 And since such small success has been produced by pain,
 72 Try those fine means you mention for what they may gain.
 73 I entrust you with this affair of consequence:
 74 Your wit is clever, your tongue rich in eloquence;
 75 You'll have done no mean feat if, while calming my furor,
 76 You can also by your reasons conquer their error.

AQUILINUS

77 The hope is fair indeed, but will be hard to realise.

RUTILIUS

78 Quite true that nothing may come of the enterprise,
 79 And I can offer no absolute guarantee
 80 That the outcome with all our wishes will agree.
 81 But this approach we can try without detriment,
 82 And the trustworthy counsels that heaven has sent,

7 Ll. 57-68: the original presents some confusion in its use of pronouns and personification, due to the fact that "raison" ("reason") and "âme" ("soul") are both feminine nouns and often allegorised accordingly. The translation attempts to clarify.

8 "[M]akes their souls shut up tight": orig. "rend leur âme interdite". The point is that the soul must be in a state to admit the effect of Reason.

83 First, to calm their furious spirits, which estrange
 them,
 84 Then orderly, in service to the gods, to range them.
 85 Of our worldly affairs those prudent arbiters,
 86 Omnipotent as they are, wish us as their helpers,
 87 And often find a use for instruments less perfect
 88 To produce here below a marvellous effect.
 89 Know then, O Caesar, what I purpose to attempt:
 90 You will think it at first deserving of contempt,
 91 But after due reflection by Your Majesty,
 92 It will appear surprising in its subtlety.

DIOCLETIAN

93 What might this precious and novel stratagem be
 94 You wish to use?

RUTILIUS

That—right here—you're going to see,
 95 And provided you to my method give consent,
 96 I'll well acquit myself, and furnish you amusement.

DIOCLETIAN

97 Whatever it takes their stubborn hearts to reform.

RUTILIUS

98 The scaffolds into fine theatres you must transform,
 99 And cause to be displayed there, with all due derision,
 100 The errors and the abuses of their religion.
 101 You know how fully the illustrious Genest
 102 Excels in grace and skill, whatever he may play;
 103 And that, by his voice and actions in diverse fashions,
 104 He can at will produce in us his changing passions—
 105 Enliven our spirits or render them depressed,
 106 Loving, disdainful, by pity or wrath possessed,
 107 And by a power sovereign and marvellous,
 108 Imprint upon our hearts all that he shows to us.
 109 Command him, my Lord, to display on stage for you
 110 The superstitions of a crass unwholesome crew,
 111 Who feed themselves on hope and, lulled by idle charms,

112 Shun pleasure that pursues and waits with open arms.
 113 If you still doubt the striking power of his skill,
 114 Experience it in your palace, if you will,
 115 And by putting to the trial that marvellous art,
 116 Feel within yourself what to them it can impart.

DIOCLETIAN

117 Have him summoned, Aquilinus; we will proceed
 118 At once.

AQUILINUS

I obey.

RUTILIUS

Of such trouble there's no need.
 119 That he is wanted that guard there can let him know.

DIOCLETIAN

120 He's here?

RUTILIUS

Yes, Lord, I left him just a while ago
 121 Along with his companions in the next apartment,
 122 Where I believe some time in pacing he has spent,
 123 Waiting for both the means and opportunity
 124 To come and offer service to Your Majesty.

DIOCLETIAN

125 Bid him enter.

AQUILINUS

Guard . . .

[*Exit Guard.*]

RUTILIUS

The troupe is pleasant to view
 126 And full of zeal, what's more, to give pleasure to you.

GUARD [*re-entering*]

127 He's here.

DIOCLETIAN

Let him approach.

Scene ii

Genest, Pamphilie, Luciane, Anthenor,
Aristide, Diocletian, Aquilinus, Rutilius, Guard

GENEST

Invincible Emperor,

128 Because Your Majesty will vouchsafe us the honour
129 Sometimes to divert with a stage representation
130 Of this presence August,⁹ worthy Rome's veneration,
131 Permit us today to display for you the story,
132 Crudely given form, of some of your deeds of glory,
133 And that by their recital, marvellous to hear,
134 Of the people and the court we may charm the ear.
135 I can offer you, O Caesar, no fairer show
136 Than by making of yourself a splendid tableau;
137 Without falling back on the common histories,
138 Permit me to speak of your famous victories
139 And through your rare exploits to the Romans explain
140 How fortunate they are to live beneath your reign.
141 Permit me your diverse qualities to expose:
142 So many famous laurels won from Persian foes;
143 Barbarians defeated, Carinus subdued,
144 At last the whole world conquered, or with fear imbued.
145 In that high cause I will make viewers me admire,
146 So that all will hold you in adoration, sire:
147 Even to those jealous of you you will seem perfect.

DIOCLETIAN

148 No, friend, I seek from your art another effect.
149 Fame discourses here sufficiently of my glory,

9 "August" (identical in original): the capital letter in Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, following the early texts, highlights Genest's allusion to Diocletian's imperial status.

206 Caesar right here, who holds our art in adoration,
 207 Most potent pleasure can derive from our performance,
 208 Which well beyond his hopes and wishes will advance.¹¹

RUTILIUS

209 May the gods grant it! But adieu, I'll leave you
 till . . .

GENEST

210 In two hours at most you will witness our skill. [*Exit Rutilius.*]

Scene iv

Genest, Pamphilie, Luciane, Anthenor, Aristide

GENEST

211 Friends, the time has come when, depending on our wits,
 212 An emperor will decide whom the prize best fits,
 213 And each of us, aspiring as we do to glory,
 214 Seeks from his rival's hands to snatch the victory.¹²
 215 This glorious employment may alter our fate:
 216 Let us combat like heroes its rigours ingrate,¹³
 217 And with a spectacle that common fare transcends,
 218 Acquire both Caesar and Fortune as our friends.
 219 That happy result depends on our work today:
 220 You know as well as I what role we have to play,

highlight the actors' skill or the author's adherence to the unity of time, it seems evident that both purposes are served.

11 Ll. 207-8: orig. "Peut voir nos actions avec tant de plaisirs / Qu'ils passeront l'espoir et vaincront ses désirs." The promise of pleasing Caesar presumably encompasses his intention of producing a political impact but implicitly goes beyond it.

12 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 26, doubt the pertinence to the contemporary French theatre of this evocation of professional rivalry. On the other hand, such is strongly implied by the virtually simultaneous representation by different troupes of two tragedies of Genest, one of them arrogating the label of "véritable".

13 L. 216: orig. "Combattons ses rigueurs par un illustre effort." "Illustre [celebrated]" plays ironically (and untranslatably) on both the work's title (*L'Illustre Comédien*) and the troupe actually performing it (*L'Illustre Théâtre*). The translation sustains the martial metaphor initiated by "[C]ombattons" and reinforced by "effort", a word which here, as elsewhere in the period, carries military connotations.

221 And without much effort we'll hit on a device
222 To put into action Rutilius' advice.

ANTHENOR

223 But what story, then, can provide us with a subject
224 Fitting and adapted to such a splendid project?

ARISTIDE

225 That of Porphyry or that of Ardaleon,¹⁴
226 Both by the Empire's masters well looked upon,
227 Who were by the Christians' abuses so suborned
228 That they pledged themselves to the doctrines they had
scorned,
229 And by thus embracing a madness without peer,
230 Did in the whole world's eyes mere shameful fools appear.

LUCIANE

231 Both of them, as it happens, practised our profession.

PAMPHILIE

232 And baptism was the first act of their transgression,
233 Which, while those fools' laughable longing it surfeited,
234 Ensured that both property and life they forfeited.¹⁵

GENEST

235 Such principles have often, exposed to the great,
236 Entangled their authors in a contrary fate.
237 From their example, for our purpose, we can learn
238 Theatrically, even if their temple we spurn,
239 Where their blindness caused them in mere water to find
240 Grim poison by which they were to the tomb consigned.
241 But without seeking help from a distant history
242 To inspire our mind and feed our memory,
243 We may recuperate from our own former days

14 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 29, observe that these two earlier actor-martyrs, converted while performing mockeries of Christianity, are cited at the end of Ribadeneira's account of Genest.

15 Porphyrie's imitation of baptism is singled out by Ribadeneira (p. 781) as sparking his conversion, but the mysteries mocked by Ardaleon are not specified.

244 Matter well assured to gain Caesar's ample praise,
 245 If, by a skilful stroke, drawn out with industry,
 246 He learns that we have left behind our native country,
 247 Our parents, and all that we owned to travel here,
 248 Distant from his enemies, his gods to revere.
 249 Let me then the order of this mystery¹⁶ state:
 250 It falls to Anthenor my father to incarnate,
 251 And in a soothing, though deceitful, interview
 252 To feign to wish me to become a Christian too.
 253 With my sister, who drew me to that erring sect,
 254 Luciane here, you know, shared a likeness near-perfect,
 255 And will know how—I am certain—on this occasion
 256 To imitate her turns of humour and affection.
 257 Aristide, moreover, to counteract her folly,
 258 We shall present as the brother of Pamphilie,
 259 Who will conjure me, by the brilliance of her eyes,
 260 Not to betray her—and the gods we authorise.
 261 There is our subject—all, at least, you need regard;
 262 Then . . . But what does Aquilinus want, and that Guard?

