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Traductions
introuvables

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 Veritable Saint Genest: Tragedy
by Jean de Rotrou

Richard Hillman
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The Veritable Saint Genest: Tragedy

By

Jean de Rotrou

*Actors*¹

Diocletian, Emperor
 Maximian, Emperor²
 Valérie, daughter of Diocletian
 Camille, companion of Valérie
 Plutianus,³ Prefect
 Genest, actor
 Marcèle, actress
 Octavius, actor
 Sergestus, actor
 Lentulus, actor
 Albinus, actor
 Decorator
 Jailer
 Page

[Roles within the tragedy of Adrian:]

Adrian, represented by Genest
 Natalie, represented by Marcèle
 Flavius, represented by Sergestus
 Maximian, represented by Octavius
 Anthimus, represented by Lentulus
 Guard, represented by Albinus
 Jailer, represented by Albinus
 Soldiers and Guards

Scene: Nicomedia⁴

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- 1 Orig. “Acteurs”, which carries special resonance, given the play-within-the-play.
 - 2 Maximian: orig. “Maximin” – historically, Gaius Galerius Valerius Maximianus, in 293 C.E. created “Caesar” of the East, with Constantius as “Caesar” of the West, as members of the Tetrarchy founded by Diocletian with his co-emperor Maximianus (see below, n. 8). He was eventually made emperor in his turn, but he had originally been a shepherd like his father and was nicknamed “Armentarius” (from *armentum*, “herd”). On his elevation to the rank of Caesar, Diocletian gave him his daughter Valeria in marriage. (See below, I.i.13-18.) On the historical persons and events, see *OCD* under individual names. Maximian is more generally known to historians as Galerius, but I prefer a version closer to Rotrou’s Maximin.
 - 3 So identified in the first martyrological accounts. See Matthieu Pignot, *Cult of Saints*, E02497 – online at <<http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E02497>>, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity* database; accessed 26 March 2023), as well as Surius, p. 917. “Plancien” (perhaps due to a transcription error?) is the form from the earliest narratives in French (notably that of Ribadeneira, as translated by René Gaultier).
 - 4 Nicomedia: city in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), the site of numerous martyrdoms at the hands of Maximian (Rotrou’s Maximin), including that of Adrian (i.e., Hadrian), who was a member of the Herculian Guard at the time of his conversion. Cf. below, I.v.305-6 and n. 22. As for the staging,

Act I

Scene i

Valérie, Camille

CAMILLE

1 What, can you not overcome a fear that is vain?
2 A dream, a mere vapour, is the cause of your pain—
3 You, to whom heaven all its treasures has consigned,
4 In such a worthy body placed a worthy mind?

VALÉRIE

5 The first of the Caesars learnt all too well that dreams
6 Are not always false, nor always the lies one deems,
7 And the strength of mind he proudly took as his mainstay,
8 Because he trusted it, cost him the light of day.⁵
9 Heaven may please to speak without an obstacle:
10 It may make the voice of a dream its oracle.
11 And dreams—the more so if the same message one brings—
12 Often, if not always, deliver truthful things.
13 Already five or six nights to my dismal thought
14 The vision of that degrading marriage have brought,
15 Showing me a shepherd with an arrogant leer
16 Pretending to my bed, which would then be my bier,
17 And the Emperor my father, with violence,
18 Seconding his presumption and his insolence.
19 I may, with due permission—and if verity
20 Allows to children some measure of liberty—
21 Fear I'll receive an ill-tempered ill-turn from him:
22 I recognise his love, but also fear his whim,
23 And see that at each meeting he blindly obeys

Pasquier specifies (Introduction, p. 161) that the decor required reflects a transition between the heterogeneity of the baroque period and the rigid unity of strict neo-classicism: a relatively complex “petit théâtre” within the “grand théâtre” would have served for the play-within-the-play, with its several locales and special effects, while the prison-scene (V.ii) would have been managed using one section of the palace, probably with barred windows.

5 Julius Caesar notoriously refused to trust in the dream of his wife Calpurnia, which foretold his imminent assassination in the Senate.

24 The impetuous heat that his first motion sways.
 25 Was he himself able to realise, when he married,
 26 What yoke his crowned head, now subjected, thenceforth
 carried?—
 27 When, as Emperor, he sold his state and his bed
 28 For the price of a soldier's bit of borrowed bread⁶
 29 And, in a moment of weakness unparalleled,
 30 Joined my mother to the world empire he held?
 31 Rome has since then suffered this, and has not upbraided
 32 His calling Alcides, lest Atlas bear unaided,⁷
 33 Or seeing the universe with two sovereigns,
 34 Maximianus⁸ called upon to share the reins.
 35 But why, for just one, so many masters diverse,
 36 Four heads for the sole body of the universe?
 37 The choice of Maximian and Constantius—
 38 Was the state to so great degree necessitous
 39 It was reduced to seeking in extremity,
 40 For its survival, their strength and authority?
 41 Each in a different way degrades his memory:
 42 One by his negligence, the other by his glory.
 43 Maximian, such warlike deeds achieving now,
 44 Seems to purloin my father's laurels from his brow;
 45 While Constantius, bearing an enemy's slight,
 46 Upon the selfsame brow imprints the shame outright.
 47 Thus, in making neither his good nor his bad choice

6 Orig.: "Le prix de quelques pains qu'il emprunta soldat" (lit. "The price of some bread he borrowed when a soldier"). Contemptuously evoked are Diocletian's humble origins and service as a simple soldier before rising through the ranks to the ultimate status of emperor. As pointed out by Pasquier, ed., n. 5, the reference is to an episode in the first part of Lope's *Lo Fingido verdadero*, in which the offer of bread to Diocleciano by a peasant woman is eventually recompensed by marriage to her; there is some irony in Rotrou's adoption of her name, Camila, for Valérie's waiting-woman.

7 Alcides, another name for Hercules/Heraclès, who temporarily relieved the burden of the giant Atlas (upholding the heavens) in the course of performing his eleventh labour (obtaining the golden apples of the Hesperides).

8 Maximianus: orig. "Maximian", i.e., Marcus Aurelius Valerius Maximianus, first designated as "Caesar" by Diocletian (284 C.E.), then, as co-Emperor, receiving Constantius as his "Caesar" (293 C.E.); see *OCD*, s.v. He is quite distinct from the play's Maximian/Maximin (see above, n. 2, and Pasquier, ed., Introduction, p. 171, n. 34). Pasquier, ed., n. 8, is surely right in attributing the slighting of Constantius (orig. "Constance") in this passage to rhetorical imperatives rather than historical accuracy: cf. *OCD*, s.v. "Constantius (Chlorus)", where he is judged "an able general and a generous and merciful ruler".

48 Did he follow a rational counselling voice,
 49 And, all things deciding by his capricious will,
 50 He neither foresaw the success nor feared the ill.

CAMILLE

51 You are too quickly alarmed, and this cogitation
 52 Is far from grounding your fear on a just foundation.
 53 When Diocletian to that rank raised up your mother
 54 Which the universe reveres above any other,
 55 His rank, because he shared it, did not bend from it,
 56 And he, in raising her, did not descend from it;
 57 So, he could reconcile his honour and his passion,
 58 And, since his men chose him, could marry in his fashion.
 59 His partners in reigning may be of any sort—
 60 He is of his estates the most solid support:
 61 If they are sailors, by whom this great fleet is manned,
 62 He is at the helm, as its pilot in command,
 63 And only involves them in such exalted things
 64 In order to see Caesars as his underlings.
 65 You see how a ghost's, dream's or chimera's distractions
 66 Cause you to misinterpret a father's fine actions,
 67 And you suffer from an importunate surmise,
 68 Sprung just from where your tranquillity should arise.

VALÉRIE

69 I won't set myself, by any wilful behaviour,
 70 Against your own sentiments in my father's favour,
 71 And to oppose a father, a child must be wrong,⁹
 72 But will you answer it is Fate that is headstrong?
 73 This insolent monarch, who all the world enjoys,
 74 With all its sovereigns, like bits of glass—mere toys,
 75 Gives up some power, then, when he has had enough:
 76 Does he not, as he formed them, make them broken stuff?
 77 Can he not, if he would see me degenerate,
 78 Sink the daughter to the mother's first vulgar state,

9 L. 71: orig. "Et contre un père enfin un enfant a toujours tort" (lit. "And against a father, in the end, a child is always in the wrong"). The translation allows for the seeming irony.

79 Destroy all his favours by his frivolity
 80 And finally make my dream a reality?
 81 It is true that death, against his inconstant moves,
 82 To great hearts in need sometimes of assistance proves
 83 And may always brave his power so insolent,
 84 But although a remedy, it is violent.

CAMILLE

85 Death holds too much horror to place any hope there,
 86 But put your hope in heaven, which made you so fair
 87 And which seems to pour down¹⁰ on you, along with beauty,
 88 Plentiful signs of power and prosperity.

Scene ii

The same, a Page

PAGE [*entering*]

89 Madam.

VALÉRIE

Your errand?

PAGE

90 The Emperor as his envoy
 Sends me to announce he's coming to share his joy.

VALÉRIE

91 At what?

PAGE

92 Don't you know of Maximian's return
 From those far lands where the sun starts its daily
 sojourn—
 93 From their rebellions by his valiant arm reduced,

10 “[P]our down”: orig. “influer”, a term commonly associated with astrological influence; see *Le trésor de la langue française* online, *s.v.*, def. 2.

94 And the trophies at the Emperor's feet produced?
95 Now to your honourable sight he feels impelled. (*Exit.*)

CAMILLE

96 To treat him well by his valour we are compelled;
97 Do not withhold from him the fruit of victory:
98 To rob one of glory is greatest thievery.

VALÉRIE

99 My spirit, now stirred by a secret agitation,
100 Cherishes that emotion's most precious sensation;
101 And the welcome chance that arrives my thought to flatter
102 Dissipates my fears, almost all has caused to scatter.
103 Let our conduct be ruled by the gods good and wise.
104 (*seeing Maximian*) O heaven, what sweet pain strikes my
heart through my eyes!

Scene iii

Diocletian, Maximian, Valérie, Camille, Plancien, Guards, Soldiers

(*Sound of drums and trumpets.*)

DIOCLETIAN (*kissing the hands of Valérie*)

105 Deploy, Valérie, your attractions and your charms;
106 Make the Orient's conqueror lay down his arms;
107 Thanks to him the empire is calm, without foes:
108 Vanquish that great heart that for us vanquished all
those.
109 Load with chains the arm that has dashed many a head;
110 Make him pay for broad conquests with prison instead.
111 Already his exploits had earned deservedly
112 The portion I gave him of my authority,
113 And his lofty virtue, defect of birth repairing,
114 Prevailed so that the power of my rule he's sharing.
115 Today, when for his loss of blood I would him thank,
116 I can honour him with no more exalted rank;
117 I owe him my blood, and since my daughter he gains,
118 A share in ruling my family he obtains.

119 (*to Maximian*) More than this present, Maximian, is your
 due
 120 For the enormous service I've received from you;
 121 But to give you rewards proportioned to your merits,
 122 The Earth too constraining would find its narrow limits,
 123 And you have rendered my power without effect,
 124 Increased it so you are excluded as its object.

MAXIMIAN

125 The part your bounty assigned me in the empire
 126 Cannot match, my lord, the fair chains that I desire.
 127 All the triumphal arches Rome has raised for me
 128 Yield to the place you intend my prison to be,
 129 And, conqueror of Indus' shores, from that position
 130 I accept with greater content a slave's condition
 131 Than you, when, this body left, in the skies you gain
 132 That rank among the gods which your virtues attain.
 133 But to dare to dream such boldness, so out of place,
 134 Is to deserve her disdain instead of her grace;
 135 And whatever this arm's deeds, it did not procure
 136 Either these grand titles or this dazzling allure,
 137 Able to efface extractions from memory:
 138 Even as to virtue sole one must grant its glory,
 139 Whatever high advantage and resplendent state
 140 With which the defect of my blood you mitigate—
 141 However much dissembling—one may always say
 142 A shepherd to the empire's throne found his way:
 143 That hamlets once, not palaces, gave me a home;
 144 That formerly he herded flocks who governs Rome;
 145 That to take up the sword I left behind the crook;
 146 And last, that your construction has a faulty look.¹¹
 147 May I, with that flaw still in need of reparation,
 148 Approach such an object worthy of adoration,
 149 Hope the glorious signs of her vows to receive,
 150 Pretend a hundred monarchs' best hopes to deceive,
 151 Surpass my own expectation, and the gods see

11 L. 146: orig. "Et qu'enfin votre ouvrage est une œuvre imparfaite."

152 Rankled, if not with hate, at least with jealousy?

DIOCLETIAN

153 It suffices this is my choice, that I well know
 154 What qualities your person and your birth both show,
 155 And that if one does not permit a rank so high,
 156 The other's virtue can the remedy apply,
 157 Fills Nature's lack, lifts his inferiority,
 158 By self-reproduction forms his nobility.
 159 How many shepherds have the Greeks and Romans seen,
 160 By dint of their virtue, a sceptre's honour glean?
 161 History, in which great hearts place most confidence,
 162 Which, unlike all else, Time handles with reverence;
 163 Which, because it fears nothing, nothing can respect;
 164 Which appears unadorned and whose speech is direct—
 165 Has it not a hundred times the high praises sung
 166 Of those whose merit drew them from mire and dung,
 167 Who by their efforts their names have illuminated
 168 And have climbed to the rank where we are now instated?
 169 Cyrus, Semiramis, his famous enemy¹²—
 170 Names that are still today revered in memory;
 171 Lycastus, Parrhasio¹³—a thousand diverse
 172 Who in ancient times reigned over the universe;
 173 And recently, again, in Rome, Vitellius,
 174 Gordian, Pertinax, Macrin, Aurelian, Probus¹⁴—
 175 Did they not rise to it, and with the selfsame hands
 176 Direct their flocks and to men deliver commands?

