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The Queen of Scotland: Tragedy

by Antoine de Montchrestien

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

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by Antoine de Montchrestien
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Richard Hillman

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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 blessèd 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 Roynne 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 ambiance 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.



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by Antoine de Montchrestien

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by Richard Hillman

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Contact : alice.loffredonue@univ-tours.fr

Translation

Richard Hillman
CESR - Université de Tours

THE QUEEN OF SCOTLAND:
TRAGEDY (1604)

By
Antoine de Montchrestien

Note on the Translation¹

Although it may not represent the text as acted (or as offered to King James), I have based the translation on the edition of 1604, on the principle that the author's latest revisions should prevail. Where it has seemed useful, variants from the 1601 edition have been mentioned in the notes. (The variants are extensive but generally restricted to points of expression and versification.)

In order to facilitate juxtaposition with Montchrestien's other tragedies, I have based the translation on the complete edition of Louis Petit de Julleville;² the text has been verified with reference to the 1975 edition of Joseph D. Crivelli, who prints the 1601 ("A") and 1604 ("B") texts (the latter based on Petit de Julleville) on facing pages; line numbers given for the earlier text are those supplied by him.³

As with my previous translations of early modern French tragedy, I have considered that hexameter couplets, however less at home in English than iambic pentameter, provide a more faithful impression of the original Alexandrines. That is the form consistently used by Montchrestien, except in some of the Choruses, which can present variations in line-length and rhyme-scheme. These I have attempted to reproduce. Punctuation has been freely modernised in the interest of clarity. At the risk of inconsistency, I have been far more sparing than the original in capitalising abstractions and religious terms, reserving this for cases where personification or spiritual exaltation is clearly entailed.

There are three distinct Choruses: the usual general choric commentator and two collective characters, who intervene in the dialogue and retain distinct identities. The original text does not distinguish these when they appear, but the distinctions are easy to infer, and I have furnished the indications as appropriate. Neither of the early texts provides stage directions. Here again I have occasionally supplied the lack where this seemed useful. All additions to the text of reference are in square brackets.

There are only two settings envisaged, if somewhat imprecisely: the English court for the first two acts; Mary's final prison (historically Fotheringay) for the remaining three. The gap of time between Act Two and Act Three is indistinct—perhaps intentionally so. The sequence thereafter is self-explanatory.

¹ Exceptionally, for the present series, there exists an English translation of *The Queen of Scotland*, under the title of *The Queen of Scots*, trans. Joseph Bourque, *Four French Renaissance Tragedies*, ed. Arthur Stabler (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1978). Apart from the fact that this work is not readily accessible, the prose translation, while no doubt more literal than verse can always be, cannot hope to convey the rhythms (in the broadest sense), colours, rhetorical richness and occasional lyricism of the original.

² Antoine de Montchrestien, *Les Tragédies*, ed. Louis Petit de Julleville, new ed. (Paris: E. Plot, Norrit et Cie., 1891).

³ Antoine de Montchrestien, *La reine d'Écosse: Édition critique avec introduction, variantes et glossaire*, ed. Joseph D. Crivelli (Paris and La Haye: Mouton, 1975).

*Speakers*⁴

1. Queen of England
2. Councillor⁵
3. Chorus of the Estates⁶
4. Queen of Scotland
5. Chorus of Ladies [henceforth, the Queen's Women]
6. Davison⁷
7. [Page]
8. Master of the Household⁸
9. Messenger
10. [Chorus]

Scenes: The English court (Acts I-II);
in and around the Queen of Scotland's (final) prison (Acts III-V).

-
- 4** Orig. "Entreparlevrs" (lacking in the 1604 ed., supplied from 1601, ed. Crivelli).
5 Orig. "Counseiller". This figure is a spokesman for the Privy Council rather than a more general "counsellor". See the Introduction, p. 11.
6 "Estates" transposes into French (and, for that matter, Scottish) terms the distinctive English institution of Parliament, as is done also by Pierre Matthieu, *Histoire des derniers troubles de France*; see the Introduction, p. 11.
7 Historically, William Davison, secretary and privy councillor.
8 Orig. "Maistre d'hostel".

Act I

Queen of England, Councillor, [Chorus]

QUEEN OF ENGLAND

1 So—until when must my soul, in its desolation,
 2 Be always shaken by some frightening sensation?
 3 Until when shall I live this way, exposed to harms
 4 From poison here at home or a foreigner's arms?
 5 An object in sunlight has one shadow, no more,⁹
 6 Whereas of evils an innumerable store
 7 Accompanies the sceptre, coveted by all—
 8 A heavy burden, though, on mind and hands to fall,
 9 Which grows from day to day, then weighs at last quite
 down
 10 Its poor possessor, vainly proud of his renown.
 11 Though the masses treat me with wearisome respect,
 12 Their mind and eyes, as I pass, ravished by my aspect—
 13 Though a hundred nations my great riches admire,
 14 Above all other princesses raise me much higher—
 15 I judge my good fortune at my misery's rate,
 16 Dupe them with a vain mask of honour and of state.
 17 The sword of Damocles that hangs above my head
 18 Threatens my fall; no shred of hope dispels my dread.
 19 The Spaniard, whom his new world gives too little room,
 20 Seeks to plant his arrogant throne upon my tomb.
 21 When force does not suffice, artifice is his way
 22 To render both my life and my estate his prey:
 23 That ambitious Pyrrhus¹⁰ puts endless plots in train,
 24 Fires all with hope, aspires all things to gain;

9 Ll. 5-10 are marked by left-margin guillemets (>>) as aphoristic, sententious or simply worthy of special attention, a common device in Humanist and later tragedy, which is used very freely in the 1604 edition (though never in that of 1601). For a discussion of Montchrestien's variable practice generally, see 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. 536-43. I indicate all such instances in the notes, but without attempting to specify the nature of the emphasis.

10 Pyrrhus: the son of Achilles, an emblem of vengeful cruelty, as in the Player's speech in *Hamlet*. (See William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, The Riverside Shakespeare*, gen. eds G. Blakefore Evans and J. J. M. Tobin, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997), II.ii.450-518.)

25 When one scheme concludes, to another he gives birth.
 26 He is known as master of both ends of the earth;
 27 Yet he is unable his thirst for gain to slake
 28 Without coming—foul crime!—this isle from me to take,
 29 And but for heaven's hand, ever to me propitious,
 30 Innocence would have seen the triumph of the vicious.
 31 My Thames, of all our fairest rivers honour's theme,
 32 Would flow for him alone in tributary stream,
 33 And my warlike people, in combat invincible,
 34 Would bear with grievous groans his yoke intolerable.
 35 But what in time to come is destined as my fate?
 36 They prepare my death when least I anticipate.
 37 A wandering and exiled queen, a fugitive,
 38 Freeing herself from some subjects who held her captive,
 39 Cast up on our shores against her own will was found,
 40 For her unhappy course to other coasts was bound.
 41 I have indeed since then denied her liberty,
 42 But otherwise her treatment suits her royalty,
 43 And while many times I wished to release her chain,
 44 Some hand of fate reached out, my purpose to restrain.
 45 All, by my example, look to the time to come:
 46 To guard a royal beauty is most burdensome!¹¹
 47 Though her tedious time in prison might impart
 48 Fierce flames of anger, with some reason, to her heart,
 49 My gentle treatment should cause her to put them out,
 50 Complain of having nothing to complain about.
 51 Reports tell me, though, that in this attempt of late,
 52 She conspires my death, aspires to my state.
 53 Can this be the love, ungrateful soul and faithless,
 54 That your lying mouth never ceases to profess?
 55 Is this the undue, unexpected payment tendered
 56 By one to whom so much good for evil I've rendered?
 57 But must I count as true things what may simply seem,
 58 And mere suspicion as firm certainty thus deem?
 59 One who believes too quickly is often deceived;¹²

11 The line is marked for emphasis.

12 Ll. 59-64 are marked for emphasis. The monologue follows the standard pattern of internal debate.

60 Believe nothing, though, and great harm may be received.
 61 One stirred by any breeze¹³ reveals inconstancy;
 62 And yet mistrust is a means to security.
 63 One dies often without dying who lives afraid;
 64 Yet better some fear than to be by death waylaid.
 65 If, then, to preserve my life, with it my crown,
 66 I have, with regret, a certain time kept her down,
 67 Never seeking her death at all, but merely trying
 68 To master her audacity—and keep from dying—
 69 Must she be from one furor to the next transported,
 70 And the whole world against me by her be exhorted?
 71 Must she incite my subjects to spurn my commands—
 72 Rouse my people, try to put weapons in their hands?
 73 In brief, through her wiles many loyal to me reckoned,
 74 Lured from their allegiance, have followed where she
 beckoned.¹⁴
 75 O heart, for such soft beauty far too inhumane,
 76 For so much treachery you secretly sustain,
 77 So much envy and spite, audacity and rage—
 78 Why do you display such tenderness in your visage?
 79 Those eyes of yours, which serve as bait for every
 heart—
 80 Will they look thus upon my death, and never start?
 81 Those stars which in the heaven of your face so shine—
 82 Are they of my dismal death a presaging sign?
 83 Would your heart not feel in some way disconsolate
 84 At seeing this fair island rendered desolate,
 85 A prey to the direst discord, with wars inflamed,
 86 Death-blows by her own sons at her other sons aimed?
 87 Will it cause you no pain to see soldiers, enraged,
 88 Spurn dead at their feet the old men that they have
 outraged,
 89 Cut children's throats with their poor fathers standing
 there,¹⁵

13 “[B]reeze”: orig. “vent”, which more strongly conveys the sense of “rumour”; I opt for preserving the image.

14 “[F]ollowed where she beckoned”: orig. “s’engage à sa cordele”. The image seems to be of dupes pulled (or “strung along”) in her train as if by a rope.

15 Orig. “Egorger les enfants presence de leurs peres”. The preposition “en” is evidently missing before

90 Force virgins still sheltering in their mothers' care,
 91 And the rivers bursting again their banks, in flood
 92 With the tears of the living, of the dead the blood?
 93 If the will to cause barbarity so obscene
 94 Can seize upon the mind of such a lovely queen,
 95 If a woman's heart, under death's spell, ever can
 96 Conceive of such a furiously evil¹⁶ plan,
 97 Then I will from this time believe that cruel bears¹⁷
 98 Resign the fury to which Nature made them heirs,
 99 And that it is woman, born for benignity,
 100 Who encloses her heart with bitter cruelty.

COUNCILLOR

101 Her mask has been removed—it's too patently true:
 102 The eye that cannot see it has a clouded view.
 103 The mind that won't believe, its own denial deals;
 104 The heart that doesn't fear it, no sentiment feels:
 105 The wretch goes to sleep, and meanwhile the storm is bred
 106 That, when he least expects it, pours down on his head.
 107 You must stay no longer, Madam, wavering thus—
 108 Have regard for the care you owe yourself, and us.
 109 For if the public good is bound to be your object,
 110 You must, for the sake of that, your own life protect:
 111 Thus you may extinguish, before they come to life,
 112 That swarthy people's¹⁸ barbarous designs for strife;
 113 Thus you will be able to bring to us assurance,
 114 Do grievous harm to Scotland, strike terror to France—
 115 Whereas, if you should die, as certain kings prefer,

“presence”, but thus in Petit de Julleville, ed., and Crivelli, ed. Cf. the version of 1601: “Esgorger nos enfants, deuant les yeux des Peres” (l. 85).