Scene v

Aquilinus, Genest, Pamphilie, Luciane, Aristide,
 Anthenor, a Guard (*carrying gifts*)

AQUILINUS

263 Heaven favours you, my friends; Fortune's smiles appear;
 264 The people admire you; Caesar holds you dear.
 265 Of that these gifts I bring you are the certain marks:
 266 Receive these presents from the most mighty of monarchs,
 267 And believe at all events that these precious objects
 268 Of his bounties are but the most trifling effects.

GENEST

269 These magnificent gifts from one the whole world knows

16 “[M]ystery”: orig. “mystère”; in the context, the term, which can apply both to religious rites and religious theatre, must be employed by Genest with pointed irony. Cf. Rotrou, IV.viii.1396 and n. 90.

270 Betoken the dignity of him that bestows;
 271 And we are aware that in his power it lies
 272 To extend his benefits beyond all surmise.
 273 But of all Caesar's favours of which we may boast,
 274 His presence is the one that we value the most,
 275 And the wish to please him by plying my profession
 276 Is the limit of my desires and ambition.¹⁷

PAMPHILIE

277 There is no one here who would say the contrary:
 278 Our zeal is enormous towards His Majesty,
 279 And every one of us is thrilled to ravishment
 280 With the wish to make him, by our service, content.

AQUILINUS

281 Such fine civilities compel us to confess
 282 That our court has no monopoly on politeness,
 283 Since we see it in you, brought to such perfect state
 284 That wonder, in speaking with you, it must create.¹⁸

ARISTIDE

285 Ah, but my Lord, your good will by itself suffices,
 286 Without confusing with your eloquent devices
 287 Those who, with such favours and benefits suffused
 288 From Caesar and yourself, are already confused.¹⁹

LUCIANE

289 Yes, my Lord . . .

17 Ll. 275-76: the rhyme "profession/ambition" (identical words) is present in the original.

18 The self-conscious trading of (literally) courtly compliments between the actors and the courtiers is taken by Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 38, at face value as a defence of the respectability of actors, and it certainly makes this impression on Aquilinus: cf. his exalted analysis of theatrical art at II.i.305 ff. There is room, however, for admiring the actors' verbal dexterity ironically as adroit imitation, given their previous speech among themselves. For a nearly contemporary spoof (1637) of refined compliments as a minor genre in a self-consciously theatrical context, cf. Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, *The Visionaries*, trans. Richard Hillman, introd. Michel Bitot (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2021), II.iv.543.

19 Ll. 286-88: The repetition of "confusing"/"confused", in the sense of "overwhelmed", is modelled on the original ("confondiez"/"confus").

AQUILINUS

290 Let us leave off there. My ears and eyes,
 So charmed to see and hear each marvellous surprise,
 291 Caused me to linger, regardless of my intents,
 292 And consequently robbed you of some precious moments.
 293 The Emperor is waiting.

ANTHENOR

That is all we ask.

GENEST

294 You may assure him we are ready for the task,
 295 And that we are merely waiting for his command
 296 To offer him diversion right here where we stand.

Act II

Scene i

Diocletian, Aquilinus, Rutilius, *and followers*

DIOCLETIAN

297 Rutilius, we shall see now if that high rate
 298 You give our actors is just and legitimate,
 299 And if these great spirits that you esteem so perfect
 300 Will produce in my own a similar effect.
 301 To take you at your word, my court can boast no grace
 302 That theirs does not easily surmount and efface,
 303 To the point where one would suppose that all perfections
 304 Have their origin in their words and in their actions.²⁰

20 Ll. 303-4: The rhyme “perfections”/“actions” (identical words in French) is present in the original.

AQUILINUS

305 Whatever praise Rutilius on them confers,
 306 His sentiment is just, and mine wholly concurs.
 307 Although certain dullards deem their art a disgrace,
 308 Within it vulgar minds have not the slightest place,
 309 Nor bodies ungainly,²¹ nor any whose appearance
 310 May not at least promise to gain a hopeful glance.²²
 311 The theatre is severe, and seeks those qualities
 312 Which may induce the great to admire its bounties.
 313 The charm of the voice becomes its mere weakest link
 314 If it is not matched with ability to think,
 315 And gesture can lend it nothing but feeble forces,
 316 If a ray divine does not govern its discourses.
 317 Besides judgement, subtlety and strong memory,
 318 Assurance is indispensable for its glory,
 319 And elegance even in the manner of dress
 320 Is no trivial matter for actor—or actress.²³

DIOCLETIAN

321 Well, then, we shall soon realise the experience:
 322 Have them begin, and let us lend them our silence.

Scene ii

Luciane, Genest

LUCIANE

323 Ah, brother, if nothing can shake your stubborn state,
 324 Then consider my tears . . . [*kneels*]

GENEST

. . . which will carry no weight.

21 “[U]ngainly”: orig. “mal composés”.

22 L. 310: orig. “Ne puisse au moins donner quelque belle espérance”. The “hope” in question would seem to be that of visually engaging the spectator’s interest.

23 “[A]ctor – or actress”: The original “acteur” would have been understood as inclusive, but I take the liberty of the addition, given the attention paid by Rotrou, by way of Marcèle, to a distinction that must have been commonplace; cf. Rotrou, esp. II.ii.349 ff. and III.viii.1029-30.

350 From Princes of the East He received the homages,
 351 And the star which guided the magi in that case
 352 Was a token that they sought a God's dwelling-place.
 353 He lived, as the story has it, and as you say,
 354 In ignominy, and died in a shameful way—
 355 Sold, denied, slighted by those who with Him had stood,
 356 At last nailed in disgrace on some pieces of wood.²⁷
 357 But by that very means, though it's hard to believe,
 358 He purports by His shame your glory to achieve,
 359 And with His precious blood being the only price,
 360 Will buy on your behalf a share of paradise.

GENEST

361 How your soul is seized by deceitful expectation,
 362 If that futile idea is its only foundation,
 363 And how false is happiness which, by a sad blow,
 364 From death accompanied by shame is thought to flow!
 365 Rally to the party of those exalted powers
 366 Through whom rich recompenses for our vows are ours;
 367 Who make themselves adored in many climes diverse,²⁸
 368 And make our Caesars masters of the universe.
 369 To follow their example, we cannot go wrong:
 370 Our duties in temples, as in their courts, belong:
 371 And since by destiny we have been made their subjects,
 372 Let us not direct our vows to different objects.
 373 But let us change our speech. Anthenor, who approaches,
 374 Would find in our discussion matter for reproaches.
 375 Undoubtedly, stricken by the same dart as you,
 376 He comes now to assail me and add his blows too.

[Enter Anthenor]

27 “[I]n disgrace on some pieces of wood”: orig. “Sur un infâme bois”. The translation respects the apparent intention to avoid evoking the cross as symbol of redemption; Luciane is repeating anti-Christian denigration prior to repudiating it.

28 “[M]any climes diverse”: orig. “cent climats divers” – similar poetic exaggeration.

Scene iii

Anthenor, Genest, Luciane

ANTHENOR

377 Well, then, has that rebel spirit yielded at last?

LUCIANE

378 As little as the rock, resisting the storm's blast,
379 Which scorns the assaults of both the wind and the sea,
380 And to our eyes still more solid appears to be.

GENEST

381 Indeed, it is well chosen, that comparison:
382 My spirit and the rock have quite a lot in common.
383 For if one by the winds can by no means be shaken,
384 Sighs to move the other, too, are pains vainly taken.

ANTHENOR

385 Ah son, if that spirit did not keep you from seeing
386 That speaking to you is the author of your being,
387 If it were far more solid, harder than a rock,
388 By rights that obligation would deal it a shock.

GENEST

389 Yes, I owe you for my birth, for seeing the light;
390 My body owes you obedience by that right.
391 But the spirit that moves me heaven makes me know,
392 And to the gods alone that high tribute I owe.

ANTHENOR

393 No, to that God of power . . .

GENEST

394 You formerly denounced. Merely a pretence

ANTHENOR

Whom now I reverence.

GENEST

395 Say, rather, a god your fatuous dreams have feigned.

ANTHENOR

396 A God by whom everything lives and is sustained,
397 And who, an immortal life on you to bestow,
398 Agreed to have his ravished from him here below.

GENEST

399 On me? I beg no gift from his last gasp of breath
400 And do not view my life as coming from his death.

ANTHENOR

401 Horrible impiety! Hateful blasphemy!

GENEST

402 But of which baptismal water can make me free.²⁹

ANTHENOR

403 Yes, my son, follow me there . . .

GENEST

Ah, not so much haste!

ANTHENOR

404 What, will you now turn back, on such a fair road placed?

GENEST

405 Yes, just as from a precipice I'd turn away,
406 Where you would have me with you to destruction stray.

ANTHENOR

407 No, I want to save you with me, not have you die.

GENEST

408 Just mind your own business and let me be.

29 He is leading his father on by mocking his belief, as the sequel shows.

420 Expecting it, I was not surprised by the fact,
 421 And for some little while, I had myself resigned:
 422 I'd seen the lightning, knew thunder not far behind.
 423 But just like the dazzle of that heavenly light
 424 Which after the storm shows fairer and shines more
 bright,
 425 The brilliance divine of the eyes of Pamphilie
 426 Came to dispel the despond of my melancholy
 427 And by those stars of love, with many a sweet glance,
 428 In affliction the beauty of my days enhance.
 429 Marvellous example of precious constancy,
 430 Dear object of my vows, my hope's expectancy,
 431 It is at last from you alone, who rule my fate,
 432 That the verdict of life or death I now await.³²
 433 All betrays me, Madame; by all I'm persecuted;
 434 Heaven has me its victim of worst ills deputed.
 435 Yet the hardest blows caresses to me would seem,
 436 If they left me still the honour of your esteem.
 437 That hope weighs well against my fortunes in the scale:
 438 It is the only succour that may me avail,
 439 And since your heart is expansive and generous,
 440 I dare not yet declare my anguish onerous.