12 “[H]is famous enemy”: orig. “sa fameuse adversaire”; the feminine confirms that the reference is to Semiramis as the enemy of Cyrus, but while Cyrus (“the Great”) conquered Babylon in 539 B.C.E., insofar as the legendary personage of Semiramis (supposed founder of Babylon raised by shepherds) had any historical basis, the reference must be to a figure who reigned in the 8th cent. B.C.E. See *OCD*, *s.v.*

13 The story of the twins Lycastus and Parrhasio in Greek mythology, whose myth as founders of Arcadia parallels that of Romulus and Remus, may be found in Plutarch, *Greek and Roman Parallel Stories, Moralia*, ed. and trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: Heinemann, 1936), 4, para. 36 (online at <<https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Plut.+Para.+36&fromdoc=Perseus%3Atext%3A2008.01.0219:boo=0:chapter=0&highlight=Lycastus>>; accessed 15 December 2022).

14 Ll. 173-74: the list is of humbly born Roman emperors of the post-classical period, although not all had actually been shepherds; see *OCD* under individual names.

Scene iv

The same, a Page

PAGE [*entering*]

202 Genest is waiting, my Lord, and extremely keen
203 To present the wishes due to your majesties.

DIOCLETIAN

204 Let him enter. (*Exit Page.*)

CAMILLE (*to Valérie*)

205 To complete your prosperities!
For however great your happiness is, his art,
206 To perfect it, must play, it somehow seems, a part.
207 Madam, procure for us this source of merriment,
208 Whose attractions are so charming¹⁷ in your own judgement.

Scene v

Genest, Diocletian, Maximian, Plutianus,
Valérie, Camille, Guards, Soldiers

GENEST [*entering*]

209 If among your subjects a fortune all too base
210 Permits one in the common rejoicing a place,
211 And to share these common desires in some measure,
212 If not to your glory, then to your tastes in pleasure,
213 Do not consider it wrong, O generous monarchs,
214 That our affection produces for you its marks,
215 And that from my companions, by my means, proceeds,
216 Not a file of pictures speaking of your rare deeds,
217 Nor that far-famed and celebrated history
218 Which your fortunate exploits leave in memory
219 (Since neither the people of Greece nor Rome possesses

17 “[S]o charming”: orig. “si charmant” – a term that ironically suggests supernatural influence. The suggestion matches Camille’s intuition in l. 206 that the performance “somehow seems” necessary (“Semble en quelque façon vous être nécessaire”).

220 A learned enough hand to set down those successes),
 221 But at least some effort by which we hope to state
 222 We have lightened for you the empire's great weight
 223 And, by what our art offers of its charms most fair,
 224 Have ravished you a moment from your heavy care.

DIOCLETIAN

225 Genest, I am grateful for your care; and the rite,
 226 On the fair day my daughter and this prince unite,
 227 And which raises our joy to such a high degree,
 228 Would be lacking with no stroke of your artistry.
 229 The theatre, today made famous by your merits,
 230 To share this noble pleasure strongly us solicits,
 231 And as it is cannot, without ingratitude,
 232 Deny that it must lend its brilliant plenitude.
 233 Stupefied, I have often known your imitations
 234 To affect me despite myself with real sensations;
 235 On all kinds of subjects, as I followed your motions,
 236 I have gleaned, from your fires, genuine emotions;
 237 And the empery¹⁸ that over a soul you claim
 238 Has a hundred times made me ice, as often flame.
 239 By your art, the heroes—rather resuscitated,
 240 Indeed, than just represented and imitated—
 241 Some hundred or thousand years since their funerals,
 242 Again go on progresses and triumph in battles,
 243 And put their famous names to the order law brings:
 244 You make me the sole master of a thousand kings!
 245 The comic, in which your art has equal success,
 246 Is such a powerful remedy against sadness
 247 That one word, when it pleases you, one step, one action,
 248 Denies any foothold whatever to that passion¹⁹
 249 And, by a striking marvel, with a sudden start,
 250 By the eye or the ear thrusts joy into the heart.

GENEST

251 By such glory, my Lord, I am so stupefied...

18 “[E]mpery”: orig. “empire”. The double meaning must be kept in the translation.

19 “[A]ction” and “passion” (French words identical) are likewise rhymed in the original.

GENEST

277 Our newest dramatic themes, worthy of Rome's power,
 278 On which a great man spent many a sleepless hour—
 279 One for whom the rare fruits the Muse may generate
 280 Have gained on the stage renown quite legitimate,
 281 And whose art and esteem are certainly both sound—
 282 With the proud names Pompey and Augustus resound;²¹
 283 These priceless works, in which his illustrious hand
 284 Depicts the Roman spirit with peerless command,
 285 Will by their beauties make your ears idolaters,
 286 And are today the soul and passion of our theatres.

VALÉRIE

287 That they were held in the highest esteem I knew,
 288 Yet when all's said and done, the subjects are not new,
 289 And whatever beauty they have, the rarest marvel,
 290 Once the mind knows it, the ear can no longer dazzle.
 291 Your art never changes, and your charms as well suit
 292 Of ancient subjects as of new ones the pursuit;
 293 But most praised is the inimitable address
 294 With which you feign a Christian's zeal and joyfulness,
 295 When, as he strides from baptism his death to meet,
 296 It seems the fires are flowers beneath his feet.

MAXIMIAN

297 That is readily ascertained.

GENEST

It will be easy,

298 If on the stage your name, my Lord, we may use freely;
 299 The death of Adrian, one of that stubborn crew
 300 Who were, in your latest decrees, condemned by you,

21 Rotrou here pays a transparent compliment to Pierre Corneille's tragedies *Cinna* and *La Mort de Pompée*; see Forestier, "Le Vritable Saint Genest de Rotrou", p. 309. The compliment, however, plays out ironically at several levels. First, of course, it flaunts its own anachronism. It also hints, chiefly by evoking the representation of Augustus in *Cinna*, at the tyrannic despotism of Diocletian. Finally, the martyr Polyeucte, the epolymous subject of Corneille's great recent triumph (1641), hovers in the background, his historically impossible absence supplied, as Forestier observes, by a foreshadowing of Genest own trajectory and Rotrou's imitations of his predecessor's style

301 You shall see presented with perfect artistry,
 302 And so little varied from true reality
 303 That you will accept our exercise of that freedom
 304 Permitting Caesar's image to Caesar to come,
 305 And you will wonder if in Nicomedia
 306 You see the action, or in a *comedia*.²²

MAXIMIAN

307 Yes, believe me, with pleasure I'll observe each act
 308 In that action miming the part I play in fact.²³
 309 Go, and prepare an effort worthy of that day
 310 When heaven, by the honour this match must convey,
 311 Sets, with a stroke posterity will not believe,
 312 My joy and glory above what I could conceive.

Act II

Scene i

Genest, Decorator

(The théâtre-within-the théâtre opens.)

GENEST (*dressing, holding his text
 and considering the theatre-within-the-theatre*)

313 It's handsome enough, but still, with little expense,
 314 You could do much to add to its magnificence:
 315 Leave nothing hidden in darkness; put in more light;

22 Genest is clearly playing on words (the original rhymes "Nicomédie" with "comédie") – grim word-play accessible to the audience, given the association of the city with Christian persecutions. In the context, it seems justifiable to convey this portentous "in-joke" by having Genest use the Italian word.

23 L. 306: orig. "En la même action dont je serai l'acteur". At the same time as the action in the theatre-within-the-theatre is anticipated, the double meaning of "acteur" ("participant" and "performer"), together with the future tense ("serai"), suggests both Maximian's intention of continuing his persecutions and, ironically, his status as a mere player on the world's stage.

316 To the surrounding elements give greater height;
 317 Do the outside in marble, like jasper the columns;
 318 Enrich the peaks and crowns, along with the tympanums;
 319 Manage your colouring with more diversity;
 320 Put in your carnations greater vivacity;
 321 Fold these garments better; move back the countryside;
 322 Include some fountains there; mark the shade they
 provide;
 323 And chiefly where, on your canvas, you paint the skies,
 324 Create light natural in the judgement of eyes,
 325 Instead of colour that seems to me somewhat muted.

DECORATOR

326 To lack of time, not effort, that must be imputed.
 327 Too, sight from far off these shortcuts better assesses,
 328 As objects emerge from the plane of these recesses;
 329 Approach these scenes, their perspectives no longer
 strike,
 330 Their false daylight becomes blurred, their colours less
 lifelike,
 331 And, as with Nature, it is harmful to our art,
 332 In which distance seems to play an attractive part.
 333 Next time their grace will be more pleasing to the sight.

GENEST

334 Right now we're pressed for time; go and prepare the
 light. (*Exit Decorator.*)

Scene ii

GENEST (*alone, walking and reading his
 role, speaks as if pacing about, while he puts the finishing touches on his costume*)²⁴

335 Cease your deliberating, Adrian—now go
 336 And with ardour those exalted combatants follow;

24 An actor would normally have had his own part written out, not the entire script. Ll. 335-44 begin the actual performance at II.vii.477-86.

337 If glory pleases you, here is a fine occasion:
 338 Heaven calls you to combat as its champion.
 339 Torture, sword and flame they've prepared, you may be
 sure:
 340 Show a constant courage, their torments to endure;
 341 Let cowards' hearts shed shameful tears amid such
 harms:
 342 Hold out your hands to tyrants, and lay down your arms.
 343 Give the sword your throat; as your blood flows, brave
 the sight,
 344 And meet death unshaken, in your rank and upright.²⁵
 (*He repeats the last four verses.*)
 345 Let cowards' hearts shed shameful tears amid such
 harms:
 346 Hold out your hands to tyrants, and lay down your arms.
 347 Give the sword your throat; as your blood flows, brave
 the sight,
 348 And meet death unshaken, in your rank and upright.

Scene iii

Marcèle (*as she finishes dressing for her role*), Genest

MARCÈLE

349 Gods! What hope have we of putting a play on here?
 350 With this pestering throng how can my head stay clear?
 351 How many, to hear them, do I consign to languish?²⁶
 352 By how many assaults their senses do I vanquish?
 353 My voice would render forest and rock-face sensible;
 354 My most artless looks are acts of murder visible;
 355 I trample on as many hearts as steps I take;
 356 The troupe, if it lost me, all appeal would forsake.
 357 All in all, I'm right to be vain, if they say true:

25 I.e., like a soldier, in keeping with Adrian's worldly identity.

26 Ll. 351-57 are tellingly reminiscent of the caricatured vanity of the character Hespérie in *Les Visionnaires* [The Visionaries], the extremely popular satirical comedy (1637) by Jean Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin. Hespérie lives within an absurd delusion of being adored by all men. See Desmarets de Saint-Sorlin, trans. Hillman, I.vi *et passim*.

384 A throat, joyfully to Your holy yoke submissive.

GENEST

385 Even if the whole court knows—which you have
astounded—

386 That the esteem you enjoy is solidly grounded,
387 This performance takes me aback, and may procure
388 Fame in the theatre which will undying endure.

MARCÈLE

389 You have greater faith in me than I myself do.³⁰

GENEST

390 The court will be coming soon. Let the lights be seen to.
(*Exit Marcèle.*³¹)

Scene iv

GENEST (*alone, repeating his role and walking about*)

391 Your yielding, Adrian, would be a shameful wrong;³²
392 If your God wants your death, then you have lived too
long.

393 I have seen, Heaven—as the many souls proclaim
394 That I presumed to send to You, whether by flame,
395 In the bellies of bulls or on a red-hot griddle—
396 The condemned burst into song, the torturers tremble.

