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Traductions  
introuvables

# **The Guisian**

by Simon Belyard

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Translated, with Introduction and Notes,  
by Richard Hillman

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## Référence électronique

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Translation to *The Guisian*

by Simon Belyard

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# Translation

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## THE GUISIAN

or

Tyrannical Treachery Committed by Henri de Valois upon the Persons  
of the Most Illustrious, Most Reverend and Most Noble Princes Louis de  
Lorraine, Cardinal and Archbishop of Reims, and Henri de Lorraine, Duke  
of Guise, Grand Master of France

By

Simon Belyard

### Note on the Translation

The text used as a basis for the translation is the modernised edition currently being prepared by Charlotte Bouteille-Meister and Michael Meere for a collective volume, directed by Christian Biet and Marie-Madeleine Fragonard, to be published by Classiques Garnier. The play's editors have generously given me the benefit of their advice and erudition, as is gratefully acknowledged in several notes (as "CB-M/MM"). I have occasionally corrected from the British Library copy of the 1592 original, especially in indicating verse-paragraphs (without, however, indenting with each change of speaker).<sup>1</sup> Punctuation has been freely adapted and modernised in the interest of rhetorical coherence and syntactic clarity (neither always easy to achieve). I have also regularly repositioned the author's numerous marginal notes (one of the remarkable features of the printed version) where they seem logically to belong and interfere less with the reading. The very few stage directions in the original have occasionally been supplemented. The lists of characters at the openings of acts have been completed as necessary. ("Madame de Nemours" is so identified for the sake of authenticity; "my Lord of Guise" is used for "Monsieur de Guise" as sounding more respectful to the contemporary English ear.) All additions to the text are in square brackets. There has seemed no need to identify the settings, which are left unspecified in the original; only three locales are called for: the indefinite space announcing the hell-on-earth that the Fury Alecto opens up at the beginning; the chateau of Blois, which serves for the conspiracy and execution scenes; and a variable space outside it associated with Madame de Nemours, and into which Henri's sudden intrusion in Act Five is therefore all the more striking.

As in my previous translations of tragedies of the period, I employ hexameter couplets in rendering the Alexandrines of the original, while preserving the highly variable line-lengths and rhyme-schemes of the choric speeches.

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<sup>1</sup> Simon Belyard, *Le Guysien ou perfidie tyrannique commise par Henry de Valois es personnes des illustres, reverdiss. & tresgenereux Princes Loys de Lorraine Cardinal & Archevesque de Rheims, & Henry de Lorraine Duc de Guyse, Grand Maistre de France* (Troyes: Iean Moreau, 1592).

## To the Reader

I wish to assure you, well-disposed reader, that I would not have had this tragedy printed, knowing that it did not deserve to be, were it not that a number of honourable men have asked me for a copy, and that some ignorant persons (or, rather, slyly feigning to be so) have slandered me falsely and accused me of the very criminality against which, I protest, I composed it. For this I have God, my conscience and the honest people who know me as witnesses. But I know that *Pro vitiis virtus crimina saepe tulit*.<sup>2</sup> That is why I desire now to expose their malice and false accusation by making [the work] public, after having, however, shown it to three, indeed four, highly learned men and three doctors in sacred theology so as to avoid committing, out of ignorance, any offence contrary to the faith and the sacred Union.<sup>3</sup> I have added marginal notes at several point—sometimes too profusely, to tell the truth—but it is to assist the ignorant, as is also the case with the spelling, where I have not retained the letters that are not at all pronounced. You will excuse my youth, and my lack of free time, taking in good part what I have done for the sake, always, of inciting the people<sup>4</sup> further to the preservation and defence of the faith and the Christian religion. Go with God.

## To *Monsieur le président des trésoriers* and Mayor of the City of Troyes:<sup>5</sup>

Sir, knowing that there is nothing more unworthy of a man than to remain lazily idle and so to degrade his mind by neglect and slackness that he comes to make himself resemble the unreasoning animals and degenerate from the nature of man, who was created to do something that might produce a public, or at least a private, benefit, I have often considered with myself that I would do better, so as not to remain idle, to imitate that which the Greeks have passed down in writing with regard to that true philosopher Diogenes.<sup>6</sup>

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2 “Virtue, instead of vices, often bears the taint of crimes”: slightly adapted (and taken much out of context) from Ovid’s *Remedia Amoris*, l. 324 (Publius Ovidius Naso, *Amores, Epistulae, Medicamina Faciei Femineae, Ars Amatoria, Remedia amoris*, ed. R. Ehwald [Leipzig: Teubner, 1907]).

3 On the (Sacred) Union, see Introduction, n. 20.

4 “[T]he people”: orig. “le peuple”—a term which invariably carried, in the period, connotations of common social status implying, precisely, a need for education and direction.

5 He is named in the dedication as Nicolas Dehault; no more appears to be known about him than may be gathered from Belyard’s text.

6 It is certainly plausible that Belyard took this anecdote from Rabelais (CB-M/MM); see François Rabelais, *Le tiers livre*, ed. Pierre Michel (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 63-69 (Prologue). Its succinct form, however, more closely matches what was doubtless Rabelais’s original—the account of Lucian of Samosata in *How to Write History*, ch. 3; see *Lucian*, ed. and trans. K. Kilburn, 8 vols, Loeb Classical Library, vol. 6 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp. 4-5. Rabelais typically amplifies to produce a much more prolix version, although he concludes

When, at a certain point, the rumour was rife that Philip, the father of Alexander the Great, was raising a large army to send against Corinth and besiege it, the Corinthians, in great turmoil and fear, as citizens will be in such a dangerous circumstance, began as best they could to provide for the imminent danger and to furnish themselves against their enemies. One prepared weapons, another gathered stones. Some repaired the walls and fortifications; others were kept from all other necessary affairs in order to defend their city. Diogenes, seeing all this, and unable to do anything else, since everyone judged him to be useless in matters concerning the Republic, suddenly, having drawn up his philosophical cloak, began to roll up and down, and turn this way and that, the barrel that served him for a house. One of his friends being astonished by this and asking him why he was doing it, "I roll my barrel," he said, "so that I won't be the only one doing nothing among all the Corinthians, who are so fervent and diligent in their tasks." Likewise, so as not to appear wholly idle in the midst of so many men highly industrious and busy in a situation nearly similar, I have composed this tragedy, which Monsieur Pajot<sup>7</sup> caused to be staged, to encourage the people well-disposed constantly to persist, and to do better and better, in maintaining the Church and the nation against the heretic.<sup>8</sup> I know that some Attilian<sup>9</sup> will say that it is better to be idle than to accomplish nothing and expend effort in vain, and especially in the art of poetry. Let him know, however, that this exercise is the best recreation I might find, and, besides the fact that it is honest, it ought to be allowed me all the more because I practise it only when the little children, tired of studying, amuse themselves by playing with nuts.<sup>10</sup> Young men worn out and wearied by carrying arms spend some time in the honest exercise of the *jeu de paume*,<sup>11</sup> while tired old men, exhausted by long management of public affairs, when they visit each other play at trictrac,<sup>12</sup> checkers or cards. Who, then, can rightly judge it to be ill if, in stolen hours over fifteen or sixteen days, I composed this tragedy, which I present to you, sir, to give you an account of my leisure—

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with a similar point to Belyard's about being ashamed of his own idleness in a time of crisis.

**7** So far unidentified.

**8** In 1592, to speak of "the heretic" would point beyond the general type to the contested King Henri IV.

**9** "Attilian". The allusion is obscure but may be intended to evoke Marcus Atilus, known only as an undistinguished Roman dramatic poet of the 2nd-1st cent. BCE. Cicero terms his rendition of Sophocles' *Elektra* "*male conversam* [poorly translated]" (M. Tulli Ciceronis, *De Finibus Bonorum et Malorum Libri Quique*, ed. L. D. Reynolds, Oxford Classical Texts [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998], p. 5 [bk. 1, ch. 2]). Such a person might well conclude that it is preferable to give up writing than to produce works of no value.

**10** Playing with nuts was a children's pastime in ancient Roman.

**11** An early version of tennis widespread in early modern France. Indoor structures designed for it were often adapted as theatres.

**12** A board game employing dice.

you who hold the government and public order in your hands; you, I say, who so valiantly sustain that very weighty burden and heavy charge of the administration of public affairs during this most miserable and calamitous period. So that it seems that, as formerly it was said that Achilles was ordered by destiny to put great Troy to the sack, and the Scipios were born to raze Carthage, so God has caused you to be born to destroy the wicked and damnable conspiracies and pernicious undertakings of those who have so often in our day treacherously plotted to put this most Catholic city into the hands of the enemies of the holy Church and the Christian religion. Now I pray you to accept this gift in good part, which in itself is almost nothing: if you measure it by my obligation and the affection shown me, mediocre; if by the subject and the intention, even you will judge it to be very great. Certainly, if it is agreeable to you, and brings you some satisfaction, I shall esteem myself to have had (as they say) the sanction and the endorsement of Minerva. So that if, as he who with an unhealthy body cannot well taste and perceive the delight and pleasure of the senses, thus by chance all the others, by the indisposition of their minds tainted by jealousy, estranged by ill-will or passion, or stained by some other vice, came wholly to scorn and reject this little effort, so it is that I shall say of you, as the poet Antimachus did of Plato: “he by himself is worth more to me than all the others.”<sup>13</sup> It is not, moreover, by these first fruits, bitter and wild, that I will taste the seductive favour and flattering grace of the people; on the contrary, I desire only that the sourness may compel the ready wits to make us taste from a branch more carefully cultivated and sweetened by the hands of the Muses. Might I indeed have so much happiness that those brave trumpeters, indignant at hearing the boom-booming of my annoying drum offend their ears, sounding out poorly such a serious subject, should come in contempt, raising their clarion-calls, causing the praises of the most illustrious princes of Guise to resound throughout all the earth so highly that they may be equal to their virtues? I will have done no little thing, to say true. May God will it thus, and, keeping you in His grace, bring it about also that this work, barely well sketched out, might remind you that the Belyards have always been humble servants of your ancestors, and welcome in your house. I hope that you will not ever refuse the duty and humble service of

*Your most obedient and grateful servant, S. Belyard.*

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**13** See Plutarch, *Life of Lysander*, bk. 18, ch. 4, where, however, it is Plato who consoles Antimachus for being poorly judged by Lysander.