- 16** [F]uriously evil”: orig. “furieux”, echoed by “fury” (“fureurs”) in l. 98, with connotations of quasi-dia-
 bological savagery.
17 The image is later applied to Elizabeth (l. 1364 [Act V]), with the ironic effect, perhaps, of sug-
 gesting that the two rivals tragically misunderstand each other. Jeff Rufo, “La Tragédie Politique:
 Antoine de Montchrestien’s *La Reine d’Ecosse* Reconsidered”, *Modern Philology* 111.3 (2014): 437-
 56, speculates, I think unhelpfully, about a possible allusion to Mary as a “fiercely defensive and
 caring mother” to James on the grounds that she-bears were popularly supposed to lick their cubs
 into shape (p. 446, n. 25).
18 “[S]warthy people”: orig. “Bazanés”. The reference must be to the Spanish, vilified above, ll. 19-34,
 and below, ll. 135-38.

116 That would destroy our faith and our own laws inter.
 117 And as a flock whose shepherd has left it to stray,
 118 Through fields in false security grazing its way,
 119 Becomes a prey to wolves with fury ravenous,
 120 Then danger of like kind would surely fall on us,
 121 If that pitiless Fate the thread were to cut through
 122 That, to our great good, joins body and soul in you.
 123 When the state is divided in several factions,¹⁹
 124 The most wicked can have a free hand in their actions.
 125 Voices of disorder, licence beyond control,
 126 To sin beyond all measure abandon the soul;
 127 All becomes indifferent, both sacred and profane:
 128 Good receives no recompense; evil fears no pain.
 129 I pray you, Madam, recall this to memory:
 130 All the kings in the world are jealous of your glory;
 131 Each one resents you, such that foreign arrogance
 132 Plots constantly for you some deadly circumstance,
 133 Seeking by any means to make your life their prize:
 134 Your death is the sole object of their enterprise.
 135 The Spaniard's attempt, repeated a thousand times,
 136 Shows clearly his aptitude for treacherous crimes,
 137 And if he has not reached the goal of his wild rampage,
 138 That's due to fortune's favour,²⁰ not diminished rage;
 139 For see how kindly heaven keeps you in its care,
 140 More so because our safety all lies in your welfare.

QUEEN

141 I know, my friend: it now appears the destinies
 142 Bind England's future to my life in their decrees.
 143 With my death making many forget what they owe,
 144 A hundred monstrous parties their heads would soon show,
 145 And as the viper is devoured by its offspring,
 146 On hapless England her own children would be feeding.
 147 At that dire thought a hundred pangs I endure—
 148 Thus can a single fear a thousand shocks procure.

19 Ll. 123-28 are marked for emphasis.

20 "[F]ortune's favour": orig. "bonheur", here implying more than good luck, given the next line.

149 Yet this black humour that my soul has tightly bound
 150 Keeps me from thinking a remedy might be found,
 151 As a patient in torment, not dying, remains
 152 And cannot, miserable wretch, relieve his pains.

COUNCILLOR

153 Leave these troubles behind—there's no easier thing,
 154 Now that the sky is serene and not threatening.
 155 The sea is well disposed, favourable the breeze;
 156 Make sail; it's overdue; occasion you must seize:
 157 For when fair weather changes to a stormy aspect,
 158 Dare merely to set out and your ship will be wrecked.
 159 He can accomplish his revenge in time of peace,²¹
 160 Who, sleeping well, prefers his cares not to increase;
 161 Then, when war comes and he must act, at last alarmed,
 162 It's all that he can do to keep himself unharmed.

QUEEN

163 Out of so confused a state, how shall I be led?

COUNCILLOR

164 The Hydra of factions cut off in one sole head.²²

QUEEN

165 Such a blow one must to Hercules' arm confide.

COUNCILLOR

166 There's no great peril in killing a homicide.

QUEEN

167 Though she is such, our laws do not to her extend:

21 Ll. 159-61 are marked for emphasis.

22 The multi-headed Lernaean Hydra, which grew additional heads to replace any cut off, was a commonplace symbol of festering political and/or religious subversion; the monster was killed by Hercules as one of his labours—hence Elizabeth's reply. The image was often applied in the Catholic cause to the Huguenots, but was reversible, like many elements in the period's discursive propaganda. See Pierre Matthieu, *The Guisiade, 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), p. 280, n. 84.

168 On God and no other do queens and kings depend.²³

COUNCILLOR

169 To kill an evil woman is a pious act;
170 Likewise to kill a tyrant—one boasts of the fact.²⁴

QUEEN

171 Consider her well—a king's mother she'll be seen,
172 Former consort of two kings, and, like me, a queen.

COUNCILLOR

173 Consider her well—rank treachery she displays,
174 And conduct that all royal majesty betrays.

QUEEN

175 My personal interest makes me judgement reject.

COUNCILLOR

176 And that same interest calls upon you to reflect.

QUEEN

177 The more I think of it, the more danger I sense.

COUNCILLOR

178 It can be lessened by avenging your offence.

QUEEN

179 That vengeance, though well earned, only God may pursue.

COUNCILLOR

180 Since you're in his place, he's entrusted it to you.

QUEEN

181 If heaven is for me, earth is to me contrary.

23 A line marked for emphasis.

24 Ll. 169-70 are likewise marked.

COUNCILLOR

182 If heaven is for you, then no harm can there be.²⁵

QUEEN

183 Its secrets are profound: human judgements devise,
184 Proposing one thing; it disposes otherwise.

COUNCILLOR

185 Since heaven is just, you are sure to be well served;
186 Let justice give the wicked what they have deserved.

QUEEN

187 No, no, some avenger from her bones would proceed,
188 Who would rob me of life and your repose impede.
189 Those rulers who cause those opposing them to die,
190 Thinking to reduce them, their foes but multiply;²⁶
191 Neighbours and friends, relations of every kind,
192 Spring to life for those to the sepulchre consigned;
193 Thus many a new shoot from the same tree will grow
194 In the place of those branches cut off by the blow.

COUNCILLOR

195 But in such a season one can so cut the tree
196 That to the very roots all withered it will be.

QUEEN

197 That remedy's considered worse than the disease.

COUNCILLOR

198 But extreme evils always need such remedies.²⁷

25 LL. 182-86 are marked for emphasis.

26 Ll. 190-96 and 198-204 are marked for emphasis. Not that examples are lacking, but audiences might have thought especially of Henri III's execution of the Guises less than two years later—a parallel encouraged intertextually; see the Introduction, pp. 15-17.

27 The proverb, still current in French ("Aux maux extrêmes, les extrêmes remèdes") was a commonplace in dramatic debates concerning radical political measures; cf. Chantelouve, *The Tragedy of the Late Gaspard de Coligny*, Vi.1077, and Matthieu, *The Guisiade*, II.ii.631, trans. and ed. Hillman.

QUEEN

199 Sometimes it is better an injury to bear
200 Than to seek out revenge, and procure greater care.

COUNCILLOR

201 But it is always better to avenge one wrong
202 Than to let meek endurance bring others along.

QUEEN

203 Between two perils it's the lesser that one chooses.

COUNCILLOR

204 But in judging, it's reason, not passion, one uses.

QUEEN

205 Executing her assures the anger of France.

COUNCILLOR

206 Does keeping her alive give you so much assurance?

QUEEN

207 We can accuse her but not mete out punishment.

COUNCILLOR

208 Since you have her in your hands, who can that prevent?

QUEEN

209 Many nations would invade my land in her name.

COUNCILLOR

210 Let those who want peace have it—war if that's their
game.²⁸

QUEEN

211 I alone will bear the blame; kings sad tears will shed.

28 The original is equally blunt: "A qui la paix la paix. La guerre à qui la guerre."

COUNCILLOR

212 At least they will not be laughing to see you dead.

QUEEN

213 Their common injury will cause them to take arms.

COUNCILLOR

214 Thunder creates more fear than ever it does harms.²⁹
 215 When a great one is punished, much noise will be heard;
 216 After the blow is struck, small effect is incurred.

QUEEN

217 The sacred blood of kings should be inviolate.

COUNCILLOR

218 Your own likewise as such she ought to estimate.

QUEEN

219 No one will believe her murderous enterprise.

COUNCILLOR

220 That is still better than being caught by surprise.

QUEEN

221 Conspiracies must always be obscurely known,³⁰
 222 Until their success by bloody effect is shown.

COUNCILLOR

223 Such knowledge comes to us, however, far too late;
 224 For meanwhile one is just the mere plaything of fate.

QUEEN

225 Far better abandon one's life, it seems to me,
 226 Than to preserve it, if that means attracting envy.

29 Ll. 214-17 are marked for emphasis.

30 Ll. 221-28 are marked for emphasis.

COUNCILLOR

227 That prince has little heart who cannot tolerate
228 Those who can murmur but not compromise the state.

QUEEN

229 Clemency³¹ prevails. I must see if she relents
230 By exploring the wound with gentle instruments.
231 I wish one more time that merciful course to try,
232 For, seeking to save her when I could have her die,
233 At least it will be known that my soul is so kind
234 That all to pardon, none to doom, I am inclined.

COUNCILLOR

235 In keeping her, keep from dooming yourself, us too.

QUEEN

236 I care little for myself but will care for you.

COUNCILLOR

237 To say so is nothing; your care you need to show.

QUEEN

238 Seeking to rid the evil, let's not make it grow.

COUNCILLOR

239 We cannot find a cure without recourse to steel.

QUEEN

240 But it must not be employed her death-blow to deal.

COUNCILLOR

241 What, does cowardly mercy your soul so possess?³²

31 Orig. (as in l. 267) “[I]a Clemence”: the virtual personification confirms that Montchrestien is fully conscious of setting out a conventional (if unusually prolonged) *clémence/rigueur* debate of the kind conventional in Humanist political drama (and modelled on the pseudo-Senecan *Octavia*). See Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), pp. 105-13.

32 Ll. 242-54 are marked for emphasis.

QUEEN

242 When it can serve us well, I'm in favour of mildness.

COUNCILLOR

243 Mildness toward the bad to the good is inhumane.

QUEEN

244 Pardon the bad and you might victory obtain.
245 But one who seeks by blood his fortune to assure
246 Must always in the end some monstrous³³ death endure.

COUNCILLOR

247 She who pardons all, or she whom one doesn't fear,
248 Is likely to end her journey in mid-career.

QUEEN

249 Fear, which only a coward's soul can dominate,
250 Makes a feeble guardian for a potent state.

COUNCILLOR

251 Permitting vice to go unpunished often brings
252 To destruction and death great kingdoms and their kings.

QUEEN

253 Excessive rigour is never from hate exempt.

COUNCILLOR

254 And laxness leads others to view us with contempt.

QUEEN

255 To have your love has always as my care appeared.

COUNCILLOR

256 You also had great need among us to be feared.

33 [M]onstrous: orig. "non commune"—that is, marked as a divine judgement.

