



Scène
Européenne

Traductions
introuvables

The Queen of Scotland: Tragedy

by Antoine de Montchrestien

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

Introduction to *The Queen of Scotland: Tragedy*
by Antoine de Montchrestien
[En ligne], éd. par R. Hillman, 2018, mis en ligne le 23-10-2018,
URL : <https://sceneuropeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/queen-scotland>

La collection

TRADUCTIONS INTROUVABLES

est publiée par le Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance,
(Université François-Rabelais de Tours, CNRS/UMR 7323)
dirigé par Benoist Pierre

Responsable scientifique
Richard Hillman

ISSN
1760-4745

Mentions légales
Copyright © 2018—CESR.
Tous droits réservés.
Les utilisateurs peuvent télécharger et imprimer,
pour un usage strictement privé, cette unité documentaire.
Reproduction soumise à autorisation.

Contact : alice.loffredonue@univ-tours.fr

Introduction

Richard Hillman
CESR - Université de Tours

Despite the attention it has received, and the considerable number of documented facts, there remain stubborn mysteries about the remarkably variegated life of Antoine de Montchrestien (1575-1621). He was a Norman of modest birth who acquired important connections, and substantial financial interests, over the course of his forty-six years, yet who lived a life punctuated by violence and who died a violent death.¹ The mysteries most intriguingly concern the “inner” life, his reasons for acting as he did, and understanding is not necessarily facilitated by the most substantial biographical account, that of the *Mercurie François*, which is hostile and prone to distortion. It is true, too, that there are substantial gaps in our knowledge of his activities, notably between the years 1604 and 1611, when he evidently travelled to Holland and Germany, after a visit to England whose dates are themselves uncertain.

The English journey was a self-exile undertaken after killing his opponent in a duel—not his first, for Montchrestien was evidently proud and quarrelsome in a way suggesting aspirations to “noble” behaviour. The exile is highly pertinent to *The Scottish Queen* because the author is widely understood to have presented a copy of his play to King James, who then interceded with Henri IV to procure a pardon, which was, eventually, granted. It was at this point, too, that Montchrestien decided to abandon his literary career, which had concentrated (though not exclusively) on the composition of tragedies. His most significant subsequent

¹ The evidence regarding Montchrestien’s life has been most judiciously examined by Françoise Charpentier, *Les débuts de la tragédie héroïque: Antoine de Montchrestien (1575-1621)* (Lille: Service de Reproduction des Thèses, Université de Lille III, 1981), pp. 1-43, to whom my cursory remarks are indebted.

written production was a treatise on political economy (*Traicté de l'oeconomie politique*, 1615), which is considered a pioneering work in the field.²

This interest ties in with a career as a businessman that seems to have made Montchrestien materially quite comfortable: he acquired interests in shipping as well as metallurgy, and there are records of multiple real-estate transactions. In social status, he acquired, and/or pretended to, titles of minor nobility. In public life, he rose to the position of governor of Châtillon-sur-Loire on behalf of the powerful Henri II de Bourbon, Prince of Condé (the dedicatee of his collections of tragedies in 1601 and 1604)—this at a point (in 1614) when Condé had joined other discontented nobles in withdrawing from the court. The prince, however, finally returned, reconciled, to the royal fold, while Montchrestien became increasingly implicated in the subversive political activities of the well-organised and nominally tolerated, but marginalised, Protestant church.

Montchrestien's religious affiliation earlier in his life—a point of capital importance in the France of the day—can be inferred with some confidence from his associations, including his literary ones: his first tragedy, *Sophonisbe* (later rewritten as *La Carthaginoise*), was staged in 1596 in Caen before a public including the wife of the Protestant governor. The Rouen publisher of his first collection of tragedies, including the original version of *The Scottish Queen*, had strong Protestant associations. The other names found in the volume enable Charpentier to place him within the milieu “*de la noblesse provinciale et des gens de robe* [of the provincial nobility and legal functionaries]”, who were “*presque tous protestants, ou de sympathie protestante* [almost all Protestants or sympathetic to Protestantism]”.³ This, too, would have been a card to play with King James.

In this context, the fact that Montchrestien's Protestantism is notably difficult to deduce even from *The Scottish Queen*, where religion, inevitably intertwined with politics, is explicitly at issue, arguably points to a conscious effort to abstract an idea of tragedy from the historical occasion for it. I will be pursuing this point below. There are other signs, in other contexts, that Montchrestien was capable of compartmentalising religion, politics—and no doubt self-interest: Charpentier cites his dedication of his economic treatise to Louis XIII, in which he adopts the term “heretics” for his co-religionists.⁴ It may therefore seem surprising that he became a soldier, and recruiter of soldiers, in the cause of Protestant self-defence in the face of increasing menace to the guarantees offered

² It has received a serious modern edition: Antoine de Montchrestien, *Traicté de l'oeconomie politique*, ed. François Billacois, Les Classiques de la Pensée Politique (Geneva: Droz, 1999).

³ Charpentier, p. 19.

⁴ Charpentier, pp. 50–51.

by the Edict of Nantes. Charpentier speaks of a reawakening of his “*zèle*”⁵ and it is also clearly necessary to allow, once more, for the qualities of temperament, including enterprise, pride and belligerence, that he had demonstrated in diverse spheres of endeavour. In the end, the combination cast him in the role of a rebel to royal authority—the latter now represented in the region by his erstwhile patron, the Prince of Condé—and he suffered a rebel’s fate: his bloody death in a small-scale confrontation was followed by the “trial” and exemplary punishment of his corpse, which was publicly humiliated, mutilated and burnt, the ashes scattered to the wind. It is difficult to see how Montchrestien could have inflated such an ignoble end into tragedy.

I

Despite a career as a playwright of limited duration (from 1596 to 1604) and production (six tragedies),⁶ Montchrestien’s work has benefited from a remarkably good press on both sides of the Channel, attracting not only modern editions of several plays, but substantial critical studies in French and English.⁷ While strong claims have certainly been made for his poetic ability (not always without reservations, as notes to the translation will attest), his relative prominence as a dramatist is probably due, in large measure, to the aesthetic continuity he seems to represent between the sixteenth-century so-called “Humanist” theatre, associated especially with Robert Garnier (whose last work, *Les Juifves*, dates from 1583), and the increasingly rigorous classicism that would emerge towards the mid-seventeenth century. That tendency would issue in the “*tragédie régulière*” primarily (if simplistically) identified with Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine. Montchrestien’s work (notably including *The Scottish Queen*) does not particularly observe the neo-Aristotelian “unities” of time, place and action; on the other hand, it does not arrogate the theatrical freedoms evident in more popular sixteenth-century tragedies, and which in turn filtered into those of the “*âge baroque*” (for instance, in the work of Alexandre Hardy).⁸

5 Charpentier, p. 53.

6 Apart from *The Queen of Scotland*, they are (in initial versions): *Sophonisbe* (1596); *David, Aman* (c. 1598); *Les Lacènes* (c. 1600); *Hector* (between 1601 and 1604). The dates are those proposed by Charpentier (p. 700).