Tyrannical Perfidy

or

The Guisian



## *Characters*

Alecto, a Fury  
 Madame de Nemours [mother of the Duke of Guise]  
     and her young women  
 Nurse of Madame de Nemours  
 Henri [III, King of France], the tyrant  
 [Duke of] Épernon<sup>14</sup>  
 L'Archant<sup>15</sup>  
     and Chorus of Guards  
 My Lord of Guise  
 Soldier (as messenger)  
 Chorus

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**14** I.e., Jean-Louis de Nogaret de La Valette, duc d'Épernon. As Henri III's closest and most powerful "minion" ("mignon") at the time, he was vilified, sometimes literally demonised, in the propaganda of the League. He is represented as conjuring infernal spirits in Pierre Matthieu, *The Guisiade* (*The Tragedy of the Late Admiral Coligny, by François de Chantelouve, and The Guisiade, by Pierre Matthieu*, trans. and ed. Richard Hillman, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation, 40 [Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005]), III.i; see also p. 272, n. 13. (Further references are to this edition.) A concise contextualised biography is provided by Jacqueline Boucher, *Histoire et dictionnaire des Guerres de religion*, ed. Arlette Jouanna, Jacqueline Boucher, Dominique Biloghi and Guy Le Thiec (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1998), s.v. "Épernon" (pp. 886-89).

**15** I.e., Nicolas de Grémonville, seigneur de L'Archant (or Larchant, as in the 1592 list of characters but not subsequently). A long-standing follower of the King, whom he had accompanied to Poland, he was the captain of the guards but involved in the murder of Guise only indirectly, by providing a diversion, while the actual deed was carried out by a contingent of the notorious "forty-five" Gascons, who were headed by a certain Honorat de Montpezat, seigneur de Laugnac. (The most reliable modern account of the episode is probably by Pierre Chevallier, *Henri III, roi shakespearien* [Paris: Fayard, 1985], pp. 662-73.) The guards were known as "archers" (identical in French), something which may have occasioned Belyard's association of the assassins with this figure (hence my own over-hasty assumption about the name in Richard Hillman, "Marlowe's Guise: Offending against God and King", *Notes and Queries* ns 55.2 [June 2008]: 154-59, p. 157).

## Act I

Alecto, [Chorus]

### ALECTO

1 I, daughter of night and the dark floods that flow  
 2 Of groaning Acheron<sup>16</sup> by those caves in the shadow  
 3 Of pitiless Orcus,<sup>17</sup> who daunts and terrifies,  
 4 Nine times marsh-enclosed,<sup>18</sup> whom even a god that lies  
 5 Would not dare deceive, such horror he deploys;  
 6 Where burning Phlegeton,<sup>19</sup> with a ferocious noise  
 7 Of whistling shrieks, thunders along its slimy shores,  
 8 Filthy, dark, stinking with venom that from it pours,  
 9 Thrilling with terror the soul of each criminal  
 10 Who there below endures his punishments eternal;  
 11 I, trouble-making, all-peace-perturbing Alecto,  
 12 Lover of tears and sorrow, whom our Father Pluto  
 13 Hates—so wicked am I—and my sisters Averno,<sup>20</sup>  
 14 Who make tremble with fear the very beasts infernal—  
 15 The triple-gullet dog, the monster with three bodies,<sup>21</sup>  
 16 The coil of twisting serpents the Gorgon's head carries,  
 17 The felonious half-horses<sup>22</sup> and those foul harpies,  
 18 Who the place where they crouch infect with their  
     disease;  
 19 I, Alecto, who of means know an endless foison,  
 20 A thousand arts, a thousand ways, by mortal poison  
 21 My snaky hair produces, all men to corrupt,

**16** Acheron was the river of woe (and its god).

**17** Orcus: an underworld demon or monster.

**18** “Nine times marsh-enclosed”: orig. “Ceint neuf fois du Palud”, which confusedly evokes at once the river Styx, supposed to encircle the underworld nine times, and the Stygian Marsh, into which all the underworld rivers were supposed to flow.

**19** Phlegeton: the underworld's river of fire.

**20** “Averno”: orig. “avernales”—Belyard's coinage from Avernus, the lake supposedly giving access to the underworld, and rhyming similarly in the original (“infernales” [l. 14]). Alecto's sister Furies (or Eumenides, as below in l. 110 and V.1582) were Megaera and Tisiphone.

**21** The dog is obviously Cerberus, the monster likely Geryon, Hercules' opponent in the tenth labour, often figured with three bodies (CM-B/MM).

**22** I.e., Centaurs, generally savage and notorious for instigating a battle with the Lapiths by attempting to seize their women on the occasion of the marriage of their king, Pirithous.

22 And the firm bond of friends and brothers to disrupt—  
 23 Will I to no purpose today have left behind  
 24 Tartarus at rest? Tantalus, with head declined,  
 25 So much water with full throat has already swilled  
 26 That his burning gullet is more than amply filled;  
 27 Tityos, whom from his fell fetters I deliver,  
 28 Through hell's darkness thrusts back its vulture from  
     his liver;  
 29 Sisyphus takes his ease, on his stone a mere sitter;  
 30 Theseus, Pirithous, the thunder-counterfeiter<sup>23</sup>  
 31 And the scalars of heaven<sup>24</sup> their combats conspire  
 32 To bring gods above and below to ruin entire—  
 33 While I am on earth in negligent idleness,  
 34 While I fail to pursue that pressing business  
 35 For which I've come here now? It is high time, Alecto—  
 36 The web is fully woven on the loom of Clotho.  
 37 Hasten, come on, it is time; your work undertake:  
 38 Spread your poisons abroad by releasing your snake,  
 39 The one that for long years you have kept in reserve,  
 40 Till as a source of amusement it might you serve—  
 41 That which caused to perish Greece in its finest hour;  
 42 That which caused to perish great Rome in all its  
     power—  
 43 Mistress of cities, honour of the universe—  
 44 Engendering in great ones counsels all perverse,  
 45 Arousing three times, to drain their city of life,  
 46 The citizens against themselves in civil strife.  
 47         No, no, I will not waste it but with action fill  
 48 The time I'm granted. A gnawing worm pricks my will  
 49 To strike into the dust the pride of haughty France,  
 50 Her grandeur and honour reduce to sufferance.  
 51 In vain yet have my sisters to me had recourse,  
 52 Who for so long have asked me to lend my resource  
 53 To maintaining forever in France heresy,

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**23** The firm friends Theseus and Pirithous defied the gods by attempting to carry off Persephone from the underworld for Pirithous; Salmoneus, out of overweening pride, attempted to imitate the thunder of Zeus. All three were punished for their presumption.

**24** See below, ll. 75-80 and n. 28.

54 Along with her blood-sister false hypocrisy.  
 55 For ten years Megaera all efforts has applied;<sup>25</sup>  
 56 Tisiphone no jot of her power has denied,  
 57 The King to inflame with anger against the Princes,  
 58 Citizens against each other in all provinces,  
 59 Using dissimulation and every shrewd ploy  
 60 The flattering courtier knows well to deploy.  
 61 So greatly grew within the court that mortal bane  
 62 That it is at its height: now does nothing remain  
 63 But one blow of my hand to give it mastery,  
 64 And all will tumble into sheer catastrophe.  
 65           You high gods, who have, by the sacred starry  
                   spaces<sup>26</sup>  
 66 Of the all-embracing sky, your wide dwelling-places,  
 67 Where you are blessed to enjoy a felicity  
 68 That endures unchanging for all eternity—  
 69 Permit me, great gods, permit me, I pray sincerely,  
 70 Just to set my foot there. My fury<sup>27</sup> will have merely  
 71 To pass through the door, and suddenly Love and Peace,  
 72 Joy, Concord and Pleasure eternally will cease  
 73 To make their happy home in the heavens on high.  
 74 I alone will do—and in the blink of an eye—  
 75 What beyond the reach of the Titans' cruelty  
 76 Lay, when, with their hundred hands, their numerous  
                   army,  
 77 Three great mountains they piled, one on another's back,  
 78 So as to scale the sky in furious attack,  
 79 Climbing above Olympus, which touched heaven's base,  
 80 Having first put Ossa and Pelion in place.<sup>28</sup>  
 81           Japetus, Enceladus, Gyges, Briareus,

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**25** It is Megaera (“Mégère”) who opens Garnier’s *Porcie* by invoking the horrors of civil war upon arrogant Rome; see Introduction, n. 19.

**26** “[T]he sacred starry spaces”: orig. “les étoilés temples”.

**27** “[M]y fury”: orig. “ma furie” (p. 3), amalgamating her nature with her literal identity.

**28** Alecto’s account, like some later classical sources, conflates legends of the Giants (Gigantes), the Hundred-Handed Ones (Hecatoncheires) and the Titans (associated with Pelion and Ossa) around the theme of defiance of Olympian authority. The list of names that follows is similarly oriented, and likewise mixed. For details, see William Smith, *The Smaller Classical Dictionary*, rev. E. H. Blakeney and John Warrington (New York: Dutton, 1958), s.v. “Titanes” and certain individual names.

82 Gaïa,<sup>29</sup> the Aloadae, Typhon, whom earth presses  
 83 With the weight of those three mountains thunder struck  
       down—  
 84 All theirs in the sky would now be the peaceful crown,  
 85 If they had picked Alecto with the snaky hair  
 86 To guide them in plotting that mutinous affair.  
 87 The thunderbolts of Jupiter could not protect  
 88 That great troupe of gods, who would rapidly defect,  
 89 Scattered, the whole crowd of them, in extreme distress:  
 90 The strong ones knocking down the weaker in the press,  
 91 They would flee here and there, not knowing where to  
       turn.  
 92 Even as one sees, in their desperate concern  
 93 The eagle to escape, flocks taking to the air.  
 94 As a timid herd of grove-dwelling deer, aware  
 95 Suddenly of a large greyhound close on its track,  
 96 At a loss, on the tangled forest turns its back  
 97 And in the middle of the plain strays here and there,  
 98 Runs fearfully on all sides, without breath to spare,  
 99 Until, at last, the dog-pack's coming imminent—  
 100 Lycaons<sup>30</sup> barking, great mastiffs on prey intent—  
 101 It rushes blindly, whimpering, striving to flee,  
 102 Upon the weapons the waiting hunters have ready—  
 103 Even so, all the gods, wholly frozen with fright,  
 104 Imagining always they feel my snakes, coiled tight  
 105 Around their necks and spewing out their serpent venom—  
 106 Penetrating their chests, slipping within their bosom,  
 107 Gnawing and tearing them, torturing from inside,  
 108 Grilling their entrails with flaming torches applied—  
 109 They would of heaven's palaces renounce their needs,  
 110 Shocked into thinking them full of Eumenides.  
 111 The greatest in their rage the demi-gods would slay,

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**29** Gaïa: a conjecture; the printed text appears to read “Cée”, but the “C” might be a broken “G” or an error for that letter, and one of the possible forms of the name is “Gè”. As the incarnation of earth, an underworld goddess, the mother of the Titans and the Hundred-Armed ones, she has the right associations.