QUEEN

257 The love of our subjects, to our clemency due,³⁴
 258 Affords far more assurance than their fear would do.

COUNCILLOR

259 The love of your subjects, therefore, on you imposes
 260 To close your eye to all but what duty discloses.

QUEEN

261 So I wish as well, but cruelty I eschew:
 262 Gentleness in women is a natural virtue.³⁵

COUNCILLOR

263 It's no cruelty at all the death to command
 264 Of her who wrongly sought to kill you out of hand.

QUEEN

265 Great honour for forgiving an offence accrues,³⁶
 266 When the power to take vengeance is there to use.

COUNCILLOR

267 If the eye penetrates as far as the intent,
 268 Punish, rather, as soon as the offence is meant.

QUEEN

269 One who pardons others to retain self-respect,³⁷
 270 Though knowing one is wrong, extreme praise should expect.

COUNCILLOR

271 But often to a foreign power he falls prey
 272 If he dares not punish his subjects when they stray.

34 Ll. 257-60 are marked for emphasis.

35 L. 262 is marked for emphasis.

36 Ll. 265-78 are marked for emphasis.

37 “[T]o retain self-respect”: orig. “Pour l’amour de soy-mesme”. A literal translation would make the action sound selfish, when the contrary is clearly intended. “[W]rong” in the next line (orig. “fautive”) accordingly refers to practical governance, not to higher morality.

292 And blood in gushing torrents flowing to the sea.
 293 What am I saying? You'll see this? Perhaps your sight
 294 Will have doused its clarity in a mortal night,
 295 And amidst so many woes this good will remain—
 296 That you cannot see them, or suffer any pain.
 297 Happy then he who will sleep in the dusty grave,
 298 Rather than languish captive in some sombre cave,
 299 Where, as within a tomb, but buried all alive,
 300 In vain for him will sea-sleeping Phoebus revive.

QUEEN

301 Well, then, to prevent that such a dangerous storm
 302 Around you and my own innocent head should form,
 303 In prison she must be placed with greater restraint.
 304 I refuse to be blamed; I do it by constraint.

COUNCILLOR

305 To set yourself free from that prisoner indeed,
 306 Far more than the usual measures you will need:
 307 On her legs and hands with a hundred fetters load her,
 308 To still more rancorous schemes you'll only goad her,
 309 And if ever somehow she can cast off her chain,
 310 She'll then delight in enterprises inhumane;
 311 A thousand deaths, a thousand evils she'll foment;
 312 The memory of restraint her rage will augment,
 313 Her natural furor still adding to her fierceness.
 314 Just so the tiger or the ruddy lioness,
 315 Having lived a certain time in the cage confined,
 316 If they reach open country much wilder we find:
 317 They're seen to do more damage, killing, deadly hurt,
 318 Than those who have been nurtured in the savage desert.

QUEEN

319 Softness through mercy we'll be able to impart,
 320 Even if she had a stone instead of a heart
 321 And in the Caucasus⁴⁰ were her nativity.

40 "Caucasus": orig. "mont Caucase"—metonymic here for remoteness and barbarity, in keeping with

322 For then it would be only through my clemency
 323 That of her life and liberty she gained possession,
 324 When both she should have forfeited by her transgression.

COUNCILLOR

325 Her treacherous spirit is by nature so strong
 326 That those precious benefits she would count a wrong.
 327 I know her mind. An ingrate bound to gratitude⁴¹
 328 Is bound to strike back with a vicious attitude.

CHORUS⁴²

329 Happy the Golden Age when, no desire knowing
 330 Great honours to possess,
 331 Man felt the days of his life glide gently flowing
 332 In equal happiness.
 333 Not afflicted was he by either hope or fear,
 334 Nor by ambition spurred;
 335 His body vigorous of suffering was clear,
 336 His heart no passion stirred.
 337 He did not wish to see his life held in esteem,
 338 For his deeds celebrated,
 339 Nor for a taste of glory, mere vanishing steam,
 340 All evils tolerated.
 341 He fed himself with fruits the earth with kindly look
 342 All by itself supplied,
 343 And, stretched out at full length above a crystal brook,
 344 His thirst he satisfied.
 345 Free, through the verdant woods he strolled with easy
 paces
 346 For his sheer delectation,
 347 And did not yet inhabit any noisy places,
 348 Crowded with population.
 349 In summer, when weary, refreshing rest he found
 350 Within the cooling shade,

the ancient Greek view of the world. It seems possible that the popular English opinion of the Scots is glanced at.

41 Ll. 327-28 are marked for emphasis.

42 The whole of the Chorus is marked for emphasis.

351 And at night in a savage cave he slept, on ground
352 With soft moss overlaid.
353 There, with no inkling at all of the world's vain cares,
354 He took his ease apart;
355 Not grief or longing (which a thousand ills prepares)
356 Came to consume his heart.
357 Who would not choose the joys that such sweet things
propose,
358 The pomp of kings to scorn?
359 Who would not wish in such a way to pluck the rose
360 Without the pricking thorn?
361 The ardent ambitions that princes' spirits fill
362 Severely cloud their judgement;
363 By their glory they acquire less good than ill:
364 Their ease is merely torment.
365 Their repose is centred in the midst of their pain;
366 Their day exchanged for night;
367 Their grandeur at its height is but an idol vain,
368 Which dupes the people's sight.
369 Their state has nothing sure but its incertitude;
370 An instant turns the tide
371 And sees their freedom fallen into servitude,
372 Their glory mortified.
373 Although all prize and honour them with deference,
374 No joy to them accrues,
375 For still the worm of care devours them in silence,
376 While they themselves amuse.
377 I count him truly happy who lives out his age
378 Free from fear and despond,
379 And who limits his desires to his own village,
380 Never looking beyond.

Act II

Chorus of the Estates,⁴³ Queen of England, [Chorus]

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

381 O sovereign honour of ladies sovereign, and means
 382 Of henceforth rendering blessèd the yoke of queens,
 383 Deign⁴⁴ to lower your lightning-flashing eyes and view
 384 This band of humble subjects, prostrate here before you,
 385 Who come to ask you through my voice to keep your word,
 386 Sure in their hearts that you, great Princess, never heard
 387 To break a promise even to your enemies,
 388 Would never so your faithful followers displease,
 389 But that you will give assent that the righteous sentence
 390 Delivered in full Council in your sacred presence
 391 Against that princess be applied without delay,
 392 For new factions spring to life with every day.
 393 It is what we all desire. The country's welfare
 394 Urges you, and that must now be your only care;
 395 You see your Estates are resolute on this score,
 396 And your devoted people ask for nothing more.
 397 Your goodness has no time to take the risk of mercy:
 398 That you may guard us well, guard well your Majesty—
 399 And that you cannot do by thinking our law brings
 400 With it licence for her to practise on our kings.
 401 Let it suffice that England, by my speech, will swear
 402 That she, just by your death, a greater loss would bear
 403 Than all it ever gained by means of those bold knights
 404 Who in the field of lilies proved their laurels' rights.⁴⁵
 405 They died in a war that was sheer frivolity,

43 The impression given by this Chorus is of a French-style constituent assembly representing the traditional “Estates” (clergy, nobility, commons) and humbly exhorting the monarch. Indeed, *mutatis mutandis*, the speech recalls the exhortations of Henri III during the 1588 Estates of Blois, as recreated by Matthieu in *The Guisiade*, III.ii(a-e).

44 The Chorus of the Estates, unlike the Councillor of the previous act, consistently uses the familiar *tutoiement* in addressing the queen. This is, perhaps, suggestive of prayerful supplication, as in addressing a deity.

45 The reference, obviously, is to England's victories over the French (symbolised by the *fleur-de-lys*), especially in the Hundred Years War, though Montchrestien is not about to endorse the cause.

406 And you, showing towards your own land more charity,
 407 Can preserve it from any harmful enterprise,
 408 If with a stroke the deadly schemes you neutralise.
 409 But if with that cruel tempest it is left to cope,
 410 The state is headed for such shipwreck without hope
 411 That picking up the broken pieces will prove vain,
 412 And glory and honour will fall into disdain.
 413 She whose feats of arms once gave the whole world a shock
 414 Those who have conquered her will find a laughing-stock;
 415 Those who to see her banners trembled in their hearts
 416 Will rush to assail her, surging up from all parts.
 417 With countenance all pale, therefore, towards you
 turned,
 418 And more for you fearing than for herself concerned,
 419 Imagine you see her, hear her address you so,
 420 Breaking her words with drawn-out sighs and sobs of woe:
 421 Daughter, of me born to be a mother to me,
 422 Queen dear to my heart, to my welfare necessary,
 423 Take heed for your safety, and if not for your own,
 424 Let care for your people, mine—and myself—be shown.
 425 If ever you desired to die for our sake,
 426 The rest of your life—alive—we now wish to take.
 427 Blest is that lady to whom the heavens as friend⁴⁶
 428 By their exceeding favour so much bounty lend
 429 That she may live a life the public good to serve,
 430 Gain the praise of all, honour for herself deserve.

QUEEN

431 O what unhappiness attends on human grandeur,
 432 Although it bursts upon the eyes with fairest splendour,
 433 If from those themselves unhappy it must be guarded?
 434 What may that hand not do when no risk is regarded?
 435 He who foretells a storm heads for a port to beat it;
 436 He who foresees a danger must take steps to meet it;
 437 So I wish to assure my life and my estate,
 438 As the public interest and my own welfare dictate.

46 Ll. 427-37 are marked for emphasis.

QUEEN

465 To convict her was right, but to condemn her wrong.

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

466 To the crime, not the rank, the sentence should belong.

QUEEN

467 I wish once again to delay this execution.

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

468 Be careful, then, not to advance our destitution.⁴⁹

QUEEN

469 What more, I ask you, can this chained-up woman do?⁵⁰

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

470 What can she not, so determined evils to brew?

QUEEN

471 Too late after her death repentance will arrive.

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

472 In a few days you'll feel she is all too alive.

QUEEN

473 One would suppose her setting sail⁵¹ for her perdition.

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

474 After the shipwreck, the mariner still sails on.

QUEEN

475 If she dares undertake it, she'll have punishment.

49 With this line, the Chorus adopts the formal “vous” in addressing the Queen. This corresponds to a shift from emotional supplication to earnest advice.

50 The line is marked for emphasis.

51 With “esuentée”, which literally refers to a sail spread to catch the wind, the nautical metaphor is taken up that was introduced in l. 461.

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

476 You've reached that point already, and cannot relent.
 477 See the French cuirasses dazzle with flashing steel;
 478 Hear the drums of the Scottish beating their appeal,
 479 And the fifes of Spain⁵²—already her jeopardy
 480 Arouses all the world, and to render her free
 481 They will cover the whole sea with oars and with sail;
 482 Our rich ports with fire and sword they will assail.
 483 In our midst, meanwhile, that ruinous fire-brand
 484 Will be setting leagues⁵³ alight on every hand.
 485 And that mortal plague enclosed deep within our marrow
 486 With worse evil than cruel war our lives will harrow—
 487 Whereas, if you will simply consent to her death,
 488 You can, in its cradle, stifle that effort's breath,
 489 And by a little blood put out that conflagration
 490 Which, as it creeps along, provokes more trepidation.⁵⁴

QUEEN

491 Well then, my friends, you may do as you have proposed;
 492 For my part, your intentions will not be opposed;
 493 On both sides equal reason to my mind appears—
 494 And peril; I'll give no order that interferes
 495 With one course or the other. Yet again reflect
 496 On where you should your efforts prudently direct.