7 Especially notable among the latter are Charpentier’s work and Richard Griffiths, *The Dramatic Technique of Antoine de Montchrestien: Rhetoric and Style in French Renaissance Tragedy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970). The most recent comprehensive assessment of the play is by Jeff Rufo, “La Tragédie Politique: Antoine de Montchrestien’s *La Reine d’Ecosse* Reconsidered,” *Modern Philology* 111 (2014): 437–56, with whose analyses and conclusions, however, I largely disagree.

8 Illuminating in this respect is the adventurous anthology, *Théâtre de la cruauté et récits sanglants: en*

A classicising tendency seems to some extent built into Montchrestien's own practice, at least on the level of language and versification: he was an inveterate reviser of his own plays in this respect—*The Queen of Scotland*, originally published in the collection of 1601, was reworked nearly line-by-line for that of 1604—and it may be that the process owes something to that major reformer of French poetics, François de Malherbe (a fellow Norman and a personal acquaintance).⁹ In any case, there is almost no change in the representation of characters or events between the two versions of the play, not to mention dramaturgical approach. In the latter regard, Montchrestien maintains a thorough fidelity to Humanist precedent. This is highly rhetorical tragedy, lacking in onstage action, dominated by lengthy monologues, stichomythia, repetitious debate and moralising choruses;¹⁰ it also substitutes sequential postures, affirmations and emotional displays for anything a modern audience (or one accustomed to English Renaissance drama) would recognise as characterisation.¹¹ Such theatre must simply be accepted on its own terms, and on those terms Charpentier, for one, judges that *The Scottish Queen* “est à coup sûr une des plus grand[es] réussites [undoubtedly one of the greatest successes]” of its author; for Jeff Rufo, it is simply his “masterpiece”.¹² Its contemporary success, moreover, demonstrably extended to performance: we have evidence that at least some of Montchrestien's plays were staged, and that evidence is especially revealing with regard to *The Queen of Scotland*.

France (XVI^e-XVII^e siècles), ed. Christian Biet (Paris: R. Laffont, 2006). For an example of a self-consciously literary tragedy from the 1590s that also displays notable dramaturgical licence, see Jean Galaut, *Phalante, Recueil des divers poèmes et chans royaux avec le commencement de la traduction de l'Aenéide, etc.* (Toulouse: Vve J. Colomiez et R. Colomiez, 1611); for a translation, see Jean Galaut, *Phalante*, ed. with an introd. by Richard Hillman, online at *Scène Européenne, Traductions Introuvables*, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Université de Tours/CNRS, 2018: <<https://sceneeuropeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/phalante>> (accessed 10/09/2018).

- ⁹ See Charpentier, pp. 20-21, 180-83, who notes the disagreement of Griffiths (p. 30) on the point. Cf. George Otto Seiver, “Did Malherbe Correct Montchrestien?” *PMLA* 55.4 (1940): 968-78.
- ¹⁰ There are three distinct Choruses in *The Queen of Scotland*, the usual impersonal choric commentator, but also two—the Chorus of the Estates and the Chorus of the Queen of Scotland's Women—who intervene in the dialogue and speak from a particular point of view. The weight of evidence seems to show that choric speeches in this theatre were spoken simultaneously by several voices; see Charpentier, p. 486.
- ¹¹ This conclusion seems to me unavoidable, *pace* the claim of Rufo for “complex characterization” (p. 452).
- ¹² Charpentier, p. xiv; Rufo, p. 456.

II

A perspective drawn along the lines of French literary history and convention will not necessarily compel interest from the public for whom the present translation has been prepared—that is, primarily, those concerned with French-English cultural and political cross-over in the early modern period. From this point of view, the salient features of the work are bound to lie in its distinctive subject, the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots, and, related to that, its reception in its time and place—or, rather, places. For also at issue is the approval it apparently received from King James. Again, the chronology here is uncertain, even including the moment of the fatal duel: the years most often proposed are 1604 and 1605. Charpentier, on the hypothesis that the British Library copy of the 1603 re-edition of the play (in its 1601 version but printed separately from the collection of that year) may be that presented to James, considers that the duel may date from that year,¹³ which is also, of course, that of James's accession. In any case, it would be more appropriate for the gift to have been a copy printed separately, so one need not rule out a presentation of this version even after the 1604 collection had appeared.

There is perhaps a reason why Montchrestien would have considered the earlier version inherently more suitable—namely, its title, which might have seemed more politic, precisely because less political. The original version was called *L'Escossoise, ou le desastre*, which suggests a classically tragic emphasis on human pathos and fatal mechanism. The 1604 revision substituted *La Reine d'Escosse*, which not only placed the tragedy squarely on the political stage but did so in a potentially sensitive way by declaring a *parti pris*. For at the time of her execution in 1587, Mary was by no means the Queen of Scotland in everyone's eyes—most certainly not in those of her son. Technically, she had abdicated (albeit under duress) in 1567, when James was an infant, and he had ruled fully in his own right from 1578. Whatever James's personal feelings about her, which of course cannot be judged from demonstrations for public consumption, she constituted a royal rival, not just for Elizabeth, but for himself. By one account, the response of James to the news of his mother's execution was, "Now I am sole King."¹⁴ Whether or not the story is true, the fact that it circulated is telling.

One further observation of Charpentier on the English exile is worth mentioning here: Montchrestien's long-standing close connection with the Norman family Thézart,

¹³ Charpentier, p. 29, n. 51. There is nothing to identify the British Library holding as a presentation copy, in contrast with works by Jean de Schélandre (see below, pp. 8-9), but this would match the fact that Montchrestien's gesture was not pre-meditated.

¹⁴ Antonia Fraser, *Mary, Queen of Scots* (Frogmore, St Albans: Panther, 1970), p. 640.

one of whose members had sought refuge in England (like many French Protestants) in 1585. Charpentier points out that this family was allied by marriage with the French branch of the Stuarts.¹⁵ This is likely to have been a highly useful connection for a French visitor seeking access to, and favour from, the king. The current Duke of Lennox was the French-born Esmé Stuart from the same family, the son of James's erstwhile favourite, Esmé Stuart, seigneur d'Aubigny, who, after the so-called Raid of Ruthven in 1582, had been forced back to France, where he died a year later. Montchrestien was not the only French author who sought to ingratiate himself with the King of England in the early years of his reign, and who seems to have profited from the French Stuart connection. Another case is that of the Protestant poet and playwright Jean de Schélandre, who was apparently impelled by more strictly financial motives, and whose textual offerings to the monarch included prefatory thanks to the Duke of Lennox for facilitating matters:

*Puis que les étrangers dont ceste Court abonde
Sont tous receus de vous d'un visage courtois,
Que par vous introduit i'ay receu quelques-fois
L'accez du meilleur Roy de la machine ronde.*

[since the foreigners who abound in this court are all received by you with a courteous countenance and, introduced by you, I was several times granted access to the best king in the world.]¹⁶

There are further suggestive parallels between the situations of Schélandre and Montchrestien, who, moreover, may well have met in London. As mentioned, the precise dates of Montchrestien's English sojourn are not documented.¹⁷ Schélandre is known to have made several visits, and, although the number and timing of these are also uncertain, his tragedy *Tyr et Sidon* (a composition very much in the romanesque baroque manner, in contrast with Montchrestien's) was dedicated to James in 1608, as were a further volume of religious verse in 1609 and—the culminating presentation, long in the planning—an (incomplete) epic in praise of the Stuart dynasty, *La Stuartide*, in 1611. My

¹⁵ Charpentier, p. 29 and n. 50.