**30** Lycaons: African wild dogs or hunting dogs, native to the sub-Saharan, renowned for ferocity; see *Oxford English Dictionary* online (<[www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)>, accessed 7 September 2019), *s.v.* “lycaon”. The particular pertinence here, if any, is unclear.

112 Or else, madly fleeing, become the Giants' prey.  
 113 A hell it would be, full of weeping and of tears,  
 114 All bloody with murders, always fraught with new fears:  
 115 In wars, in discord, in hateful hostility  
 116 They would fight each other—furious, without pity;  
 117 In short, a cruel death, when suffering such pain,  
 118 Would be what the immortal race would die to gain.<sup>31</sup>  
 119 Hell is hell only because I am present there.<sup>32</sup>  
 120 France will be one, because I've now taken in care  
 121 Its total ruin. Now, it is your doing, France—  
 122 France, it is your fault. Your power to sufferance,  
 123 Your grandeur to nothingness, happiness to woe  
 124 Will soon be altered, and your revelling to sorrow.  
 125 The archer who spreads brilliance from his golden  
 hair,<sup>33</sup>  
 126 From India's shore to the waves of Tagus, where  
 127 He douses his radiant torch at each day's closing,  
 128 Sees nothing more beautiful, nothing more imposing,  
 129 With which Ausonian glory could not have vied,  
 130 Nor Agamemnon's grandeur have equalled in pride,<sup>34</sup>  
 131 Whether in arts and learning, or in those we know  
 132 By that splendid mantle strength and virtue bestow:  
 133 As greatly as the sun surpasses any star,  
 134 Noble Gaulois honour exceeds all by as far.  
 135 Has any place ever seen so many great minds  
 136 Produce such learned writings of so many kinds?  
 137 With lively step bounding beyond banal surmise,  
 138 A swan come from Vendôme casts dust into the eyes<sup>35</sup>

31 Ll. 117-18: orig. "Bref, la cruelle mort en une peine telle / Serait le seul désir de la race immortelle." "[L] a race immortelle" must be spoken with sneering irony, which I allow the translation to sharpen.

32 L. 119: orig. "L'enfer n'est point enfer que parce que j'y suis." The notion that she carries hell with her is not without recalling Marlowe's Mephistopheles: "Why, this is hell, nor am I out of it" (Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus, A- and B-Texts [1606, 1616]*, ed. David Bevington and Eric Rasmussen, *The Revels Plays* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993], A-text, l.iii.77).

33 I.e., the sun-god, Phoebus Apollo.

34 Ll. 129-30: "Ausonian" (orig. "ausonienne") and "Agamemnon" (orig. "agamemnonienne") evoke, by metonymy, ancient Rome and Greece, respectively.

35 "[C]asts dust into the eyes"—orig. "jette aux yeux la poussière", so the translation is literal, including the mixed metaphor.

139 Of all his precursors, Greeks or Italians.  
 140 Then, so many great scholars, great historians!  
 141 The eloquent Frenchman now has such elegance  
 142 He puts to shame both Greek and Roman arrogance:  
 143 This has afforded him honour in high degree.  
 144 Otherwise, too, he tastes supreme felicity,  
 145 Which truth-relating Fame goes spreading all around—  
 146 East, West, North and South—to her trumpet’s vibrant  
           sound:<sup>36</sup>  
 147 Through all this universe the strong arms victorious  
 148 Of the gallant Gaulois render his name glorious.  
 149 Aeneas, Hector, Troilus—enough praise of these,  
 150 Of Ajax the furious, swift-footed Achilles,  
 151 Monster-quelling Theban or Troezenian,<sup>37</sup>  
 152 Those who came for Aeson’s son<sup>38</sup> the Argo to man;  
 153 Let one no longer boast of Alexander’s bays,  
 154 Of Caesar’s triumphs, his hapless son-in-law<sup>39</sup> praise:  
 155 One prince from Lorraine (great warriors Lorraine  
           breeds)  
 156 As far surpasses them by his courageous deeds  
 157 As Atlas, sky-upholding, hiding at cloud-height  
 158 His summit, forever unknown to mortal sight,  
 159 Towers above the dwellings of the scaly race,  
 160 Who, swimming, with their wingèd backs<sup>40</sup> around them  
           trace  
 161 The transparent marble that forms the salty meadows:  
 162 It towers above green fields the moist valley shows.<sup>41</sup>

**36** Fame (“renommée”), of whom the trumpet was a standard iconographical attribute, is pointedly “truth-relating” (“vraie”), as was not always the case. If the imagery is tortuous, the syntax is unambiguous: it is the Frenchman’s “felicity” (“bonheur”) that is so diffused.

**37** The Theban is Oedipus, who defeated the Sphinx; the Troezenian (orig. “Troezenien”) is Theseus, born in the city of Troezen (CB-M/MM).

**38** Aeson’s son is Jason, who led the Argonauts on their expedition to seize the Golden Fleece.

**39** “[H]apless son-in-law”, i.e., the much-admired Pompey, defeated by Caesar in the civil war and subsequently murdered.

**40** “[W]ingèd backs”—orig. “dos ailés”. I translate literally to keep the image of fish as birds of the sea, however complicated it becomes by the additions of the marble (orig. “marbre”) and “meadows” (“campagnes”) of l. 161.

**41** Orig: “Surpasse des champs verts les humides vallées”. The line almost seems an incongruous afterthought, but it is integrated by its rhyme and (precariously) its syntax.



163            Everywhere right up to the sky soars their great fame:  
 164            To Cathay, to Peru and to Cush<sup>42</sup> is the name  
 165            Of the Guisards exalted.<sup>43</sup> I go mad, I rage—  
 166            So does that Guisard fill me with constant outrage.  
 167            He alone, since he just sufficient years had told  
 168            To clothe his dimpled chin with downy curls of gold,  
 169            Has with his prudence thwarted all my enterprises:  
 170            It does no good to plot for him frauds, tricks,  
                   surprises.  
 171            I had imagined that, with his forbear and father<sup>44</sup>  
 172            Dead, I was faced with nothing that could prove a  
                   bother,  
 173            When at once I saw the son, favouring his line,  
 174            The valour<sup>45</sup> of that forbear and father outshine.  
 175            Still, I had hope that same valour would one day  
                   bring  
 176            His death, and he'd be struck down in the midst of  
                   fighting.  
 177            In vain I made a bullet traverse his cheek's length,<sup>46</sup>  
 178            For new vigour he showed, less regard for my strength.  
 179            Like a young lion whose heart is swelling and brave,  
 180            Having received a blow from a bull when he gave  
 181            His first assault, leaving cavern and grove behind,  
 182            He builds up his courage another fight to find.  
 183            Higher still and higher his heart constantly swells,

**42** Orig. "Chus". The reference is to the territory (usually taken to be Ethiopia) associated with the son of Ham and father of Nimrod mentioned in Gen. 10:6; the combination of exoticism and biblical resonance seems important, especially given the House of Lorraine's heroic exploits in the Holy Land.

**43** Not here, perhaps, but often elsewhere, the terms "Guisian" ("Guysien") and "Guisard" seem to be used by Belyard interchangeably, without the negative connotations commonly attached to the suffix "-ard".

**44** "[F]orbear and father": orig. "l'aïeul et père". At first glance, both terms seem simply to refer to François I, Duke of Guise, assassinated in 1563. The reformulation in l. 174, however ("la vertu de l'aïeul, et du père"), might favour taking "aïeul" in its literal sense of "grandfather", hence as a reference to the equally heroic founder of the House of Guise, Claude de Lorraine (1508-47). The translation therefore preserves the ambiguity.

**45** "[V]alour": orig. "vertu" (repeated in l. 175). As often, the word is used in the narrow sense of "manhood".

**46** As pointed out by CB-M/MM, an allusion to the wound that Guise received at the battle of Dormans in 1575, which earned him his nickname of "le Balafre" ("the scarred one").



184 As his body of its great capacity tells.  
 185 That Guisard hero, by that very injury  
 186 Yet more emboldened, has honour supreme from me  
 187 On thousands and thousands of occasions obtained.  
 188           Still, for the longest time the hope I entertained  
 189 That by constantly stirring up new wars I must  
 190 Cause him in fairly short order to bite the dust.  
 191 But as in vain I wait, the more he's flourishing:  
 192 From that thick and growing trunk the more branches  
           spring.  
 193 Never did new births in such numbers Crete adorn,  
 194 By offspring of Rhea, great mother-goddess, born,<sup>47</sup>  
 195 As France is with princes and lords so well supplied,  
 196 With brave chevaliers and brave governors beside—  
 197 Royal companions, who high majesty sustain,  
 198 Who are born every day from the race of Lorraine,  
 199 Like a green willow, which, by cutting back reduced,  
 200 Sees always more and more prolific shoots produced.  
 201           I have to extirpate entirely that race,  
 202 In order to reign in France with the god of Thrace.<sup>48</sup>  
 203 Enyo<sup>49</sup> will drive, as our rolling chariot goes,  
 204 The fierce dark horses, stained with blood that slowly  
           flows  
 205 Of men in all the corners of France massacred.  
 206 On, right now, I wish it! Let no quarter be offered.  
 207 Try all of you—I say!—of harm who can do most.  
 208 Now let one, now the other of victory boast.  
 209 Let anger have no end nor mix with any shame;  
 210 May blind rancour in perpetuity inflame,  
 211 And fury, the spirits of men with minds obsessed.  
 212 Let too on their unborn descendants be impressed,

---

**47** It may be to the point by association that the last son of Rhea, born on Crete, was Zeus, ruler of the gods.

**48** “[G]od of Thrace”: a common way of referring to Mars, gaining force by Thrace’s reputation for barbarous brutality.

**49** Enyo: the hate-filled Greek goddess of war, who leads the Trojan forces with Ares in *Iliad*, V.592-93; with her Roman counterpart, Bellona, she precedes the chariot of Victory in Ronsard’s *La Franciade* (Pierre de Ronsard, *La Franciade, Œuvres complètes*, ed. Jean Céard, Daniel Ménager and Michel Simonin, 2 vols, vol. 1 [Paris: Gallimard, 1993], III.486).