CHORUS OF THE ESTATES

497 May heaven's blessing crown our lofty enterprise,
 498 Earth view the great event with favourable eyes!
 499 Let the Spirit⁵⁵ of England others dominate,

52 The association of the Spanish threat with Mary's cause is sound enough (the Armada, long in preparation, finally sailed in 1588, the year after her execution), but with respect to France and, especially faction-ridden Scotland (where James VI had officially replaced his mother as sovereign at the age of one in 1567), the evocation of united military action is fanciful.

53 "[L]eagues": orig. "Ligues". Although the word can be applied to factions generally, it is likely to have evoked the activities of the Holy League, headed by the Guises, on Mary's behalf. See the Introduction, p. 14.

54 The translation attempts to capture the mixture of metaphors unfolding through ll. 485-90.

55 "Spirit": orig. "Démon", in the sense of a supernatural force that guides, inspires and protects.

577 Which travels from its cradle to its grave each night,
 578 And always from its east towards its setting inclines;
 579 A bubble wind-blown on the face of the sea-swell,
 580 Which then melts back into its liquid element;
 581 A dull spark blown to life that an instant will quell,
 582 But there is no undoing its extinguishment.
 583 Life is merely warm breath from the nostrils
 expressed,
 584 Which the seed of a grape to stifle will suffice;
 585 A lively stream of blood to irrigate the breast,
 586 Which can't be warmed again, once turned by death to ice.
 587 The moon enjoys a sun to compensate its loss:
 588 Its crescent newly filled once every month appears;
 589 But life, once covered over by death with its dross,
 590 Is never once reborn within a thousand years.
 591 If winter's trees of leafy covering are shorn,
 592 Spring dresses them again with foliage more fair;
 593 While man, once he his pleasing verdure has outworn,
 594 Cannot hope at all in such renewal to share.
 595 One cannot render to the flowers their spring hues,
 596 Once summer's heat has touched them with its blight;
 597 When once death's pallor comes our eyelids to suffuse,
 598 Then eyes, you may well say, adieu, sweet gift of light.
 599 Life never stands still yet is of such short duration
 600 And such swift motion that one does not feel it fly;
 601 As soon as it arrives somewhere, that is its station:
 602 At almost the same point we are born and we die.
 603 Death is sure for all, but to its form we are blind.
 604 Who can in the morning the day's ending construe?
 605 They seek to behead a goddess of human kind—
 606 The very mother of love and daughter of virtue.⁷¹

71 The last two lines mark a surprising *parti pris* at odds with the negative portrait of Mary presented to this point. The transition to her representation in the next act is decisively, if abruptly, signalled.

Act III

Davison, Queen of Scotland, Chorus, [Chorus of the Queen's Women, Page]

DAVISON

607 He who to grandeur's height his spirit would exalt⁷²
 608 Must expose both body and soul to the assault
 609 Of a destructive master, whose authority
 610 Leads either to the tomb or else to infamy.
 611 Possessed by mania⁷³ extreme I him pronounce
 612 Who'll lend himself to a lord and himself renounce!—
 613 Who, to gain favour fickle as the wind that blows,
 614 Deprives himself often of honour and repose.
 615 The charge imposed on me is surely very daunting,
 616 But the peril it poses I find still more haunting.
 617 I am to strike a blow, but suddenly I see—
 618 I see it, unhappy man—falling back on me.
 619 Oh, how one stricken body will give birth to strife!
 620 To what undying sorrows will one death give life!
 621 The innocent blood that must flow is infinite
 622 Before that wound can staunch what pours from it!
 623 That Hydra, as the sword-strokes double, will grow great:
 624 From one cut off a hundred heads proliferate.
 625 Meanwhile I—wretched, shunned and enfeebled with pain—
 626 I shall seek to die, but my effort will be vain;
 627 Forever will such torment prolong life for me,
 628 Justly pursued by rancour and hostility.
 629 Being so soon resolved this crime to perpetrate
 630 Will earn me equally of all of them the hate.
 631 My thoughts are constantly to Pompey's death directed,
 632 Whose murderers did not receive what they expected.⁷⁴
 633 The mastiff that to anger and to rage falls prey
 634 When a passer-by stones him to drive him away,

72 Ll. 607-14 are marked for emphasis.

73 “[M]ania”: orig. “manie”; the term and concept have mythological resonances.

74 That is, they were spurned by Caesar, instead of rewarded, when they presented him with the head of his enemy, and two of those responsible were killed. Thanks mainly to Plutarch's *Life of Pompey*, this was a notorious exemplum of the frequent fate of those who practised villainy in the hope of gaining favour.

666 Her fairest rights from her are stolen.
 667 Cease, human souls in wretchedness,
 668 To boast of all your qualities;
 669 You fan yourself with honour's breeze⁷⁸
 670 But suffer from it nonetheless.
 671 And if as good or ill befalls,
 672 We gauge the value of existence,
 673 The stupidest of animals
 674 For happiness takes precedence.
 675 One point alone there can be found
 676 Which over animals may place you:
 677 That is when the pursuit of virtue
 678 Keeps you within your duty's bound,
 679 Without appetite in your soul,
 680 Blind tyrant of your fantasy,
 681 By an access of brutal frenzy
 682 Carrying you beyond control.
 683 But who can have such confidence,
 684 Unless by favour from on high?
 685 Without that aid in vain we try
 686 Vice to resist by common sense;
 687 But some greater than human force
 688 That heaven lends us by its grace
 689 Helps us towards virtue turn our face
 690 And check vice in its tempting course.

[Enter Queen of Scotland and Chorus of the Queen's Women.]

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

691 Of which must I complain? O heaven, land and sea!
 692 Which of you three wages most bitter war on me?
 693 Ever since the sun the first time his torch ignited
 694 And the new-made world with its brilliant splendour

78 Orig. "D'vn vent d'honneur vous vous flatez".

lighted,
 695 Fate in its fury has not such sorrow inflicted
 696 On any mortal except a poor queen, afflicted
 697 As I am, wretched and filled to the brim with woes.
 698 I alone have been the target of tragic arrows,
 699 From the fatal moment of my very first hour,
 700 Which saw me greeting the light with a tearful shower,
 701 To the present day; days sad and full of lamenting,
 702 Without truce, without succour, have been my tormenting,
 703 And if I've sometimes felt a shadow of relief,
 704 That merely served to render more acute my grief.
 705 My body poor and feeble in its cradle lay,
 706 Weeping to foresee to what woes I would be prey,
 707 When the country of my birth, its spirit divided,
 708 As if to damage itself some pleasure provided,
 709 Banished from its mind ideas of fidelity
 710 And as a substitute installed disloyalty.
 711 My mother, being expelled from our ancient throne,
 712 Through secret places wandering, and all alone,
 713 Transported my cradle, watered always with weeping,
 714 When roses and flowers should have sweetened my sleeping,
 715 As if Fortune, from that time to me inhumane,
 716 Had wished to suckle me with sadness and with pain.
 717 Sometimes that great princess, her age's ornament,
 718 Would pick me up despite her abject languishment,
 719 Moved in her heart by our common pitiful case,
 720 The stream of her eyes flowing over my small face,
 721 And, lifting up to heaven her heart and her brow,
 722 Would softly sigh and speak to me as I do now:
 723 O dear part of myself, poor weak and helpless
 creature,
 724 I do not know what kind of good or evil future
 725 Destiny reserves for you; for the keenest eye
 726 Into secrets so remote has no means to spy.
 727 Well I know only that if your hapless life-span
 728 Follows along the same thread with which it began,
 729 Heaven to show its power of unhappiness
 730 Has caused you to be born here to live in distress.
 731 But say, cruel heaven, what bad or harmful thing

732 Could have been done to you by my cradle-bound offspring,
 733 Who seems every day, by dint of the tears she sheds,
 734 To implore your mercy on our pitiful heads?
 735 If the grieving mother's sins merit punishment,
 736 Why do you plague the daughter, who is innocent?
 737 Pardon her, cruel ones, and rather upon me
 738 Expend, on wretched me, this whole catastrophe.
 739 My mother in these terms to heaven made her plea,
 740 But only to enkindle its still greater fury:
 741 She had not yet arrived at her life's middle phase
 742 When an eternal night closed over her fair days,
 743 And redoubled on the orphan state that was mine
 744 Blows from a rage indomitable and malign.
 745 The winter snows scarcely seven times had I seen,
 746 And seven times the spring put on his garb of green,
 747 When I abandoned then my land once natural—
 748 No more my mother but a godmother unfaithful!—
 749 And journeyed to the shores of France, crossing the sea
 750 To seek beneath another sky new destiny.
 751 There the King wedded me, as grandly as one could,
 752 But there followed for me a mournful widowhood:
 753 He died, that noble prince, so that rigorous fate
 754 Gave a mere glimpse of him to the poor Gallic state.⁷⁹
 755 O fickle Fortune, is it thus that with your wheel
 756 Even with queens and kings inconstantly you deal?
 757 Realising then that in that court of much delight,
 758 I faced eclipse when brightest shone my own life's light,
 759 France, fair France, where all find all that may best
 divert,
 760 Was no more to my eyes than an appalling desert.
 761 I regained my own land, where my only intent
 762 Was sadly my woeful destiny to lament;
 763 But I was not there long in the midst of my complaints
 764 Before I felt more strongly its dire constraints.
 765 No sooner have I seen one of my evils leave me
 766 Than another appeared, still more cruel, to grieve me.

79 Orig. "Ne fist que le montrer aux Gaulois malheureux".

799 Still I sailed on,⁸⁴ having of the tempest less
 dread
 800 Than of my own subjects, who sought to have my head.
 801 Thus I considered that greater repose awaited
 802 In the midst of torment, the wild flood unabated,
 803 Than amongst a people stirred with treason and ire,
 804 Harboursing for their own queen's death unjust desire.
 805 Heaven did not permit me what I longed for most—
 806 That I might cast my anchor off the Gallic coast,
 807 Where I had hoped to find a foreign land less weighty
 808 To lie upon my corpse than my ungrateful country.⁸⁵
 809 But as, alas, I sought⁸⁶ that land which from me fled,
 810 The torment increased, day was into night converted;
 811 The flaming lightning-flashes that the storm emitted
 812 Like arrows half-pierced the darkness with streaks of red;
 813 The horror, the noise, the sobs and crying, the fear,
 814 Confounded the vital spirits, deafened the ear.
 815 All turned to God for aid amid that dreadful tempest;
 816 His ear proved deaf to all the prayers that they
 expressed:
 817 The air discharged his wrath,⁸⁷ and stronger than before
 818 The combat of waves and wind produced a wild uproar.
 819 Now our ship wallowed, in a gaping trough plunged
 low;
 820 Now it hurtled up, towards the stars thrust from below;
 821 Again, by equal counter-weight caused to collapse,
 822 It took in salt-water floods through the timber gaps.⁸⁸

84 Orig. "Ie single nonobstant". "Singler" (modern spelling "cingler") is specifically a sailing term, and the queen evokes her voyage in terms at once highly symbolic and vividly suggestive of a perilous maritime adventure.

85 Ll. 807-8 express her despair elliptically but clearly enough, and I translate literally, except in taking "cendres" ("ashes") in its figurative sense of "mortal remains"; see *Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, s.v. "cendre", def. II.B; online at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/>> (accessed 29 August 2018).