¹⁶ Jean de Schélandre, *Les deux premiers livres de la Stuartide, etc.*, cited by Richard Hillman, "Setting Scottish History Straight: *La Stuartide* of Jean de Schélandre as Corrective of *Macbeth*", *Modern Language Review* 113.2 (2018): 289-306, 290. The points touched on below relating to Schélandre are developed in this article.

¹⁷ Charpentier, p. 29.

argument that this last work was composed (or revised) in response to a performance of *Macbeth* points to possible encounters with Montchrestien from 1606 on.

Whatever the precise circumstances in each case, the project of currying favour with the new King of England by way of his Scottish heritage is the most significant link between the two French authors, not least because it also highlights the problematic nature of the project. As I have argued in detail, the problem for Schélandre was fairly straightforward: in producing a dynastic celebration on the model of Ronsard's *La Franciade*, he needed (like Shakespeare in *Macbeth*) to circumvent certain awkward "facts" about James's ancestors recorded in the "historical" sources. For Montchrestien, the textual die had been cast at least since 1601, and, apart from his urgent personal interest, the issues were more immediately sensitive, since at stake were James's closest ancestor of all and the politico-religious issues attached to her life and death.

The question is pertinent, therefore—if finally unanswerable—of the extent to which Montchrestien had anticipated those issues. Arguably, by 1601 the succession of James to the aging English queen already loomed as all but certain. Montchrestien could not have known that he would need James's assistance as a matter of personal necessity, but he might have supposed that his radical choice of tragic subject, in contrast with the biblical and classical themes of his other plays (and, overwhelmingly, of most sixteenth-century French dramatists), would ultimately have been flattering to Elizabeth's prospective successor. The sympathetic, indeed pathetic and transcendent, portrayal of Mary Stuart drawn over the last three acts might be part of such a project. At the same time, the extreme reluctance of the play's Elizabeth to proceed with the execution, which dominates the first two acts—and indeed issues in a resolution to defer it (l. 570 [Act II]; p. 87¹⁸)—would be readable as legitimising continuity for the new monarch. Responsibility for the "tragédie"—in the original version the "désastre"—is fixed firmly on the unnamed Councillor of Act One and on the "Estates", who press the hard line in Act Two. At the beginning of Act Three, moreover, the character Davison (historically William Davison, the Privy Council secretary who had actually obtained Elizabeth's signature on the warrant for execution) speaks vaguely of "those who are the authors of that queen's ill [*ceux qui sont auteurs du mal de ceste Reine*]" (l. 639; p. 89).¹⁹ All in all, once James was (more-or-less) securely on the English throne, he may well have seen no reason to take issue with such a representation—one hinting, from a safe distance, at overriding

¹⁸ Page numbers refer to my French text of reference : Antoine de Montchrestien, *La reine d'Escoce, Les Tragédies*, ed. Louis Petit de Julleville, new ed. (Paris: E. Plot, Norrit et Cie., 1891).

¹⁹ On Davison's obtaining of the warrant, see Fraser, p. 621. He was indeed scapegoated, as the character fearfully anticipates in ll. 625-40 (Act III); see Fraser, pp. 636-37.

national and international interests, with any “cruelty [*cruauté*]”, to use the play’s recurrent term, attributable to maliciously fomented misunderstanding. Demonstrably, James himself played both sides of the fence, erecting lavish monuments to both Elizabeth and Mary in Westminster Abbey, while eschewing controversy in Mary’s epitaph.²⁰

III

The evidence is also clear, however, that *The Scottish Queen* got on official English nerves both before and immediately after the succession. In an important article some ninety years ago, Frances A. Yates documented the efforts of the English government to censor the play, which was professionally performed at least in Paris and Orléans, as well as French efforts to cooperate in the effort.²¹ Both theatrical representation and publication in print were targeted. One issue, as Yates points out, was the widely propounded (if hardly impermeable) principle that “a modern Christian king” was not to be impersonated on stage.²² But English-Scottish relations, naturally including the religious question and the related one of succession, had been a subject of special sensitivity to the English government for years, as is shown by the censorship regarding these matters imposed on the second edition of Holinshed’s *Chronicles*, which appeared scarcely a month before Mary Stuart’s execution (on 8 February 1587).²³ One concern was evidently to spare the susceptibilities of the Scottish king, whose prospective succession in England required delicate handling. Thus, for instance, the vitriolic anti-Catholic and anti-French attacks directed against Esmé Stuart at the time of the Ruthven raid were excluded from the *Chronicles*.

Montchrestien’s play, then, is likely to have been seen as dangerous by the English less because it presented a sympathetic view of Mary—after all, there had been an explosion of explicitly anti-English propaganda in France over the execution itself—than because, some fourteen years later, it threatened to revive heated political memories that had seemed to be at rest, thanks largely to the reconciliatory policies of Henri IV. And this would have occurred at the very point when a smooth transition to Stuart—but Protestant—rule in England needed to be assured. The destabilising effect was poten-

20 See Fraser, pp. 648-50.

21 Frances A. Yates, “Some New Light on *L’Écossaise* of Antoine de Montchrestien”, *Modern Language Review* 22.3 (1927): 285-97, 285-90.

22 Yates, p. 293.

23 For discussion and documentation, taking literary representations into account, see Richard Hillman, “Scottish Histories: Robert Greene’s *James the Fourth* (c. 1590) in the Light (and Shadow) of David Lyndsay’s *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* (1552)”, *Scottish Literary Review* 9.2 (2017): 57-83.

tially all the greater because *The Scottish Queen* gives nearly equal airing to the arguments—politico-religious and moral—for and against Mary’s execution.

That fact, and the two-part structure of the tragedy that reflects it, are also dealt with persuasively by Yates, whose discoveries included what is unmistakably an important source for the play: the widely disseminated *Histoire des derniers troubles de France* (1597) by Pierre Matthieu. Matthieu, whose historiography at this point was very much in the French king’s service, duly records the imprisonment of Mary and her execution, but then appends, at the end of his second book, what is marginally labelled as a “*Digression sur la mort de la Reine d’Escosse* [Digression on the death of the Queen of Scotland]”.²⁴ The digression consists of a supposed debate between a French and an English gentleman, who respectively make arguments against and for the execution that resonate with those found in the play. The “case for the prosecution”, as presented by Montchrestien’s “Councillor”, particularly evokes points attributed by Matthieu to Sir John Puckering, privy councillor and Keeper of the Great Seal. The second act’s Chorus of the Estates effectively takes up Puckering’s speech on behalf of Parliament, what Matthieu labels the “*Remonstrances des Estats d’Angleterre*” (fol. 59^r). For his part, Matthieu’s anonymous French spokesman makes points coinciding with counterarguments advanced by Elizabeth herself and found in the choruses sympathetic to Mary.