213 Passing from father to son, the consuming ire  
214 Of their predecessors, and with their hearts on fire,  
215 Let them commit a hundred new for one old wrong.  
216 May we witness great ones' fortunes tumbling down  
              headlong,  
217 When all they are constrained by force and violence  
218 To cede to some base porter full of insolence.  
219 Let none have leisure to lament an evil done,  
220 But let it give way at once to a greater one.  
221 Let none have power to impede furor and ire  
222 In their free scope to do whatever they desire.  
223 Quickly, now, go quickly, advance, my snaki-kins,<sup>50</sup>  
224 Slink into the heart of the King and his assassins,  
225 Who are waiting for day that work to undertake.  
226 The chateau<sup>51</sup> has perceived the entry of the snake:  
227 The contact causes it with horror back to shrink;  
228 They're<sup>52</sup> all thirsting already avidly to drink  
229 The blood of those demi-gods of the Lorraine race.  
230 All's but too well prepared. I go, the track retrace  
231 I followed when I from the darkling gulfs withdrew,  
232 Down there in shadowy Tartarus to renew  
233 The throes of the impious damned in endless pain.  
              All is done. I see already<sup>53</sup> with inhumane  
234 And brutal thrusts by thousands the Guisard laid low,  
235 Subjected to many a thousand<sup>54</sup> dagger blow,  
236 Spreading blood all around him in his futile strife  
237 Against the raging murderer taking his life.  
238 As when one goes to sacrifice a burly bull  
239 To Mars or Neptune, and he tries away to pull—  
240 Pulls hard, to no avail, and the sturdy rope strains,  
241 Then, when a stroke from the weighty axe he sustains,  
242 He lurches this way and that with a fierce bellow,  
243

---

**50** "[M]y snaki-kins": orig. "mes couleuvreaux", a coinage which, in the context, is apparently (and of course grotesquely) both diminutive and affectionate.

**51** "[C]hateau", i.e., of Blois, site of the murder.

**52** "[T]hey": orig. "Ils". In effect, the snakes of l. 223 are syntactically and imaginatively amalgamated with the bloodthirsty murderers they inspire.

**53** "I see already": orig. "J'aperçois jà"; she shifts into the mode of visionary prophecy.

**54** The repetition of "thousand" (a standard locution) is present in the original.

244                   Witnessing his distress, though half-dead from the blow,  
 245                   Seeking in vain to strike fear, flailing at the sky,  
 246                   And with his hooves causing powdery dust to fly,  
 247                   Till at last he falls dead, staggering in his blood:  
 248                   Just so Guise puts off his death, staggering in  
                           blood.<sup>55</sup>  
 249                   His brother<sup>56</sup> (to God consecrated) is nearby,  
 250                   New-staining his great purple robe with bloody dye.  
 251                   Over there I see a sombre prison retain  
 252                   All the others of that house who living remain.<sup>57</sup>  
 253                            That does not content me, except that it will bring  
 254                   Rebellious disorder, to me more than anything  
 255                   Welcome and delightful. I see some arms take up  
 256                   To avenge that murder,<sup>58</sup> while still others wake up  
 257                   Their criminal courage the tyrant to defend—  
 258                   See service to one banner or the other lend  
 259                   Fervent soldiers. I hear ferocious horses thrilling  
 260                   At the sight of human blood in the work of  
                           killing.  
 261                   I see all brought to ruin by wicked men-at-arms:  
 262                   On all sides I can see the flashing of their arms;<sup>59</sup>  
 263                   I hear the cracking of cuirasses on their backs;<sup>60</sup>  
 264                   I see them with rough boldness meet in their attacks.  
 265                   I hear the cannon's thunder, with saltpetre flashes,  
 266                   As the walls of great cities to powder it dashes;  
 267                   I sense the shrill trumpet that fills my ears with  
                           sound,

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**55** Ll. 247-28: orig. "Jusqu'enfin chancelant qu'en son sang tombe mort. / Le Guisien repousse ainsi sa proche mort." The repetition of "mort" as a rhyme word produces a parallelism that the translation aims to reproduce.

**56** Namely, Louis de Lorraine, Cardinal of Guise.

**57** Charles, Duke of Mayenne, Guise's brother, escaped and replaced him as leader of the League. Most prominent among those imprisoned were the Duchess of Nemours (briefly) and Guise's eldest son, Charles, who escaped in August 1591 when he was fifteen years-old. This exploit was much celebrated in League circles, among others by Belyard in a pastoral poem forming a counterpoint to the tragedy; see Introduction, pp. 6-7.

**58** Author's marginal note: "And consequently the Catholic religion, of which the Guise brothers were the prop."

**59** Ll. 261-62: the identical rhyme on "arms" ("armes") is present in the original.

**60** L. 263: orig. "J'entends dessus leur dos les cuirasses craquer"—presumably from the blows received.

268 See the cavalry crushing footmen on the ground,  
 269 Wounded beneath their horses, hear the lamentation  
 270 Of the vanquished, of the victors the exultation.  
 271 I see the piercing steel used to heap up the dead;  
 272 I see steaming blood make the camp its river-bed.  
 273 I see within those cities that as strongest rate  
 274 Seditions, murders and civil wars dominate;  
 275 I see discord dominate the closest of friends,  
 276 See how the bond of brothers in enmity ends;  
 277 The sister hates the sister, her own mother hates;  
 278 The son-in-law or child their father hesitates  
 279 To trust, the father likewise to trust his own  
                     offspring.  
 280 The perverse glorious, seeing themselves triumphing  
 281 Over their close relations, sing out "Victory!",  
 282 And from an act contemptible derive their glory.  
 283 I see fire on every side the houses razing;  
 284 I see fire in the fields set the harvests blazing.  
 285 In brief, I see Enyo swiftly spreading her bale,  
 286 The whole of France ravaging by hill and by dale,  
 287 Filling all full of fear, filling all full of horror,  
 288 Filling all full of cries, of laments and of terror.  
 289 The sun, to shun the sight of those tokens of doom,  
 290 Will bury his rays deep within shadowy gloom.

#### CHORUS

291                   Nothing remains entire,  
 292                   As was sung with such grace  
 293                   By the truthful lyre  
 294                   Of the priest from Thrace,  
 295                   As those rocks and trees bowed  
 296                   His voice with ears endowed;<sup>61</sup>  
  
 297                   Who turned back to their sources  
 298                   Great rivers in their might,  
 299                   Who drew toward him the courses

---

61 Evoked is Orpheus, the mystic poet-priest.

300                   Of those in air-borne flight,  
301                   Who of dread Hades swayed  
302                   The hearts of iron made:

303                   Once more in this world present,  
304                   To the Getae<sup>62</sup> he said,  
305                   Striking his instrument,  
306                   That Jupiter instated  
307                   The rule that applies  
308                   To all beneath the skies:

309                   That the cruel spinning Fate,  
310                   Her spindle emptying,  
311                   Drags us that bark to freight  
312                   The infernal stream plying,  
313                   That what bears life today  
314                   Is by death snatched away.

315                   Many a trophy ruinous  
316                   Of those Greeks venerated  
317                   Makes us trust in Orpheus,  
318                   His song thus validated,  
319                   When they to Romans fell—  
320                   Their strength,<sup>63</sup> their tongue as well.

321                   From Rome's ascendant power,  
322                   Which leaves to us its sway,  
323                   France in its happy hour  
324                   The honour bears away:  
325                   Rome to the Gaul concedes  
326                   Its laws and martial deeds.

327                   The destiny assured  
328                   Of Hector's rescued son,  
329                   From ruined Troy secured,

---

**62** Getae: a people associated with the Thracian countrymen of Orpheus.

**63** “[S]trength”—orig. “main” (“hand”), which would be less clear in English.

330                   In us is truly won,  
 331                   All kings consigned to cares  
 332                   By Francus's proud heirs.<sup>64</sup>

333                   I fear that France, our nation,  
 334                   May perish in its turn:  
 335                   Sudden is alteration,  
 336                   Belated the return  
 337                   Of a fortune propitious,  
 338                   From a fortune malicious.

339                   Nail, great God, I appeal,<sup>65</sup>  
 340                   With a nail of adamant  
 341                   Her<sup>66</sup> too-much rolling wheel,  
 342                   That these Estates<sup>67</sup> may grant  
 343                   We will maintain in peace  
 344                   Our fair state without cease.

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**64** The reference is to the version of the myth of France's Trojan origins presented by Ronsard in *La Franciade*, according to which Hector's infant son Astyanax was rescued by divine intervention after the fall of Troy and, under the name of Francion/Francus, founded the kingdom of France.

**65** In the original, this line, initiating a prayer, is printed in large type. The word "clou(e)" ("nail") is similarly repeated in the original.

**66** Given the familiar iconography, Fortune would be inferred from the previous stanza (where, however, the translation attempts to sharpen the point by rendering "sort" as "fortune").

**67** I.e., of Blois.

## Act II

Madame [de Nemours], Nurse, [Chorus]

MADAME

345 O God, what have I dreamt? God, great God, hear my  
 prayer:  
 346 In your benignity, turn disaster elsewhere!  
 347 God, who made all of nothing, who possess all might;  
 348 You, who into our deeds and thoughts have perfect sight;  
 349 You, who with your blood have redeemed humanity—  
 350 I pray you, my God, let these dreams be vanity.  
 351 My blood is cold as ice, I am all filled with fear,  
 352 My strength, breath, colour and courage<sup>68</sup> no longer here;  
 353 A cold sweat, running in rivulets from my brow  
 354 To my frozen limbs, suffuses my whole length now,  
 355 Whenever their disturbing memory I feel:  
 356 So pressing are our evils I could think them real.  
 357 The end of any ill is merely the inception  
 358 Of other ills to come. It is my clear perception  
 359 That I live here below to suffer miseries.  
 360 It seems as if stars in the sky that I displease  
 361 Together against me in enmity conspire  
 362 Malignantly to grieve me with all that is dire,  
 363 To blight those close to me with baleful influence.  
 364 You who of the sovereign bliss know the joy  
 intense,  
 365 In heaven exempt from care, you spirits thrice-blessed,  
 366 Hear these clamours of mine, these cries of one  
 distressed.  
 367 If heaven, offended by faults we have committed,  
 368 Is preparing to loose arrows, already fitted  
 369 To its rigid bow, drawn and ready us to harm,  
 370 Discharge against me alone that ireful arm—  
 371 Me who, already weighed with age's heaviness,  
 372 Am useless to the world. A mournful weariness

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68 “[C]ourage”: orig. “cœur”.