86 "[S]ought": orig. "suy", according to Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 290, n. to p. 93, who detects a long-s error in the 1604 text's "fuy". This is corroborated by the version of 1601: "Comme ie vay suivant ce païs qui me fuit" (l. 781).

87 "[H]is wrath": orig. "son ire"—conceivably (according to grammar) that of the air itself, but the context and the term "ire" point rather to divine anger.

88 "[T]imber gaps": orig. "fentes du bois". The meaning must be that the seams of the hull are opening under the strain.

823 To make an end, as almost our last chance dictated,
 824 A savage squall, which our wishes and prayers⁸⁹ negated,
 825 Flung it up against the barbarous English shore—
 826 People duplicitous and cruel, whose laws ignore
 827 All principles but those of force and tyranny,
 828 Whose heart in secret nurtures rage and treachery,
 829 Whose eye feeds on murder and nothing finds more dear
 830 Than when pools of human blood on the ground appear.
 831 Oh, much better for me to have been far off thrown
 832 On an uninhabited island's shore unknown,
 833 Or my torch of life in the foamy waves to drown:
 834 The ocean at least would have lent my tomb renown.⁹⁰
 835 They took me prisoner. Since then many a year
 836 Has had the time the circle of its course to steer;
 837 Not one, however, has ever restored to me
 838 The happiness of freedom lost so wretchedly.
 839 O liberty so dear, which I vainly desire!
 840 Never again, therefore, may I to you aspire.
 841 Still I hoped one day to see you make me content:
 842 That has led to nothing but further disappointment.
 843 There is no getting out of a prison so strait;
 844 Or if I am to get out, death must be its gate.
 845 They wish to strike the blow I cannot turn aside;
 846 Well, then, my life is done: for that I must provide.
 847 Evil born impatiently is harder to bear,⁹¹
 848 Courage, of human virtues, most precious and rare.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

849 Madam, whatever they say, they won't carry through.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

850 In any case, I am resolute if they do.

89 “[W]ishes and prayers”: orig. “vœux”, which in the context carries both meanings.

90 Orig. “L’Ocean pour le moins fust mon fameux tombeau”. The (ironic) idea seems to be that her renown would be magnified by the grandeur of the ocean.

91 Ll. 847-48 are marked for emphasis.

851 CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN
To treat such a princess as a mere criminal!

852 QUEEN OF SCOTLAND
One who seeks revenge thinks of nothing else at all.

853 CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN
They do it on purpose to shake your resolution.

854 QUEEN OF SCOTLAND
My heart deceives me, or it's for my execution.

855 CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN
To offend those great princes of France they'll eschew.

856 QUEEN OF SCOTLAND
They fear less to have me dead than they fear my rescue.

857 CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN
The Queen your sister will never give her assent.

858 QUEEN OF SCOTLAND
She will bear in mind my unjust imprisonment.⁹²

859 CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN
That's too much already: more she dare not condone.

860 QUEEN OF SCOTLAND
The great measure all things by advantage alone.⁹³

861 CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN
What would be said of her in every other nation?

862 QUEEN OF SCOTLAND
When passions reign, one loses sight of reputation.⁹⁴

92 That is, presumably, she will fear Mary's vengeance if she gets free—a point already raised.

93 The line is marked for emphasis.

94 Ll. 862-68 are marked for emphasis.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

863 One with no virtue at least its shadow desires.⁹⁵

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

864 One with no virtue to every crime aspires.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

865 He'll try beneath some specious pretext to conceal it.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

866 Such a one is so far gone, he dares to reveal it.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

867 Even one of modest spirit recoils from shame.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

868 A spirit impudent takes no account of blame.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

869 We must, therefore, pray: no other recourse is there.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

870 Spirits moved by fury are always deaf to prayer.⁹⁶

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

871 I remain convinced that by this design they aim
 872 To extinguish in your soul the lingering flame,
 873 Which by your offended remembrance is preserved,
 874 Of indignities your conduct has not deserved.
 875 For when to someone despairing one offers grace,⁹⁷
 876 That will, in the hardest hearts, all ill-will⁹⁸ efface.

95 I.e., the appearance of virtue. As at other points, the 1601 edition is less elliptical: "Qui n'a point la vertu se couure de son ombre" (l. 835).

96 Line marked for emphasis.

97 Ll. 875-76 are marked for emphasis.

98 "[I]ll will": orig. "mal talent", equivalent to "mauvais vouloir"; see A. J. Greimas, *Dictionnaire de l'ancien français*, Expression (Paris: Larousse, 1999), s.v. "talent".

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

877 A desolate soul can easily be deceived
878 By trusting too readily in a good conceived.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

879 A soul unfortunate mistrusts without full proof
880 And from an imminent benefit holds aloof.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

881 Once the thoughts of the heart by hope are agitated,
882 Within it endless perplexity is instated.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

883 Happy in adversity is one hope sustains,
884 Promising deliverance in the midst of pains.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

885 No, rather unhappy is the man in despair,
886 Whose vain hope of good prolongs endlessly his care.
887 Speak no more of it ever: it is not in speech
888 But in woe itself that consolation I reach;
889 Chasing far from me any pleasurable thought,
890 I embrace only those my misery has wrought.
891 Thus for quite some time now I've been in servitude,
892 Nourished by sorrow as my customary food.

[Enter Page.]

PAGE

893 Some men have come here, Madam, well enough attended,
894 Dismounted over there, as if their journey's ended.
895 Their errand I have not been able to find out,
896 But that they come from the Queen there can be no doubt.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

897 Good. If they come to us, it's clear they must be seen.
898 No good or ill will be mine, whatever they mean.
899 To all possibilities my soul is inured:
900 I am by myself of myself quite well assured.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

901 Sisters, with one voice and heart let us pray
 902 To God on high, who hearts of kings can sway,⁹⁹
 903 That he free from her torment
 904 Our Queen innocent.
 905 Let us pray to him who all power wields
 906 And demands that each obedience yields
 907 That he may have compassion
 908 Upon our sore affliction.
 909 Let us pray to him whose designs restrain
 910 The motions of those hearts most inhumane
 911 That he support our cause
 912 By pardon or by laws.
 913 Let us pray to him whose potent right hand
 914 The gates of prisons has at its command
 915 That he may set us free
 916 By granting his sweet mercy.
 917 Let us pray to him who is the sole recourse
 918 Of the afflicted, of justice the source,
 919 That he may lift the sadness
 920 Of our great princess.
 921 Let us pray to him who vows to set free
 922 The heart that suffers all with constancy
 923 That he may now redress
 924 Her pain and our distress.

[Enter Davison.]

DAVISON

925 To you, Scottish Queen, who in prison have been kept
 926 From the time when to our shores you were rudely swept,
 927 The Estates of England, in unanimity,
 928 Decided to avenge your crimes, their injury,
 929 Desire you to hear from me this just death-sentence:

99 “[W]ho hearts of kings can sway”: orig. “qui tient le cœur des Rois”—in French and English an echo of Proverbs 21:1.

930 For causing kings against us to commit offence,
 931 For dissidence fomenting, for treason conspiring,
 932 For by poison to take our good Queen's life aspiring;
 933 For re-kindling civil quarrels in divers places,
 934 Making factions and mortal hatreds show their faces,
 935 Reviving the heat of combats that long were cool,
 936 Forming parties to challenge the state's rightful rule—
 937 The Council has pronounced this warrant by me served,
 938 Of your abhorrent crimes the wages well deserved.
 939 Upon a black scaffold your beauteous head, covered,
 940 Shall fall, by the executioner's harsh hand severed.
 941 May your soul mount to heaven! In that hope supernal,
 942 Prepare yourself, Madam, to enter life eternal.

QUEEN OF SCOTLAND

943 So does the moment come at last, so long awaited,
 944 That to bring me solace by sweet repose is fated?
 945 O happiest of days, which means a queen will gain,
 946 By escaping from two prisons, escape from pain,
 947 To enter those heavens from which one never parts,
 948 While the horrors of death can never touch our hearts.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

949 O unhappy day, or rather sepulchral night,
 950 Which within the shadowy grave enshrouds our light!
 951 Without resource, without support, how will we fare?

QUEEN

952 He is never deprived whom God takes in his care.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

953 You are leaving us, Madam, and with tearful anguish
 954 Our weeping eyes the light within them will extinguish
 955 At seeing us—O grief!—amidst a thousand dangers,
 956 Among these fierce enemies and treacherous strangers.

QUEEN

957 It is you, rather, who leave me; I am not leaving:
 958 I abandon the earth and to heaven am cleaving.

959 It is a certain law for one who here descends¹⁰⁰
 960 That life that begins with birth by death always ends—
 961 That every day, hour and moment passing by
 962 Shortens the space of life we have before we die.
 963 But while the wicked death rightly as evil reckon,
 964 Yet it profits the good, whom the passing years beckon
 965 To enter, although by a bitter way, that port
 966 Though which to the celestial city resort
 967 The elect—living and not dead, young and not old—
 968 Once pilgrims, now dwelling in the heavenly fold.
 969 The runner, when he leaves the barrier behind,
 970 Already has the ending of his race in mind;
 971 The sailor who has grown weary the sea of plying,
 972 Wishes his vessel in the harbour to be tying;
 973 The exhausted traveller feels his heart grow light
 974 When the steeple of his own village comes in sight:
 975 I, therefore, having run through my allotted age,
 976 Enduring constantly the hostile tempests' rage,
 977 While I sailed on through worldly turmoil without cease—
 978 I wish to anchor in the port of perfect peace.
 979 I finish my journey in a season unkind,
 980 But all the more pleasant the dwelling I shall find,
 981 Where I shall see that pitiful Father and Lord,
 982 Who out of discord brings the gentle notes of concord;
 983 Who keeps the heavens' motions under his control,
 984 Causes the radiant stars in their dance to roll
 985 And holds this sprawling world enclosed in his strong
 fist;
 986 By whom in everyone all things diverse exist,
 987 By whom we have being, in whom our lives we prove,
 988 In whom alone we are able to feel, breathe, move.
 989 Fire, quick and agile, to heaven flies away;
 990 Water downwards is carried, so much does it weigh;
 991 For everything aspires the same place to find
 992 That God as its appointed centre has assigned:
 993 My spirit, born of heaven, to it ever turns,

100 Ll. 959-75 are marked for emphasis.

994 And with strong-thirsting ardour incessantly yearns
 995 For him—the good, the holy, the strong, the Almighty—
 996 Whom to see is a life and a death not to see.¹⁰¹
 997 Although the tempest, heaping up many a cloud,
 998 My coming to Paradise would have disallowed,
 999 And along the road a thousand troubles besides
 1000 Have surged beneath my steps, to loom up on all sides;
 1001 Although the heat and the cold, the wind and the storm,
 1002 Have attempted that happy voyage to deform,
 1003 Yet they cannot—very shortly I will be there:
 1004 I see the virgins,¹⁰² blithe at my coming, prepare
 1005 My honours; princes and kings who faithfully served
 1006 Opening in their ranks the place for me reserved,
 1007 And God himself, by glorious angels surrounded,
 1008 Receiving me in his dwelling with grace unbounded:
 1009 A thousand signs of honour and fondness he tenders,
 1010 And then the robe of rejoicing to me he renders,
 1011 With precious blood of that most innocent Lamb stained,
 1012 Who for love of his flock all sacrifice sustained—
 1013 Though God, became a man, though free, became a slave,
 1014 On the cross our sins' burden carried, and forgave.
 1015 Heaven, only comfort for our most bitter woes,
 1016 Harbour from our torments, from our evils repose,
 1017 Receive then my spirit, which, from the shipwreck rescued
 1018 Of death eternal, to your shore strays down for food.¹⁰³

101 Line marked for emphasis.

102 A reference to the 144,000 (male) virgins who follow the Lamb in the book of Revelation (14:1-5), with whose images Mary's vision here is suffused. Over ll. 1004-11, she implicitly moves from defence of her moral probity to affirmation of political uprightness and finally to a claim of martyrdom evoking Revelation 6:9-11.