PAMPHILIE

441 What is your sorrow, and of what are you so scared?
 442 Already, without knowing, your hurt I have shared,
 443 And my love has such force that you would do it wrong
 444 To think it, when matched with whims of fortune, less
 strong.
 445 Your cherished qualities, with your vows and your flame,
 446 For much too long have to my soul enforced their claim.
 447 And in spite of your suspicions, you may be sure
 448 There is no hardship it cannot, unchanged, endure.
 449 But please tell us, at last, where your misfortune lies.

32 While the language of religious devotion is of course commonplace in contemporary expressions of secular love, the context throws Genest's near-idolatry here into relief.

GENEST

450 In a passion repugnant to my sacred ties,
 451 In zeal without reason, wilfulness unconfined—
 452 The power, in sum, of a spirit wholly blind.

PAMPHILIE

453 A father, no doubt, would force you to make a change,
 454 And have you inconstantly your vows rearrange?

GENEST

455 He would, Pamphilie, he certainly would—but learn
 456 That unjustified desires I coldly spurn,
 457 And that before my heart his rash demands will meet,
 458 My love will sacrifice my poor life at your feet.

PAMPHILIE

459 I am far from wishing such a horrid effect.
 460 And perhaps, in the end, his choice is so far perfect
 461 It moves him to take this mildly coercive measure,
 462 Which provokes in you such transports—or feigned
 displeasure.

GENEST

463 Ah, of the hard misfortunes whose blows on me fall,
 464 This is the most hurtful, the rudest of them all!
 465 What, with all things fatal to me, when all reject me,
 466 Today does even Pamphilie herself suspect me?
 467 No, no, Madame, no—all suspicion put away
 468 Of wanting my vows, or your beauties, to betray.
 469 This unhappy change my father would force on me
 470 Concerns our altars, and not you personally.
 471 He does not disallow that your eyes I adore,
 472 But for his god's sake I must worship ours no more,
 473 And as if I, too, his abusive error prized,
 474 I am supposed to get myself, like him, baptised.
 475 But rather than prove in love or belief ingrate—
 476 Rather than either my vows or faith violate—
 477 May those powerful hands that the thunder produce
 478 With a red streak of fire to dust me reduce;

512 Both hopes that are sweeter and better destinies.
 513 But can you think the love that binds me faithfully
 514 Could ever permit me to desert Pamphilie?
 515 Can you imagine that it lies within my might,
 516 My love being boundless, to live out of her sight?
 517 No, no, far from her graces with their godlike powers,
 518 Mere harsh thorns to me would be the loveliest flowers;
 519 I would detest a throne, and sceptres as my gains
 520 Would please me much less than the honour of my chains.
 521 But if a father's cruelty inexorable
 522 Makes me today to myself unrecognisable—
 523 If I must remain in this miserable state,
 524 Which of friends, goods and spirit leaves me desolate
 525 (Excuse me for such speech, due to my melancholy)—
 526 What will become our passions, dear Pamphilie?
 527 I well know that your heart is large and generous,
 528 But you're a woman, and my sadness is onerous.

PAMPHILIE

529 It is true, I am a woman: in that I glory,
 530 Because today that name will mark my victory,
 531 When in my sex enough spirit I demonstrate
 532 To best you in defeating the shrewd turns of Fate.
 533 I will hardly repeat in this place that I love you,
 534 That my love is as strong as your manifold virtue:
 535 By my eyes and sighs it's been a thousand times spoken,
 536 And they are much better than my voice as a token.
 537 But whatever the rigours inflicted by Fate—
 538 If you were in a still more deplorable state—
 539 Of fidelity unequalled I you assure,
 540 Which is certain as far as the tomb to endure.

GENEST

541 Well, then, in my affliction's pain I will believe
 542 That nature in you a prodigy did conceive,
 543 And that, in giving birth to you, it caused to be
 544 A perfect miracle of love and constancy.
 545 Even if your bountiful soothing of my feeling
 546 Displays your skill in speaking rather than in healing,

GENEST

601 What's your view, dear Pamphilie, of this business?

PAMPHILIE

602 I fear.

ARISTIDE

What do you fear?

PAMPHILIE

Everything.

ARISTIDE

Gods, what madness!

603 You say you fear. What? Can two water-drops put out
604 His flaming torch of love, whose ardour's not in doubt?

PAMPHILIE

605 No, but this error might at last on him prevail,
606 And for us that would grave consequences entail.

GENEST

607 Ah, that my mind is so unsound do not suppose!

PAMPHILIE

608 All right, then, go ahead and do as you propose.

GENEST

609 This affair must be managed with dexterity.

ARISTIDE

610 Leave everything to me; your father I'll go see,
611 And so subtly I can his understanding bend
612 That, blinded by the bait of the scheme we intend,
613 He'll never, as my words will be shrewdly arrayed,
614 In the least suspect the trap that for him is laid.
615 But, to put an end to our speeches over-lengthy,
616 Go, you two, to the Chistians' temple—wait there for
me. [*Exeunt separately.*]

Act III

Scene i

Diocletian, Aquilinus, Rutilius

DIOCLETIAN

617 Rutilius, I grant they are incomparable,
 618 And all they represent I find quite admirable:
 619 How the agreement of their voices with their actions
 620 Skilfully expresses the whole range of their passions!³⁸
 621 How well they can lament, or anger imitate!
 622 What power their love-talk has to ingratiate!
 623 And how they apply themselves with graceful appeal
 624 To depicting a torment which they do not feel!
 625 Did it not strike you when you heard Luciane plead
 626 In favour of the Christians and their profane creed?
 627 She defended their error with such cogent art
 628 That I sometimes imagined she spoke from the heart,
 629 And that the stroke she then appeared to have sustained
 630 Was quite real in its effect and not at all feigned.

RUTILIUS

631 True, my Lord, but did it not also strike your sense
 632 To hear Genest arguing in his own defence?
 633 With how much deft intelligence, courage and verve
 634 Did he the higher claim of our altars preserve!
 635 And, finally, with what artistry and invention
 636 He bears himself to bring contempt on their religion!³⁹
 637 Yes, his great subtlety has never had its equal!

AQUILINUS

638 Wait, Sire, you'll soon see many a miracle,⁴⁰

38 Ll. 619-20 are calculated to echo II.i.303-4; the rhyme “actions/passions” (identical in French) is present in the original.

39 Ll. 635-36: The rhyme “invention”/“religion” (identical in French) is present in the original.

40 “[M]any a miracle”: orig. “des merveilles”. There is evident irony in the way Aquilinus’ figurative use of the term anticipates its literal realisation.

639 Which will ravish your senses with so much delight
640 You will not believe it, though it is in your sight.

Scene ii

Diocletian, Aquilinus, Rutilius, *and followers*.
Genest, Pamphilie, Aristide, Luciane, Anthenor

GENEST [*entering*]

641 Where am I? What have I seen? What heavenly flame
642 First dazzled my eyes, then into my spirit came?
643 What ray of light, able to purify my soul,
644 Dispelled the error that by stealth had seized control.⁴¹
645 I believe, I am Christian, and that extreme grace
646 Whose effects I feel is baptism's holy trace.

PAMPHILIE

647 Christian? Who did that?

GENEST

I am.

ARISTIDE

Some dream you recall . . .

GENEST

648 An Angel made me so.

ANTHENOR

In front of who?

GENEST

Of all.

41 "[B]y stealth had seized control": orig. "surpris [surprised]"; the term was often used in a military context for capturing someone or something (cf. the expression "surprise attack").

LUCIANE

649 And yet not a single person saw this adventure.

RUTILIUS (*to the Emperor*)

650 Now he will serve up to them some far-fetched imposture.

AQUILINUS

651 How well he feigns!

DIOCLETIAN

652 Quite true—his feigning takes the prize,
And surely he charms the ear as well as the eyes.

GENEST

653 What? Did you not see that brilliant illumination
654 Whose marvellous effects, beyond my expectation,
655 With such sudden radiance burst into this place,⁴²
656 When the minister of a God filled it with grace.

ARISTIDE

657 What minister, what god? You're telling us a fable.

GENEST

658 No, my friends, the things I recount are veritable.
659 Here a while ago, when by you I was discovered
660 Down on my knees, eyes raised to heaven, head uncovered,
661 I saw—oh, what a marvel scarcely conceivable!—

42 “[T]his place”: orig. “ce lieu”, in which “ce” could mean “this” or “that”. The latter might seem more logical, given that the audience has seen nothing of the kind, but “ici” in l. 559 unequivocally means “here”. Genest’s narrative thus presents the fundamental interpretative puzzle observed by Bourquin and de Reyff, eds, n. 75. Two possibilities, neither capable of proof, might be added to their analysis: 1) Genest’s epiphany was indeed a “dream” (l. 649) or “fable” (l. 657), as Aristide asserts, in the sense of a wholly interior experience of divine grace; 2) a scene of divine baptism was indeed staged, as in Rotrou’s analogue (cf. Rotrou, IV.v.1251 S.D.), where, however, the angel (termed a “minister” [l. 1251], as in Desfontaines [l. 656]), remains invisible to both on- and off-stage audiences. Was such a scene removed from Desfontaines’s play, perhaps as performed as well as published? Might supplying that omission be part of Rotrou’s claim to furnish a “veritable” version, thereby supporting the assertion of Genest in Desfontaines that his experience was “veritable” (l. 658; orig. “véritables”)? Also supported, in that case, would be the prior existence of *L’Illustre Comédien*.