Yates’s application to Montchrestien of the major source she discovered is primarily structural: in her view, it accounts for the “discrepancy...between the first two and the last three acts”, as well as for the preponderance of the French point of view yet tolerance of the English one.²⁵ Rufo draws a far broader conclusion concerning Montchrestien’s intention, stressing the “empathy, tolerance, and equanimity of his political outlook”.²⁶ Regardless of intention, enough has already been said about the relation between the text and its political contexts to show that, despite its relative even-handedness and lack of polemic as such, certainly compared to the “propaganda plays” cited by Rufo²⁷ (works that placed themselves outside the mainstream of Humanist tragedy), *The Scottish Queen* could not have succeeded in rising above controversy. It was bound to be taken, as it demonstrably was, as a provocative intervention in still-sensitive issues.

This point can be further developed by way of a principle of intertextual functionality neglected by both Yates and Rufo but key to much meaning-making in the period—

24 For convenience, I cite the 1606 edition, available on Gallica: Pierre Matthieu, *Histoire des derniers troubles de France, etc....Dernière édition, Reueuë & augmentee de l’Histoire des guerres entre les maisons de France, d’Espagne, et de Sauoye* (n.p.: n.pub., 1606), fol. 55^r.

25 Yates, p. 292.

26 Rufo, p. 451.

27 Rufo, p. 451.

namely, the triggering of associations through juxtaposition, or even the lack of it, such as the conspicuous omission or suppression of elements known to be part of a given discursive field. This argument may take as a prime illustration the fact that the English translation of the *Histoire des derniers troubles de France*, published in 1598 without mention of either author or translator, eliminated all reference to Mary's life and death, not to mention the "Digression".²⁸

IV

To return to Montchrestien's own significant silences, these may be taken to lead us back initially to King James—not in a way that clarifies his actual response to the play but so as to confirm its politico-religious charge even in its pre-accession version (which may well, again, be the one presented to him).²⁹ James is evoked only once within the play-text itself—in the series of "adieux" delivered by Mary in Act Four as a virtual testament. In lines 1213-28, she prays for, then apostrophises, her "dearly beloved son [*mon enfant bien aimé*]" (l. 1213; p. 103), expressing the wish that he may become an exemplary king in every way and, particularly, that he may overcome what is bound to be his "outrage" (l. 1223; same word in French, p. 103) over her injurious treatment. The portrait presented is infused with a due combination of maternal sentiment and regal idealism, as suits a Mary transcendently human and noble, but it conspicuously rides roughshod over the problematic realities of the mother-son relation in personal, political and religious terms. These have just been vividly if vaguely alluded to, moreover, by way of Mary's "adieu" to Scotland (ll. 1203-28; p. 103) as a country chronically torn apart by factious strife, which she prays that "heaven [*Le Ciel*]" may "appease [*appaïser*]" (l. 1209; p. 103): it would be clear to a reader or spectator of any persuasion that James's version of a heavenly solution—already in 1587 but certainly in 1601—would be contrary to hers.

28 The translation is incorporated, with separate pagination, as *The first booke of the historie of the last troubles of France, etc.*,—in fact, four books are included—in a collection entitled, *An historical collection, of the most memorable accidents, and tragicall massacres of France, vnder the raignes of Henry. 2. Francis. 2. Charles. 9. Henry. 3. Henry. 4. now liuing* (London: Thomas Creede, 1598); STC 11275. This collection has traditionally been attributed to Jean de Serres but is probably due to Simon Goulart; see Richard Hillman, *French Origins of English Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), pp. 9-11. Both Serres and Goulart were Protestants, unlike Matthieu.

29 On a minor revision in the 1604 version that may reflect the accession, see the translation, n. 117 to ll. 1213-28.

The point is all the more striking with reference to the *Histoire des derniers troubles*. There Mary's veritable "*Testament*"—marked out for attention as such in the margin—is cited in the parliamentary remonstrances to Elizabeth as "*instituant son heritier le Roy d'Espagne, au cas que son fils ne restablit la religion Catholique en Escosse* [establishing as her heir the King of Spain, unless her son restores the Catholic religion in Scotland]" (fol. 59^r)—something nobody expected to happen. This is an argument against Mary that Montchrestien chooses not only to suppress as one of those offered to Elizabeth, but to transform radically by way of Mary's ecumenically pious hopes for her son. The intertextual effect is to highlight the elision.

There are still more flagrant omissions and distortions in the play's picture, compared with Matthieu's. The latter concludes his account of Mary, now in his historian's voice, with a few terse sentences summing up the successive murders of David Riccio and Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley (Mary's husband), then her re-marriage with James Hepburn, Earl of Bothwell, who was suspected of Darnley's murder; thereupon, Matthieu continues, the people revolted, "*l'accusa d'adultere & de parricide, la fait prisonniere* [accused her of adultery and parricide, imprisoned her]" (fol. 60^v).³⁰ Montchrestien keeps all this out of the allegations made directly against his heroine, while her problematic relation with Darnley is subsumed into Mary's grandiloquent lament over the mutinous people who perversely imagined her complicit in the death of the husband she loved so well. Her innocence, which is not insisted on by Matthieu, is proved in the play by a common dramatic device; she is given a sentimental apostrophe delivered in monologue as proof of sincerity:

Can you bear, dear spouse, who now peacefully repose
Where blessed spirits dwell, to hear lies such as those?
Or see your dear other half spurned before your eyes,
Whose devotion to you lives after your demise?

[*Peux-tu bien, cher mary, qui maintenant reposes
Au seiour bien-heureux entendre telles choses?
Peux-tu voir diffamer ta plus chere moitié
Qui mesme apres ta mort vit en ton amitié?*]
(ll. 779-82 [Act III]; p. 92)

From Matthieu's narrative of these notoriously sordid events, the playwright most obviously recuperates only the historian's impeccably non-judgemental moral—" *Allez faire estat des felicitez du monde* [Go judge the worth of worldly felicities]" (fol. 60^v). The

30 For a historical account, see Fraser, pp. 293-398.

theme serves as a basis for numerous variations in Mary's later monologues and in the effusions of both the general Chorus and that of Mary's women. It also, however, matches the conclusion of a far less impartial intertext, as will be seen.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of Matthieu's account and "*Digression*" in intertextual terms is their embedding within his narrative of the events leading up to the 1588 execution, on the orders of Henri III, of Henri, Duke of Guise, and his brother Louis, Cardinal of Guise. Indeed, the moral about worldly felicity is immediately followed by a pointed juxtaposition: "*Retournons voir Monsieur de Guise qui se trouue empesché à Paris* [Let us go back to see Monsieur de Guise, who finds himself blocked in Paris]" (fol. 60^v). That is the end of Book II; the killing (by ambush) is actually accomplished, and its aftermath analysed, in Book IV. What stands out overall in Matthieu's treatment here, as with that of Mary, is its balanced presentation and argumentation. Guise's heroic qualities, popularity and zeal for the Catholic religion are acknowledged; so, however, are the danger to public order posed by Guise's fomentation of rebellion and the king's defence of royal prerogative in punishing such an offence of *lèse-majesté*.