103 Ll. 1017-18: orig. "Reçoy donc mon esprit qui sauué du naufrage / De l'éternelle mort descend à ton riuage". The translation elaborates slightly on the image of a shipwreck survivor—the culmination of an extended pattern in Mary's discourse—and seeks to avoid any unwanted suggestion (from "descend") of the classical underworld; no such is present in the 1601 version ("aborde"), which also adds two tendentious lines to the notion of shelter and relief:

Reçoy donc mon esprit qui sauué du naufrage
 De la mort éternelle aborde à ton riuage;
 Et le mets à couuert des orages diuers,
 Qui luy sont suscitez par ce peuple peruers.

[Receive, then, my spirit, which, saved from the shipwreck / of death eternal, lands upon your

CHORUS¹⁰⁴

1019 Do not at all let death torment you,
 1020 It is the all-too common lot:
 1021 Like the weakest, the strongest too
 1022 Endures that fortune, shuns it not.
 1023 All finish in the same condition
 1024 But diversely find that fruition.
 1025 Mortal, therefore, cease to suppose
 1026 Harsh destiny you can oppose.
 1027 If its progress one cannot force,
 1028 Neither can one divert its course;
 1029 Tears, sighs—whatever one may say—
 1030 Are vain obstacles in its way.
 1031 Of strong necessity the pull
 1032 Leads everything towards its close,
 1033 Running with steps unstoppable,
 1034 Till in its end it finds repose;
 1035 The boat's motion is not descried,
 1036 But one lands on the other side.
 1037 Our primal parents long ago
 1038 That darksome path were forced to tread,
 1039 Where different beasts by thousands go
 1040 Both night and day, by Death¹⁰⁵ conducted.
 1041 If one today quits life's sojourn,
 1042 Tomorrow it's the other's turn.
 1043 Man at his utmost term arrived,
 1044 As well as at his natal source,
 1045 Is by fatal decree deprived
 1046 Of all chance of another course,
 1047 As a river joined with the sea
 1048 Can never more a river be.
 1049 A road can any person spy
 1050 That does not lead to any place?

shore; / and shelter it from the various storms / that have been aroused against it by this perverse people.] (ll. 993-96)

104 This chorus as a whole is marked for emphasis.

105 "Death": orig. "La Parque", as subsequently in the chorus. Despite the classical reference, the nature of the personification and its associated imagery are suggestive of Death in the medieval tradition.

1051 You see the sun rise in the sky,
 1052 Then later hide from you its face.
 1053 That gives you of this truth a sight:
 1054 Death is mortality's birth-right.
 1055 One who would suffer indignation
 1056 Because he was not sooner born
 1057 Well earns a true fool's reputation:
 1058 Likewise as folly should one scorn
 1059 Desire to defer death's date
 1060 Despite the strict decree of fate.¹⁰⁶
 1061 That man cannot be firm in mind
 1062 Who fears a thing that is assured;
 1063 Fate he will just as quickly find
 1064 As terrifying and disfigured
 1065 For holding death's hour in fear
 1066 As for not, be it far or near.
 1067 To have death constantly in view,
 1068 One must the heart with courage arm
 1069 And be prepared it to construe
 1070 As benefit and not as harm.
 1071 He can never be with fear be tainted
 1072 If on his heart its form is painted.
 1073 The man who most self-knowledge uses
 1074 Is sure that whenever he dies,
 1075 Of his own time he nothing loses,
 1076 But that the rest to others flies.¹⁰⁷
 1077 However old, he will fade away
 1078 In the flower of his fairest day.
 1079 He sees Death rake¹⁰⁸ up everyone
 1080 With no respect for rank or age,
 1081 Sees everywhere beneath the sun
 1082 The whole world is Death's heritage,

106 “[F]ate”: orig. “sort”.

107 L. 1076: orig. “Mais qu’aux autres l’autre demeure”. The expression is cryptic (as in the remainder of this stanza), but the idea seems clear that time, the medium of mortality, belongs to no one and that recognising this is the key to facing death, whenever it comes, with equanimity. The translation attempts to bring this out.

108 “[R]ake”: orig. “racle”; the word refers rather to scraping or grating, but the traditional portrayal of Death as a rake-wielding harvester is surely present.

1083 And that there is no season fails
 1084 To harvest him his due avails.
 1085 Such a man spies the flight of time,
 1086 Which carries little verity
 1087 For those whose happy spirits climb
 1088 To such heights of prosperity
 1089 That nothing more they might require
 1090 But to be free of more desire.
 1091 He sees that the great and the small
 1092 By each other are closely followed
 1093 To the place that swallows them all,
 1094 And that within that pale abode
 1095 Every man by sleep is taken
 1096 Till the great day when they awaken.
 1097 To make complaint, he has no doubt,
 1098 Of the passing of some fair creature
 1099 Whose light of life death has put out
 1100 Is to do wrong by blaming Nature,
 1101 Who receives from one still more great
 1102 That law's uncompromising dictate.
 1103 He knows that in the swirling pains
 1104 Of such inconstant human days,
 1105 Death still a certainty remains
 1106 Amidst all his uncertain ways,
 1107 But that one cannot, for its moment,
 1108 Arrive at any valid judgement.
 1109 One who in this way meditates,
 1110 Always ready and firm in stance,
 1111 Whom terror never captivates
 1112 When he perceives his term advance
 1113 But always considers it fulfilled—
 1114 He alone with wisdom is filled.

1138 The good which below on earth it never conceives.
 1139 Now that I may enjoy the long-awaited fruit,
 1140 To God devotedly I make my humble suit
 1141 In the name of his dear Son, who upon the rood
 1142 The banes of hell, death and sin all for me subdued;
 1143 Who took the sensible form of a mortal slave
 1144 Our nature to restore, which lives beyond the grave;
 1145 And who deigned down from heaven to earth to descend,
 1146 So that earth to heaven he might cause to ascend:
 1147 Then in the Son's name, Father, to you I address
 1148 My humble prayer, pronounced with fervent faithfulness:
 1149 May it please you accept it by his grace alone,
 1150 Since by his death to be my saviour he is shown.
 1151 If you were mindful of each criminal offence,
 1152 To suffer death eternal might well be my sentence,
 1153 In that sulphurous chasm gaping underground,
 1154 Where cries, laments, sobs and gnashing of teeth resound.
 1155 But clothed in the mantle of perfect innocence
 1156 With which your only child has covered our offence,
 1157 I pray you, Lord, to let my faith extenuate
 1158 Whatever your justice against me might delate.
 1159 Father kind and gentle, as judge do not appear
 1160 Against your creature. Ah, my God! Be not severe¹¹³
 1161 With me, your servant, and forbear me to remind
 1162 Of all the mortal sins that you in me can find.
 1163 All have committed faults before your holy face:
 1164 Yet if for that we all were exiled from your grace,
 1165 For whom at last would your salvation be reserved?
 1166 That wood awash with blood—for what would it have
 served?
 1167 The whole earth would be left barren of population,
 1168 If the errors of humans brought their ruination.¹¹⁴
 1169 Of Adam's fall and fault, your bounty has relieved
 us,

113 “Be not severe”: orig. “n'estriue”; for this verb, see Frédéric Godefroy, *Dictionnaire de l'ancienne langue française: et de tous ses dialectes du IX^e au XV^e siècle, etc.*, 10 vols (Geneva: Slatkine, 1982), s.v. “estriver”, and Greimas, s.v. “estriif, estrit”. Cf. English “strive”, “strife”.

114 Ll. 1167-68 are marked for emphasis.

1170 Drawing our good out of the very ill that grieved us;
 1171 Then, opening a lavish treasury of grace,
 1172 Our reprobate debts with yourself you did efface:
 1173 In the very place where most sins of ours were owed,
 1174 To write them all off at once, your blood overflowed.
 1175 As when, in the morning, the air with fog is thick,
 1176 And the sun, by darting his glances slight and quick,
 1177 Suddenly the blanketing mist away will chase
 1178 That blocks him from the earth like a veil held in place—
 1179 Just so, bright sun of justice, do you dissipate,
 1180 When you rise up, the vapours our vices create,
 1181 Which, without the gentle looks coming from your eyes,
 1182 Would form an obstacle between us and the skies.
 1183 Please you turn to me, however slightly, your face,
 1184 And in my heart will spread the bright rays of your grace,
 1185 Which will purge it of those abominable sins
 1186 With which my soul and body taint their origins.
 1187 O God, grant that my soul, though faults have tarnished
 it,
 1188 Receive the portrait of your glory infinite,
 1189 Cleansed by your hand, just as, for one's true self to
 see,
 1190 One rubs and polishes a mirror that is dirty.
 1191 Deliver me, Lord, from this mortal servitude,
 1192 Whose eternal chain is its strongest certitude;
 1193 Grant that my soul, as this body it leaves behind,
 1194 Which has been accustomed too tightly it to bind,
 1195 Shall not by its dangerous weight at all be bowed,
 1196 But that agile and light it shall cut through the cloud,
 1197 So that, being admitted to its home eternal,
 1198 It may harbour within itself your love paternal,
 1199 Which by your face's sight is more strongly conceived
 1200 In a spirit of its muddy vesture relieved.
 1201 As I depart from here, one thing remains to do—
 1202 That I address to all an eternal adieu.
 1203 Adieu, then, my Scotland, adieu land of my birth,

1232 You brought me happiness; because of you I pined.
 1233 Yet if my bones with you could have their resting place,
 1234 Death would be a source for me of quiet and grace;
 1235 But since the Eternal differently disposes,
 1236 Upon the justice of his will my soul reposes.
 1237 Adieu to your great Henri, monarch glorious,
 1238 Dearly cherished by the heavens, to the earth precious,
 1239 Who carries love in his eyes, grandeur in his visage,
 1240 Eloquence in his mouth, in his heart Mars's image.¹¹⁹
 1241 Adieu, princes of the blood, who cause to resound
 1242 The universe with honour, men of Lorraine, crowned
 1243 With laurels proving your brave race, in all men's sight,
 1244 Still boasts the Idumean trophies¹²⁰ with good right.
 1245 Adieu, proud Louvre, with haughty courtiers teeming;
 1246 Adieu, rich cities, and chateaux with pleasures gleaming;
 1247 Adieu, polite commoners, fair nobility,
 1248 Who once, when I was your princess, so cherished me,
 1249 When a second François, that Valois star, shone bright
 1250 And over Gaul applied paternal law and right.
 1251 Adieu, at last, ladies both chaste and beautiful,
 1252 For whom honest hearts long, and fair souls dutiful;
 1253 Who in the air of France give off more brilliant light
 1254 Than do the fires of the firmament at night,
 1255 And whose number over that of the stars prevails
 1256 When they, to shine in winter, jettison their veils.
 1257 Now, what words can I devise to address to you,
 1258 My fair and dear sisters, how express my adieux,
 1259 As I set off on my way the angels to see?
 1260 Even more strangely moved I sense myself to be
 1261 When I perceive your eyes with woeful tears ringed round
 1262 Because you cannot trace my steps to heaven bound.
 1263 As those sad sighs that force open your mouths I hear,
 1264 Such a sharp and forceful stroke enters through my ear
 1265 That my soul is hard-pressed, and despite my intent,
 1266 I find myself constrained to condole and lament.