662 Through that vault above a prodigy admirable:⁴³
 663 An angel a thousand times fairer than the sun,
 664 And who, promising happiness second to none,
 665 Declared that he came, if I would believe his story,
 666 Expressly to enfold me in rays of his glory.
 667 Then all my senses, charmed in hopeful ravishment,
 668 Carried my spirit to this state of high content,
 669 Which, overflowing my heart with infinite joy,
 670 Made before my eyes this ceremony deploy:
 671 The angel, whose appearance there my mind astonished,
 672 In one hand an imposing book with writing brandished,
 673 Where, as heaven's grace seconded my ardent eyes,
 674 The sins of my life I was quick to recognise;
 675 But with drops of water, which his other hand poured,
 676 At once I saw the words erased, white space restored,
 677 And by an effect which surpasses those of nature,
 678 My heart became more calm, my soul was made more pure.
 679 There it is: that is what I saw, those my emotions,
 680 And what delivered me to such rapturous motions.
 681 Far from me from now on, figments of fantasy,
 682 Scourges of weak minds, unable deep truths to see!⁴⁴
 683 To you, false gods, no more tribute of fear I yield,
 684 Nor to vain thunderbolts, which in paintings you wield;
 685 I no longer know you, I detest you—retire!
 686 And my heart, enkindled by celestial fire,
 687 Adores a living God, whose overwhelming power
 688 Shows itself everywhere and causes all to cower.⁴⁵

DIOCLETIAN

689 This feigning, Aquilinus, I find discontents me.

43 The repeated rhymes on "...able" (ll. 657-58, 661-62) are imitated from the original, where they are part of the rhetorical effect.

44 L. 682: orig. "Fléaux des faibles esprits, et des Ames vulgaires", with "vulgaires" in the sense of "common", as the translation attempts to convey. While Genest's discourse might be dismissible as a parody of the arrogance attributed to Christians, Diocletian's reaction in ll. 689-90 suggests irritation at the insults aimed at pagan believers, and not least at himself, especially given his quasi-divine position as emperor. It is to the point that Genest declares his new faith in terms of the Christian god's omnipotence and capacity to inspire universal fear – see esp. below, ll. 687-88.

45 L. 688: orig. "Se fait craindre partout, et partout se fait voir."

690 Stop it.

GENEST

It's not yet time, O Caesar, to silence me!

691 That Lord of Lords, who is almighty King of Kings,
 692 Whose law the whole universe to reverence brings,
 693 Beneath whom hell trembles, whom the heavens adore,
 694 Wills me to continue and prompts me to say more.
 695 Know, Emperor, that the God who can all command,
 696 Whose power I felt myself, and His mighty hand,
 697 When I had it in mind to mock at His decrees,⁴⁶
 698 Has caused the greatest of miracles me to seize,
 699 Turning an idolater into His worshipper
 700 And making a subject out of His persecutor.⁴⁷
 701 Supposing I would entertain—oh, strange event!—
 702 Only simple mortals, I made angels content,
 703 And with the sole intention of pleasing your eyes,
 704 Unawares I pleased the Emperor of the Skies.⁴⁸
 705 It is true that, deprived of that ultimate grace,
 706 I once spewed a thousand blasphemies in His face,
 707 But in the lying speeches that my tongue unrolled,
 708 It was not myself speaking but hell that controlled—
 709 That common enemy of all things that bear life,
 710 Which wholly builds its empire on sin and strife,⁴⁹
 711 And, having fooled my senses and seduced my reason,

46 “[D]ecrees”: orig. “oracles”.

47 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 80, point out that the notion of Genest’s theatrical practice of mocking Christian rites, as found in the sources, infiltrates this passage in a way beyond his presentation by Desfontaines. Still, such mockery is explicitly the object of the command performance (see above, I.i.109-10, I.iii.159 ff.), while ll. 705-6 below do not restrict his “blasphemies” to stage performances. The act of ridicule immediately at issue is, of course, the pretended baptism.

48 Cf. Rotrou, IV.vii.1365-66. The close resemblance is one of those noted by Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 80 and Introduction, p. 404, who also cite the common source in Surlus (p. 917). Cf. Ribade-neira, p. 917: “J’ai tâché de plaire à l’Empereur de la terre; & celui du Ciel m’a regardé d’un bon œil, & reçu en sa grace.” As elsewhere, Baudoin offers a more dramatic rendering: “Je me suis jusques icy rendu complaisant à vos passions, ô puissant Empereur de la terre; et cependant celui du Ciel a bien daigné me regarder d’un œil fauorable” (p. 142).

49 “[S]in and strife”: orig. “crime”, which here clearly carries a broad meaning. The divine empire is now opposed to both the earthly and the infernal ones – discourse hardly likely to please Diocletian.

712 In my heart had implanted that dangerous poison.⁵⁰
 713 But the infinite bounties of my God at last
 714 All those horrible thoughts from my soul have outcast,
 715 And, Caesar, be it known, to the end of my days
 716 I have no more voice but what serves to speak His praise,
 717 To proclaim to the two ends of the earth this wonder:
 718 That He is sole sovereign, sole lord of the thunder,
 719 Of heaven, angels, mortals and the elements—
 720 In short, alone worthy of our altars and incense.

DIOCLETIAN

721 He has lost his senses, and his distracted soul
 722 Sends his tongue, like his mind, spinning out of control.

GENEST

723 No, no—never did I reason with sounder judgement
 724 Than when I turned against your gods and your intent;
 725 And if I lost it, it was when my guilty speech
 726 Basely agreed your idols' favour to beseech.

DIOCLETIAN

727 Ha! Don't anger me—enough of your insolence,
 728 Or we'll have you treated like those who have no sense.

GENEST

729 That's not at all the treatment that I have in view,
 730 For then I'd be treated in the same way as you.

DIOCLETIAN

731 To Caesar, Rome's Emperor, they don't so behave.

GENEST

732 You're not treated as a sovereign but as a slave,
 733 For, far from willing that high Goodness to obey—
 734 That God from whom all royalty derives its sway—
 735 Often you pay homage, at some courtier's whim,

50 It seems important to retain the original's near-rhyme "reason/poison" (identical in French).

736 To an image some poor craftsman had made for him,
 737 Who followed his fancy, or that of such false men,
 738 To fashion gods for you, who are your masters then.

DIOCLETIAN

739 Just look at him! Moved by such audacious outrage,
 740 He'd try to bring Achilles or Hector on stage.

GENEST

741 No, no, my soul, which reason now can well restrain,
 742 No longer lets within it an idea so vain.
 743 I know myself, Caesar, and know what I am, too.

DIOCLETIAN

744 But do you know, traitor, what I'm able to do?

GENEST

745 Yes—the fact of your power cannot be ignored:
 746 I know that you are feared, and in Rome are adored.
 747 Yet I well know, too, my role by a God assigned—
 748 My body is yours to torment but not my mind.

DIOCLETIAN

749 We shall put to the proof that lofty constancy.

GENEST

750 Do it now, and right away the result you'll see:
 751 Order your torturers to weigh me down with chains.

DIOCLETIAN

752 They'll teach you the respect your perfidy disdains,
 753 If you do not make up your mind your speech to alter.

GENEST

754 One never changes while one's courage does not falter.

DIOCLETIAN

755 Yet nevertheless one must perish or comply.

GENEST

756 Then here you see me ready, tyrant—let me die!⁵¹
 757 Bring on, bring on at once those blessing-bearing⁵²
 chains,
 758 Instruments of my glory, as well as my pains.
 759 And for hateful fetters as of now take back these—
 (*throwing his scarf⁵³ back at him*)
 760 Which once made me the slave of your divinities.
 761 Let those who did not see that miracle divine,
 762 Which only now ravished these eyes and ears of mine,
 763 Abjectly adhere to your vain magnificence
 764 And look with an envious eye upon your presents.
 765 As for me, who have just seen the most splendid marks
 766 Of the power of Him who gives commands to monarchs,
 767 I no longer have desires so criminal:
 768 Your gifts are transitory, while His are eternal;
 769 His favours are those of a God, yours of a man,
 770 And heaven's honours well worth any merely Roman.
 771 Give the order, Emperor, and hasten my torment:
 772 You are deferring my glory and my content.
 773 Cause my body the most extreme pains to endure;
 774 Stir up your tormentors, invent new kinds of torture:
 775 And, following an impulse that quite well you know,
 776 Avenge a little water with a bloody flow,
 777 For its divine effect has given me such grace
 778 That today I brave your menaces to your face.

51 “[L]et me die”: orig. “allons mourir”, a formula elsewhere associated with heroic resolution to face death. Bourquin and de Reyff, eds, n. 89, cite the verbatim repetition of lines from Desfontaines’s own *Martyr de Saint Eustache*, but the expression was also associated with pagan suicide in sixteenth-century “Humanist” tragedy, notably in the representations of Cleopatra by Étienne Jodelle and Nicolas de Montreux. See Richard Hillman, *French Reflections in the Shakespearean Tragic: Three Case Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012), p. 99.

52 “[B]lessing-bearing”: orig. “bienheureuses” – a word with strong religious associations, thanks principally to its recurrent use in the “Beatitudes” in the sense of “blessed” (Mat. 5:3-11).