373 Weakens my sinews; I'm scarcely able to see;  
 374 The ivory of my teeth for black ebony  
 375 Exchanges its whiteness; then, too, rheum and catarrh  
 376 Have done me further harm, however rare they are.<sup>69</sup>  
 377 I am a bare stump and a trunk, and nothing more.  
 378           The longer the thread Fate's loom has for me in  
                   store,  
 379 The more ill I suffer. Take me off, then, I pray;  
 380 To your nurturing homeland carry me away,  
 381 And preserve in your tender care my sons to save  
 382 That France which is soon bound, I see, to find a grave.  
 383 Oh, alas,<sup>70</sup> of countless misfortunes I foresee  
 384 That a dismal downpour, in stark catastrophe,  
 385 Is ready all France along with myself to drown:  
 386 My heart predicts it; I almost see it come down.  
 387 Alas, everything is lost unless God preserves us;  
 388 Alas, for what great evils God, alas, reserves us!  
 389 Alas, my God, alas! He will not fail, alas,  
 390 With cruelty to rob me of my good and solace.

NURSE<sup>71</sup>

391 Scarcely are Phlegon's noisy nostrils, in his  
                   pasture  
 392 Undersea near Nabathaea's fields,<sup>72</sup> the obscure  
 393 Shadowy night respiring, as azure steals  
 394 Upon the vault of heaven; Hecate<sup>73</sup> still feels

**69** “[H]owever rare they are”: orig. “tant qu’elles sont bien rares”; the point is elusive.

**70** The repetition of “alas” in this passage is faithful to the original (“hélas”). There are so many occurrences in the speeches of lamentation, however, that I have sometimes reduced them.

**71** The Nurse’s erudition in this speech, verging on the pedantic, is quite incompatible with any notion of characterisation and exceeds the Senecan models; the playwright is evidently attempting to establish a suitably classical ambiance for Madame de Nemour’s sleeplessness and terrors. See also below, ll. 431-33. In later scenes, the Nurse resumes the simpler style belonging to her character-type.

**72** Phlegon: one of the four horses that drew the sun’s chariot (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2.154). Nabataea was an Arabian kingdom, extensive in the first cent. CE. (See *The Jerusalem Bible*, gen. ed. Alexander Jones [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966], n. e to 1 Maccabees 5:25, and Stephen M. Hooks, “Nabataeans”, *Mercer Dictionary of the Bible*, gen. ed. Watson E. Mills [Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990], pp. 597-99.) The reference serves here metonymically to signify the east, where the sun rises out of the sea.

**73** Hecate: the triple goddess, here figured in her aspect of goddess of the moon, who fell in love with



395 The pleasures she reaps from Endymion's caressing;  
 396 One brother of the double-birth is not addressing  
 397 His twin yet to call him from the world underground.<sup>74</sup>  
 398 All beasts, exhausted from their daily work, are  
           found  
 399 Preparing themselves for the labour soon in store  
 400 By sleep profound, which serves their forces to restore;  
 401 All in sweet sleep await the waking-up tomorrow  
 402 Of the torch that chases away night, fear and sorrow.  
 403 Yet you alone already, when the light of day  
 404 Back to our hemisphere has hardly made its way,  
 405 Begin again your weeping, your lamenting wails.  
 406 Girl, rally your spirits. What is it you so ails?  
 407 Chase off for me now all this sorrow, all this sadness,  
 408 Which gnaws at your heart, which gives you endless  
           distress.  
 409 Smooth out your brow, on your grieving restraint impose;  
 410 Stifle those sighs, along with all those secret woes.  
 411 In bemoaning their Ceÿx, those birds called Alcyon,  
 412 Bemoaning their Itys, the daughters of Pandion,<sup>75</sup>  
 413 Could not the quantity of your tears manifest,  
 414 Which one sees forever dropping upon your breast,  
 415 Causing your fair eyes to flood perpetually  
 416 With weeping, or rather to melt in a deep sea.  
 417 Will these fierce lamentations never have an end?

## MADAME

418 When kind heaven by welcome death is pleased to  
           send  
 419 Release for my poor soul from its imprisonment.

---

the shepherd Endymion; she is more usually figured as Diana, Selena or Luna.

**74** The allusion is to the myth of Castor and Pollux; see Smith, *s.v.* "Dioscuri".

**75** The Nurse appears somewhat confused in referring to the "Alcyoniennes" who mourn "leur Ceyx": it was Alcyone who drowned herself out of grief for her drowned husband Ceÿx, and both were transmuted into kingfishers. Pandion was the father of Procne and Philomela, who revenged themselves on Tereus by having him feed on his murdered son (by Procne) Itys; all were subsequently changed into various birds. See Smith, *s.v.* "Alcyone" and "Tereus".

## NURSE

420 Do you speak of death? What is there lurks in  
concealment  
421 Within your sad heart that could cause you such  
distress,  
422 With tears and weeping could your being so oppress?  
423 Could there occur anything so miserable?  
424 Could there occur anything so deplorable  
425 To the mother of children who seem in their hands  
426 To hold Fortune, who to human hearts give commands?

## MADAME

427 Whom cruel stepdame Fortune everywhere pursues.

## NURSE

428 Whom everywhere she follows, and benefits strews.

## MADAME

429 Only the hour—now here, alas!—I await  
430 When her hostile turn throws us to the lowest state  
431 And gives us a great fall. Thus is she pleased to play,  
432 By turning her inconstant wheel whichever way—  
433 Truly inconstant, and will by no means desist.

## NURSE

434 Your eldest son, who has been able to resist,  
435 Endure adversity, repulse blow after blow,  
436 Can well thwart any move of hers to overthrow  
437 Him from her sphere's summit, by virtue<sup>76</sup> elevated  
438 To such favour. The cube, since it is situated  
439 (The cube mercurial) adjacent to that ball,  
440 With constancy will block its rolling, hence his fall.<sup>77</sup>

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**76** Orig. "vertue"—here, it seems, "manliness" in the broader sense.

**77** This philosophical idea of the opposition posed by Mercury, patron of learning, knowledge and the arts, in the form of a cube, to Fortune's unstable wheel, was apparently widespread enough (thanks largely to emblem books) for the Nurse to have imbibed it. See Piotr Rypson, "Homo Quadratus in Labyrintho: The Cubus or Labyrinth Poem", *European Iconography East and West: Selected Papers of the Szeged International Conference, June 9-12, 1993*, ed. György E. Szönyi, *Symbola et Emblemata* 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 7-17, p. 14.

MADAME

441 Ah, Nurse, I fear, I fear!

NURSE

What is it that you fear?

MADAME

442 I fear.

NURSE

But what?

MADAME

443 My fearful mind makes it appear  
 444 Vexatious Fate mocks us in our prosperity,  
 445 Since it will soon load us with woe and misery:  
 446 We are purposely shown such favour to deceive us,  
 The better afterwards to injure and to grieve us.

NURSE

447 What? You need have no fear of its inconstancy.  
 448 You have a Hercules, who has such potency—  
 449 One Hercules? Your other children, each of these  
 450 In prudence and virtue triumphs like Hercules.

MADAME

451 Hercules, in spite of his formidable strength,  
 452 Found himself succumbing to Fortune's force<sup>78</sup> at length.  
 453 Once, when Troy fell and was sacked, poor Hecuba's eye  
 454 Witnessed her hundred children, Asia's glory, die.  
 455 Of her twice seven children, she of Thebes, made stone,  
 456 In one day saw herself bereft, to weep alone,  
 457 As Amphion, her spouse, then died and, losing him,  
 458 She felt her tears grow hard along with every limb.<sup>79</sup>

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**78** "Fortune's force": orig. "sa puissance forte". I specify "Fortune" to clarify the character's thought. The masculine "Fate" ("sort") of l. 443 has already given way to a feminine pronoun ("elle") in l. 445.

**79** The weeping Queen of Thebes, Niobe, like Hecuba a stock figure of mourning in the Renaissance,

459 Alas, if that cruel tyrant and hypocrite  
 460 His cursèd cruelty to use on them saw fit!<sup>80</sup>  
 461 Ah, my God, how fearful I find that apprehension!

## MADAME

462 But whatever engenders in you that conception?<sup>81</sup>  
 463 Your children have now been restored to the King's  
 grace.<sup>82</sup>

## MADAME

464 He nourishes rancour behind his laughing face.

## NURSE

465 Never has such vice been found in a heart that's  
 royal.<sup>83</sup>

## MADAME

466 He has always been perfidious and disloyal.  
 467 Neither faith nor loyalty goes with heresy.  
 468 Ah, I spy well enough: his false hypocrisy  
 469 Has some evil in store for me. My eyes can see,  
 470 My spirit sense it. And indeed the gods agree  
 471 By sending nightly presages by way of dreaming.<sup>84</sup>  
 472 Pray, gods, bring it about that this is mere false  
 seeming!  
 473 Again only this morning (alas, what a vision!)  
 474 I seemed to see myself sleeping in an effusion<sup>85</sup>  
 475 Of blood. Nurse, alas, nurse, help me to stand upright!

---

was changed into stone after the angry gods massacred her children (seven boys and seven girls), as well as her husband.

**80** Author's marginal note: "One can expect nothing but evil from a tyrant."

**81** The rhyme "apprehension/conception" is present in the original.

**82** I.e., with the signing in Rouen of the Edict of Union, imposed on Henri III in July 1988, two months after his Guise-incited expulsion from Paris on the so-called Day of the Barricades.

**83** Author's marginal note: "No, but in that of a tyrant like this one."

**84** Conspicuously in this passage (as indeed elsewhere), the Senecan apparatus, with its premonitions and prophetic dreaming, is thinly overlaid on a Christian foundation—cf. esp. ll. 488-92 below.

**85** The rhyme "vision"/"effusion" is in the original.

## NURSE

476 Madam, take heart. There can slip into us by night,  
 477 Along with sleep itself, many a idle terror.  
 478 Give it no credence at all—that would be gross error.  
 479 But say what you saw.