119 On the echo here of Matthieu, *The Guisade*, see the Introduction, pp. 15-16.

120 "Idumean trophies": orig. "palmes d'Idumée"; see the Introduction, p. 14.

1267 But let us soothe our spirits with faces serene,
 1268 Since after this brief tempest a calm can be seen.
 1269 It is not much to die if to life we return¹²¹
 1270 Within eternal peace in an eternal sojourn.¹²²
 1271 Kiss me, my girls, as finally my leave I take,
 1272 And pray to God: your faithful prayers for my sake
 1273 Will serve as wings¹²³ by which my spirit quick and light
 1274 May go lodge above the stars, soaring in full flight.
 1275 But I will beg of you—this is the final office
 1276 I require of you to finish out your service—
 1277 Do not let the headsman’s hand my body profane:
 1278 Care for precious honour should after death remain.
 1279 With your own fingers, then, my darkened eyelids close;
 1280 Entomb me, lay me out on the bier in repose;
 1281 If there is no feeling in my limbs mortified,
 1282 My soul in some small measure will be gratified.

CHORUS¹²⁴

1283 Before death Man should not in happiness believe,
 1284 For here below felicity makes no sojourn;
 1285 Elsewhere far she dwells; her glory none can perceive,
 1286 Unless, Man no more,¹²⁵ to the skies he makes return.
 1287 How the spirit is blissful who knows that fair one¹²⁶
 1288 And can cherish and kiss her to fullest content!
 1289 How the soul in endless glory knows satisfaction,
 1290 Practising her¹²⁷ pleasures that can never be spent!
 1291 How ravishing to taste the ambrosia so sweet
 1292 Offered those of her court¹²⁸ by her delicate hand,

121 Ll. 1269-70 are marked for emphasis.

122 L. 1270: orig. “Au seiour eternal en eternelle paix”.

123 “[W]ings”: orig. “cerceaux” (lit. “hoops”, “circles”), but the context strongly indicates “wings” as the sense; cf. above, l. 1124, where the angels are asked to open for her “les cerceaux de vos aisles” (“the hoops of your wings”).

124 This entire chorus is marked for emphasis.

125 “Man no more”: orig. “se laissant soy mesme”.

126 “[T]hat fair one”: orig. “ceste Belle”. The eroticising of spiritual bliss is integrated into a vision of the soul’s mystic union with the divine.

127 “[H]er”: orig. “ses”; the reference may be to the soul, but the personification of heavenly felicity is sustained in what follows.

128 “[T]hose of her court”: orig. “ses Courtisans”. The imagery is vivid and insistent.

1293 And imbibe her nectar, by which from the conceit
 1294 All pangs of sorrow and devouring cares are banned.
 1295 One she receives to share the honour of her feast
 1296 She causes to be placed with those who live forever,
 1297 To lead a life above, from mortal woes released,
 1298 And wake to a day which no evening will sever.
 1299 Her head is by the very hand of glory crowned;
 1300 Her body wears the robe of immortality;
 1301 In this the sign of heavenly marriage is found,
 1302 Which endlessly unites her with eternity.
 1303 The angels who are at the sacred marriage present
 1304 Raise the nuptial hymn: through the skies it resounds;
 1305 All their sacred spirits to extreme joy are bent,
 1306 As the lovers' joy extreme¹²⁹ in glory abounds.
 1307 You who have graces eternal eternally,
 1308 Enjoy your peace within the very house of peace:
 1309 Time will renew your great rejoicing endlessly;
 1310 For you the blooming of joy's flower will not cease.
 1311 The port where you dwell can against that storm
 protect
 1312 Which comes in a trice the calm of the world to shake:
 1313 There the spirit is saved, though the body is shipwrecked,
 1314 And the raging waters no longer make it quake.
 1315 You fear no more the pirate's brutal depredation,
 1316 Who, spreading terror on the sea, will sailors slay;
 1317 No longer does the bloody thief cause trepidation,
 1318 Who surges up with sword in hand and blocks your way.
 1319 No more does the usurer, who eats men alive,
 1320 Dispatch a ruthless officer to haunt your gates:
 1321 Men held you in contempt; in God's honour you thrive,
 1322 And for your pain your blessing more than compensates.
 1323 A prince no longer injures you with his ambition,
 1324 Imposing on his subjects in his chosen fashion;
 1325 No more you tremble at a tyrant's disposition,
 1326 Who follows no counsel and nothing but his passion.

129 “[E]xtreme joy...joy extreme”: the translation attempts to reproduce the verbal repetitions deployed throughout this part of the chorus.

1327 The trumpet does not wake your souls with startling
 fears;
1328 You do not see when armies come our fields to strew;
1329 Music of the moving heavens contents your ears,
1330 And your eyes are fully open their dance to view.
1331 From now on nothing can distract you from repose;
1332 Now your hearts are satiated with all pleasures;
1333 What indisposes us cannot you indispose,
1334 And your desires are outmatched by happy treasures.
1335 So many splendid graces you possess, in short,
1336 That to hear and see them would hardly be believed;
1337 Rather, one would doubt all that eyes and ears report,
1338 Comparing your joys with what here can be conceived.

Act V

Master of the Household, [Messenger, Chorus of the Queen's Women]

MASTER OF THE HOUSEHOLD

1339 What a three- and four-times wretched servant am I!
 1340 Do you outlive this wretched scene that meets your eye?—
 1341 Without seeing it, though, and out of sad oppression
 1342 Remaining indiscreet even in your discretion.
 1343 Queen, of all ladies in our time the ornament,
 1344 How by your deplorable fate my heart is rent!
 1345 Fair body, whose death to so many brings distress,
 1346 For whom your eyes comprised the utmost happiness,
 1347 I could not render you—nor should have done—that
 office,
 1348 Although my existence was born to do you service.
 1349 Having served so honourably within your
 household,
 1350 Was it for me to lead you to the shameful scaffold?
 1351 That would not have attested with firm clarity¹³⁰
 1352 How strongly I detested that barbarity.
 1353 I had perceived in former times your august grandeur
 1354 Surpassing the sun itself in its vivid splendour,
 1355 And I was sure the gathered cloud that dimmed your day
 1356 Would be by your good fortune some day chased away.
 1357 But I so erred that, far from seeing you once more
 1358 Enthroned, your royal power wielding as before,
 1359 Alas, my mind's eye was forced to admit your image¹³¹
 1360 Subjected to the headsman on an abject stage.
 1361 No doubt but I would have fallen dead in mid-stride,
 1362 If to that shameful death I had served as your guide—
 1363 Shameful not to you but that barbarous disgrace,

130 The line's original ("Ce n'eust pas esté rendre vn certain tesmoignage") is elliptical, like much of the passage, and perhaps conveys the character's distraction and distress. The 1601 equivalent is more direct: "Te ne l'ay pas voulu te rendant tesmoignage [I was unwilling to do so, and thereby showed you]" (l. 1341).

131 "[M]y mind's eye...admit the image": orig. "regarder de l'ame"—confirmation that he did not actually witness the execution; cf. Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 290, n. to p. 106.

1364 Who resembles her bears in all things but her face.¹³²
 1365 It is to be the very soul of cruelty
 1366 To let her be so defiled—that unequalled beauty,
 1367 Who deserves to have none but kings allowed to touch her—
 1368 By an executioner’s hand, a blood-stained butcher,
 1369 And in killing her, without shame or fear efface
 1370 The honour of honour itself, the grace of grace.
 1371 O nation fierce and savage, who to this consent,¹³³
 1372 To saturate your coast may your own blood be spent;
 1373 May Death throughout your cities unendingly stalk;
 1374 Along with him, too, let hatred and discord walk;
 1375 Always may turbulent skies, with storms overspread,
 1376 Sharp thunderbolts by thousands hurl upon your head;
 1377 Always may the swollen sea with deafening roars,
 1378 Without bridle or bit dash itself on your shores.
 [Exit.]

[Enter Chorus of the Queen’s Women]

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN’S WOMEN¹³⁴

1379 The age we live in is a time when modesty
 1380 Has fled the world, along with shame and decency;
 1381 We inhabit an age when all things are confused—
 1382 When righteousness is by wrong punishment abused,
 1383 When the will of the great praiseworthy is esteemed,
 1384 When whatever is possible reason is deemed.
 1385 Such slight respect does sacred royal blood command

132 “[T]hat barbarous disgrace, / Who resembles her bears in all things but her face”; orig. “cette Barbare / Que le visage seul de ses Ourses separe”. A pointed reference to Elizabeth, known to be especially fond of bear-baiting, but who herself applied the cruelty of bears to Mary in l. 97 (Act I). Intriguingly, the 1601 version, prior to Elizabeth’s death, settles for a more general evocation of English cruelty: “la gent barbare, / Que le visage seul d’auec les Ours separe [the barbarous people, whom only their face separates from bears]” (ll. 1353-54).

133 Ll. 1371-78: These lines condense by four the equivalent passage in the 1601 edition (ll. 1365-76), which includes explicit curses invoking civil war and foreign invasion.

134 Ll. 1379-84 are marked for emphasis. That this is the Chorus of the Queen’s Women is clear from what follows, but they must also be distinct from the women who actually witnessed the execution (see ll. 1428 ff.). This Chorus breaks the pattern of the previous acts (and of convention generally) by speaking the conclusion, so that the moralising and commenting function of the general Chorus is assimilated to their transcendental evocation of Mary’s tragedy.

1413 And that spirit divine, a human body's guest,
1414 By a tormentor's hand has now been dispossessed.

MESSENGER

1415 Do not stop at pitying that poor lady's fate,
1416 But hear how she ended, your grief to mitigate.
1417 In hearing of a constant death, a prudent mind¹³⁵
1418 Some pleasure mingled with its sad regret will find.
1419 A large hall was decked out to make a mournful show,
1420 Illumined with flaming torches placed high and low,
1421 Which the floor tiles reflected with dark sparks of light;
1422 The scaffold loomed up, erected to a great height.
1423 There members of neighbouring nations were assembled,
1424 Who at this circumstance with trepidation trembled,
1425 And soon the Queen, who bore a constant countenance
1426 Arrived where the headsman was waiting in attendance.
1427 Paulet¹³⁶ served to conduct her (she was in his keeping),
1428 And her women in a group trailed after her, weeping.
1429 She, who to death advanced with steps forthright but
slow,¹³⁷
1430 Comforted their sorrow with these words, spoken low:
1431 I pray you, let my death by no means be pursued
1432 With tears and sobs;¹³⁸ are you not with envy imbued,
1433 If, for my body's loss, such a gain I acquire
1434 That nothing, compared to it, is this world entire?
1435 Since all must die, is it not blessing to arrive,
1436 Once past this shameful death, in Heaven, and revive?
1437 If now the flower of my days is withering,
1438 It will flower again in the eternal spring,
1439 And the grace of God, just like a nourishing dew,

135 Ll. 1417-18 are marked for emphasis.

136 Historically, Amyas Paulet, who served as Mary's keeper during her last period of captivity. He was a privy councillor and an ardent Protestant, who argued strenuously for putting Mary to death after her trial and condemnation. See the article by Sidney Lee in the *Dictionary of National Biography* (1909), available online via *Lumenarium: Encyclopedia Project, England under the Tudors*: <<http://www.lumenarium.org/encyclopedia/paulet.htm>> (accessed 27 April 2018).