53 “[S]carf”: orig. “écharpe” – an ancient Roman mark of allegiance or party affiliation, in this case of imperial loyalty. Bourquin and de Reyff, eds, n. 90, plausibly suggest that it may be among the tokens of Diocletian’s esteem delivered by Aquilinus at I.v.266. The word is singular but Genest speaks of “ces liens odieux” in the plural (hence “these”), imagining the scarf as truer chains than those just mentioned.

800 But you'll find the fruit of your treason now produced.
 801 Yes—I'll be revenged for such a palpable outrage,
 802 And not distinguish among you by sex or age,
 803 With no pity present my anger to appease.
 804 Aquilinus.

LUCIANE

Ah, Caesar I embrace your knees.

DIOCLETIAN

804(a) Impertinent!

ANTHENOR

Caesar . . .

DIOCLETIAN

Your tears in vain pretend⁵⁵

805 To disarm my righteous rigour, which will not bend.
 806 After flaunting in my palace such disrespect,
 807 What favour can you possibly dare to expect?
 808 Might you suppose that, having been so insolent,
 809 All you need do today is beg me to be clement?
 810 No, no—crimes as heinous as yours are never pardoned
 811 With the same facility with which they were done,
 812 And lenity would bring forth others free from fear,
 813 If I did not make your own punishments severe.
 814 And so . . .

PAMPHILIE

Oh, Caesar, what extreme unhappiness

815 Can render us today mistrusted by Your Highness?
 816 Against your power, my Lord, what is our offence?
 817 Are we made criminals by our obedience?
 818 You gave the order, and we hastened to obey you:
 819 To carry out your wishes—is that to betray you?

55 The editions of 1645 and 1646 confirm that this is a complete verse-line and should be both printed and counted as such, as is not the case in Bourquin and de Reyff, eds. To maintain conformity with the modern edition, I consider the line as 804(a).

820 For what crime, then, can we be accounted culpable?
 821 Of what treasons do you consider us capable?
 822 We have not aimed a blow at the gods or the state;
 823 Our own misfortune is all that we perpetrate.
 824 It's not that I would seek, by speaking in this way,
 825 To turn back the anger that holds you in its sway.
 826 In the wretched muddle to which fate relegates me,
 827 I don't dream that calm seas or a safe port awaits me,
 828 And I would blame myself for desire too base
 829 If my voice for my life were to present a case.
 830 No, don't expect from me such craven sentiments:
 831 Pronounce, if it suits you, my fatal punishments;
 832 You will see me perish both constant and content.
 833 But spare, O Caesar, a troupe that is innocent,
 834 Who have always prudently in each single action
 835 Considered both their duty and your satisfaction.

DIOCLETIAN

836 So, then, your duty consists in displeasing me?
 837 In promising one thing, performing the contrary?
 838 In coming to suborn—before my eyes!—a subject,
 839 And then forcing him at last our gods to reject?
 840 Perhaps you dismiss such an act of impudence
 841 As mere amusement, sport that is quite innocent?
 842 But trust me, if this stroke meets with impunity,
 843 Then I am short on both rancour and memory.
 844 No, no, traitors, after such a savage attack,
 845 Don't you suppose that fighting spirit⁵⁶ I will lack!
 846 You are joined by your crime, as well as by your fate:
 847 Your destinies, therefore, I shall not separate.
 848 You share the same purpose and the same point of view,⁵⁷
 849 And you shall endure identical vengeance, too.

ARISTIDE

850 Caesar, in the name of the gods, hear my advice:

56 “[F]ighting spirit”: orig. “courage”.

57 “[P]oint of view”: orig. “intelligence”.

883 And viewed his insolence with a deep sense of horror.

DIOCLETIAN

884 How were those blameworthy precepts to you supplied
885 Which just now the crimes of the Christians justified?

LUCIANE

886 By a curious desire, which cannot shock,
887 Since I entertained it only so I might mock,
888 And still today those egregious lies, as it seems,
889 Are accounted in my spirit nothing but dreams.

DIOCLETIAN

890 If you abhor, as you say, the Christians' abuses,
891 Put the discourse you maintain to practical uses:
892 Go and seek out Genest, and do your best to daunt
893 His obdurate heart with those reasons you now flaunt.
894 A nimble wit, united with bodily grace,
895 Generally puts remarkable force in place;
896 Assist a little your eloquence with your eyes:
897 A fair object always a rebel mollifies.
898 Thus my anger ceases, and yields to your allurements.⁵⁸
899 Behave so that Genest welcomes your blandishments,
900 And that his heart, made a conquest by such fair arms,
901 May render us indebted to your potent charms.

LUCIANE

902 I am quite prepared, O Caesar, to carry out
903 Your wishes and commands, without the slightest doubt,
904 Although I am far from being so presumptuous
905 As to dare to expect the end will be glorious.
906 But I will not hold back, because it is your will,
907 And for want of attractions, will employ my skill.
908 But then, my Lord, do not forget that Pamphilie
909 Has long exerted over him her mastery,
910 And that the glory of that happy feat was due
911 To her alacrity of tongue and her eyes, too.

58 Diocletian's language turns notably "courtly" here.

Act IV

Scene i

Pamphilie, Aristide

PAMPHILIE

938 What? Can that obstinate heart by nothing be bent?

ARISTIDE

939 No. He will be brought before you at any moment.
940 I give you fair warning.

PAMPHILIE

Where?

ARISTIDE

941 In this very place,
942 So that—if he can (tainted by treason so base)—
943 He may renounce his error in the same location
Where Caesar and the gods saw his abomination.

PAMPHILIE

944 How do you know this?⁶¹

ARISTIDE

945 By Rutilius' command,
946 Who, seeing him able all attempts to withstand,
947 And that our best efforts had not the least effect
948 In curing his blinded spirit of its gross defect,
949 Informed me that he would send that rebel to you,
950 And that I should come ahead to make sure you knew,
951 So that your mind a ready supply might provide
Of shafts to hurl at him which he can't turn aside.

61 Pamphilie's ignorance and Aristide's explanation here seem somewhat out of joint with the end of the previous scene – perhaps a suggestion of a certain artifice on her part? (Cf. the Introduction, pp. 10-11.)

PAMPHILIE

952 And what shall I do, Aristide, when that occurs?

ARISTIDE

953 You know far better than I do that traitor's humours.

PAMPHILIE

954 Yet me, as much as you—or more—he has betrayed.

ARISTIDE

955 It is of your anger that he is most afraid.

PAMPHILIE

956 He fears me?

ARISTIDE

So I believe.

PAMPHILIE

On what evidence?

957 Does he not treat me with supreme indifference?

958 And am I not for him a contemptible object?

ARISTIDE

959 Your name, however, has a powerful effect.

960 For he could never, when your beauties were evoked,

961 Stifle his ardent sighs, and on his tears he choked.

PAMPHILIE

962 After his rank treasons and such egregious slights,

963 His weeping and his sighs make unconvincing sights.

964 The ingrate has changed, and whatever one supposes,

965 What once he did for love, mere habit now imposes.

ARISTIDE

966 To comply with Caesar's will, you simply must try him—

967 Rutilius so orders.

PAMPHILIE

Well, go notify him⁶²

968 That, in order to tame that overweening heart,
 969 My hate and my love to the full will play their part.
 970 Go—let me mull over this troubling task I face.

ARISTIDE

971 Farewell. In a moment you'll see him in this place.

[*Exit Aristide.*]

Scene ii

PAMPHILIE [*alone*]

972 Blind tyrants that my poor soul claim
 973 And take your turns to dominate—
 974 Contempt and vengeance, love and hate:
 975 What ending will my furors have, what end my flame?⁶³
 976 Hate, must your laws be my choice?
 977 Love, must I listen to your voice?
 978 Must I rush to seek out vengeance?
 979 Or, with a more noble disdain,
 980 Should I dedicate my allegiance
 981 To forgetting the ardours that cause my heart pain?
 982 Oh gods, how within me contend
 983 Choices and wishes—and surmise!
 984 How a lover's weeping and sighs
 985 Impose on my soul a suffering without end!⁶⁴
 986 No, eyes of mine, don't grant him sight;
 987 Just leave him in his deadly plight
 988 And our hatred thoroughly slake—
 989 Or, since he called you by false names,

62 I.e., according to the context, Rutilius, although the pronoun references in the passage waver indistinctly between him and Genest.

63 L. 975: orig. "Où se termineront mes fureurs, ou ma flamme". Although it makes little difference to the translation, Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 102, suggest that the "ou [or]" of the early editions might also be taken as "où [where]". Such a reading would, I think, weaken the effect of Pamphilie's doubt at this moment about the nature of her feelings.

64 At issue is the sincerity of Genest's signs of passion; cf. above, IV.i.962-65.

1015 That hurtful injury to my vows should be done.
 1016 I wish that a punishment both prompt and severe
 1017 In your perfidious blood that offence may clear,
 1018 And show that thanks to me your fate will be more dire
 1019 Than just for affronting the gods or the Empire.