(*He repeats the last four verses.*)

397 I have seen, Heaven—as the many souls proclaim
398 That I presumed to send to You, whether by flame,
399 In the bellies of bulls or on a red-hot griddle—
400 The condemned burst into song, the torturers tremble.

(*And then, after day-dreaming a moment,
and no longer consulting his role, he continues.*)

30 L. 389: orig. “Vous m'en croyez bien plus, que je ne m'en présume”. The language of faith/belief is significant.

31 Pasquier, ed., n. 49, points out that the form of the stage direction, “Elle rentre”, preserves the older concept of a withdrawal into the wings (“coulisses”) rather than from the theatrical space.

32 Ll. 391-400 look forward to the performance at II.vii.493-98.

401 You gods, against me come to your defence—and mine.
 402 In fact, as in name, to a new self I incline.
 403 I less feign to be, than I become, Adrian,
 404 And take on with his name the feelings of a Christian.
 405 I have found that, with long studying of a part,
 406 We make into custom our self-transforming art,
 407 But here it seems truths of unfeigned veracity
 408 Surpass both custom and our art's capacity,
 409 And that Christ proposes to me glory eternal,
 410 Against which my defence is vain and criminal.
 411 Your names of gods and immortals I now distrust;
 412 The rites one accords your altars give me disgust;
 413 My spirit secretly against your laws rebels,
 414 Conceiving a contempt that all its ardour quells;
 415 And like someone profane but at last sanctified,
 416 Seems to declare itself for a man crucified.
 417 But where has my thought strayed, and by what privilege,
 418 And most insensibly, slipped into sacrilege?
 419 Of the gods' power do I forget the full sum?
 420 The aim is to imitate, and not to become.

(The sky opens,³³ with flames, and a voice is heard, saying:)

421 Your character, Genest, pursue:
 422 You will not imitate in vain.
 423 Just a little courage and salvation awaits you.
 424 God's helping hand will you sustain.

GENEST (*astounded, continuing*)

425 What do I hear, just Heaven? By what strange effect,
 426 To touch me in the heart, my ears do You affect?
 427 You gentle sacred breath, that come now to fire me—
 428 Spirit holy, divine, who come to inspire me,³⁴

33 As Pasquier, ed., points out (n. 59), the capital in the original stage direction (“Ciel”) calls attention to the double reference to the scenography and its spiritual significance. More broadly, by (exceptionally) not providing any further indication of the staging of the play-within-the-play at this point, the printed text supports the suggestion of an actual epiphany.

34 L. 428: orig. “Esprit Saint et Divin, qui me viens animer”; the language echoes the biblical account

429 And who, desiring me, my courage erect,
 430 Labour to bring me salvation: Your work perfect;
 431 Guide my doubtful steps towards the heavenly prize
 432 And, so that they may be opened, unseal my eyes.³⁵
 433 But oh, what vain belief and frivolous invention
 434 To suppose that voice from Heaven for my attention!
 435 Someone who perceived me wavering in my choice
 436 Saw fit to amuse himself by feigning that voice,
 437 Which ignites in me such a lively conflagration
 438 That to the depth of my soul it makes penetration.
 439 Come now, you gods, come, and against Christ take your
 part—
 440 You who are almost all gone from my rebel heart.
 441 And you, O Christ, against the gods take a strong stance,
 442 Since this heart against your laws still makes some
 resistance.
 443 Amid these surging waves, which toss my spirits still,
 444 Finish—both of you—your wars, capture me who will:
 445 Give me the peace of which this trouble me deprives.

Scene v

Decorator (*coming to light the candles*), Genest

DECORATOR

446 Make haste now—it's high time, for the whole court
 arrives.

GENEST

447 Right. From a glorious role you've caused my distracting,
 448 Which before the Court of the Heavens I was acting,
 449 And whose action is of great consequence to me,
 450 And the subject itself no less than heavenly.
 451 Let's prepare the musicians—have them take their place.

of creation.

35 “[U]nseal my eyes”: orig. “desille-moi les yeux”. The common metaphor derives from the practice of sewing shut the eyes of falcons for training purposes.

DECORATOR (*exiting, having lit the candles*)

452 He was rehearsing his role, to lend it new grace.³⁶

Scene vi

Diocletian, Maximian, Valérie, Camille, Plutianus, Soldiers, Guards

VALÉRIE

453 On me, at any rate, tragedy has most hold:
454 Its action is loftier, its subject more bold,
455 And the thoughts, stately and replete with majesty,
456 Confer on it more weight and more authority.

MAXIMIAN

457 It takes the prize finally by offering models
458 Of monarchs as ornaments, heroes as examples
459 Of measure and regulation in their affections,
460 Both by the events it stages and by its actions.³⁷

PLUTIANUS

461 The theatre today—proud in its edification,
462 Admirable for its art, rich in decoration—
463 Promises similar distinction for the content.

MAXIMIAN

464 The effects are splendid, if given proper treatment.
465 Here you'll see a man of mine show rank insolence,
466 Scorning his share of grace in my beneficence—
467 Scorning his own life, scorning our divinities,
468 Defying of earth and heaven the potencies,
469 And causing my love to give way to such sheer hate

36 “[T]o lend it new grace”: orig. “et s’y veut surpasser” (lit. “and seeks to surpass himself in it”). By evoking “grace” (used with a double meaning throughout the text), the translation aims at conveying the spiritual overtones.

37 The rhyme “affections”/“actions” (identical words in French) is in the original. Pasquier, ed., n. 60, points out that the notion of tragedy as a source of moral *exempla* for princes was old-fashioned in the 1640s. It is also ironic coming from Maximian, especially given the portrait of himself he is about to be shown.

470 That, far from viewing the scene in a troubled state,
 471 With a spirit tranquil and satisfied I'll see
 472 The woeful effects of zealous obstinacy
 473 And have that traitor from his tomb to die again—
 474 If not himself, at least the image they will feign.³⁸

DIOCLETIAN

475 Genest will have left nothing out in his rehearsing.
 476 Let us merely listen, and for now cease conversing.

(A voice sings, accompanied by a lute.³⁹)

(THE PLAY BEGINS.)

Scene vii

Genest (*alone on the raised theatre*⁴⁰), Diocletian, Maximian, Valérie, Camille,
 Plutianus, Guards (*seated*), Soldiers

GENEST (*under the name of Adrian*)

477 Cease your deliberating, Adrian—now go⁴¹
 478 And with ardour those exalted combatants follow;
 479 If glory pleases you, here is a fine occasion:
 480 Heaven calls you to combat as its champion.
 481 Torture, sword and flame they've prepared, you may be
 sure:
 482 Show a constant courage, their torments to endure;
 483 Let cowards' hearts shed shameful tears amid such
 harms:
 484 Hold out your hands to tyrants, and lay down your arms.
 485 Give the sword your throat; as your blood flows, brave
 the sight,

38 The symbolic punishment of criminals in effigy was common in early modern France.

39 On the possible implications of this stage direction for contemporary performance practice, particularly when companies entertained in great houses, see Pasquier, ed., n. 63.

40 This confirms that a small theatre was constructed within the theatre for the purpose of the performance; see Pasquier, ed., n. 65.

41 Ll. 477-86 are repeated from the earlier "rehearsal scene" (II.ii.335-44).

486 And meet death unshaken, in your rank and upright.
 487 The favour of Caesar, which a whole people crave,
 488 Can last at the most until he is in his grave;
 489 To that of your God, no more than to Time's extent,
 490 Never shall bounds be set by any accident.
 491 Already this tyrant's deeply offended power,
 492 If your zeal persists, has decreed your final hour.
 493 Your yielding, Adrian, would be a shameful wrong;⁴²
 494 If your God wants your death, then you have lived too
 long.
 495 I have seen, Heaven—as the many souls proclaim
 496 That I presumed to send to You, whether by flame,
 497 In the bellies of bulls or on a red-hot griddle—
 498 The condemned burst into song, the torturers tremble.
 499 I have seen children who their confident throats dared
 500 Hold out to the bloody death that they saw prepared
 501 And fall to a glorious death beneath the blow—
 502 Those fruits ripe for Heaven, though barely formed below.
 503 I have seen some whom the time allotted by Nature
 504 Was on the verge of thrusting in the sepulchre
 505 Once upon the scaffold, hasten their final pace
 506 And with the courage of youth look Death in the face;
 507 Countless beauties I've seen in the flower of age,
 508 To whom everyone—even tyrants—rendered homage,
 509 Regard with pleasure all mangled and mutilated
 510 Their precious members, once by all eyes venerated.
 511 This you have seen: would you fear without shame
 the brunt
 512 Of what both sexes brave and all ages confront?
 513 Might such vigorous strength be at human command?
 514 No, no, that virtue,⁴³ Lord, comes straight from your
 own hand,
 515 Drawn by the soul from its originating place,
 516 And as the outcome shows, the source is godly grace.
 517 It is from Heaven I receive that noble vigour

42 Ll. 493-98 repeat the rehearsal at II.iv.391-400.

43 "[V]irtue": orig. "vertu". As often in both early modern French and English, the word combines moral meaning with its etymological sense of "manhood", "strength".

518 Which makes me despise the torments with all their
 rigour—
 519 Which lends me a force that human powers disdains
 520 And makes my very blood displeas'd within my veins,
 521 Burning as it is to water that precious tree
 522 Where hangs for us the fruit Heaven prizes most dearly.
 523 I can hardly conceive how deeply I'm transformed:
 524 I feel different from myself, with new strength inform'd;
 525 I know no fear, and fear no terror at the sight
 526 Of Death's face looming through the horror of black
 night.
 527 Only one thing I lose, only my Natalie,
 528 Whom a sacred yoke links in happiness with me,
 529 And who knows nothing of this zeal, which is my secret,
 530 Amid such fervour brings some feeling of regret;
 531 But if that thought can touch me, my courage is weak:
 532 I am so close to death, and here of love I speak!

Scene viii

Flavius (*the tribune, represented by the actor Sergestus*), Adrian,⁴⁴ two Guards

FLAVIUS [*entering*]

533 I believe, dear Adrian, that it must be clear
 534 For what pressing reason I direct my steps here.
 535 All the court is troubled—with the truth unacquainted
 536 Regarding a rumour by which your name is tainted
 537 And to which you lend credence by your very absence.
 538 Each takes a different view, depending on his sense:
 539 Some that false gossip was spread just to mock, not harm;
 540 Others that some spell was employ'd your soul to charm;⁴⁵
 541 Others that the poison in regions so infected
 542 Has fuddled your reason and your senses affected.

⁴⁴ From this point on, the character is named in the paratext without any indication that the role is assumed by an actor. The practice is extended to the other figures in the play-within-the-play, starting with III.iv, although not consistently, and (for readers) supports the effect of a coalescence of the two dramatic levels.

⁴⁵ Cf. Desfontaines, IV.iv.1222 and n. 81.

543 But above all Caesar's own vacillating view
544 Has difficulty fixing an idea of you.

ADRIAN

545 Say, to whom do I owe the good turn⁴⁶ of informing?

FLAVIUS

546 We were in the palace, with around Caesar swarming
547 His men, who of their zeal were boasting—the whole
throng—
548 That they would die for the gods or avenge their wrong.
549 Adrian, he said, with an expression composed,
550 Adrian would suffice for all forces opposed;
551 Alone he'll prevail against rebels of this kind:
552 Thanks only to his care, I can have peace of mind.⁴⁷
553 Seeing what small result our cruelties produce,
554 Let us make trial of art, where force is of no use.
555 Their stubbornness is merely angered by these pains:
556 There now are more prisoners than irons and chains;
557 The dungeons are too narrow—they are overfilling;
558 The axes and crosses are quite weary of killing.
559 They have seen Death too much: its sight is no more
dreadful;
560 Fire, from its use against them, is now not useful.
561 Hangmen at last lack heart, with these horrid events,
562 Judges constancy, the dying their rightful torments.
563 Mildness can often prove an invincible recourse
564 With these stubborn hearts, which one embitters by
force.⁴⁸
565 At this, Titianus, bursting into the hall,

46 “[G]ood turn”: orig. “bien”. The irony is double, since the martyrdom he faces as a result is indeed a benefit.

47 The original similarly shifts between indirect and direct discourse.

48 An ironic deployment, especially given the immediate sequel, of the debate between harshness and mildness (here “douceur”) that had been a standard feature of French dramatic treatments of Roman themes. (See notably Hillman, *French Reflections*, p. 95; Elliott Forsyth, *La Tragédie française de Jodelle à Corneille (1533-1640). Le Thème de la vengeance*, Études et Essais sur la Renaissance (Paris: H. Champion, 1994); and Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), esp. pp. 105-13.