137 L. 1429: orig. "Elle qui lentement à la mort se hastoit"; there is perhaps an allusion to the adage widely diffused by Erasmus, "*festina lente*" ("make haste slowly").

138 The physical action is specifically evoked, since the lamenting women are actually following her.

1440 Will distil upon it favour that will accrue
 1441 And cause it to give forth an air so gracious-smelling
 1442 Its perfume will suffuse the celestial dwelling.
 1443 The blessed spirits in bliss are Heaven's own roses,¹³⁹
 1444 Which the sun of justice eternally encloses;
 1445 Those in gardens in less than a morning are spent,
 1446 But as for Heaven's flowers, they are permanent.
 1447 When to her grieving servants these words she had
 said,
 1448 Whom her cruel parting left less living than dead,
 1449 In their care-burdened hearts were engendered more sighs,
 1450 More laments in their mouths and more tears in their eyes.
 1451 When she had arrived in the middle of the place,
 1452 Still fairer, because it was pale, appeared her face—
 1453 Pale not from death, for her youthful years premature,
 1454 But long hardships in prison she'd had to endure.
 1455 Then, with hearts made tender, all who were present there,
 1456 Ravished in their souls, at her face began to stare,
 1457 On her lovely forehead read how death she disdained,
 1458 Admired her fair eyes, the bearing she maintained;
 1459 But their wonder gave way and fear began to quicken:
 1460 Dreading the coming mortal stroke, their souls were
 stricken,
 1461 As, without tears herself, she brought tears to their
 eyes;
 1462 As, not sighing at all, she made them heave out sighs.
 1463 As all remained rivetted to her face's view—
 1464 For even in death, love-darts by thousands it threw—
 1465 With a foot as free and light as her heart was bold,
 1466 She mounted to the height of the macabre scaffold,
 1467 Then, smiling a little with her mouth and eye, said:
 1468 "I did not think that I would die in this fair bed,
 1469 But since it pleases God to make such use of me,
 1470 In defending my faith I will die for his glory;
 1471 Of a palm¹⁴⁰ this shameful tormenting is the price,

139 Ll. 1443-46 are marked for emphasis.

140 See the Introduction, p. 20 and n. 40.

1472 Paid to make my life to his name a sacrifice,
 1473 Which in diverse tongues will be a theme of renown;
 1474 I give up nothing but a single earthly crown
 1475 In order to have two in the eternal kingdom—
 1476 The crowns of everlasting life and martyrdom.”
 1477 These words, as she sent them to heaven winged with
 sighs,
 1478 Seemed to turn sorrowful, drawing tears from her eyes,
 1479 But suddenly displaying greater joyfulness,
 1480 She asked loudly for a priest, so she might confess;
 1481 Someone at once advanced, who proffered consolation;
 1482 She, who recognised from his manner of oration
 1483 That he was not what she wished,¹⁴¹ stood somewhat confused:
 1484 “Such a small favour”, she said, “am I now refused?
 1485 It is too great a cruelty not to consent
 1486 That at my death a Catholic father may be present:
 1487 Yet whatever you do, I will die in the state
 1488 That my instruction and my firm belief both dictate.”
 1489 That said, she knelt on the scaffold, herself
 confessed,
 1490 Then struck contritely upon her sorrowing breast
 1491 Three blows, and with a flood of tears of devotion
 1492 Bathed her radiant eyes when her prayers were done,
 1493 And kept her spirits fixed on heaven’s lofty vaults,
 1494 The pardon to secure that’s promised for our faults.
 1495 Her orison completed, she brightened her face
 1496 With the air serene and sweet of a laughing grace;
 1497 Her eyes with a new-found softness began to fill;
 1498 Her brow turned smooth as the sea when all wind is still;
 1499 Then one more time her pious sentiments she told:
 1500 “I die for you, my Lord, and so I die consoled.
 1501 My saviour and my God, to your most holy grace
 1502 I commend my soul in departing from this place.”
 1503 Then turning to the headsman her face like the sun:
 1504 When you want, in your brutal hand take up your weapon,

141 A Protestant divine did, in fact, intervene and pray loudly for her, despite her refusal to hear him. See Antonia Fraser, *Mary, Queen of Scots* (Frogmore, St. Albans, Herts: Panther, 1970), p. 632.

1505 And with a furious arm strike the fatal blow
 1506 To make my soul seek Heaven, my head fall below.
 1507 Hearing these words he ran to seize the axe;
 1508 With one, two, three, even four blows her neck he cracks,¹⁴²
 1509 For the sharpened iron, less cruel than his arm,
 1510 Sought to keep a body so fair from mortal harm.
 1511 The trunk fell finally down, and her dying face
 1512 Bounded three or four times dully upon the place.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

1513 O what devastating chills our hearts suffocate!
 1514 To make us know the utmost rigour of our fate,
 1515 Transform yourself, each eye, to an eternal spring;
 1516 Drown your pupil into blindness by constant weeping;
 1517 And you, desolate hearts, so many sobs set free
 1518 That they will roar more loudly than a storm at sea.

MESSENGER

1519 Put aside, put aside these pitiful laments.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

1520 Who can weep enough for such distressful events?

MESSENGER¹⁴³

1521 Mourning so extreme is justified when there dies
 1522 All hope, just as dead as the lifeless body lies,
 1523 Without knowledge of the other life, or that man
 1524 Is placed within the tomb to slumber a short span,
 1525 And that the angel's voice will soon awake his breath.
 1526 To die is not bad; and when the good man meets death,
 1527 The consequence can hardly be to dispossess

142 Orig. "Vn, deux, trois, quatre coups sur son col il delasche [One, two, three, four blows he lets fall upon her neck]"; the line is identical in the 1601 edition (l. 1514). All historical accounts agree in specifying three strokes of the axe, and it is hard not to suspect Montchrestien of adding a fourth *metri gratia*. Cf. l. 1512, "three or four times" (orig. "trois ou quatre fois")—seemingly also not an authentic detail.

143 This entire speech of the Messenger is marked for emphasis. It remarkably moves beyond the usual function of the character in its counsels of consolation and moderation—needed, perhaps, because the Queen is no longer there to restrain her women's grief.

1528 Him from his state and bring about unhappiness.
 1529 For though in the same way innocent blood is spilt
 1530 As that of the vicious man, aware of his guilt,
 1531 He who has always walked through life with upright paces
 1532 Always dies well enough, whatever death he faces.
 1533 If happiness depended on what death we meet,
 1534 Heaven would the most righteous mislead and ill-treat:
 1535 For it would have rendered wretched and miserable
 1536 So many sacred martyrs, fathers venerable
 1537 And holy confessors, who, constant in believing,
 1538 Shameful death endured for the honour of their King.

CHORUS OF THE QUEEN'S WOMEN

1539 You counsel well. Let us not sorrow for her sake,
 1540 When in eternal glory she can now partake,
 1541 But grieve for the loss we have endured, only weeping
 1542 In order some relief of our own woe to bring:
 1543 Weeping bitterly has power to sweeten sadness.¹⁴⁴
 1544 Then listen to these lamentations, blessed princess.
 1545 Princess unique, the object of princes and kings,
 1546 By whom Love imposed his strict laws on underlings,
 1547 Making a universal conquest just through you;
 1548 Beauty herself when you lived here had living breath,
 1549 But when you died her nature made her perish too,
 1550 And nothing remains of her but grief for her death.
 1551 If a glorious sceptre here your hand once wielded,
 1552 In exchange for heaven's kingdom you have it yielded;
 1553 Yet we are blinded by the hiding of your light,
 1554 For while by the sun our outward eyes are still fed,
 1555 Our soul, in losing you, its own sun has forfeited,
 1556 Whose brilliance alone rendered possible our sight.
 1557 Beauty, who exercised total sway over hearts,
 1558 And tempered with attractions your rigorous darts,
 1559 Which caused them of pain or of desire to die,
 1560 If you had to die, you should not have come to birth—
 1561 Or, if nothing can live immortal here on earth,

144 This line is marked for emphasis.

1562 You should have all alive been ravished to the sky.
 1563 Of mortal beauties the immortal ornament,
 1564 For whom all ravished human eyes felt languishment—
 1565 With even Love himself enamoured of your grace—
 1566 While chastity ever upon your brow stood gleaming,
 1567 And gentleness deep-set within your eyes was teeming,
 1568 As modesty sowed blushing roses in your face.
 1569 Fair body, who virtue in yourself concentrated,
 1570 As the sole spirit by which you were animated,
 1571 That in the sight of all it might be apprehended:
 1572 When they required you from life to death to go,
 1573 With you to heaven she went from the world below,
 1574 As once within you from heaven she had descended.
 1575 Head, which, like nesting birds, lodged pretty
 strands of hair,¹⁴⁵
 1576 Sweet bonds which knew the hearts of princes to ensnare,
 1577 Who made a glory, ravished, of their loving service—
 1578 Alas, O hair much beloved, no more do you gleam,
 1579 Or else transformed into stars in the sky you seem,
 1580 As was once long ago the hair of Berenice.¹⁴⁶
 1581 Fair forehead, fiery mirror where transfixed eyes

145 Orig. “Teste où les ieux mignards comme oiseaux se nichoient”. The 1601 version eliminates any ambiguity and confirms that Montchrestien is deploying the standard Petrarchan image of beautiful hair as amorous inducement: “Forest d’or ou l’Amour comme vn oiseau nichoit [Forest of gold where Love nested like a bird]” (l. 1591). The revision is especially regretted by Petit de Julleville, ed., p. 291, n. to p. 112, who not inaptly comments that this entire sequence, comprising a nearly parodic *blason*, contains “un curieux mélange de trouvailles de style exquises et de jeux de mots puérils [a curious mixture of exquisite stylistic inventions and childish word-games]” (p. 291).

It is impossible not to suspect Montchrestien of backhandedly evoking the less glamorous reality. The fact is documented by eye-witnesses that, when the executioner held up Mary’s severed head for display, it separated from a wig to reveal her real hair as being close-cropped and grizzled; see Fraser, p. 364. That her hair could be seen, when the head was displayed, as having turned from golden to grey because of her sufferings is a point found in Renaud de Beaune, “Oraison fvnebre de la Royne 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), p. 44.

146 The reference is to the constellation called, from ancient times, “the hair of Berenice” after the historical Berenice II, Queen of Egypt (3rd cent. B.C.E.), who cut off her long hair and dedicated it to the gods in order to secure her husband’s safe return from battle. When the hair disappeared, it was said to have been taken to heaven. The story is recounted by Catullus (poem LXVI). The evocation of a pious and loyal queen translated to the heavens is obviously to the point.