## MADAME

Dear nurse, of comfort the store—

480 My nurse, my heart—an hour and a half, and more,  
 481 Alas, I felt that my bed was drowning in blood:  
 482 Blood streaming, streaming to make a terrible flood,  
 483 From the side of my children, the sole sustenance—  
 484 Alas, the hope, the life—of myself and of France.  
 485 My dear children, alas, my dear children, I held you  
 486 In my arms and, alas, all bleeding I beheld you—  
 487 Bleeding, bruised, alas, with blood and dirt overspread,  
 488 Pale, livid, undone. Wherever had that grace fled,  
 489 That grace divine? Where now was that surpassing beauty?  
 490 That brow, seat of love? That heart, seat of loyalty,  
 491 Of honour, majesty, prudence and piety—  
 492 Of strength, of virtue, of faith and of constancy?  
 493 Alas, instead all hollowed out your eyes were shown,  
 494 Your fair bodies all bloody, and your limbs, once known<sup>86</sup>  
 495 To bathe in the blood of foes when by warfare they  
 496 Sought our faith, our goods and our land to take away.  
 497 Then with a sudden start—I was so seized by fright—  
 498 Jolted out of sleep, I gave a loud cry outright.  
 499 That dream only renders my cares and sorrows double.

## NURSE

500 What? Will you then let a vain dream cause you such  
       trouble?  
 501 It is a deceiving phantom, a mere illusion.<sup>87</sup>

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**86** “[O]nce known”: an addition to the translation to distinguish more clearly their present state from their former one, in which the blood that covered them was that of enemies.

**87** Such dismissal of the ominous by the comforting figure of the Nurse was a common device in the Senecan tradition. A especially close instance, which might almost have been modeled on Bel-yard, is found in the exchanges between Andromache and her Nurse in Antoine de Montchrestien,

## MADAME

502 Not that alone troubles me with fearful confusion.  
 503 Still in bewilderment beneath that vision's sway,  
 504 Not moving at all, stretched out as if dead I lay,  
 505 With my stomach heaving, my hair that stood on end,  
 506 Without speech, without pulse, my limbs too chilled to  
     bend,  
 507 I was weeping gently over that sad event  
 508 Which Fortune had allotted the dream to present.<sup>88</sup>  
 509 Weeping. Nevertheless, a faint impulse to doze  
 510 Crept softly into me, enough my eye to close—  
 511 My eye, all swollen with consuming tears of grief,  
 512 My eye, for many nights deprived of sleep's relief.  
 513 And there at once I spied, in front of my damp bed,  
 514 My husband's shade—pale, forlorn, an object of dread,  
 515 As he was when I saw him after he'd been felled<sup>89</sup>  
 516 By that cowardly stroke, and his breath had been  
     quelled.  
 517 He seemed to rise from the coffin where he'd been laid,  
 518 Cadaverous, in a wretched pale shroud arrayed;  
 519 After much sighing, tears streaming in constant flow  
 520 Down his face, he uttered to me these words of sorrow:  
 521         "Your sons all taken, like your husband, now you  
             find,  
 522 Yet sleep without a care of us to cloud your mind!  
 523 Sleep while you are able, then, and rest at your ease;  
 524 You will wake soon enough, bowed down with miseries—

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*Hector: Tragedy*, ed. and trans. Richard Hillman, Scène Européenne—Traductions Introuvables (Tours: Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, 2019) <<https://sceneuropeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/hector>>; accessed 29/08/2019, esp. II.522 ff.

**88** Orig.: "Que le songe m'avait montrée d'aventure". Despite "d'aventure" ("by chance"), the dream is obviously not to be understood as merely random, as the Nurse's argues.

**89** "I saw him after he'd been felled": orig. "je le vis mettre dessous la lame" (lit. "beneath the blade"). The expression is a figurative evocation of Death as the archetypal "grim reaper". The "cowardly stroke" of the following line was actually a pistol shot, by which the Huguenot Jean de Poltrot de Méré murdered François, duc de Guise, during the siege of Orléans in 1563. The assassin was widely assumed to have been suborned by the Protestant leader, Gaspard de Coligny, Admiral Châtillon, and the Guises instigated the St Bartholomew's massacre in August 1572 by having the latter killed in revenge.

525 With sobbing, with sighing, with sorrowing, with tears,  
 526 With pains, misfortunes, burdens, and with gnawing  
       fears.  
 527 Your children are lost: his livid envy to slake,  
 528 The tyrant inhumane is poised their lives to take.  
 529 Yet he will not be satisfied to see them dead:  
 530 To entomb their bodies you will not be permitted.  
 531 They will come to find me in heaven, full of joy,  
 532 Leaving you alone, grief and mourning to deploy.”  
 533       He spoke no more; weeping, and bidding me adieu,  
 534 Suddenly back to his heavenly home he flew.  
 535 To retain him, three times in vain did I enfold  
 536 Emptiness in my arms, three times essayed to hold  
 537 His ever-fleeting image; vainly three times, too,  
 538 I called, as he, three times seized, from my hand  
       withdrew.<sup>90</sup>  
 539 All at once a tremor shook my eyelids, shut tight,  
 540 And caused me to see again the day’s noxious light,  
 541 Which splits my heart with sorrow, melts my eye with  
       weeping,  
 542 Always my cares and my pains in a fresh state keeping.  
 543       O valorous soul, O true dwelling-place of virtue,  
 544 When will I live happy, reunited with you  
 545 In fields Elysian? May God make Clotho<sup>91</sup> sever  
 546 Soon the thread of my days, which seems prolonged  
       forever!

## NURSE

547 All this agony afflicting your heart abandon,  
 548 Madam: let not your fear before the evil run.  
 549 Even evil present and real by fear is doubled;  
 550 A lying apparition your spirit has troubled,

**90** The repetition of actions three times is venerable epic convention.

**91** Normally, of the three Moirae (Roman Parcae), it was Clotho who spun the thread of life (cf. above, l. 36), Atropos who cut it once it was measured, but the confusion was widespread. See Jean Galaut, *Phalante, Sidney’s Arcadia on the French Stage: Two Renaissance Adaptations: Phalante, by Jean Galaut; The Shepherds’ Court, by André Mareschal*, ed. and trans. Richard Hillman, Scène Européenne—Traductions Introuvables (Tours: Presses Universitaires François-Rabelais, 2018), p. 73, n. 51 to l. 1060.

551 Figuring the object of your distressful thought:  
 552 With that which we think of by day our dreams are  
                     fraught.  
 553 There's no need yet to fear; no harm's been done at all:  
 554 No man can have a heart so ferocious and brutal.<sup>92</sup>  
 555 Why does a sign of such unhappiness so vain  
 556 Within you engender the certainty of pain?  
 557 Now if destiny—O gods, may this be averted,  
 558 This augury prove vain and to good be converted!—  
 559 If destiny, changing course, for our France prepares  
 560 Any trouble and turmoil, then entrust your cares  
 561 To Him who holds chance and destiny<sup>93</sup> in his sway.  
 562 No, do not fear, but this morning, without delay,  
 563 Rather to God due sacrificial rites fulfil  
 564 To appease his ire and procure his good will:  
 565 God is not implacable—prayers have their effect.  
 566 Madam, for all that, do not, I pray you, suspect  
 567 That I suppose some evil lurks to spoil our good.  
 568 Ah, God! How many times—O what outrageous falsehood!—  
 569 Has such a feigning phantom, as I dreamt at night,  
 570 Frightened me likewise! No dream ever gives us sight  
 571 Of truthful things. Make sure you are not led astray;  
 572 Let them, with sleep, from your memory fade away;  
 573 Dreams deceive always; there nothing but lies are told.  
 574                   But who, whether French or foreigner, is so bold  
 575 As to try your sons' manhood,<sup>94</sup> so daunting and great?  
 576 What temerity, what indomitable hate,  
 577 Rancour, impiety, could ever so prevail  
 578 With some cruel monster that he would dare assail  
 579 Those stalwart Guisians, the fathers of their country?<sup>95</sup>

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**92** An authorial note in the margin qualifies this: "Tyrants are deprived of all humanity."

**93** "[C]hance and destiny": orig. "le sort et le destin". A distinction seems implied along the lines of the classical "fortuna" *versus* "fatum", but the passage goes on to apply its pagan apparatus to the overriding Christian truth.

**94** "[M]anhood": the context makes clear the primary sense to be assigned to "vertu" here.

**95** "[T]he fathers of their country": orig. "pères de la patrie"). The plural extends the idea to the House of Lorraine in general, but most immediately evoked are doubtless the successes of Henri, duc de Guise, in combatting invading forces of Protestant mercenaries—exploits lionised by partisans, beginning with his victory at Dormans in Champagne (1575). See Richard Hillman, "Pharaon et le duc



580 Of doubt, I pray you, Madam, let your heart be free.  
 581 Do you not know that all those haunters of the court—  
 582 Flatterers, fools, contrivers of frauds, and of sport,  
 583 Foul spawn of vipers, feeders on the people, leeches,  
 584 Cut-throats,<sup>96</sup> murderers, mongers of slanderous speeches,  
 585 Spreading discord, chasing peace and love from the  
           heart,  
 586 In short, those foes of your sons—from the court  
           depart?  
 587 Any rebels who hide a lasting jealousy  
 588 Would not dare to put their lives in such jeopardy;  
 589 The clemency, the mild behaviour, the largesse  
 590 Of your virtuous sons have proven their success  
 591 With others who wished them ill, by whom they're pursued  
 592 With much love now, dearly cherished and highly valued.  
 593 Who would be so cruel, so crude and inhumane  
 594 As to desire his outrageous hand to stain  
 595 With the blood of someone by whom his life was saved?  
 596 Have they not liberated France, almost enslaved—  
 597 Either beneath the yoke of its neighbours bowed low,  
 598 Or of its own children, mutinous Huguenots?  
 599 Consider this well, and banish that trepidation,  
 600 That suspicion, that care, that grief and lamentation;  
 601 In smoke and with the wind, your dreams will fade from  
           sight,  
 602 And not return so often to vex you at night.  
 603 Madam, believe me, all that is nothing but lies.

## MADAME

604 Not only from my dreaming does my fear arise.  
 605 Do I not see that tyrant whispering each day  
 606 With his amusers? How many reports convey

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de Guise, d'après Françoise de Chantelouve", *Le Bruit des armes. Mises en formes et désinformations en Europe pendant les Guerres de Religion (1560-1610)*, Actes du Colloque International, Tours, 5-7 Novembre 2009, ed. Jérémie Foa and Paul-Alexis Mellet, Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, Le Savoir de Mantice (Paris: H. Champion, 2012), pp. 295-304.

**96** "Cut-throats": the equivalent of the standard French term in contemporary use—"coupe-jarrets" (lit. "ham-stringers")—which was notably applied to the group of assassins who carried out the murder.