There was, of course, both a family and a politico-religious connection between the House of Lorraine and Mary Stuart, whose mother was Mary of Guise. The Guises, instigators of the Holy League (*Sainte Ligue*), which ultimately challenged the authority of Henri III and provoked his retribution, were also involved over a period of years in various schemes to free her—and to put her on the throne of a Roman Catholic England. The warning to Elizabeth against "leagues [*Ligues*]" (l. 484 [Act II]; p. 85) by Montchrestien's Chorus of the Estates appears highly charged in this context. The play's Mary, by contrast, naturally enough directs one of her "adieux" to her Lorraine kinsmen,

princes of the blood, who cause to resound
The universe with honour, men of Lorraine, crowned
With laurels, proving your brave race, in all men's sight,
Still boasts the Idumean trophies with good right.

[*Princes du sang honneur de l'univers,
Adieu braues Lorrains qui de Lauriers couuers,
Faites que vostre Race en tous lieux estimée,
Vante encor' à bon droit les palmes d'Idumée.*]
(ll. 1241-44 [Act V]; pp. 103-4)

"Idumean" refers to Edom in ancient Palestine, hence to the crusading heritage claimed (and used politically) by the House of Lorraine on the basis of the exploits of Godfroy de Bouillon, who captured Jerusalem and became its sovereign in 1099. It is very familiar rhetoric in the discourses of the League, and it is not surprising to hear it coming from Mary's mouth.

What is far more surprising, and incongruous with the situation in 1587, to say nothing of the perspective available in 1601, is that she has just, in the previous lines, bidden a similarly exalted “adieu” to the Duke of Guise’s arch-rival, who, less than a year after her death, would have him eliminated:

Adieu to your³¹ great Henri, monarch glorious,
Dearly cherished by the heavens, to the earth precious,
Who carries love in his eyes, grandeur in his visage,
Eloquence in his mouth, in his heart Mars’s image.

[*Adieu ton grand Henry, Monarque glorieux,
Delices de la terre et doux souci des Cieux,
Qui porte aux yeux l’amour, la grandeur au visage,
L’éloquence en la bouche, et Mars dans le courage.*]
(ll. 1237-40; p. 103)

Moreover, she has expressed herself in terms that recognisably echo the character of Henri as represented by Matthieu himself—but in a radically different context. As Montchrestien would have known perfectly well, Matthieu had undergone a drastic political conversion since his own days as an activist in, and propagandist for, the Holy League based in Lyons. Only in 1594 did he rally to the royalist cause, as embodied now in Henri IV, after the latter’s conversion to Catholicism.³² The most notably literary product of Matthieu’s League period was his tragedy *The Guisiade* (*La Guisiade*), composed in immediate response to the assassination of the Guises, which passed through three editions in the course of 1589, the latest reflecting in revision Henri’s own murder at the hands of Jacques Clément, which was generally attributed in League discourse to divine retribution.

In *The Guisiade*, Henri III is naturally an arch-villain and hypocrite, driven largely by jealousy, sympathetic to heresy and allied with the English,³³ while Guise is the selfless

31 She is apostrophising France. It is perhaps the strength of the irony that induces Crivelli, ed., l. 1237, n. ll, to discern a direct reference to Henri, duc de Guise, “prétendant au trône”, as seems far-fetched from several points of view.

32 For an overview of Matthieu’s career, see Richard Hillman, Introduction, *The Guisiade*, by Pierre Matthieu, *The Tragedy of the Late Gaspard de Coligny* [by François de Chantelouve] and *The Guisiade*, trans. and ed. Richard Hillman, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation, 40 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005), pp. 57-71, 57-63. I will be citing this translation.

33 Elizabeth had bestowed the Order of the Garter on Henri III in 1575, and the countries were allied militarily through the Treaty of Blois—hence the reproaches that Matthieu causes to be directed at the king by his mother, Catherine de’ Medici:

If your soul were wholly God’s, pure and without blemish,

champion of his heroic family, and ultimately a martyr to true religion and the national interest. In the play's second scene, the King has a long self-justificatory monologue, including a bitter apostrophe of the city of Paris, which had mutinied in favour of Guise; here are the lines that Montchrestien is pretty clearly recalling by way of Mary:

I am a great and potent king, the Lord's anointed,
As judge of last resort over the French appointed;
My breast and my back, as if clad in armour plates,
My true right protects; from my face love radiates;
I have courage in my heart, and in my hand power,
Sure means to bring about my victorious hour.

[*Je suis l'Oinct du Seigneur, ie suis Roy grand et fort,
Je suis sur les François iuge en dernier ressort,
Ma poitrine & mon dos, comme d'une cuirasse,
S'arme de mon bon droict, i'ay l'amour en la face,
L'ay en main le pouuoir, & le courage au cueur,
Asseurez instruments pour me rendre vainqueur.*]
(*The Guisiade*, ll. 505-10 (Act II); *La Guisiade*, pp. 23-24)

As for the king's "eloquence", Matthieu not only recreates it, but explicitly acknowledges it himself in his introductory Argument to III.ii (*The Guisiade* [p. 222]; *La Guisiade*, p. 42). And in an ironic structural reminiscence, much as Mary moves on to her "adieu" to the Guises, so *The Guisiade* next introduces the Duke of Guise himself, Henri's rival and destined victim, who interrupts the king's monologue and unwittingly attracts a kind of "adieu" himself: "Ah! Here I see the mover of those rebels' actions [*A! ie voy venir le chef de ces rebelles*]" (*The Guisiade*, l. 547 [Act II]; *La Guisiade*, p. 25).

Never would you have had the garter from the English.
You would not be caressing, sister-like, their queen;
The Huguenot in France would not be so serene.

[*Si vous auiez à Dieu l'ame pure & entiere,
L'Anglois ne vous aurait donné sa jarretière,
Vous ne caresseriez sa Royne comme seur,
L'Huguenot ne seroit par la France si seur.*]
(*The Guisiade*, ll. 387-90 [Act I])

The original is cited from Pierre Matthieu, *Troisiesme edition de la Guisiade, tragedie nouvelle. En laquelle au vray, & sans passion, est representé le massacre du Duc de Guise. Reueuë, augmentee, etc.* (Lyons: Iaques Roussin, 1589), p. 17.

In its application of high tragic style and self-conscious neo-classical technique to more-or-less current political reality, *La Guisiade*, frank propaganda play though it is, makes a close dramatic precedent for *The Queen of Scotland*. Matthieu, an experienced playwright, was adept in Humanist dramatic procedures. His work is cast completely in Alexandrine couplets, except for the choruses. There is extensive use of monologue and stichomythia, as well as speeches of persuasion addressed to the monarch by the “Estates” (those of Blois in 1588) and by counsellors (enigmatically collectivised as the “N.N.”) who urge him forward in the execution. A Messenger recounts the action as such, which takes place offstage. Certainly, Montchrestien eschews the quasi-medieval diabolism with which Matthieu endows his villains (the Duke of Épernon, the N.N.). But all in all, there is no surviving specimen of the sixteenth-century theatre of propaganda to which Montchrestien appears more indebted, and it is as if this debt, like the one to the *Histoire des derniers troubles*, is deliberately signalled intertextually.³⁴

V

How should one understand this effect, given that *The Queen of Scotland* eschews propaganda and uses its politics as a springboard for representing intense human experience, coded as transcendently tragic? And in this context, what does it mean that Matthieu’s dispassionate account of the conflict between Henri III and Guise in the *Histoire des derniers troubles* serves as a frame for the conflict between Elizabeth and Mary, which he evokes, with similar circumspection, in passages demonstrably used by Montchrestien? From an intertextual point of view, a double and contrary movement, at once towards and away from tragic experience as such, seems to be at work.