566 Cried out loud, "Ah, Caesar! This means the loss of all!"
 567 Fear, at hearing this cry, courses⁴⁹ throughout our veins;
 568 Throughout the hall, a murmur of confusion planes.
 569 "What's this?", said the Emperor, stopping short and
 troubled.
 570 "Has the sky opened up?⁵⁰ Or has the whole world trembled?
 571 What thunderbolt's been hurled that menaces my head?
 572 Does some foreign conqueror upon Rome now tread?
 573 Has some conflagration where we stand been announced?"
 574 "Adrian for Christ," he said, "the gods has renounced."

ADRIAN

575 Yes, and Caesar too, and myself—no doubt of it.
 576 And all, Lord, to Your power supreme I submit.

FLAVIUS

577 Maximian, struck furious, with blazing eye—
 578 A sure sign that deadly decrees and deeds will fly—
 579 Turns pale, stamps his foot, shudders, curses with a
 roar
 580 Like one in despair, knowing no one anymore;
 581 Shows us, by gesture and colour in living fashion,
 582 A man transported by grieving and loving passion.⁵¹
 583 "And do I hear Adrian still call his crime righteous?
 584 Caesar's—his master's—favour does he repay thus?
 585 And thus, though I wished him so well, does he mistake
 me?"

ADRIAN

586 Let him stop loving me, or as a Christian take me.

FLAVIUS

587 The gods, on whom, like us, even monarchs depend,

49 The translation follows the original in shifting into the historical present to render the narrative more vivid.

50 Maximian, of course, speaks more truly than he knows. Cf. above, II.iv.420 S.D. and n. 33.

51 Pasquier, ed., n. 80, detects a possible description of contemporary acting technique. In any case, effectively evoked is the notion of performance, and with it the larger issue of "true" and "feigned" identity.

588 Do not allow it—nor laws one cannot offend.

ADRIAN

589 It is the God I serve who causes kings to reign,
590 And who causes the earth their commands to sustain.

FLAVIUS

591 His death on a gibbet reveals his impotence.

ADRIAN

592 Speak rather of His love, and His obedience.

FLAVIUS

593 But really, on a cross!⁵²

ADRIAN

594 Rather, a dazzling tree—
Less a cross than a ladder to mount up to glory!

FLAVIUS

595 But that kind of death is the chiefest to avoid.

ADRIAN

596 But in so dying, the empire He destroyed.

FLAVIUS

597 The universe's author in a tomb to bring!

ADRIAN

598 Thus the whole universe was seen to put on mourning,
599 And the sky, affrighted, hid its every light.

FLAVIUS

600 If vain chimeras like that serve as your delight,
601 This contempt for our gods, and for your duty too,
602 In Caesar's mind will extinguish all hope for you.

52 Cited as the most disgraceful form of execution for criminals.

ADRIAN

603 Abandoned by Caesar, in Christ I find assurance:
604 He is the hope of mortals condemned to endurance.

FLAVIUS

605 He may take from you the rich goods that you possess.

ADRIAN

606 I shall mount to Heaven more lightly having less.

FLAVIUS

607 Poverty is a monster feared by man on earth.

ADRIAN

608 Christ, both man and God, had a stable for his birth.
609 I despise your worldly goods and their false caresses,
610 Things which one is possessed by, rather than possesses.

FLAVIUS

611 His piety compels—and equity's advice is—
612 To make of all the Christians equal sacrifices.

ADRIAN

613 Let him do it—he waits too long.

FLAVIUS

Only repent!

ADRIAN

614 No, Flavius, no: my blood is ripe to be spent.

FLAVIUS

615 If you stay obstinate, your destruction is certain.

ADRIAN

616 The expectation is sweet, the menace in vain.

ADRIAN

645 The grace with which Heaven opened my spirit's eyes
 646 Indeed persuaded me, but not at all surprised,
 647 And were I allowed the chance of one who repents,
 648 Far from undoing it, I'd repeat the offence.
 649 Go on: not Maximian, friendly or furious,
 650 Nor lightning painted to show your gods injurious,
 651 Nor the court nor the throne with all their potent
 charms,
 652 Nor even Natalie, whose tears lament her harms,
 653 Nor the universe to its first chaos let slide
 654 Such a solid intention could not turn aside.

FLAVIUS

655 Weigh well the effects to which my words will give
 course.

ADRIAN

656 As frivolous as those were, these will have no force.

FLAVIUS

657 If neither reason nor offered mildness moves you,
 658 My orders go further.

ADRIAN

Do as your charge behooves you.

FLAVIUS

659 It is to arrest you and your body to chain,
 660 If, as you say, both persuasions are merely vain.

[*Enter Guards.*⁵⁶]

ADRIAN (*presenting his arms to the irons,
 which the Guards attach*)

661 Do it. These precious burdens, as my spirit knows,

56 The Guards might have been on stage from the opening of the scene, but an entrance here seems more in keeping with the failure of Flavius' persuasions.

662 I receive as the first presents Heaven bestows—
 663 As the special favours and superb furnishings
 664 Of the Caesar of Caesars, and the King of Kings.
 665 And I go willingly where glory without fail
 666 Greets Jesus's soldiers, who over death prevail.
(*Exeunt omnes.*)

Scene ix

Diocletian, Maximian, Valérie

DIOCLETIAN

667 Genest has surely surpassed himself in this case!⁵⁷

MAXIMIAN

668 Nothing could he imitate with a greater grace.

VALÉRIE (*rising*)

669 In the interval we can due compliments pay

670 And see the actors.

DIOCLETIAN

Then we'd better not delay.

Act III

Scene i

Diocletian, Maximian, Valérie, Camille, Plutianus, Guards, Soldiers

VALÉRIE

671 Chaos! Disorder! How, barring a miracle,

672 Can they ever produce any pleasing spectacle?

57 The ironic double meanings are insistent in this exchange.

CAMILLE

673 It's clear that when we see among them such confusion,
674 The good order of their speeches seems sheer illusion.

MAXIMIAN

675 The artistry is marvellous, I must allow—
676 But the actor playing me is appearing now,
677 And I just saw him with Genest in conversation.
678 Let's see what grace he brings to my representation.

Scene ii

Maximian (*played by the actor Octavius*),
Genest (*in fetters*), Flavius, Guards, Soldiers

MAXIMIAN (*actor*)

679 Are these the favours, traitor, and are these the wages
680 With which your fine new master your homage engages,
681 And whom, while the gods' rights and worship it defies,
682 Christian impiety dares to place in the skies?

ADRIAN

683 The newness, my Lord, this Master of Masters gives
684 Is to be before all times, before all that lives.
685 It is He who from nothing made the universe,
686 Who caused the spreading seas the dry land to immerse,
687 Who out of the air the water-soaked regions drew,
688 Who sowed with diamonds the vaults of azure blue,
689 Who brought to birth the war among the elements,
690 And who regulated the heavens' diverse movements.
691 The earth to His power defers in silent prayer;
692 Kings are His subjects; He lends us the world to share;
693 If seas should be stormy, a calm He can confer;
694 If He rebukes the winds, they do not dare to stir;
695 If He so commands the sun, it stops in its course;
696 He is the Master of all, as He is its source;
697 All exists through Him; without Him nothing would be:
698 Of this Master, my Lord, this is the novelty.
699 Judge if without reason, my homage I accord,

700 And if without vanity I wear my reward:
 701 Yes, these very chains, Caesar, these glorious weights,
 702 Are precious gifts that every Christian's arm awaits;
 703 That dear Master had His hands so fettered before us:
 704 Thus, in the fire of His love, He forged them for us.
 705 Far from crushing us, their burden is our mainstay,
 706 And it is these links that draw us to come His way.

MAXIMIAN (*actor*)

707 Gods! With whom can we safely deal in confidence?
 708 And to whom trust for friendship without false pretence?
 709 Any of those whom Fortune to our side has brought?
 710 Any of those we have less acquired than bought?
 711 Whose hearts, beneath their submissive brows, are
 rebellious,
 712 Which we, by too much trusting, render treacherous?
 713 Oh, what cruelty the court carries as its fate,
 714 Which cannot love inviolable tolerate—
 715 Candour when unadorned, virtue unless unprized,
 716 Duty unless constrained, or faith unless disguised!
 717 What am I doing, poor man, in these parts removed,
 718 Where, lieutenant of those gods with just anger moved,
 719 I cause, with my vengeful arm, fierce tempests to crack
 720 And of Christians' impious heads pursue the track?
 721 Yet while I am so occupied, with futile care,
 722 I see here at home arise what I chase elsewhere:
 723 In my court takes root what I aim to extirpate;
 724 I nurture nearby what there I exterminate.
 725 Thus our great fortune, though dazzling in brilliant
 state,
 726 Cannot, despite its best efforts, purchase an ingrate.

ADRIAN

727 To believe in one God—to that freedom, my Lord,
 728 Does your judgement so black a taint of crime accord?
 729 If worthy these excesses that your temper seize,
 730 Then can those tolerate the slightest liberties?
 731 If till today you believed my life without faults,
 732 Invulnerable even to envy's assaults,

761 Those whose flesh we've seen, on your orders, mutilated,
 762 By fire devoured, by the sword penetrated,
 763 Unless you void the sentence your conduct imposes—
 764 Their cruellest torments will seem a bed of roses.⁵⁸

ADRIAN

765 We hope that our perished bodies, elsewhere directed,
 766 The God whom we serve will restore to us perfected.

MAXIMIAN (*actor*)

767 Traitor! Never will sleep cause me to spare my pains
 768 Until your treacherous blood, drawn out of your veins,
 769 And your sacrilegious heart, to make the crows pleased,
 770 The anger of our gods have finally appeased.

ADRIAN

771 The death I shall die will move envy at the sight,
 772 When for the Author of Life I relinquish light.

MAXIMIAN (*actor*)

773 Go now, and in a dungeon, weigh him down with chains;
 774 Assemble all the torments that his sect sustains
 775 And apply all you wish against this faithless one.

ADRIAN

776 Say one converted.

MAXIMIAN (*actor*)

 Let your zealous worst be done.
 777 Invent, imagine things: the most industrious
 778 In making him suffer will be counted most pious.
 779 I will use my justice where favour is in vain:
 780 He who flies my favour will feel my hate in pain.

58 L. 764: orig. "Les plus cruels tourments n'auront été que Roses"; the translation supplies the common English equivalent.

Scene v

Natalie, Flavius, Adrian, Jailer, Guards

NATALIE

797 Is it my husband? Oh, then, the news is too true!

FLAVIUS

798 The final hope we have depends wholly on you:
799 Restore him to you, Caesar, himself—for our sake.

NATALIE

800 If an extreme desire is all it would take . . .

FLAVIUS

801 I'll make an occasion to hope for such amendment.
802 See him there.*(Flavius exits with the Guards; the Jailer steps back.)*

ADRIAN

Silence, woman, and listen a moment.

803 By the custom of nations and the laws of Rome,
804 The pleasures, the pains, the possessions and the house,
805 All hope, all profit, the sum of human affairs
806 Should be in common when a common couch is shared.
807 But that equally, like their life and like their Fortune,
808 Their beliefs must always be precisely in tune—
809 To stretch as far as the gods their community—
810 No law imposes on them that necessity.
811 Supposing, however, that it did so provide,
812 It seems the husband, with more power on his side,
813 Would have more right, at least according to appearance,
814 To dictate to what gods his household gave adherence.
815 What you see here, this body loaded down with chains,
816 Neither to laws nor to human reasons pertains,
817 But to the mere fact that the Christian God I knew
818 And bade to your altars an eternal adieu.⁵⁹

59 “[A]dieu”: so in the original. Adrian might be using the formula with bitter irony here, with telling

NATALIE (*embracing him*)

851 O sovereign marvels of a God omnipotent!
 852 Let part of your chains, dear husband, to me be lent!
 853 And if our rites of Hymen and chaste amity
 854 Do not gain the title of your half-self for me,
 855 Allow this alliance finally to be sealed,
 856 And may Christ with these chains today our union
 yield!
 857 Believe I will count them bonds not to be untied,
 858 Which frustrate me because to you alone applied.

ADRIAN

859 O Heaven, Natalie! Ah, pure and sacred flame!
 860 My feelings I revive, and call my wife by name;⁶¹
 861 Since on the way to Heaven my steps you will trace,
 862 Be mine, my dear spouse, and beyond death we'll embrace.
 863 My wishes join your faith! But give my doubt relief:
 864 Do I not flatter myself with a vain belief?
 865 What is the source of this fair flame that warms your
 breast?
 866 When did you conceive the grand project you express?
 867 By what happy means?

NATALIE

I will see you satisfied.