GENEST

1020 All right, then, execute your overflowing rage;
 1021 Only for that I stand before you. Take advantage!
 1022 Here I am ready, Madam, a victim enchained;
 1023 My fate, dealt at your feet, will be gladly sustained.
 1024 As you do so, your eyes, taking your rigour's part,
 1025 Will point out to your hands the pathway to my heart.
 1026 Or if they do not wish to give themselves such trouble,
 1027 Take arms—here it is. Strike, cruel and beautiful!
 1028 Futile as your gods' incapable thunderbolts,
 1029 Their force is too feeble to give my senses jolts.⁶⁶
 1030 Perform it, Pamphilie, your fierce outrage perform!
 1031 My heart scarcely trembles at such a trifling storm:
 1032 You once saw it hot, with amorous fire glowing;
 1033 For your better content now see it with blood flowing.
 1034 But if even now I may hope some grace to see,
 1035 Allow that, prior to the blow that threatens me,
 1036 I may dare to enquire what egregious fault
 1037 Is driving you, Madam, to this cruel assault.

PAMPHILIE

1038 What fault, disloyal man? O gods, what impudence!
 1039 He is virtue itself, the soul of innocence!
 1040 He never fell short in love or fidelity;
 1041 He never was false to the Emperor or me.
 1042 Of baptism he never uttered words in favour;
 1043 Never did language of his of blasphemy savour.
 1044 Crimes, you righteous gods? He's done nothing to
 displease,
 1045 And you are simply wrong to be his enemies.

66 “[T]o give my senses jolts”: orig. “pour étonner mes sens”.

GENEST

1074 Oh, how treason is beautiful and innocent,
 1075 How blameworthy is fidelity, how delinquent,
 1076 When they concern a tyrant and divinities
 1077 That are nothing but horrible monstrosities!
 1078 How sweet to be free of a yoke so detestable
 1079 And choose the rule of a Monarch so adorable,
 1080 Whose palace and court are in the heavens above,
 1081 And who is all gentleness, all justice, all love!
 1082 Oh, my precious Pamphilie, if only you knew
 1083 What ignorant night, like a tomb, encloses you,
 1084 And if, redeemed by that miraculous star's light
 1085 Whose dazzle drew me from the blindness of my night,
 1086 You might receive a ray of that sovereign grace
 1087 That could within my heart such noble boldness place,
 1088 How, compared with your own, would you my fortune bless,
 1089 Which you would reckon as a Christian's happiness!
 1090 And how, to wear of that state the glorious marks,⁶⁹
 1091 Would you make small account of the favours of monarchs!
 1092 It is by that splendid means that I wish today
 1093 Veritable love for you, Madam, to display,
 1094 And make you confess that I did not break my vow
 1095 Except in order to cherish you better now.
 1096 Lord, if Your goodness deigns to listen to my prayer,
 1097 Accord to Pamphilie . . .

PAMPHILIE

Wretched man, stop right there!

1098 What would you ask?

GENEST

That His bliss, which over all reigns,
 1099 May save the other half of myself that remains,
 1100 And permit at least that before death stops my effort,
 1101 I may stretch out my hand to lead her safe to port.
 1102 If over you I gain that brilliant victory,

69 Evidently alluding to his chains.

1103 Let that happy outcome contribute to my glory!
 1104 How sweet will be my fate, how I will die content,
 1105 If I can bring to fruition that bold intent.
 1106 Let us not put it off. Listen, Madam, if you—

PAMPHILIE

1107 In vain you try with your ruses my soul to woo.

GENEST

1108 Oh, only believe, and then the King of the Skies
 1109 Will take away the blindfold that covers your eyes,
 1110 And you will discover unequalled brilliant things,
 1111 Marvels from which incomparable wonder springs.
 1112 Make use here and now of the torch of faith's own flame—
 1113 Or, if it dazzles you, hear me speak in its name.
 1114 Just consider well my words and give them due weight:
 1115 Tell me what effects these idols of yours create;
 1116 What have they ever executed here below
 1117 That causes us their power or godhead to know?
 1118 Do you think that gods made of wood or gold or stone,
 1119 Whose being is bounded by their shadow alone⁷⁰—
 1120 Gods that are nothing more than inanimate objects,
 1121 Owing to a mortal's hand and iron their aspects—
 1122 Could, with words that mighty miracles multiply,
 1123 Have created man, the air, the land, sea and sky?
 1124 Ruled the elements, strewed the heavens, star by star,
 1125 Made all those beauties that shine for our eyes from far?
 1126 And everywhere placed that order incomparable
 1127 Which keeps the universe in a state admirable?
 1128 No, all those demons, those gods in their impotence,
 1129 Upon whom, so uselessly, you squander your incense,
 1130 Have never, whatever credit their fraud received,
 1131 One single atom⁷¹ in all of nature conceived—
 1132 Which, to conclude, in its perfect magnificence

70 “[B]ounded by their shadow alone”: orig. “borné dans l’ombre qui l’enserme” – that is, presumably, having no existence beyond the shadow surrounding the physical object.

71 “[A]tom”: orig. “atome” – a term which, as observed by Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 118, had warrant in Aristotelian, as well as Epicurean, tradition.

1133 Is a brilliant work of the God I reverence.
 1134 Yes, Madam, He is the master who all composed:⁷²
 1135 I was ignorant, but that knowledge He imposed;
 1136 And, provided that your soul desires to see,
 1137 That same benefit lies in your capacity.
 1138 By no means refuse it, my precious Pamphilie:
 1139 Let your soul thereby with mine in alliance be,
 1140 And grant that today, by such a splendid bond tied,
 1141 Our two hearts may thus be forever unified.
 1142 Now you perceive how extreme is my love for you.

PAMPHILIE

1143 You love me.

GENEST

Yes—and far more than myself, it's true,
 1144 Since to come to your rescue, and to make you sure,
 1145 Whatever brutal torments I'll have to endure—
 1146 Whatever horrid tortures their rage can deploy—
 1147 I'll be seen to run to them with abounding joy,
 1148 As long as with my blood I can for you acquire
 1149 Happiness that, with me, you are bound to desire.

PAMPHILIE

1150 Alas!

GENEST

You sigh. Oh, doubtless a timorous mind
 1151 Strives against your desire and keeps it confined.
 1152 You are afraid of death—a tyrant makes you quail.⁷³

72 “[T]he master who all composed”: orig. “l’auteur et le maître”, which likewise carries a suggestion of artistic creation.

73 “[A] tyrant makes you quail”: orig. “un Tyran vous fait peur”. One can imagine different ways of delivering this half-line, some of which would sway the identity of the “tyrant” from the Emperor towards Death itself. But the reference below in l. 1160 is unambiguous.

PAMPHILIE

1153 No, no—do not suppose my heart's courage⁷⁴ can fail:
 1154 That sigh, expression of a holy tenderness,
 1155 Is proof of my repentance, not my feebleness.
 1156 I follow you, dear love—I believe and I yield:
 1157 Your God reigns in my heart, from me has won the field.⁷⁵
 1158 Already that great happiness ravishes me,
 1159 Gazing at your chains with an eye of jealousy:
 1160 I burn till a tyrant his torturers commands
 1161 With these glorious burdens to weigh down my hands;
 1162 I cannot seize them—let me help them to sustain;⁷⁶
 1163 Yes, these fetters are my fetters, this my own chain,
 1164 Since by the effects this sweet rigour can impart,
 1165 It passes even now from your hands to my heart.

GENEST

1166 Pamphilie! Oh, transports that fill me full of glory!

Scene iv

Diocletian, Aquilinus, Rutilius, [Pamphilie], Genest, Anthenor,
 Aristide, Luciane, and the Guards

RUTILIUS

1167 My Lord, she has no doubt obtained the victory:
 1168 In her eyes there sparkles a visible elation.

DIOCLETIAN

1169 Well, what you have you done for our gods' gratification?

PAMPHILIE

1170 More than I ought to have.

74 "[H]eart's courage": orig. "cœur".

75 "[F]rom me has won the field": orig. "triomphe de moi".

76 L. 1162: orig. "Ne pouvant les ravir qu'au moins je les soutienne". She may (or may not) make a gesture towards removing his chains before simply helping to bear their weight; the following lines seem to imply physical contact. One wonders whether any reaction is envisaged for the two Guards present.

DIOCLETIAN

That may be arrogance,
 1171 Subject to reprimand and deserving of penance—
 1172 The more so since you fell short of the end you sought.⁷⁷
 1173 Yet you declare that you have done more than you ought:
 1174 True, one does too much when a spirit is culpable
 1175 And sets his will against becoming reasonable,
 1176 For once it is clear that he refuses to yield,
 1177 By extreme rigour must the argument be sealed.
 1178 But although your reasons in combatting this rebel
 1179 Have not rendered his heart more loyal or more humble,
 1180 I am far from wishing to rob you of the prize
 1181 We owe you for your efforts in the enterprise.
 1182 Just like you, Luciane, Aristide, and Anthenor
 1183 Applied their efforts in vain to persuade that traitor,
 1184 And yet I paid their portion with a hand so free
 1185 That they will not complain against the gods or me.

ARISTIDE

1186 No, my Lord, the value placed on us by your splendour
 1187 Bears witness to your magnificence and your grandeur,
 1188 And we would be ungrateful to the gods and you
 1189 If ever we lacked the zeal or faith that are due.
 1190 Yes, command us, Caesar, to your will we incline,
 1191 And a thousand times would lay our lives on the line,
 1192 And seek, in a brutal combat's bitterest throes,
 1193 With glory to perish in the midst of your foes.
 1194 Let wonder, Pamphilie, you too, like us, astound
 1195 At the Emperor's precious⁷⁸ bonds in which we're wound:
 1196 Of gifts for us his treasury is never short;
 1197 We are honoured with choicest places at his court;
 1198 And by special bounty, which I can scarcely credit,
 1199 We rise out of nothing to glory's very summit.