What most obviously distances a historical event from the intensity of its impact is the passage of time: this is one way—obviously not the only one, given the difference in genres (not to mention Matthieu’s evolving self-interest)—of approaching the discrepancy between the sense of immediacy conveyed in *The Guisiade* and the detached perspective of the *Histoire des derniers troubles*. One may take as an example the contrast in effect (regardless of the “true facts”) between Henri’s reaction to Guise’s death as presented in the tragedy and in the history. *La Guisiade* portrays him (through a Messenger) as crowing in triumph on the spot: “He cried, ‘All alone, all alone I wish to reign / I am the King henceforth; we are no longer twain’ [*Il s’escrie, Tout seul, tout seul regner ie veux: / Je suis Roy maintenant, nous ne sommes plus deux*]” (*The Guisiade*, ll. 2083-84 [Act V];

34 Hence, perhaps, the juxtaposition of the plays by Griffiths, pp. 93-94

La Guisiade, p. 87). The historical account dispassionately records the king's actions, confining itself to indirect discourse:

La premiere chose que le Roy fit ce iour au sortir de son Cabinet fut de porter luy mesme les nouvelles a la Royne sa Mere, a laquelle il dict qu'il estoit Roy desormais, qu'il n'auoit plus de compaignon.

[The first thing the king did that day when he left his private apartment was to carry the news himself to the queen mother, to whom he said that he was king from then on, that he no longer had any companion.]
(fol. 159^r)

The similarity to James's reported, "Now I am sole king", is no doubt fortuitous, except insofar as it issues from a similar political dynamic. (By contrast, if Elizabeth ever uttered such a sentiment, it must have been strictly to herself.)

In any case, such distancing also applies to the execution of Mary as Matthieu presents it. Whatever its continuing capacity to raise ideological hackles for the English, for the French historian it has within a few years become a subject for relatively abstract debate on points of law and justice, not humanity. For even if a recollection of the charge of "*cruauté* [cruelty]" (fol. 55^r) triggers the "*Digression*", Matthieu explicitly seeks to subject to reason the emotional reactions expressed by the French and English at the time: "*il faut voir si nostre dueil [sic] est plus soustenable que leur resiouissance* [we must see whether our sorrow is more justifiable than their rejoicing]" (fol. 55^r). The distancing is reinforced by the cold eye simultaneously cast on the Henri-Guise struggle: the historical Henri's reaction to Mary's execution is not developed beyond the fact that he put on mourning, as was virtually obligatory, while the implication remains that he himself, under threat from a powerful rival, would find himself compelled to act likewise less than two years later.³⁵ As the retrospect of Matthieu's French gentlemen in itself suggests, the emotion aroused by Mary's case belongs to the past, when a well-documented effusion of grief and outrage in France followed arrival of the news (after weeks of delay caused by the closing of the English ports). Again, it is in the discourses caught up in the immediacy of the event that a tragic dimension may be registered with claims—however specious—to transcend the political.

A plethora of documents of this kind would have been available to Montchrestien, none in dramatic form (as far as we know), but many akin in spirit to *The Guisiade*:

35 Cf. the reaction recorded at the time by the ambassador of Philip II of Spain, to the effect that Henri was not saddened because of his hatred of the Guises, on whom he wished to revenge himself; see Paule Henry-Bordeaux, *Marie Stuart* (Paris: Plon, 1938), p. 441.

League-associated productions ostentatiously subsuming the political within evocations of the universally human. They have been reviewed by a number of scholars, most recently by Charpentier,³⁶ but firm conclusions about borrowings remain elusive. This points to the limits of source-hunting when one is dealing with recurrent thematic and imagistic clusters, whose main interest for the playwright evidently lies in the emotional charge with which they were originally invested.

This is the case, I believe, even with one document that stands out for its privileged position within the discourse of mourning and presents a number of close intersections with *The Queen of Scotland*—namely, the funeral oration preached before the assembled court in Notre Dame Cathedral on 12 March 1587 by Renaud de Beaune, Archbishop of Bourges. The attribution of the text multiply reprinted under his name has been called in question,³⁷ but its tone and orientation certainly match what one would expect of that militant advocate of the League. (He was the spokesman for the clergy during the 1588 Estates of Blois; several of his addresses to the king were published, and a summary was transformed by Matthieu into a key oration within *The Guisiade* [III.iib, Argument and ll. 1099-1198; *La Guisiade*, pp. 48-52].) Some of the themes are commonplace, and it is natural to find them echoed in the play—for instance, the glorious crusading heritage of the House of Lorraine, which would have seemed largely beside the point, one suspects, in the post-League climate of 1601.³⁸ Others, by contrast, would doubtless have posed even more of a political problem for Montchrestien than he actually experienced, as when the malicious and fearful English councillors are said to have been motivated by fear of Mary's right of succession to the aging Elizabeth.³⁹ But Montchrestien would have had no reservation, on the contrary, in playing up details carrying an emotional charge of a strictly human kind, and several notable ones are deployed as the *Oraison* builds up to the climax of "*ceste piteuse tragedie* [this pitiful tragedy]" (p. 42).

36 See Charpentier, pp. 216-26.

37 I cite "Oraison fvnebre de la Roynie d'Escosse, sur le subject de celle prononcee par Monsieur de Bourges", annexed with separate pagination to Adam Blackwood, *Martyre de la royne d'Escosse, douairière de France, etc.* (Antwerp: G. Fleysben, 1588; STC 3108). "[S]ur le subject" seems to offer scope for adaptation, but Charpentier, p. 218, claims outright authorship for the prelate and legal scholar Guillaume du Vair. Without further evidence, the point seems doubtful. One of the most striking features of the oration is the personal recollection of Mary's marriage to the dauphin François in the same setting ("*Beaucoup de nous ont vue...* [Many of us have seen...]" [p. 47]). This had taken place in 1558, when Du Vair was two-years-old.

38 See Renaud de Beaune, p. 7.

39 See Renaud de Beaune, pp. 24-25. The French gentlemen in Matthieu, *Histoire des derniers troubles*, fol. 56^v, also takes her right for granted but thinks this should have made for kind treatment by Elizabeth.

From the point in Act Three following pronouncement of the death sentence, Montchrestien multiply develops Mary's consoling of her downcast ladies-in-waiting with reminders of earthy vanity and the promise of heavenly felicity (ll. 943 ff.; p. 97). These are commonplaces, of course, but they are movingly set out, and they fulfil a pattern attached by the *Oraison* to Mary's behaviour throughout her hardship:

Combien de fois l'a-on vue pendant ce temps consoler ses pauvres serui-teurs, qui deploroient sa misere: avec quelle resolution mespriser les grandeurs de ce monde: se rire de ceste muable & instable Royauté, & prejuger par ses discours qu'une ferme & asseuree felicité l'attendoit au ciel, non en la terre: entre les Anges, & non entre les hommes?