607 To me daily that they have settled on a time  
 608 Among them to perpetrate their murderous crime?  
 609 Does that pack of cut-throats not give reason to fear  
 610 When one sees them laughing while the Estates meet  
       here—  
 611 They who have wholly ruined the servile populace?  
 612 From day to day in this town my fear grows apace,  
 613 As I see it swarming with our great enemies.

## NURSE

614 Now the King makes your sons his friends, puts them  
       at ease.  
 615 It is for France and your sons that this fair display  
 616 Of the Estates convened in Blois is underway.

## MADAME

617 That neither the King nor his courtiers contents.

## NURSE

618 He grants them all they ask and bestows on them  
       presents.

## MADAME

619 Forget those presents—they are treacherous, mere  
       ruse.

## NURSE

620 Something useful to me I will never refuse.

## MADAME

621 It's that one must fear: in the honey poison lies.

## NURSE

622 May God be gracious to us, more kindly the skies.

## MADAME

623 Yet that the King at last would manifest his hate—  
 624 Never that wretched plague did I anticipate:  
 625 We had the strength to bring them all to ruination.

626 Sadly, in one who longs for earthly domination,  
 627 The more his greatness grows, the more he grows afraid.  
 628 Never were the Indian realms with light arrayed  
 629 So early, as the sun shed its resplendent beams,  
 630 That it did not see me sad, tears pouring in streams;  
 631 Never so late into Spanish waves did it go  
 632 With its flaming chariot that it saw the flow  
 633 From my eyes dried up. Oh, what a great benefit  
 634 To live obscure, having little—but sure of it!  
 635 Vices do not enter a humble dwelling-place;  
 636 Poison often from a golden cup, not from base  
 637 Bowls of wood, is drunk.<sup>97</sup> And there always without  
       dread,  
 638 Not beneath a gilded roof, one may eat one's bread.  
 639 Happier than I is the simple shepherdess:  
 640 If her coffer does not foreign riches possess,  
 641 If her limbs are not in silk and velvet encased,  
 642 If her lowly house with proud towers is not graced,  
 643 To keep guards at the door there is also no need:  
 644 She sleeps fearless. All greatness is accompanied  
 645 By a swarming profusion of worries and pains:  
 646 Greatness with its very milk a thousand obtains.  
 647 I speak from experience, and only the truth.  
 648 My children lost in their most tender youth  
 649 Their noble father. At Poitiers's siege they bore,  
 650 Young as they were, the cruel assaults of the war  
 651 The Huguenots waged, almost masters then of France;  
 652 Within they were exposed to extreme sufferance,  
 653 Fiercely assailed and having very little bread  
 654 To sustain their bodies, from hunger almost dead.  
 655 To what ills were they not exposed at La Rochelle?  
 656 At Saint Denis? In the midst of each bitter battle  
 657 Sweating beneath their armour to defend their king?  
 658 When all of Paris, under siege, with fear was trembling,  
 659 As strutting in the field were seen, close to its walls,

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97 "Poison . . . drunk": orig. "L'on boit souvent dans l'or, et non pas dans le vase / Fait de bois, la poison." The translation roughly imitates the unusual syntactic dislocation in the verse.

660 French enemies, the different German nationals,  
 661 Men from various Swiss cantons, with greedy hand,<sup>98</sup>  
 662 From Poitou, Limousin, Flanders, Brittany, England?  
 663 Did the elder not get a bullet-scar to bear?<sup>99</sup>  
 664 What? At the camp of Poitou? Again at La Fère?  
 665 As likewise at Rocroi, at Sedan, in Guyenne?<sup>100</sup>  
 666 What blocked the German, who (the worse for him) had  
                                   then  
 667 Reached the Gâtinais,<sup>101</sup> having left his land behind  
 668 A new home in our France, by war subdued, to find?  
 669 And what of Paris in the foreign soldiers' grip?<sup>102</sup>  
 670                     If after so many pains and dangers, such hardship,  
 671 Some impending evil still hangs over our race,  
 672 Almighty God of goodness, grant, grant me this grace—  
 673 That upon me your ire may begin to fall.  
 674 Or rather, kind father, have pity on us all!

## NURSE

675 Madam, put yourself in a better state of mind;  
 676 For far too long your eye with weeping has been blind.  
 677 Good and ill change like winter, summer, fall and  
                                   spring.<sup>103</sup>

**98** “[W]ith greedy hand”. The original, “gourmands”, seems likely in context to refer to the notorious avidity of the mercenaries, eager for plunder.

**99** As mentioned above (n. 46), it was at Dormans that Henri of Guise received his facial wound. The Duchess’s mind has wandered from the siege of Paris, so I make l. 663 end a self-contained question. (There is a full-stop in the original.)

**100** The geographical references cover a wide span of French territory, from east to west and from north to south.

**101** Gâtenais: an extensive region extending from the east into the Île-de-France, hence close to Paris. Memorialised here are undoubtedly the Duke of Guise’s two celebrated victories over the mercenaries in the fall of 1587 at Vimory, near Montargis, and Auneau, near Chartres—a prelude to the events in Paris in the spring of 1588. See Jouanna et al., eds., pp. 327-28.

**102** Orig.: “Et quoi dedans Paris cantonné d’étrangers?” A marginal note of the author placed after “cantonné” reads “aux barricades”, confirming the reference to the so-called Day of the Barricades (12 Mai 1588), when a popular uprising in favour of the duc de Guise compelled Henri III to flee Paris and accept humiliating terms (including the convocation of the Estates in Blois). The play’s point of view is naturally that of the League, emphasising the King’s provocation of the protest by stationing—“cantonner” is the military term—foreign troops (regiments of Swiss guards) within the city, contrary to the privileges of the city. See Jouanna et al., eds, pp. 691-93 (“Barricades, journée des”).

**103** L. 677: orig. “Le bien suit le malheur comme l’hiver l’été”—literally, “Good follows evil as win-

## MADAME

678 Good fortune is more distant than some evil thing.

## NURSE

679 One afflicted suffers this ill: he lacks the sense  
 680 That against what he fears he can find a defence;  
 681 He always believes in loss, rather than in gain.  
 682 All will yet work out well: rid yourself of this pain.

## MADAME

683 Oh, may God too will it so! Yet, Nurse, nonetheless  
 684 Let's warn my Henri of that murder merciless  
 685 I'm often told they're planning to make him endure.  
 686 That is the way to make my heart feel more secure.

## NURSE

687 When one is frightened, it's best to have open  
 eyes:  
 688 An enemy cannot then take one by surprise.

## CHORUS

689 He even to the gods is equal,  
 690 Displaying more than human power  
 691 Who has no fear of death's arrival  
 692 Nor seeks to know its unsure hour.  
 693 He does not have, ambitious,  
 694 A heart with envy rife;  
 695 Moreover, avaricious  
 696 He was never in his life.  
 697 He has dread of no king  
 698 Nor is fearful of lightning.

699 Secure, he sees the sun provide  
 700 Its rays, which all illuminate.

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ter summer". The syntactic ambiguity complicating the logic seems due to the need for a rhyme with Madame's next line ("prosperité"). The translation reverts to the essential point about the changing seasons.

701                   Secure, again he sees it hide.  
 702                   Constant, he lets the vulgar prate.  
 703                    Just as his fancies please,  
 704                    Amid soft chirping sounds,  
 705                    He slumbers at his ease  
 706                    On the grass which surrounds,  
 707                    On their banks of rich verdure,  
 708                    The gentle streams that wander.  
  
 709                   From larks and finches, free from care,  
 710                   From nightingales' and linnets' throats  
 711                   And other songsters of the air,  
 712                   The beautiful and warbling notes  
 713                    In soothing harmony  
 714                    His hearing gently takes—  
 715                    Not the clarion's frenzy,  
 716                    Which, as it bursts forth, wakes  
 717                    Men into sudden bounds  
 718                    When the assault it sounds.  
  
 719                   He savours the sweet soothing fragrance  
 720                   Flora divine comes to diffuse,  
 721                   When spring perfume the air enchants  
 722                   And flowers' hues the earth suffuse.  
 723                    Later he mows the fields,  
 724                    Working with tied-up hair,  
 725                    And, threshing what that yields  
 726                    In the place they prepare,  
 727                    Watches the sparkling grain,  
 728                    At the flails' blows, remain.  
  
 729                   What pleasure to see Bacchus fume,<sup>104</sup>  
 730                   Because in casks enclosed he stays,  
 731                   And boiling out of them in spume  
 732                   Through the unstable autumn days.  
 733                    The trunk that saw his care

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**104** “[F]ume”: the original (“fumeux”) likewise plays on words to evoke the vapour of the fermenting wine as expressing the wine-god’s anger at his confinement.

734 With fruitful harvest greets  
 735 Him whose grafts made it bear.  
 736 From the dairy he eats,  
 737 No poison needs to fear  
 738 At any time of year.

739 Who for those dishes good and pleasant,  
 740 Freely given, would wish instead  
 741 To feed on fancy bread and pheasant,  
 742 That happy life thus forfeited?  
 743 Oh, that it's not permitted  
 744 By all to choose one's state!  
 745 My foes, discomfited,  
 746 Mine would not imitate.  
 747 I would harbour no longings  
 748 For great things of great kings.

749 I would live in flowery meadows  
 750 And where the trees give gracious shade,  
 751 Exempted from worries and sorrows,  
 752 As along winding banks I strayed.  
 753 There all day one circumvents  
 754 All kinds of harmful things,  
 755 In love and reverence  
 756 The Lord of Heaven brings.  
 757 There, although sins are bold,  
 758 On hearts they have no hold.

759 There reign forever verity,  
 760 Faith and justice, fairness and mildness,  
 761 Openness, sweetness, charity,  
 762 Chastity, freedom from all falseness.  
 763 There always in repose,  
 764 With harm on none inflicted,  
 765 When ancient Atropos  
 766 Cuts through his vital thread,  
 767 Soft slumber, as he dozes,  
 768 A man's eye gently closes.