77 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 123, plausibly propose that Diocletian reacts to the fact that Genest is still in chains. I follow their elucidation of this elliptical passage.

78 L. 1195: orig. "Les adorables nœuds dont l'Emperour nous lie". The image depends on the contrast with Genest's chains, as Pamphilie's rejoinder confirms (ll. 1214-21). Regrettably, English "adorable" here would lend Aristide's servility an incongruously fey quality.

1233 Do you suppose these splendours have appeal for me?
 1234 No, no—these false pleasures upon me cast no spell.⁸⁵
 1235 He will finish his days—finish my life as well.
 1236 So you will see, whatever he must undergo,
 1237 That what love has joined, separation cannot know.⁸⁶

DIOCLETIAN

1238 You'd be better advised to beg me to be clement.

PAMPHILIE

1239 Your fury for my taste is scarcely violent.
 1240 Why do you delay, tyrant, to have it applied?

DIOCLETIAN

1241 Then that's your desire? It shall be satisfied.
 1242 But after this refusal, no pardon expect:
 1243 The same fate will follow from your joint disrespect,
 1244 For since one crime in common sufficiently ties you,
 1245 The self-same punishment is able to chastise you.

PAMPHILIE

1246 Along with the same torments, we'll share the same glory.

AQUILINUS

1247 But before the combat you sing of victory.
 1248 Death is, to the staunchest spirit, a thing of terror.

PAMPHILIE

1249 In cowards like you it always inspires horror—
 1250 Its mere name strikes fear; but a heart noble and hale
 1251 Looks it squarely in the face without turning pale.

DIOCLETIAN

1252 Perhaps you count on that god's succour to appear,

85 The translation points up her accusation that, contrary to Anthenor's declaration in l. 1222, it is her erstwhile companions who have fallen victim to enchantment.

86 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 127, note the reference to Matthew 19:6, which forms part of the marriage service.

1253 Which a scoundrel like him⁸⁷ dared to promise you here.
 1254 But in your extreme peril you would hope in vain
 1255 For such help as he did not for himself obtain
 1256 To save you from a death that he could not prevent,
 1257 And my power should make you fear as imminent.

PAMPHILIE

1258 Colossus of mud and clay,⁸⁸
 1259 Whom a timid people obey,
 1260 Do you really dare those criminal words to speak,
 1261 Between your grandeur and His own to make equation?
 1262 And do you not know, you mortal wretched and weak,
 1263 That His bounty is your foundation,
 1264 And that you'll be dust tomorrow at God's command,
 1265 If He withdraws His hand?⁸⁹

1266 You, whom He has made in His image;
 1267 You kings, who take from Him the homage
 1268 Which is owed to His altars by rightful respect,

87 “[A] scoundrel like him”: “un fourbe comme lui”. Genest is assimilated to Christ, designated in the common pagan manner as an outlaw and imposter. Cf. above, II.ii.353-56, as well as Rotrou, II.vi-ii.591 ff.

88 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 128, point out the allusion to Daniel 2:31-45. The context is Daniel's prophecy to Nebuchadnezzar of the future of Babylon, the archetype of earthly glory – hence a prototype of Rome – which is ephemeral, in opposition to the heavenly city of God, the New Jerusalem. The stanzaic pattern of Pamphilié's speech supports its inspired prophetic quality, which makes it a quasi-typological pendant to her stanzas of anguished inner conflict at IV.ii.971-1001 and helps to carry it beyond a direct rebuke of Diocletian's tyranny.

On the popularity and uses of interpolated stanzaic lyrics in the period's dramaturgy, by Desfontaines particularly, see Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, *Tragédies hagiographiques*, Introduction, pp. 29-30. Cf. the effusion of the imprisoned Genest in Rotrou, V.i.1431-70. A thorough technical analysis of the convention is furnished by Jacques Scherer, *La Dramaturgie classique en France*, rev. ed. Colette Scherer (Saint-Genouph: Nizet, 2001), pp. 284-97, who does not, however, mention Desfontaines's *L'Illustré Comédien*; Marie-France Hilgar, *La Mode des stances dans le théâtre tragique français, 1610-1687* (Paris: Nizet, 1974), does include this example (p. 166) but does not go beyond basic description. No critic seems to have appreciated the contrast between Pamphilié's conventional earlier lyric, focused on terrestrial love, and the present exalted one.

For a parody of the stanzaic mode in a quite different context, see Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, *The Visionaries*, trad. Hillman, III.iv.921-70.

89 The idea of God as present in and sanctioning his creation is a familiar one; Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 129, aptly cite the book of Wisdom (Sapientia), which was apocryphal for Protestants; see Wisdom 11:21-27 (Douai-Reims version).

1269 Just because you crown your heads with a little circlet,
 1270 Do you dare, pride-swollen, His power to neglect,
 1271 And your condition forget,
 1272 And make comparison between your quality
 1273 And His high majesty?

1274 Salmoneus' mere effigies,⁹⁰
 1275 Would you govern destinies?
 1276 Is it your place to rule over men and their fate?
 1277 Are you at all able with life them to inspire—
 1278 Whose power presumes their deaths to precipitate
 1279 Just to satisfy your desire?
 1280 And what right permits you to sustain your own projects
 1281 With the blood of His subjects?

1282 The earth he suspended in place—
 1283 Does it contain within its space
 1284 Any bodies whose motion your voices can cause?
 1285 Yet you, who are unable in the whole of nature
 1286 To make one solitary atom by your laws,
 1287 Work the destruction of His creature.
 1288 Daily before His eyes the cruellest means you take
 1289 The work of His hands to break.

1290 But the mixed blood and tears that flow
 1291 From those whom your weapons lay low
 1292 Cry out for justice to His lofty tribunal,⁹¹
 1293 While His subjects their unjust oppression lament,

90 Orig.: “vous petits Salmonées”. In mythology, Salmoneus, King of Elis, imitated the thunder and lightning of Zeus and was punished by him; Pamphilie thus denigrates kings as petty imitators of a blasphemous imitator. See *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), *s.v.*; henceforth cited as *OCD*. He is depicted by Virgil as punished in the underworld (*Aeneid*, VI,585-94).

91 Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 132, compare the appeal to God of Abel's blood after his slaying by Cain (Genesis 4:10). More immediately to the point in the hagiographical context is the typological fulfilment of that first murder in the evocation of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-10:

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? (Authorised Version)

1294 And at their plaint He will open his arsenal
 1295 To draw from it such punishment
 1296 That constrained then and there⁹² to confess you shall be
 1297 Your God is only He.

DIOCLETIAN

1298 And my righteous anger ample proof will afford
 1299 That I, despite him, am your master and your lord.
 1300 Aquilinus, take her, for she's sung her last note,⁹³
 1301 And with her lover watching, have them cut her throat.

Act V

Scene i

Anthenor, Luciane, Aristide

ANTHENOR

1302 So close to yet another precious benefit,⁹⁴
 1303 Your desire's fruition, of your hopes the surfeit,
 1304 At such a high degree of glory and of favour,
 1305 What is the cause of Aristide's troubled⁹⁵ behaviour?
 1306 What sudden change occurred to pull your spirits down?
 1307 Your gaze turns upward to the sky, you smile and frown,
 1308 You sigh.

92 “[T]hen and there”: orig. “en ce lieu”.

93 “[F]or she's sung her last note”: the translation presumes to add this image to the original, where Diocletian simply orders her instant removal (“Dépêchez ... qu'on l'ôte promptement”), so as to link his fearful sense of menace (anticipating his reaction at the play's conclusion) to her lyrical outburst. In this context, to cut her throat is not merely to punish but specifically to silence her.

94 Orig. “Si proche d'ajouter à tant de récompenses”. The translation employs “precious” ironically to recall Aristide's previous attitude; cf. above IV.iv.1195.

95 “[T]roubled”: orig. “rêveur” (lit. “dreamy”), but the sense here extends to serious disquiet.

ARISTIDE

Alas!

ANTHENOR

So what can be the explanation

1309 Of your manifesting such a great alteration?
 1310 Destiny, which once hard against you barred the gate,⁹⁶
 1311 Now harbours towards you neither anger nor hate,
 1312 Its fondness such, by the gods' generosity,
 1313 That others are jealous of your prosperity.
 1314 To complete your happiness, what else would be due?
 1315 The Emperor holds you dear; Luciane loves you,
 1316 For indeed that object divine of your affections
 1317 Responds with ardour to your amorous intentions.⁹⁷
 1318 What then is causing your uneasiness of mind,
 1319 Which so out of keeping with your fortune we find?
 1320 Please, dear Aristide, at least our worries dispel:
 1321 Do it for Anthenor, and Luciane as well.

ARISTIDE

1322 Oh, how ridiculous is your request, and vain!
 1323 Can you be unaware of the cause of my pain?
 1324 The arrows that wounded me—have they passed you by?
 1325 Your actress comrade⁹⁸—O gods!—is about to die,
 1326 And he whose charms you were accustomed to revere
 1327 Goes with her to death, and in your eyes not a tear.
 1328 O heavens, let the slightest fillip change our fate,
 1329 If it can't for one morning keep a constant state!
 1330 And so, then, splendid Genest and rare Pamphilie,
 1331 They let you die—what's more, forget you instantly!
 1332 And by traits of cowardice I cannot endure,
 1333 My weeping to see you perish attracts their censure.
 1334 I'm even expected a joyful brow to show.

96 As pointed out by Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 134, Anthenor alludes to the marginal existence of the players prior to their installation as favoured courtiers.