[How many times has one seen her during that period console her poor servants, who deplored her misery: with what resolution despise the grandeurs of this world, laugh at this mutable and unstable royalty, and bear witness by her discourses that a firm and assured felicity awaited her in heaven, not on earth; among the angels, not among men?] (p. 23)

In both texts, when she is enjoined to be ready for death the following morning, she projects herself with joy into the coming day:

O heureuse journee, qui eschangera mes langueres et tristesses en vie heu-reuse et divine, & qui me tirera d'entre les mains de mes ennemis pour me mettre avec mon Dieu, mon Createur, & Sauueur.

[O happy day, which will exchange my languors and sorrows for life joyful and divine, and which will take me from the hands of my enemies and place me with my God, my creator and saviour.] (Renaud de Beaune, p. 39)

O happiest of days, which means a queen will gain,
By escaping from two prisons, escape from pain,
To enter those heavens from which one never parts,
While the horrors of death can never touch our hearts.

*[O iour des plus heureux tu feras qu'une Reine
Sortant de deux prisons sortira de sa peine,
Pour entrer dans les Cieux d'où iamais on ne sort,
D'où n'approchent iamais les horreurs de la
mort.]*

(Montchrestien, ll. 945-48 [Act III]; p. 96)

And indeed, the preacher has already opined:

*Que peut-il arriuer plus heureux à celle qui vieillit en vne cruelle prison,
qu'vne mort auancee, & à celle qui desire la mort que de mourir pour
l'honneur de Dieu & tesmoignage de sa verité?*

[What happier event could come to her who was growing old in a cruel prison than a speedy death, and to one who desired death than to die for the honour of God and as a witness to his truth?] (Renaud de Beaune, p. 30).

This draws its impact from the rhetoric of martyrdom, which Montchrestien also assigns to Mary:

In defending my faith I will die for his glory;
Of a palm⁴⁰ this shameful tormenting is the price,
Paid to make my life to his name a sacrifice

*[Je mourray pour sa gloire en deffendant ma foy.
Je conqveste vne Palme en ce honteux supplice,
Où ie fay de ma vie à son nom sacrifice.]*

(l. 1470-72 [Act IV]; p. 109)

Blood is essential to martyrdom, and it abounds in both texts. When the executioner had finished, the *Oraison* reports, the blood poured from the body “à gros boüillons [in great floods]” (p. 44), while in Montchrestien it “flowed out in great surges [*Ondoye à gros boüillons*]” (l. 1406 [Act V]; p. 108). The latter notably omits the *Oraison*’s politically barbed addition that it called out to God and men for vengeance: however commonplace the call for vengeance within the biblically derived discourse of martyrdom (stemming most directly from Revelation 6:10), there is no place for it in the purely beatific vision proffered by Montchrestien’s Mary (ll. 1471-76; p. 109), which corresponds rather to that of Revelation 7:9-17.

In developing the idea of Mary’s seemingly more-than-human beauty, now destroyed in a way that drives home the evanescence of all mortal glories, Montchrestien might almost seem to be tracing the contours of the pathetic peroration of the *Oraison*. The preacher’s starting point is the way in which that “*excellente beauté (l’un des miracles du monde) est fletrie en vne dure prison, & en fin toute effacee par vn piteuse mort* [excellent

40 The palm, as an ancient emblem of victory, was applied in Christian symbolism to martyrdom, by which, as with the passion of Christ, the spirit triumphs over the flesh. The martyred carry palms in Revelation 7:9.

beauty (one of the miracles of the world) was spoiled in a rigorous prison, and finally wholly effaced by a pitiful death]” (p. 48). Hence, ultimately, the lesson of the “*fragilité & inconstance* [fragility and inconstancy]” of all “*grandeurs* [forms of greatness]” (p. 49). Montchrestien, through the Chorus of her women, locates all beauty in Mary, its total evanescence in her loss:

Beauty herself when you lived here had living breath,
But when you died her nature made her perish too,
And nothing remains of her but grief for her death.

[*La beauté respiroit quant tu viuois ici,
Mais lors que tu mourus elle mourut aussi,
Et le regret pas plus en reste à la memoire.*]
(ll. 1548-50 [Act V]; p. 111)

The Chorus then launches into a surprising—at times nearly grotesque—*blason* of the vanished beauties that comprised that Beauty, as if to invest with finality the concluding lesson of universal vanity:

Since so many beauties we have seen struck to ground,
From now on cease, poor mortals, yourselves to astound
If nothing constant and lasting can be declared;
From moment to moment, we see all things are changing—
Life is like a shadow, or like a light breeze ranging:
To nothing but nothing can its course be compared.

[*Puis que tant de beautez lon a vue moissoner,
Cessez, pauures mortels, de plus vous estonner
Si vous ne trouuez rien de constant et durable:
De moment en moment on voit tout se changer;
La vie est comme vne ombre ou comme vn vent leger,
Et son cours n'est à rien qu'à vn rien comparable.*]
(ll. 1605-10; p. 112)

The lesson is certainly familiar enough, and it is anticipated with variations in various elegiac memorials to Mary Stuart—as indeed in the moral drawn by Matthieu in the *Histoire des derniers troubles*—but the *Oraison* seems particularly helpful in grasping the tragic affect which Montchrestien’s version aimed at awakening. The two-part structural anticipation of *The Scottish Queen* that Yates discerns in Matthieu’s *Histoire*, the contrasting of the English and French positions, is as clearly present in the *Oraison*, with the supplement of that affect. Without according the latter work the formal status

of source, one may at least see the playwright as infusing historical narrative and debate with the emotive force of funeral oration.

The tragic power of his last three acts, then, Montchrestien effectively recuperated from a discursive field dating back to his subject's death. But with respect to the central and cumulative feature of Mary's beauty, in particular, he was arguably reaching still further back. Charpentier has perceptively observed, with respect to *The Scottish Queen*:

Toute la poésie de Montchrestien baigne dans un climat ronsardien. Mais ici les souvenirs se font plus pressant, car Ronsard a consacré de nombreux vers à Marie Stuart, en partie regroupés dans Le Premier Livre des Poèmes dédié à [la] Roïne d'Escosse.

[All the poetry of Montchrestien bathes in a Ronsardian climate. But here the memories are made still more pressing, for Ronsard consecrates numerous verses to Marie Stuart, in part collected in *Le Premier Livre des Poèmes dédié à [la] Roïne d'Escosse.*]⁴¹

Charpentier notes, moreover, that Ronsard constantly (“*obsessivement* [obsessively]”) deploys diction and imagery evoking “*la grâce et la beauté* [the grace and the beauty]”⁴² of the Scottish Queen of France, whose mournful return voyage to her native country after her widowhood (at the age of nineteen) he heavily charges with overtones of tragic loss. For Montchrestien, no doubt, these would have prefigured her wider tragedy and, ironically, her harsh treatment when she returned to Scotland, as she herself recounts it (ll. 763 ff. [Act III]; p.92). It is a period of suffering that the *Oraison* terms a “*desastre*” (p. 17) in its own right—one that in turn prefigures her ultimate downfall. Montchrestien had at least two precedents, then, for his use of the term for his first title—the other being Matthieu's *Histoire* (fol. 59^v), as is pointed out by Yates.⁴³ The implications thus spread outward, from both the historical and personal perspectives, to cast a broad fatal shadow—classically tragic—over the whole course of her life.