868 It was inspired almost at my mother's side;
 869 And Heaven then almost simultaneously
 870 The light of day and that of faith poured down on me.
 871 It caused that with the mother's milk that was my meal
 872 I sucked in the belief of Christians and their zeal.
 873 And that zeal with me grew until that happy day
 874 When my eyes, without intent, drew your love my way;
 875 You know, if you recall, with what strong opposition
 876 My mother combatted your amorous petition—
 877 Not that glory wanted in a match so august,

61 L. 860: orig. "Je rallume mes feux, et reconnais ma femme". The translation points up the contrast with l. 854 above.

878 But the worship of your gods filled her with disgust;
 879 Caesar's supreme authority, at all events,
 880 Obtained her sad acceptance and obedience.
 881 Only her weeping was a sign of her distress—
 882 For what, other than his tears, does a slave possess?
 883 At last the day came when I was to you consigned.
 884 "Go, girl," she said apart, "condemned by fate unkind,
 885 Since Caesar so wishes, but above all preserve
 886 Your allegiance to that God whose law we observe:
 887 To Him alone make your vows, to Him alone pray;
 888 Rather than His radiance, cede the light of day,
 889 And the gods of your spouse with as much loathing treat
 890 As his chaste kisses you are certain to find sweet."
 891 I wept in answer, for my voice had been effaced,
 892 And by your people in your chariot was placed,
 893 But so occupied was my mind by that impression
 894 That I scarcely had eyes to take note of your passion,⁶²
 895 And I needed time to master my free condition
 896 To where at last your merit brought it to submission.
 897 The eye that into hearts and heavens clearly sees
 898 Knows how intensely since then your gods me displease;
 899 And since our Hymen, never have I paid the price
 900 (You'll agree) of any impious sacrifice:
 901 Never upon their altars has my incense smoked,
 902 And when I have seen you there, to furor provoked,
 903 Offer so many victims in their innocence,
 904 I've wished a hundred times to die for your offence,
 905 And a hundred times to Heaven, which my pains knew,
 906 Sent upward, along with my tears, my prayers for you.

ADRIAN

907 My dear Natalie, at last I can testify
 908 That I owe my salvation to our sacred tie.
 909 Permit me, however, to complain in my turn:
 910 Since you saw with what tender love for you I burn,
 911 Could you respond to that while keeping still concealed
 912 The heavenly flame that God had to you revealed?

62 Ll. 893-94: "impression" and "passion" (identical in French) are rhymed in the original.

946 Having once accomplished the husband's injury,
 947 Your people will perform for me this kindness yet—
 948 Prevent Caesar from taking you from me in secret,
 949 Not revealing the hour or letting me know;
 950 Very soon after that my steps your own will follow;
 951 Very soon . . .

ADRIAN

Spare them that unnecessary pain;
 952 Leave that care to me; their vigilance would be vain.
 953 I will not depart from that funereal place
 954 Without your final adieu and final embrace.
 955 Let your solicitude upon my care repose.

Scene vi

Flavius, Guards, Adrian, Natalie

FLAVIUS

956 In crucial affairs, he who fears impatient grows.
 957 So then, what will the outcome be? Your earnest tries
 958 With your blinded husband—have they opened his eyes?

NATALIE

959 To all human respects and feelings he is closed;
 960 When I opened my mouth, any speech he foreclosed,
 961 And, detesting the gods, in discussion prolonged
 962 Sought to show me that worship to his own belonged.
 963 In short, do not pursue an aim impossible,
 964 And make sure that, against a heart inaccessible
 965 You do not wound yourselves in striving him to
 save,
 966 And, wishing to cure an evil, catch one as grave.
 967 Do not seek his welfare, and your own fail to cherish;
 968 Allow, rather, allow that stubborn man to perish.
 969 Report to Caesar our expense of wasted breath,
 970 And if the law of the gods imposes his death,
 971 Let the threat be realised without delaying more:

972 That is the last and only favour⁶³ I implore.
 973 With hope for a milder outcome ungratified,
 974 At least my sense of duty done is satisfied.⁶⁴

FLAVIUS

975 Oh, virtue unparalleled, above all on earth!
 976 Oh, of a worthy wife, husband that lacks all worth!
 977 What pity can induce us succour to supply,
 978 If, without pitying himself, he seeks to die?

NATALIE

979 Come now, hold out no hope that either force or fear
 980 May prevail, when I've shed many a futile tear.
 981 I know his heart too well, know its solidity,
 982 Incapable of fear and of frivolity;
 983 It's with regret that against him I add my voice,
 984 But the interest of Heaven leaves me no choice.
 985 One last attempt, cruel man, in the name of our love:
 986 In the Holy, Sacred Name of the Court above,
 987 Receive from your spouse this counsel for you auspicious—
 988 Abjure your error, and render Heaven propitious.
 989 Think, and keep well in mind, that every present torment,
 990 Compared to future ones, is gentle, at least lenient;
 991 See what damage this death does to your reputation!
 992 Weigh what you're leaving, and why, and your destination!

ADRIAN

993 For your part, restrain your zeal, which I know quite well.⁶⁵
 994 Think that you still have here a certain time to dwell,

63 “[F]avour”: orig. “grâce”, which in the context also carries the legal sense of “pardon”; she thereby reinforces her apparent endorsement of Adrian’s sentence.

64 Pasquier, ed., n. 110, points out that Natalie’s pretense of cold disdain is borrowed from Cellot (II.vi). In taking over this detail, Rotrou adds depth and complexity to the metadramatic dimension. Natalie’s role in the play-within-the-play calls for Marcèle to feign a contempt for Adrian’s Christianity which ironically corresponds to her true sentiments, as these are subsequently expressed regarding Genest’s conversion. Moreover, her assumed pagan piety in ll. 984-90 below is expressed in terms that resonate, for Adrian’s benefit, with Christian belief (hence the translation’s use of capitals for her spiritual language).

65 The irony of Adrian’s lines is strong, especially given the echo of Natalie’s declaration of Christian “zeal” (orig. “zèle”) above in ll. 872-73.

995 And waiting at that longed-for port you will find me.
 996 [*to Flavius*] Come now, execute that felicitous decree,
 997 Which deems me, not for death, but for salvation fit.

FLAVIUS (*delivering him to the Jailer and exiting*)

998 You are yourself to blame for not avoiding it.

Scene vii

Natalie (*alone*)⁶⁶

999 Now, Heaven, I dare, with a regard firm and sure,
 1000 Contemplate the diamonds studding Your vault of azure,
 1001 And those false gods deny that never trod upon
 1002 That starry palace-dwelling with its rolling motion.
 1003 For to Your power, Lord, my husband renders homage;
 1004 Your faith he professes, and his chains are his pledge.
 1005 The gods' fearful scourge, who left no Christians alone—
 1006 That lion who swilled the sacred blood of Your own,
 1007 Who deemed so many unjust deaths legitimate—
 1008 No longer their agent, chooses a victim's fate,
 1009 And now, patient lamb, to Your enemies will give
 1010 A throat, joyfully to Your holy yoke submissive.
 1011 Let us, following his death, break our shameful silence,
 1012 Out of this cowardly respect force violence,
 1013 And say to tyrants, with a voice constant and firm,
 1014 What we to God in thought a hundred times affirm;
 1015 Give air to that fair blaze by which our soul is pressed.
 1016 A thousand before me have brave ardour expressed,
 1017 Triumphs over infinite obstacles have won:⁶⁷
 1018 Cecilia's slicing blades, Prisca's teeth of iron,
 1019 Faustina's boiling lead, Dymphna despite lineage,
 1020 Agatha despite her sex, Agnes her young age,
 1021 Tecla her suitor—all women who death have faced.

66 Ll. 999-1010 are those rehearsed by Marcèle at II.iii.373-84. On the religious allusions, which now take on their full significance, see above, n. 29.

67 On the martyrs enumerated below, see Pasquier, ed., nn. 114-119. The legend of Saint Agnes was in circulation in recent dramatic form, thanks to the tragedy of Pierre Troterel; see Troterel, *Pièces de dévotion (Hagiographic Plays)*, ed. Pasquier, trans. Hillman.

Scene ii

Adrian (*represented by Genest*), Flavius (*represented by Sergestus*), Guards, Diocletian,
Maximian, Valéria, Camille, Plutianus, additional Guards

FLAVIUS

1035 If heaven, Adrian, does not soon favour show,
1036 You'll surely run to the cliff-edge and plunge below.
1037 I have seen, when rapid repentance he awaited,
1038 The wrath of Caesar, though enraged, be palliated,
1039 But when he learned of all our prayers and efforts made,
1040 The tears and hopes of your wife, uselessly displayed,
1041 (His eye with anger burning and face turning pale),
1042 "Bring him," he said (with an accent to make one quail),
1043 "Bring out that traitor, in whom my notable kindness
1044 Today encounters most vicious cowardly blindness,
1045 And let the ingrate know to what extremity
1046 May proceed the furor of outraged monarchy."
1047 Passing from this discourse—it must be said—to rage,
1048 He invents, gives orders, turns all to serve his umbrage,
1049 And if the repentance of your benighted error
1050 Does not avert the effect, extinguish his furor . . .⁷⁰

ADRIAN

1051 Let all effort, all art, the whole of human skill
1052 Unite to destroy me, conspire ways to kill.
1053 He whose sole word created every element,
1054 Imparting to each one its action, weight and movement,
1055 And lending His sanction to that famous creation,
1056 Retains the power to suspend its application.
1057 Fire cannot burn, nor is air able to stir;
1058 Water cannot flow, but at the will of His power.
1059 Iron, the solid blood that the veins of earth store,
1060 And fatal instrument of the furors of war,

tian's praise is evident.

70 The original text places a full stop at the end of the line, leaving the sentence incomplete, but it is clear that Adrian defiantly interrupts.

1061 Weakens, at His command, and cannot penetrate
 1062 Where His power prevents its entry in that state.
 1063 If Caesar is cruel to me, he favours my case:
 1064 I give him my support; in him my hope I place;
 1065 He proves every day that a tyrant's raging hate,
 1066 Where it believes it conquers, conquerors creates.

FLAVIUS

1067 Often in such ardours, the death which one supposes
 1068 Seems a mere amusement, a breath, a bed of roses;⁷¹
 1069 But when that fearful spectre, by a cruel brow spanned,
 1070 With its pincers, fires and axes in its hand,
 1071 Starts to appear to us and makes its coming known,
 1072 Then not to be afraid, one would have to be stone,
 1073 And any repentance of ours, on that occasion,
 1074 If not merely vain, will lack all force of persuasion.

ADRIAN

1075 Your hatred of Christians a long time I have served
 1076 And in punishing them their constancy observed.
 1077 But while Caesar has still not pronounced the command,
 1078 At whose proclamation I will be close at hand,
 1079 Allow me with adieu the promise to fulfil
 1080 Made to my dear half-self, whom I leave by God's will,
 1081 So that, as the last fruit of our chaste love, I may
 1082 Take leave of her, as I do of the light of day.

FLAVIUS

1083 Come. Piety compels respect for your desire,
 1084 But this delay is bound to aggravate his ire.

ADRIAN

1085 The time will not be long. Walk a little ahead.

FLAVIUS

1086 Walk, then. [*to the Guard*] The burning zeal he harbours
 to be dead

71 “[A] bed of roses”: orig. “une rose”; cf. above, III.ii.764.

1087 Is, for his person, a sufficiently sure guard.

GUARD

1088 Still, to believe a prisoner puts him at hazard.

ADRIAN

1089 My ardour and my faith should make you confident.

1090 Go just a pace ahead; I only want a moment.

Scene iii

Adrian (as he continues alone)

1091 My dearest Natalie, with what a joyful thrill
 1092 Will you now see my visit my promise fulfil!
 1093 Sacred kisses, embraces galore, I surmise,
 1094 From the secret motions of your heart will arise!
 1095 Be guided by my ardour, counselled by my flame,
 1096 March boldly on the path where once a woman came—
 1097 That sex which closed Heaven, then access did repair:⁷²
 1098 Precious are the fruits of virtue everywhere.
 1099 I cannot wish a guide of more fidelity.
 1100 I approach the door; now it opens—it is she!

Scene iv

Natalie, Adrian

ADRIAN (*seeking to embrace her*)

1101 At last, dear half-myself . . .

NATALIE (*going back and shutting the door on him*)

What? Alone, without chains?⁷³

1102 Is this the great martyr, vanquisher of hell-pains,
 1103 Whose famed courage, and strength stretched to infinity,

72 An allusion to the traditional typological relationship between Eve, responsible for the Fall of mankind, and Mary, the instrument of redemption.

73 The chains have already been established, for both of them, as key emblems of the spiritual freedom to be realised through martyrdom; see above, notably, III.ii.701, III.v.856,924, III.vii.1004.

1104 Have been braving his persecutors' tyranny?

ADRIAN

1105 You suspect, my dear soul . . . ?

NATALIE

 This cowardly display!