97 Since there has been no previous mention of this relationship (Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 135), it is implicitly presented as accompanying the actors' accession to new status and wealth.

98 "[C]omrade actress": orig. "compagne".

Scene ii

Aristide, Anthenor

ARISTIDE

What thunderbolt upon my soul has burst!¹⁰³

1387 So, then, for a simple plaint that my lips traversed
 1388 And some sentiments, fully justified, of pity,
 1389 Drawn out of my heart by long-standing amity,
 1390 Luciane will—good gods!—as faithless me berate?
 1391 Wait for Aristide, ungrateful beauty, just wait,
 1392 And his heart torn out, which you accuse wrongfully,
 1393 Will by my¹⁰⁴ death cause you at least my love to see.
 1394 But I call in vain; let's follow the fugitive
 1395 And disabuse her, or otherwise cease to live.
 1396 Come on!¹⁰⁵

ANTHENOR

Oh, restrain this transport for your own sake;

1397 Let this flowing torrent pass by and rage forsake.
 1398 Her pride swells ever higher, the more it's opposed,
 1399 And to greater violence you'll find it disposed.
 1400 Allow her turbulence the chance to take its ease;
 1401 You will see these towering waves themselves appease
 1402 And bring, in succession to this furious storm,
 1403 A calm which greater happiness for you will form,
 1404 Proceeding from a mind subservient to reason
 1405 And not a flood of passions produced out of season.

ARISTIDE

1406 Oh, that cruel one!—you don't know to what extent
 1407 She has a proud, unfeeling, haughty temperament:

103 The image ironically recalls the heavenly punishment he anticipated if he failed to lament the fate of Pamphilie; cf. above, V.i.1335-36.

104 The shift from third- to first-person here, an apparent mark of emotional agitation, is confirmed by both early texts; cf. Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 139.

105 “[C]ome on”: orig. “Allons”; by rhetorical convention, he is probably exhorting himself as much as his companion, especially in putting his life on the line, but the following sequence confirms that he wants Anthenor's support.

1408 She will not let herself be tamed so easily;
 1409 That disdain of hers will feed her hostility
 1410 And doubtless provide her with certain confirmation
 1411 Of all she believes that bolsters my denigration.
 1412 Therefore, let's go, the more so because in this furor
 1413 I don't wish to show myself before the Emperor.
 1414 Here he comes. Quick, then!

ANTHENOR

Come on.

[*Exeunt.*]

Scene iii

Diocletian, Rutilius, *and attendants*

DIOCLETIAN

So, Rutilius,

1415 The tortures have proved but of little use to us,
 1416 And that desperate man bears without murmuring
 1417 All that, short of death, one's capable of enduring?

RUTILIUS

1418 Yes, Caesar. All the torments he endures and slights;
 1419 You'd say that in his heart he treats them as delights—
 1420 Indeed that, with his blood gushing forth on all sides,
 1421 Within a blissful bath amid pleasures he glides.
 1422 There is no torment known that we have not employed:
 1423 All he suffered, looking as if all were enjoyed.
 1424 Both the flame and the iron that tore his flesh loose
 1425 Could not force him the tiniest sigh to produce.
 1426 His courage grows with his torments and stature gains;
 1427 The torturers, more than he, are moved by his pains;
 1428 And while everyone pities or weeps for his fate,
 1429 He alone sees his death prepared, and gazes straight.

DIOCLETIAN

1430 No doubt he is provided with strength by his charms.¹⁰⁶
 1431 But how did Pamphilie react amid these harms?

RUTILIUS

1432 Is there, for me to tell, or you to hear, a way?
 1433 I'm forced either to displease you, or disobey,
 1434 And I fear, O Caesar, that my obedience
 1435 May obligate me here to commit an offence,
 1436 If a painful tale must make you visualise
 1437 A spectacle at which I scarce could trust my eyes.
 1438 But hear of an occurrence, since it is your pleasure,
 1439 That is novel and unheard of in all of nature.
 1440 According to the orders and decree you sent,
 1441 Our criminals, already led to punishment,
 1442 With torturers and populace following there,
 1443 Were displayed one after the other in the square,
 1444 When Genest, turning his eyes on every side,
 1445 Rested his glances on Pamphilie, whom he spied,
 1446 Who, without seeming troubled or at all affected,
 1447 Mutually to him in turn her sight directed.
 1448 These silent exchanges between spirits most agile¹⁰⁷
 1449 Having taken their voices' place a certain while,
 1450 Then paused, so permitting within the tongue's full reach
 1451 The power to proffer loudly this woeful speech:
 1452 "See, O resplendent conqueror," said Pamphilie,
 1453 "See, my dear love, if my courage is failing me.
 1454 See if I tremble, as I look death in the eye:
 1455 No, no, I fear nothing; together let us die.
 1456 And since we shall be joined above in sacred union,¹⁰⁸
 1457 Let our blood, shed on this dear scaffold in profusion,
 1458 Sign the contract and serve as the initial pledge
 1459 We will have given in surety of our marriage.
 1460 In the place of rich jewels, we'll have these chains

106 Cf. above, IV.iv.1222 and n. 81.

107 "[S]pirits most agile": orig. "esprits plus adroits"; the wording suggests a literal and active meeting of minds in the space between them.

108 "[S]acred union": orig. "saint Hymen", according to the familiar metonymy.

instead;

1461 These grim preparations make our delightful bed,
 1462 The torturers to officiate and this presence
 1463 To furnish ornament, pomp and magnificence.”
 1464 At these words, her lover, his face perfect composure,
 1465 Replied with a glance, and towards her made a gesture
 1466 Signifying clearly just how much he approved
 1467 Of that haughty¹⁰⁹ figure, astoudingly unmoved.
 1468 At last, when both had been prepared for their ordeal,
 1469 We saw them vie with each other first pain to feel
 1470 And, as in a combat full of honour and glory,
 1471 Dispute between them that sorrowful victory
 1472 Whose bloody effect stuns the spirit through the eyes,
 1473 And of which death is at once the end and the prize.¹¹⁰
 1474 First, to strike fear into that arrogant young thing,
 1475 The executioner raised a torch fiercely burning,
 1476 Then finally to Genest directed his aim,
 1477 Pitilessly to his body applied the flame:
 1478 The fire caught, produced such pitiful¹¹¹ effect
 1479 That all were touched by it—except that victim abject,
 1480 Who with lively ardour, although half burnt alive,
 1481 Instead of dying from it, seemed rather to thrive:
 1482 The torturers lost heart, we wondered at the sight.

DIOCLETIAN

1483 And in my heart I'm perishing from rage and spite¹¹²
 1484 That I cannot strangle him with my own hands' force!

109 “[H]aughty”: orig. “superbe” – Rutilius’ evocation of her overweening pride (cf. below, ll. 1474 and 1504-5) coexists with his admiration despite himself.

110 With the torture sequence that follows, cf. *Rotrou*, III.ii.741-48 and V.vii.1731-38.

111 The keynote of pity is likewise repeated in ll. 1477-78 of the original (“sans pitié”, “pitoyable”).

112 L. 1483: orig. “Et je crève en mon cœur de dépit et de rage” – once again, recognisably the language of the mystery play devils. Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 145, signal a grammatical ambiguity in the relation between this and the following line, which they prefer to take as a separate exclamation (“Oh, I wish I could...!”). The diabolic echo emerges more strongly, however, if Diocletian’s inward fury is intimately linked to his actual impotence, as a reminder that the devil has no power over the truly faithful, whose model is the suffering Christ himself.

1584 And reserve your voice, your sighs and your lamentations
 1585 Henceforth for pitying my flood of tribulations.
 1586 Yes, keep your store of pity wholly for my fate:
 1587 It could not have more matter more appropriate,
 1588 Since those whom heaven regards with a hostile eye
 1589 Comparison may deem more fortunate than I.
 1590 Yes, despite grandeur, all pomp Rome bestows and can,
 1591 I now know, Aquilinus, that I am a man—
 1592 But a man abandoned, an outcast vilified,
 1593 A man by whom men and the gods are horrified.

AQUILINUS

1594 What is this you're saying, my Lord? What pain so strong,
 1595 Afflicting you so, could suddenly come along?
 1596 All fear you, all bow down, all venerate your law:
 1597 You alone are held by the Queen of Kings¹¹⁹ in awe.
 1598 Banish far from you, then, this soul-infecting care:
 1599 The throne is a sanctuary—no fear comes there.
 1600 The whole world's eyes upon you all dangers disperse:
 1601 You could perish only with all the universe.

DIOCLETIAN

1602 Oh, to cure me of the ill that has me in thrall,
 1603 How little serves flattering speech, or not at all!
 1604 And how, to pull me free from the pains I'm now tasting,
 1605 My subjects, in their efforts, those efforts are wasting!
 1606 In vain I wield a sceptre, in vain was I crowned;
 1607 In vain do great throngs follow me, and me surround;
 1608 In vain am I a monarch who gains victories,
 1609 If in my heart already lurk all my enemies—
 1610 If I feel cruel war raging within my soul,
 1611 If I myself rebel against my own control,
 1612 And if I must drag along with me everywhere
 1613 Horror and frightfulness, self-reproach and despair.
 1614 All seems to me fatal, carrying deadly sense:
 1615 Days streaked with lightning, air tainted with

119 "Queen of Kings" – i.e., Rome (Bourqui and de Reyff, eds, n. 149).

1646

But if, unrighteous gods, my death at last is due,

1647

Finish with your torments, with haste my end pursue.

END