VI

What may be seen as Montchrestien's strategy of neutralising the play's politics while heightening its affective engagement—a doubtfully successful manoeuvre, to judge from

41 Charpentier, p. 223.

42 Charpentier, p. 224.

43 Yates, p. 291.

the reflex reactions of both English and French authorities—may be related to the altered state of French historical tragedy at the turn of the sixteenth century. Even leaving aside the few avowed interventions in politics that survive from the second half of the sixteenth century—plays that name names and re-enact contemporary deeds, such as *La Guisiade*, *Le Guysien* (Simon Belyard, 1592) and *La tragédie de feu Gaspard de Coligny* (François de Chantelouve, 1574)—playwrights deploying classical or biblical material in this period could count on attracting contemporary applications—accurate or not, desired or not. Over the long period of the Wars of Religion, which had broken out in 1562, the country was in such a state of confusion and bitter tension that energy circulated liberally between tragic representation and tragic reality—a transfer encouraged by the ubiquitous metaphorical use in all discursive forms of “tragedy” to refer to sanguinary events in general. Garnier, Montchrestien’s most immediate model, was frank about the urgent imbrication of life and art, and of the discourses belonging to each—witness the following title: *Porcie, tragédie françoise, représentant la cruelle et sanglante saison des guerres civiles de Rome, propre et convenable pour y voir dépeinte la calamité de ce temps* [Porcie, tragedy in French representing the cruel and bloody period of Rome’s civil wars, apt and suitable for seeing depicted in this the calamity of this time].⁴⁴

The situation of tragedy arguably evolved, broadly speaking, over the final decade of the century—by way of Henri IV’s conversion (1593), the Treaty of Vervins and the Edict of Nantes (both 1598). The general reconciliation and pacification desired by the king—including the stiffened ordinance against duelling violated by Montchrestien—did not simply discourage dramatic treatments of, or readily applicable to, contemporary themes: the change threatened to render such treatments and applications irrelevant. It is as if art were beginning to separate itself from life, and to take on a life of its own.

A recent monograph by Andrea Frisch, *Forgetting Differences: Tragedy, Historiography and the French Wars of Religion*, valuably accentuates the consequences for both historiography and tragedy of the premium placed by the new régime on “*oubliance* [forgetting]”.⁴⁵ Such an approach serves at least as a starting point for accommodating the balanced, indeed contradictory, perspectives furnished by Montchrestien on the life and death of Mary Stuart. But it may be equally useful in suggesting why the dramatist harks back intertextually to established points of political crisis and emotional intensity. The point may be to bring, not tragedy to life, but life to tragedy, by recuperating the charge of immediacy at what is deemed (or hoped) to be a safe distance.

⁴⁴ Paris: R. Estienne, 1568.

⁴⁵ Andrea Frisch, *Forgetting Differences: Tragedy, Historiography and the French Wars of Religion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

One might conjecture, with due caution, that similar cultural and political forces, *mutatis mutandis*, were in play on the other side of the Channel, thanks to the resolution of the succession crisis that had dominated Elizabeth's last years. Certainly, the English chronicle history play, so popular in the 1590s and so actively engaged with issues of succession, began to occupy a diminished place in the repertoires. Could this phenomenon also be related to that genre's habitual exploitation of French-English tensions, both historically and currently? From this point of view, Shakespeare's *Henry V* (1599) might be regarded as a sort of paroxysm, not only culminating but exhausting the energies associated with such nationalism, as numerous internal ironies would tend to confirm. As for turn-of-the-century tragedy, with Henri IV on the French throne, soon followed by James (the self-styled "*Rex Pacificus*") on those of England and Scotland, the dominant cultural ambience was perhaps no longer in synchrony with a more-or-less latent idea of tragedy as built into the human condition, proceeding from and feeding back into it. Such a perspective may be tied in with the aesthetic emerging in the early seventeenth century—to which the term "baroque" or "mannerist" is often applied—which tends to be self-conscious about its artifice. This is arguably apparent even when existential issues are most directly engaged, as they are, for instance, in Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1604-5), John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612-13) or—to return closer to our starting point—Montchrestien's own *Hector* (1601-4).

Accordingly, dramatic treatments of deadly political rivalries of a kind recalling those between Henri III and Guise, Elizabeth and Mary, tend to present these power struggles, whatever their political implications and resonances, as essentially personal and self-contained, lacking a cosmic dimension and not calling in question the human condition at large. An English case in point would be George Chapman's two-part tragedy representing the rebellion against Henri IV by Charles, Duke of Biron (1607-8), despite the reminiscence, for both the French and English, of the conflict between Elizabeth and the Earl of Essex, which itself was also "safely" in the past.⁴⁶ One might cite, as well, both the French and English tragedies of Coriolanus (by Alexandre Hardy [1607?] and Shakespeare [1608], respectively), which also seem to glance "distantly" at both Biron and Essex.⁴⁷

46 See John Margeson, ed., *The Conspiracy and Tragedy of Charles Duke of Byron*, by George Chapman, *The Revels Plays* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 17, and Appendix 3, pp. 280-82.

47 See Richard Hillman, "Tragedy as a Crying Shame in *Coriolanus* and Alexandre Hardy's *Coriolan*: The 'Boy of Tears' and the Hardy Boys", *Coriolan de William Shakespeare: Langages, Interprétations, Politique(s)*, Actes du Colloque international organisé à l'Université François-Rabelais les 3-4 novembre 2006 sous les auspices de la Société Française Shakespeare, ed. Richard Hillman (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2007), pp. 175-94, esp. p. 177. A translation of Hardy's play is available: Alexandre Hardy, *Coriolan*, new ed. with introd. by Fabien Cavaillé, Eng-

These are admittedly large hypotheses, and further discussion of them would be out of place here. The immediate point to be made about *The Scottish Queen* is that Montchrestien's eclectic intertextual approach to these recent-yet-remote events seems to combine a kind of nostalgia for their former intensity and immediacy with a refusal of any political *parti pris*. Whether or not Montchrestien was ever a fervent Protestant in belief, it remains remarkable that his recreation of Mary's execution derives its expressive power, in part, from some of the most powerful elements of ultra-Catholic discourse. Naturally, it does so in "sanitised" form, for it is inconceivable that Montchrestien would have made himself an advocate for the League's reading of events—or that he could have imagined receiving the approval of King James for doing so. It seems an important part of the point, however, that in 1601, the League was effectively passé.

It is therefore all the more ironic that when Montchrestien returned to France after his long foreign absences in 1611, the year after the assassination of Henri IV and under the regency of Marie de' Medici, he found at least "*l'esprit de la Ligue* [the spirit of the League]"⁴⁸ reviving. His increasing engagement in opposition to that "spirit", or at least its concrete manifestations, led by erratic stages to his brutal but almost casual death ten years later. Yet long before then, by a further irony, perhaps the most telling of all, he had ceased to write tragedies.

lish trans. with introd. by Richard Hillman, online at *Scène Européenne, Traductions Introuvables*, Centre d'Études Supérieures de la Renaissance, Université de Tours/CNRS, 2018: <<https://scene-europeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/coriolan>> (accessed 12 September 2018). See also the Introduction to the translation in this volume, pp. 8-9.

48 Charpentier, p. 30.