1106 Go, traitor—never more address me in that way!

1107 Of the God you betray I share the injury.

1108 Me, be a pagan's soul, tainted by perjury!

1109 Me, be the soul of a Christian turning his back

1110 On his Law, who all of soul, heart and faith can lack!

ADRIAN

1111 Deign to hear me speak one word!

NATALIE

 No coward I'll hear,

1112 Who at the first step teeters and lets go from fear,

1113 Whose manhood⁷⁴ at mere petty menaces takes fright,

1114 Who lays down his arms without putting up a fight,

1115 And who, having made us think him a solid rock,

1116 When the assault is sounded, yields before the shock.

1117 Go, foresworn, to the tyrants, to whom you've
 surrendered:

1118 Ask, like a coward, that your price to you be rendered;

1119 Let Rome's treasury to your hands spill out its worth:

1120 Denied the goods of Heaven, dream of those on earth.

1121 But among its posts of honour, shimmering lures,

1122 Count me as property that is no longer yours.

ADRIAN

1123 I beg for just one word; don't let my prayer fail.

NATALIE

1124 Ah, would that I had been the keeper of your jail!

1125 I would have died before I'd have let you go free.

74 "[M]anhood": orig. "vertu"; the sense of virility is clearly dominant here.

1126 Traitor, what do you hope from conduct so cowardly?
 1127 The court will mock; your tyrant, whatever he says,
 1128 Will not value the perfidy your heart displays.
 1129 The martyrs, churning in the grip of holy furor,
 1130 Will be seen to blush with shame and tremble with horror;
 1131 Against you in Heaven Christ His justice is arming;
 1132 Hell's ministers prepare their torment for your harming—
 1133 And now you, by the earth and the Heavens abandoned,
 1134 Come here to destroy me with you—and to be pardoned!
 (*She exits furiously, speaking as she goes.*)
 1135 What shall I do, O Lord? How can I tolerate
 1136 Your glory's enemy and object of Your hate?
 1137 Can I live with this dislocation in my life—
 1138 From a martyr's sister to an apostate's wife,
 1139 A foe of God, a coward, a man all will shun?

ADRIAN

1140 I'll disabuse you. Where, my dear soul, do you run?

NATALIE

1141 To ravish in your prison, playing a man's part,⁷⁵
 1142 The palm today you forfeit by your lack of heart—
 1143 There join the martyrs, and by holy hardihood
 1144 Combat with them in the rank where you should have stood;
 1145 There pluck the laurels God would give you for a crown
 1146 And in Heaven assume the place for you marked down.

ADRIAN

1147 What distrust causes you to diminish my glory?
 1148 God still within my heart maintains His victory.
 1149 He has received my faith, which nothing can dismay,
 1150 And I run to my death, far from fleeing away;
 1151 Alone, unchained, but armed with zeal that conquers all,
 1152 I go to the combat at the Emperor's call;
 1153 My guards go on ahead, and all I'm here to do
 1154 Is to fulfil my promise and bid you adieu.

75 “[P]laying a man's part”: orig. “d'une mâle vigueur”. In the theatrical context, the acting metaphor enters naturally into the translation.

1188 In her children a quite immoderate desire,
 1189 Which often makes them, at the risk of perishing,
 1190 Invest its idle lures with futile cherishing.
 1191 There what an age produces lasts a moment's span;
 1192 Lift your eyes higher, Adrian—appear a man;
 1193 Combat, suffer, and by a Christian death you gain
 1194 Eternity of good for a moment of pain.

ADRIAN

1195 Adieu. I run, I fly to pleasures that await;
 1196 Fulfilment comes too slow, the hour seems too late.
 1197 My only source, O noble sister, of frustration,
 1198 And which sours the sweetness of anticipation,
 1199 Is that the law against the God that I profess
 1200 Deprives you by my death of what you would possess,
 1201 And robs your noble blood, to profit public finance,
 1202 Of its rank's privilege, its glory's sustenance.

NATALIE

1203 What? Does the flight you take through celestial airs
 1204 Allow you to look downward on human affairs?
 1205 Can you, the world put off, departure so close seeing,
 1206 Still speak not as a martyr but a human being?
 1207 Do not be worried by an interest so trivial:
 1208 Cling to Heaven, cling to God, with strength invincible.
 1209 Keep your glory for me: how proud then I will feel
 1210 Of an inestimable treasure none can steal.
 1211 A woman can count endless riches on her shelf
 1212 Who has a husband who possesses God himself.
 1213 [*spying Anthimus*] Dear Anthimus, who with your instruction divine
 1214 Assist Christians, approach and join your prayers to
 mine.

Scene v

Anthimus, Adrian, Natalie

ANTHIMUS

1215 A rumour running through the town has struck my
 ears,

1216 By which the marvel of your conversion appears,
 1217 And the noble contempt you display for your life
 1218 Enlists me, not for your rescue, but in your strife.
 1219 I know to what point Caesar is a feeble foe;
 1220 What a Christian can suffer and perform, I know;
 1221 And I know that never did paltry fear of dying
 1222 Keep a heart touched by Christ its onward course from
 plying.
 1223 Go, then, fortunate friend, go and your head submit,
 1224 Less to the sure blow than the bays prepared for it;
 1225 Go, your sacrosanct words to their fruition bring;
 1226 Go fulfil the wishes Heaven's choirs all sing.
 1227 And you, blest legions of angels, heavenly host,
 1228 Who of the thrice-holy Name endless praises boast,
 1229 Let not your sacred concerts interruption find,
 1230 But hold the Heavens open, when he is struck blind.

ADRIAN

1231 My wishes will achieve their blissful paroxysm
 1232 If, with sin-cleansing water of holy baptism,
 1233 To enter those blessed ranks you give me the right
 1234 Of all those this banner had led into the fight.
 1235 Confirm, then, dear Athimus, with the holy water
 1236 By which the cross appears in nearly every quarter,
 1237 In this frail heart that project of glorious size:
 1238 To do battle with the earth and conquer the skies.

ANTHIMUS

1239 Of that saving water, Adrian, you've no need:
 1240 Your blood will impart that quality when you bleed.
 1241 Only let your invincible faith be descried,
 1242 And as you fight for God, He will fight at your side.

ADRIAN (*looking at the sky and lost in thought
 for a little while before finally speaking*)

1243 Ah, Lentulus! The zeal in which my soul is caught
 1244 Compels me to raise the mask and reveal my thought.
 1245 The God I hated makes me with love for Him burn:
 1246 Adrian has spoken; Genest speaks in his turn!

1247 Adrian breathes no more, for Genest's have become
 1248 The grace of baptism, honour of martyrdom.
 1249 But Christ would hardly entrust to your profane hands
 1250 That mysterious seal with which His saints He brands.
 (*Looking at the sky, from which some flames are cast down.*)
 1251 A heavenly minister bearing sacred dew
 1252 To cleanse me of sins is cleaving the vault of blue;
 1253 His brilliance surrounds me, and all around the air
 1254 Resounds with harmony and glistens as I stare.
 1255 Descend, heavenly actor; you wait, you summon me;
 1256 Wait! My fiery zeal will put wings upon me.
 1257 From the God who sent you, share blessings round about!
 (*He climbs two or three steps, then exits behind the tapestry.*)

MARCÈLE (*who was representing Natalie*)
 1258 Those verses there were added; my cue was left out.

LENTULUS (*who was playing Anthimus*)
 1259 He made them up, and failing to follow the story,
 1260 By exiting covers his lapse in memory.

DIOCLETIAN

1261 See with what skilfulness Genest today invents
 1262 A passage from someone's looks to his sentiments.

VALÉRIE

1263 To fool the hearer, the actor himself deceive:
 1264 Surely no greater exploit could his art achieve.

Scene vi

Flavius, Guards, Marcèle, Lentulus, Diocletian, Maximian,
 Valérie, Camille, Plutianus

FLAVIUS

1265 This moment lasts too long—let's find him right away.
 1266 Caesar will have it in for us for this delay.
 1267 I know his violence, am fearful of his hate.

A SOLDIER

1268 Those ordered to their death are likely to be late.

MARCÈLE

1269 This man—one at the very top of his profession—
1270 Genest, whom now you're looking for, has spoiled this
 session
1271 And, troubled at being seen, has left us alone.

FLAVIUS (*who is Sergestus*)

1272 The most gifted into such states are sometimes thrown.
1273 Extreme ardour to succeed must be his excuse.

CAMILLE (*to Valérie*)

1274 How his art, Madam, has exposed them to abuse.

Scene vii

Genest, Sergestus, Lentulus, Marcèle, Guards, Diocletian,
Valérie, Maximian, Camille, Plutianus

GENEST (*looking at the sky, his hat in his hand*)

1275 Supreme Majesty, who cast into souls below
1276 With just two drops of water flames that we feel so!
1277 Fulfil Your good works, and let my case be asserted
1278 To trace the holy paths of hearts to You converted!
1279 Let the Love whose blaze consumes us now show the plan,
1280 For You, of force divine, my duty as a man:
1281 Your welcome as a victor valuing repentance,
1282 And I, Lord, a martyr with ardour and endurance.

MAXIMIAN

1283 He imitates, as if possessed, baptismal graces.⁷⁷

77 L. 1283: orig. "Il feint comme animé des grâces du Baptême". The translation aims at bringing out the sneering cynicism surely present in Maximian's comment.

1302 By cleansing me, through baptism, of all my wrong.
 1303 This transitory world, made of frivolity,
 1304 Assigned me a role unknown in its comedy;
 1305 I did not know with what fire my heart should burn:
 1306 The Demon dictated, when to speak was God's turn.
 1307 But since an angel-spirit gives me tutelage,
 1308 Guides me, re-directs me, instructs my personage,
 1309 I've corrected my role, and the Demon, confounded,
 1310 Seeing me better apprised, no more has me hounded;
 1311 I have wept for my sins: Heaven perceived my tears,
 1312 In that performance found that a true charm appears;
 1313 Bestowed on me its Grace as my approving sponsor;⁸¹
 1314 Proposing its fees, has created me its actor.

LENTULUS

1315 Though he mistakes his lines, he shows no hesitation.

GENEST

1316 God teaches me line by line my whole recitation,
 1317 And you have not truly listened if, in this action,
 1318 My role even now can appear to you a fiction.⁸²

DIOCLETIAN

1319 Your disorder, finally, is trying my patience;
 1320 Are you aware that this show takes place in my presence?
 1321 And may I not know why this fiasco I see?

GENEST

1322 Excuse them, my Lord, all the fault belongs to me.
 1323 But my salvation hinges on this rude display:
 1324 It is not Adrian who's speaking, but Genest.
 1325 This play is no play but reality presented,
 1326 Where through my feigning I am truly represented,
 1327 Where, both my acting's object and its origin,

81 "[A]pproving sponsor": orig. "approbateur", which here seems to carry the senses of both sponsorship and censorship. Pasquier, ed., n. 141, signals the close adaptation of Lope in this passage.

82 Ll. 1317-18: the rhyme "action"/"fiction" (same words in French) is in the original, with "action" carrying its theatrical sense of "performance".

1328 By water of holy baptism purged of sin—
 1329 Water a heavenly hand has deigned to confer—
 1330 I profess one sole Law, which I must here deliver.
 1331 Then hear me, you Caesars, and you, armed troop of
 Romans,
 1332 The glory and terror of all forces of humans,
 1333 But feeble enemies of a sovereign Power
 1334 That tramples underfoot Rome's arrogance and sceptre.
 1335 Blinded by the hellish errors that you infect,
 1336 Like you I held in hatred the whole Christian sect,
 1337 And, to the poor utmost my art could execute,
 1338 I took pleasure in all that could them persecute.
 1339 To flee them, and adhere to your idolatry,
 1340 I left behind my parents and my native country,
 1341 And purposely embraced an art inglorious,
 1342 The better to scorn them and make them odious.⁸³
 1343 But by beneficence that knows no parallel,
 1344 By an incredible and sudden miracle,
 1345 Of which only power divine could be the author,
 1346 Their rival I became, and not their persecutor.
 1347 And I submit to the Law whose ruin I craved
 1348 A soul from so many shipwrecks happily saved:
 1349 In the midst of the storm by which fate would me strand,
 1350 An angel guided me into port by the hand—
 1351 Showed me on a paper where my past faults were traced,
 1352 And now, with that water, in an instant erased;
 1353 And that healthful and celestial preparation,
 1354 Far from chilling me, kindled my heart's conflagration.
 1355 I renounce the hatred and the rancorous envy
 1356 That made me persecute all Christianity;
 1357 What they believe is my own faith; their hope I share,
 1358 Their God adore: the name of Christian, then, I bear.
 1359 In the ardour that impassions me, come what may,
 1360 The body's interests to those of the soul give way;
 1361 Bring on your cruelties, your burnings, cuts and slices—

83 Pasquier, ed., n. 144, points out that this rare reference to Genest's previous flouting of Christianity reflects a dimension of the legend more fully developed in the version of Desfontaines.

1362 My sufferings will still be lesser than my vices;
 1363 I know what repose will follow upon this strife
 1364 And have no fear of death, which will lead me to life;
 1365 I've long had the wish to be pleasing in your eyes:
 1366 Now I wish to please the Emperor of the Skies.⁸⁴
 1367 I have diverted you, your praises filled my voice;
 1368 Now the moment has come the angels to rejoice.
 1369 It is now time immortal prizes to prefer;
 1370 It is now time to pass to altars from the theatre.
 1371 If I've deserved it,⁸⁵ to martyrdom lead the way;
 1372 My role is over with: I have no more to say.

DIOCLETIAN

1373 Finally, your play proves troublesome and uncouth.

GENEST

1374 You owe it to yourselves that it should prove a truth.

VALÉRIE

1375 Has he lost his senses?

MAXIMIAN

Can I believe my ears?

GENEST

1376 At the same arm's touch many a marvel appears.

DIOCLETIAN

1377 What? You will not, traitor, worship our gods with us!

GENEST

1378 And they themselves I deem as false as odious.
 1379 Seven of the lot are nothing but feeble lights,

84 Cf. Desfontaines, III.ii.703-4, and n. 48.

85 "If I've deserved it": orig. "Si je l'ai mérité"; the formula is poised between the perspective of the persecutors, for whom the blasphemous criminal deserves punishment, and that of the Christian, for whom martyrdom is a benefit to be earned.

CAMILLE

1395 Simpleton, how little you care for Caesar's grace!

GENEST

1396 But God's I gain!⁸⁹

Scene viii

Octavius, Decorator, Marcèle, Plutianus, Guards

OCTAVIUS

What mystery⁹⁰ is taking place?

MARCÈLE

1397 The Emperor to rigour of the law now leaves
1398 Genest, who states that he the Christian faith believes.

OCTAVIUS

1399 Our prayers, perhaps?

MARCÈLE

We tried—no hope in them remains!

PLUTIANUS

1400 Guards?

A GUARD

Sir?

PLUTIANUS

1401 Conduct Genest, bound and burdened with chains,
To a deep dungeon cell to await his decree.

89 Pasquier, ed., n. 152, points out the adaptation of the exchange in *Lope*, where the interlocutor of Ginès is Maximiano. Cf. also Baudoin, p. 147: “vous vous trompez . . . si vous croyez que j’aye besoin d’autre grace que celle du Roy des Roys [you are deceived . . . if you believe that I need any grace but that of the King of Kings].”

90 The term (orig. “mystère”), with its application to religion, and the theatre that enacts it, is used advisedly by Rotrou (if not Octavius, who will speak in l. 1399 of “prayers” [orig. “prières”] in the purely secular sense); this is in counterpoint to Diocletian’s evocation of pagan tragedy in the previous scene.

GENEST (*as he is brought down from the theatre*)⁹¹

1402 I thank you, O Heaven! Let us go, I am ready.
 1403 Angels, one day, those chains with which you⁹² weigh me down
 1404 Will use, in that palace of azure, me to crown.

Scene ix

Plutianus, Marcèle, Octavius, Sergestus, Lentulus, Albinus, Guards,
 Decorator, and other assistants

PLUTIANUS (*seated*)

1405 His insolence is as much to blame as his error:
 1406 To dare to boast of it before the Emperor!
 1407 And you, who use his art and with his fortunes fare—
 1408 Is his faith, like his art, also something you share?
 1409 Is it now contagious, as with some invalid?

MARCÈLE

1410 Oh, heaven preserve me from it!

OCTAVIUS

The gods forbid!

SERGESTUS

1411 Sooner a thousand deaths!

LENTULUS

Flames again and again!

91 The symbolic change of scene is to a spiritual theatre, as pointed out by Pasquier, ed., n. 153 – where, of course, a different role and genre will be performed.

92 “[Y]ou”: orig. “tu” – perhaps an indication that he is addressing heaven.

PLUTIANUS (*to Marcèle*)

1412 You used to play what roles?⁹³

MARCÈLE

As you have seen, the women,

1413 Unless some disguise within the plot should require,

1414 As sometimes happens, that I put on male attire.

PLUTIANUS (*to Octavius*)

1415 And you?

OCTAVIUS

Sometimes a king, but sometimes a mere slave.

PLUTIANUS (*to Sergestus*)

1416 You?

SERGESTUS

Extravagant types, the furious, the brave.⁹⁴

PLUTIANUS (*to Lentulus*)

1417 This old man?

LENTULUS

Doctors, lacking in both laws and letters,⁹⁵

1418 Confidants sometimes, and sometimes treason's abettors.

PLUTIANUS (*to Albinus*)

1419 And you?

93 Pasquier, ed., who notes the origin of the prefect's interrogation of the actors in Lope's tragedy, deduces useful information concerning contemporary theatrical repertoires, especially with respect to genre and character-types (see nn. 154-56). What also emerges collectively is a succinct recapitulation of the *theatrum mundi* concept, in contrast with the "true" identity of the afterlife. See the Introduction to the translations, pp. 12-17.

94 "Extravagant types": orig. "Les extravagans" – used in the sense of "Astonishingly or flagrantly excessive or extreme" (*Oxford English Dictionary* online [<https://www.oed-com>]; accessed 17 April 2023]), *s.v.* "extravagant", def. 6; "the brave": orig. "les braves" – no doubt, in the context, the comic stereotype of the *miles gloriosus* (Pasquier, ed., n. 156).

95 Pasquier (private communication) sees a reference here to the type of pedant common in French (and Italian) comedies of the period, as fits with a wide repertoire adapted to court presentation.

ALBINUS

The assistants.

PLUTIANUS (*rising*)[*aside*] Their frank simplicity

1420 Appears quite unadorned in their naivety;
 1421 [*to the actors*] I pity your woes, but where the gods
 are concerned,
 1422 Our eyes to mere human matters cannot be turned.
 1423 Sometimes pardon for crimes may be legitimate,
 1424 But in cases like this, a crime it would create;
 1425 And if Genest his blind folly will not repent,
 1426 It's he himself who seeks his death and passes judgement.
 1427 In any case, go see him, and if that good office
 1428 Can render him disposed to render himself service,
 1429 Believe me, with pleasure I will see again flourish
 1430 The limbs assembled of a body apt to perish.⁹⁶

Act V

Scene i

Genest (*alone in the prison, chained*)⁹⁷

1431 By what precious divine adventure,
 1432 Pleasure sacred and sensible,

96 L. 1430: orig. "Les membres ralliés d'un corps prêt à périr". The image evokes both the reuniting of the acting troupe (cf. below, V.ii.1482) and, ominously, the impending dismemberment of its leader's body.

97 Pasquier, ed., nn. 157-58, calls attention to the conventionality of prison scenes in the period's tragedy and tragicomedy, with the prisoner typically lamenting in stanzaic verses. In transforming lament into exaltation, Rotrou effectively signals his adaptation of profane theatrical convention to *théâtre dévot*. Thus, too, Genest's expression of life's fragility (ll. 1455-60) and conclusion, "Let us die" (orig. "Mourons donc"), at once recall and contrast with similar sentiments in the pagan context: cf. the "Mourons donc" of the heroine in Étienne Jodelle, *Cléopâtre Captive*, ed. Kathleen M. Hall, Textes Littéraires, 35 (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1979), V.1289.

1433 Foretaste of a glorious future,
 1434 Felicity incredible—
 1435 With what remedies for our pains,
 1436 Our holy speech with truths to gloze
 1437 And help us to preserve repose
 1438 Beneath the burden of our chains,
 1439 Do you quit the heavenly plains
 1440 For the horror dungeons enclose?

 1441 O you false pleasure of the world,
 1442 Vain promise of a rude deceiver!
 1443 The deepest calm by you unfurled
 1444 Is never but a wisp of vapour:
 1445 And my God, even in the pain
 1446 He wills that we for Him should bear,
 1447 When He deigns our burden to share,
 1448 And knows what love we still maintain,
 1449 A flood of bliss we entertain
 1450 With no trace of the slightest care.

 1451 Death for Him is salvation's key,
 1452 And by that act of valiant will
 1453 We cause to spring felicity
 1454 From an inevitable ill;
 1455 Our days have not one hour sure;
 1456 Each instant does their torch consume,
 1457 Each step takes us towards the tomb;
 1458 And art, in imitating nature,
 1459 Edifies with the self-same figure
 1460 Cradle and bier in one small room.

 1461 Let us die, then, called by the cause;
 1462 To die must surely be most sweet,
 1463 When someone who from life withdraws
 1464 Confronts a goal so hard to meet.
 1465 Since that light of heavenly source
 1466 Is found only by life's abating
 1467 And conquest comes by dominating,
 1468 With masculine and warlike force

1469 Let us run to complete the course
1470 Where we shall find the crown is waiting.

Scene ii

Marcèle, Jailer, Genest

JAILER (*to Marcèle*)

1471 Enter. (*Exit Jailer.*)

MARCÈLE

Well now, Genest, this nonsensical ardour—
1472 Is it still with you or have you shown it the door?
1473 If you won't act for yourself, if your life's not dear,
1474 If your welfare can't touch you sufficiently near,
1475 We dare hold out the hope that perhaps our own fate,
1476 In this grave extremity, will carry more weight,
1477 And that, so cruel to yourself, to us you'll yield,
1478 And for us your obstinacy may be repealed.
1479 If ever you must care for us, the time has come:
1480 For separated from you, what would we become?
1481 By what fortune after your death might we go on?
1482 What can a body still do when its head is gone?
1483 It's on your life only that our own life depends;
1484 All of us will die from the blow by which yours ends:
1485 Yours alone the guilt, and the effect thus created—
1486 To punish all for what we never perpetrated!

GENEST

1487 If your minds of constructive counsel are capable,
1488 Be partners in the crime, render yourselves culpable,
1489 And you will learn whether sweeter joy can befall
1490 Than death, which indeed I would wish unto you all.
1491 You would die for a God whose all-bountiful will,
1492 Causing you, in your dying, death itself to kill,
1493 Would make eternity be purchased by that moment
1494 Which I proclaim a pardon,⁹⁸ you a punishment.

98 “[P]ardon”: orig. “grâce”, which obviously carries the theological meaning as well.

MARCÈLE

1495 Oh, how ludicrous!—to vaunt the omnipotence
 1496 Of a God that distributes death as recompense,
 1497 An imposter, a trickster, someone crucified!
 1498 Who placed him in the heavens to be deified?⁹⁹
 1499 A crowd of ignorant good-for-nothing refuse,
 1500 Malcontents, the dregs and disgrace the towns produce?
 1501 And of women and children, whose credulity
 1502 Has forged to their own liking a divinity?
 1503 People who, lacking the comfort of worldly fortunes,
 1504 Find that, in their misery, life's light¹⁰⁰ importunes,
 1505 So, calling themselves Christians, make death blessedness,
 1506 And contempt for riches (which they do not possess);
 1507 Who of ambition lose, because of hope, the sense,
 1508 And suffer all fate sends them with indifference!
 1509 This is what disorder in diverse places brings;
 1510 This is the source of contempt of both gods and kings,
 1511 Which Caesar, in his anger, with justice represses,
 1512 And cannot punish with too vigorous excesses.
 1513 If I dare speak my mind with perfect liberty
 1514 (And if your own, Genest, is not unknown to me),
 1515 Such gross abuse could not attest your true convictions:
 1516 You're laughing at the vulgar and feeding them fictions,
 1517 And for a cause you hide from us, some unknown end,
 1518 To this new cult a strong attachment you pretend.
 1519 Perhaps you complain of neglect in your young days
 1520 By an ungrateful court that slight attention pays;
 1521 If Caesar himself was not chary of expense,
 1522 Yet your good service deserved better recompense;
 1523 In all courts, however, this complaint is not rare:
 1524 Merit comes tardily to meet with fortune there;

99 As documented by Pasquier, ed., nn. 162-63, from this point until l. 1528, Marcèle again substantially borrows from the anti-Christian language and argument deployed in the play of Cellot against Adrianus (whose interlocutor is his fellow Titianus). This time the borrowing is adapted to express the actress's true feelings – another ironic twist on the interplay between assumed and genuine identities. Cf. above, n. 64.

100 “[L]ife's light”: orig. “lumière” – a commonplace metonymy for life itself.

1560 Who alone can save me, as life in me He poured,
 1561 Rightfully their thrones beneath His altars I place
 1562 And, compared with His honour, scorn the mortal race.
 1563 If to hold their gods in contempt is to rebel,
 1564 Believe that with reason they count me infidel,
 1565 And far from excusing that infidelity,
 1566 I count that guiltless crime a source of vanity.
 1567 You will see if those gods of metal and of stone
 1568 Wield the power above for which on earth they're known,
 1569 And if they will rescue you from the righteous furor
 1570 Of a God belief in whom passes there for error.
 1571 And then those wretched ones, the refuse of the town,
 1572 Those women, those children, those types of no renown—
 1573 In short, the followers of someone crucified—
 1574 Will tell you if for nothing He's been deified.¹⁰¹
 1575 Your Grace, Lord, has power this presage to forestall,
 1576 But only some use, alas, what is free to all;
 1577 Of so many bidden, few with your path comply;
 1578 And though many are called, they do not all reply.¹⁰²

MARCÈLE

1579 Cruel man! Since this error so possesses you
 1580 That for your blind illness there is nothing to do,
 1581 At least appease Caesar's wrath by being devious
 1582 And save yourself, if not for your sake, then for us;
 1583 And hoping in one God, to whom your faith adheres,
 1584 Contrive that your faith in our gods at least appears;
 1585 If not with a heart, at least with a brow submissive,
 1586 Obtain for us a pardon and—for your friends—live!¹⁰³

GENEST

1587 Our faith could never allow such an act of weakness:
 1588 I am bound to proclaim the faith that I profess.
 1589 Might I ever disavow the Master I follow?
 1590 Besides our hearts, our mouths as well to him we owe.

101 Genest is, of course, throwing back in her face Marcèle's words at ll. 1497-1502.

102 Ll. 1577-78: a reminiscence of Jesus's proverb concerning the wedding guests in Matt. 22:1-14.

103 This stratagem obviously presumes Genest's acting skill.

1591 The cruellest torments possess no violence
 1592 That might oblige me to accept such shameful silence.
 1593 Could I again, alas, after the shameless licence
 1594 With which this ingrate voice inflicted such offence—
 1595 Whereby I made a God a theatrical toy
 1596 For a prince's and pagan crowd's ears to enjoy—
 1597 With silence as guilty as my voice in full throat,
 1598 Before His enemies of His laws take no note?

MARCÈLE

1599 Your death will be cruel if Caesar obtains nothing.

GENEST

1600 My torments will be short, my glory everlasting.

MARCÈLE

1601 When the flame and the iron appear to your eyes...

GENEST

1602 In opening my tomb, they'll open up the skies.

MARCÈLE

1603 O man too fearless!

GENEST

O woman too little brave!

MARCÈLE

1604 Cruel, save your life!

GENEST

Coward, your soul you should save!

MARCÈLE

1605 That an error, a caprice, mere frivolity,
 1606 Should mean that the light of day you'll no longer see!

GENEST

1607 I will indeed have little lived if age we measure
 1608 Only by the number of years prescribed by nature.
 1609 But the soul a tyrant from us martyrs may sever
 1610 In the dwelling-place of glory lives on forever.
 1611 To complain of dying is to grudge being man;
 1612 Each day cuts him down, every instant shrinks his span:
 1613 The moment he arrives, on his return he leaves,
 1614 And so begins to lose the daylight he receives.

MARCÈLE

1615 Then nothing touches you, and you abandon us.

GENEST

1616 I'd leave a throne and crowns if I did not do thus.
 1617 Any loss is light if it brings a God to you.

Scene iii

Jailer, Marcèle, Genest

JAILER

1618 The Prefect wants you.

MARCÈLE

Adieu, cruel one.

GENEST

Adieu.

Scene iv

Jailer, Genest

JAILER

1619 If you do not soon to our gods accord due homage,

1620 You won't be doing justice to your personage;¹⁰⁴
 1621 And I fear this act will have a tragic dénouement.

GENEST

1622 A favourable judge presides at my arraignment:
 1623 His eternal diligence gives me peace of mind;
 1624 Assurance that my cause will win in Him I find;
 1625 By His means shall these chains I bear be cast aside—
 1626 And by Him one day shall Caesar also be tried.
 (*Exit Genest with Jailer.*)

Scene v

Diocletian, Maximian, Guards in attendance

DIOCLETIAN

1627 May this Hymen, by the fruitfulness its couch brings,
 1628 To the end of all time furnish the world with kings,
 1629 And by their actions these descendants, in their glories,
 1630 Deserve, like you, a rank among the deities!¹⁰⁵
 1631 In this common gladness, the joy common to all
 1632 Marks more your virtue than good fortunes that befall,
 1633 And shows that in the honour I have rendered you
 1634 I have paid you less than to you was rightly due.
 1635 The gods, in whom human fortunes originate,
 1636 Who make us all what we are, each in his estate,
 1637 And to whom the greatest king is a simple subject,
 1638 Must in this business likewise be our chiefest object;
 1639 And knowing they have our dwelling on earth elected
 1640 To uphold their rights, to see their thunder directed,
 1641 And, in brief, to consign their vengeance to our hands,
 1642 We must constrain human beings by their commands,

104 The Jailer's banter deploys, in a minor comic mode, the metaphor of *theatrum mundi* and the issue of false versus true identity. The character-type was well established. For a Shakespearean example, in an intriguingly similar context of Christian revelation about to dawn on the pagan Roman universe, see the Jailer's exchange with his condemned prisoner in William Shakespeare, *Cymbeline* (*The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. eds G. Blakemore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd ed. [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997]), V.iv.151 ff.

105 There is a starkly ironic juxtaposition with the last prophetic words of Genest just previously.

1643 And our authority, which they'd have men revere,
 1644 In maintaining their own is never too severe.
 1645 I hoped for that effect, and that to liquidate
 1646 So many Christians would set those remaining straight;¹⁰⁶
 1647 But it did no good to give them hosts soaked in blood,¹⁰⁷
 1648 And with their impious blood their foul altars flood;
 1649 In vain my desire to purge them from these regions:
 1650 From the blood of one alone, I see spring up legions.
 1651 My deeds are more harmful to the gods than of use:
 1652 Each defeated foe a thousand more will produce;
 1653 And their caprice is such, in their extravagance,¹⁰⁸
 1654 That death animates them and lends them arrogance.
 1655 Genest, for whom that sect, as mad as they are vain,
 1656 Had long been an object of laughter and disdain,
 1657 Now comes to reject the gods' law and theirs embrace,
 1658 And insolently dares proclaim it to our face.
 1659 Impiety aside, that contempt manifest
 1660 Intertwines our own with the heavens' interest;
 1661 It must needs be purged by death, this double attack:
 1662 We, the gods and ourselves, have to get our own back.

MAXIMIAN

1663 I believe the Prefect, whose orders will suffice,
 1664 Also intends to make a public sacrifice
 1665 Of your command, and will have that insolent fellow
 1666 Offer the people this evening a bloody show—
 1667 Unless already on a stage for grim display¹⁰⁹

106 Ll. 1645-46: orig. "J'esperais cet effet, et que tant de trépas / Du reste des Chrétiens, redresseraient les pas." "[R]edresseraient les pas" (lit. "would correct the steps") is used in the sense of putting someone who is lost on the right path.

107 Symbolically torturing or abusing the sacrament was an established form of anti-Christian persecution – the counterpart of attributing miracles to it. In France, *Le jeu et mystere de la Sainte Hostie, par personnages* (anon.) was published in the mid-sixteenth century (BnF Gallica NUMM-71490); the outstanding English example is *The Play of the Sacrament*, dating from the late-fifteenth century and associated with Croxton in Suffolk (available in *Medieval Drama*, ed. David Bevington [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1975]).

108 "[E]xtravagance": orig. "[ces] extravagants"; the term has recently been used with reference to absurdly excessive theatrical roles. See above, IV.ix.1417 and n. 94.

109 "[A] stage for grim display": orig. "le bois d'un Théâtre funeste"; the ironic comparison of the scaffold to a theatrical space is a commonplace in deployments of the *theatrum mundi* motif, as, fa-

1668 He has performed the last action he has to play.

Scene vi

Valérie, Camille, Marcèle (*actress*), Octavius (*actor*), Sergestus (*actor*), Lentulus (*actor*),
Albinus (*actor*), Diocletian, Maximian, Guards in attendance

(*All the actors kneel.*)

VALÉRIE (*to Diocletian*)

1669 If heaven for me quite empties itself of blessings,
1670 As its provident eye greets our hopes with caressings,
1671 I dare yet venture, amidst all this gaiety,
1672 To ask indulgence for a woman's frailty.
1673 Permit me, my Lord, at your knees here to display
1674 All those you sacrifice in condemning Genest.
(*The Emperor causes them to rise.*)
1675 The creed he embraces all absolutely shun;
1676 All know that his crime is unworthy of a pardon.¹¹⁰
1677 But of their life he is such a sturdy mainstay
1678 That the blow that cuts his short will take theirs away;
1679 Granting their plea to turn your arms from him aside,
1680 I yielded to their tears, which could not be denied;
1681 Nor do I dare insist, if my temerity
1682 Is asking an injustice of Your Majesty.

DIOCLETIAN

1683 I know that it is pity, rather than injustice,
1684 That causes you to embrace this merciful office;
1685 And in any well-born heart compassion will sanction,
1686 Even for enemies, a truly righteous action.
1687 But where rank arrogance and scorn for the divine,

mously, in Thomas More's *History of kyng Rycharde the thirde*: "And so they said that these matters bee kynges games, as it were stage playes, and for the more part plaied upon scaffolds" (*The works of Sir Thomas More Knyght, sometyme Lorde Chauncellour of England, wrytten by him in the Englysh tonge* [London: Iohn Cawod, Iohn Waly and Richarde Tottell, 1557], p. 66). Maximian's application of the image adds his intended irony at the actor's expense and, in the Christian context, unwittingly reinforces the larger irony at his own.

110 "[P]ardon": orig. "grâce" – hence with an ironic theological resonance.

1688 Defiance of the state and of heaven combine,
 1689 To oppose the judgement of our authority
 1690 Is to practice a pity spurning piety—
 1691 To forestall the very tempest his arm provokes
 1692 And which his intention upon his head invokes,
 1693 And with importunate care from his hand to wrest
 1694 The knife which he is wielding to pierce his own breast.

MARCÈLE

1695 Ah, my Lord, it's true. But of that tempest the blast
 1696 Does harm to all of us, if on his head it's cast,
 1697 And if it is left in his hand, the fatal knife
 1698 Murders us in piercing his breast to take his life.

OCTAVIUS

1699 If no pardon, my Lord, is due to his offence,
 1700 Some compassion is owing to our innocence.

SERGESTUS

1701 The sword that the course of his years abruptly stays
 1702 Will cut short your pleasures in cutting short his days.

DIOCLETIAN

1703 I know his merit, and your misfortune I pity.
 1704 But besides the interest outraged divinity
 1705 And state alike possess in punishing this error,
 1706 I feel for that whole sect so violent a horror
 1707 That when its accessories¹¹¹ have faced any torment,
 1708 Or any must endure, I deem it far too lenient.
 1709 Still, in token of this Hymen so fortunate,
 1710 Which promises such blessing to the Roman state,
 1711 If by repentance, as his own interest should urge,
 1712 With his blasphemous voice the sacrilege he'll purge
 1713 And recognise the gods, who the universe made,
 1714 My pity's open arms to you remain displayed . . .

[*enter Plutianus*]

1715 But here is the Prefect. I fear the execution

111 “[A]ccessories”: orig. “complices” – a similarly demeaning term.

1716 May have rendered vain your merciful intervention.

Scene vii

Plutianus, Diocletian, Maximian, Valérie, Camille, Marcèle, Octavius, Sergestus,
Lentulus, Albinus, Guards in attendance

PLUTIANUS

1717 By your order, my Lord, that glory-covered actor,
1718 Of the most famous heroes famous imitator,¹¹²
1719 Of the Roman theatre the splendour and the glory,
1720 But such a bad actor in his own history,
1721 More stubborn than ever in his impiety,
1722 And by all my best efforts solicited vainly,
1723 Has, of the gods' outrage against his perfidy,
1724 With a bloody act concluded the tragedy.¹¹³

MARCÈLE (*weeping*)

1725 Which we shall complete by the ending of our days.

OCTAVIUS

1726 Oh, fatal disclosure!

SERGESTUS

Oh, how this speech dismays!

PLUTIANUS

1727 I joined to gentleness, to offers and to prayers—
1728 To the slight inspiration heaven with me shares¹¹⁴—
1729 Persuaded that my efforts uselessly were spent,
1730 All the art whose cruel rigour can bodies torment.
1731 But neither the racks, nor the red-hot blades' fell
biting,
1732 Nor the iron claws, nor the torches flesh igniting

112 Cf. above I.v.239-44. Plutianus intends an irony which actually turns against him (see the Introduction to the translations, pp. 16-17).

113 In the original, Plutianus' speech is similarly Latinate in its syntax, with its formal unity reinforced by rhymes on the same sounds, as if recalling a tragic declamation.

114 L. 1728: orig. "A si peu que les Dieux m'ont donné de lumières".