## Act III

Henri, Épernon, L'Archant

HENRI

769 So, you're a do-nothing,<sup>105</sup> spineless; you weakly cower,  
 770 And—by this it seems to me a king wielding power  
 771 Over the flower of Europe<sup>106</sup> is still more shamed—  
 772 You delay your revenge on one who has you tamed,  
 773 Who keeps you under control<sup>107</sup> and plagues you with  
       cares:  
 774 Must a king, then, let others judge his affairs?  
 775 Too long now I've endured a vassal's dominance.  
 776 The noble horse, which only has a cognizance  
 777 By nature of the joys by liberty procured,  
 778 Shakes the restraining bit. The yoke is not endured  
 779 By strong oxen who draw the plough unless constrained,  
 780 And will you drag out your whole life fearful and  
       pained,  
 781 Not daring one man's slightest wishes to withstand?  
 782 You? Whose forbears were able not only their land  
 783 To hold against the greatest kings but, what is more,  
 784 To acquire lands from others by martial war?  
 785 Do you degenerate,<sup>108</sup> then, from royal succession,  
 786 Son of the great Henri, of great François the  
       grandson?<sup>109</sup>  
 787 You who enjoyed such credit, such honour and power,  
 788 Great chief of the French army from a youthful hour?<sup>110</sup>  
 789 You, to whom in submission came, of its free will,  
 790 Electing you their king,<sup>111</sup> that great unconquered people

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**105** “[D]o-nothing”: orig. “fainéant”. Author’s marginal note: “So he was if any man ever was.”

**106** I.e., France.

**107** Author’s marginal note: “The villain does not dare to commit his impious acts in the presence of the virtuous.”

**108** Author’s marginal note: “Undoubtedly, but not in the sense he means.” Matthieu makes the execrable Épernon confess to degenerating from his noble ancestors in *The Guisade*, III.i.774; League discourse thus uses acknowledgement of glorious heritage to accentuate the deviance of its villains.

**109** I.e., respectively, of Henri II (reigned 1547-59) and François I (reigned 1515-47).

**110** At the age of seventeen, Henri, as Duke of Anjou, commanded the royal forces at the victorious battle of Jarnac in 1569.

**111** Henri was elected King of Poland in 1573; his ignominious flight from Poland to take up the French



791 Who labour in those fields where angry mouths breath  
 forth  
 792 Rock-shaking and all-freezing winds out of the north,<sup>112</sup>  
 793 Toughening hearts, which hard and ferocious are bred  
 794 In my warlike Polish hosts, who on meat are fed?  
 795 When will one see your idle manhood has awoke  
 796 To cut off the pernicious Hydra<sup>113</sup> with one stroke,  
 797 The hundred-headed monster, with Guisard blood swelling,  
 798 Now the strict overseer of a Valois king?<sup>114</sup>  
 799 O coward! Today the dawn with its saffron hue  
 800 Should not have appeared the joyous day to renew,  
 801 The veiled sky varying with its rust-red display,  
 802 Before all my troubles had been taken away—  
 803 Before I had caused France with men-at-arms to teem.<sup>115</sup>  
 804 The flames of blazing fire and their weapons' gleam  
 805 Should have made it daylight even before the sun,  
 806 By opening his eye, the dawn had set in motion;  
 807 And I see already: of these towers so high  
 808 He's gilding the tips, of the far vaults of the sky  
 809 Traversing the base, and with his galloping horses  
 810 Tracing the rosy-fingered<sup>116</sup> goddess in her courses.  
 811 Too long delayed, too long! The dim and obscure night  
 812 Was better suited to this deed than is the daylight.<sup>117</sup>  
 813 Still, be that as it may, we can't afford to wait:  
 814 There's no making up lost time if it's left too late  
 815 And he should ever get wind of our enterprise.  
 816 We must not scorn good fortune's offer of surprise.

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throne when his brother Charles died in the following year was a theme of League scorn and ridicule.

**112** The image stems ultimately from the ancient personification of the winds, as current in contemporary cartography.

**113** Author's marginal note: "The virtuous man is slandered by the wicked, who cannot harm him otherwise." The myth of the multi-headed Lernean Hydra and its killing by Hercules (the hero's second labour), is often evoked by both sides in the discourse of politico-religious controversy in the period. In *The Guisade*, the Duke of Guise urges Henri to slay the Huguenot Hydra; see Matthieu, II.ii.623-24, and n. 84. Cf. below, V.1808.

**114** Author's marginal note: "Who prevented him from carrying out his evil designs."

**115** Author's marginal note: "To ruin subjects is the pleasure of tyrants."

**116** "[R]osy-fingered": orig. "aux doigts languets-rosins", modelled on the recurrent Homeric epithet for Aurora, who is often imagined as pursued by the chariot of the sun.

**117** Author's marginal note: "One who does evil seeks out darkness."

817 I aim at catching him while nothing is suspected;<sup>118</sup>  
 818 For me, no single happy day can be expected  
 819 Till he has rendered his blood and, with it, his life.  
 820 Either he or I, by a steel blade, sword or  
       knife  
 821 Thrust through,<sup>119</sup> must let the other calmly in France  
       reign.<sup>120</sup>  
 822 I wish with his blood to bathe, to dye and to stain  
 823 Whoever he may be who comes to his defence,  
 824 Who chooses, espousing his cause, to give offence  
 825 To me as a mortal enemy: may he be  
 826 Consigned at once to massacre mercilessly.<sup>121</sup>  
 827 The great man who by a small one is done some wrong  
 828 And for vengeance lacks prudence sufficiently strong—  
 829 He is just not worthy, not at all, of possessing  
 830 That happiness the gods have granted as a blessing.

## ÉPERNON

831 Sovereign monarch, you whom fleurs-de-lys surround,<sup>122</sup>  
 832 Honour of all the kings who have ever been crowned  
 833 In this our lower world,<sup>123</sup> suspended by its weight;<sup>124</sup>  
 834 You who stand above both the rights and laws of state,<sup>125</sup>  
 835 Who wield here on earth all-powerful sovereignty,  
 836 Dispensing life and death, over humanity—  
 837 Like that great Jupiter, said able, in the sky,

**118** Author's marginal note: "Typical of a malignant and impious traitor."

**119** "[B]y a steel blade, sword or knife, / Thrust through": orig. "sous la cendreuse lame / Referré". "Cendreuse" (from "cendre"/"ash" might simply evoke death in a general way but may also refer to steel that tarnishes easily (see *Le Trésor de la langue française informatisé*, online at <<http://atilf.atilf.fr/>>; accessed 16/02/2019), *s.v.*, B2. The translation aims at least to approximate the blood-thirsty effect intended.

**120** Author's marginal note: "He reveals his hypocrisy."

**121** Author's marginal note: "Behaviour of a tyrant."

**122** The fleur-de-lys is the French royal emblem, supposedly bestowed by divine gift.

**123** Author's marginal note: "The voice of the flatterer, plague of the great."

**124** "[S]uspended by its weight": orig. "soutenu par son poids". The somewhat elliptical reference depends on the ancient image of the earth as hanging by a golden chain from the heavens. The evocation of Jupiter's power that follows (ll. 830-31) recalls the often-cited Homeric origin of the image in Zeus's boast in *Iliad*, VIII.19-27. The cosmography was still sufficiently current to be deployed by Milton in *Paradise Lost* (II.1004-5, 1051-55).

**125** Author's marginal note: "As if it were permitted him to do ill."

838 To destroy the universe by blinking his eye:  
 839 You've divided the world into parts of like worth;  
 840 He holds the vaulted heavens, you the rounded earth.<sup>126</sup>  
 841 Then, because you are his equal in domination,  
 842 You should show in action equal determination.  
 843 Sire, do you not see—oh, do you not see, Sire!—  
 844 How, if he is offended, in venting his ire  
 845 He hurls his thunderbolt and breaks, tempestuous,  
 846 With jagged lightning the head he finds sacrilegious?  
 847 He smashes it wholly, reducing it to powder,  
 848 And still not content, he makes his thunder roar louder  
 849 And his lightning flash all across the spacious air  
 850 With his power both the earth and heavens to scare,  
 851 That in abject obedience he may maintain  
 852 The men and gods who find themselves beneath his reign.  
 853 Why are you closely on all sides accompanied  
 854 By strong and strapping men, with all the arms they  
     need?<sup>127</sup>  
 855 To what purpose do you carry that sword with you,  
 856 Unless you have the intention it to imbrue  
 857 In the blood of all those who have provoked your ire;  
 858 Let the brilliant shining of cutlasses like fire  
 859 Be your flaming lightning, flying bright through the  
     air;  
 860 Let the lead that pours from the pistol, limbs to tear—  
 861 From the musket, roaring cannons and arquebus—  
 862 Be the outburst of thunder that amazes us.  
 863 I have not forgotten what I've heard people say—  
 864 That Jupiter does not always strike the same way  
 865 At all equally. The naked-armed Pyracmon,  
 866 Brontes, who deals hard blows, that smithy sweat gleams  
     on,<sup>128</sup>  
 867 In the Isle of Lipari forge bolts in three states,  
 868 Which limping Vulcan for his father fabricates.

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**126** Author's marginal note: "Flatterers full of manifest lies."

**127** Author's marginal note: "The pernicious counsel of fools."

**128** The three Cyclopes who forged thunderbolts for Jupiter's use were Pyracmon (or Arges), Brontes and Steropes. See Smith, *s.v.* "Cyclopes".

869 The first is full of fire, exploding and turning,  
 870 Sulphurous, growling, which flies all blasting and  
           burning.  
 871 With this the high-thunderer once that crew assailed  
 872 Of serpent-footed brothers, who, when they had scaled  
 873 The triple mountain's height,<sup>129</sup> sought by force to  
           arrive  
 874 At heaven, tried their best the gods away to drive.  
 875 As for the second, it is almost the same kind,  
 876 And yet in violence it lags somewhat behind:  
 877 It breaks the bones; the flesh it does not penetrate  
 878 But merely scorches, when, his rage to moderate,  
 879 He assigns a light penalty for an offence,  
 880 Merciful, his malice appearing less intense.  
 881 The third with less fire, fury and wrath is weighted:  
 882 Not doing any harm, Jupiter overhead  
 883 Makes thunder rumble, resound and rapidly roll  
 884 To awe the earth's inhabitants with his control.  
 885 Like him, without pity lightning-blast those you hate;  
 886 Chastisement of the others you may mitigate  
 887 To make them reform, confessing your clemency—  
 888 To frighten as well, and quell the audacity  
 889 Of the simple folk, who to sedition incline.  
 890 Cause the dazzling sword on all sides to flash and  
           shine,  
 891 To ring out and strike sparks. Let your anger deploy  
 892 This instant its thunderous power to destroy  
 893 On him who of all your foes is the hateful head,<sup>130</sup>  
 894 Since it is determined they all shall be struck dead.

## HENRI

895 But that will not be sufficient. I cannot tell  
 896 What punishment will be severe enough, and cruel.  
 897 I seek to see inflicted such great cruelty  
 898 On these Leaguers, all of them, that posterity

**129** According to some accounts, the Giants, who had snakes for feet, in rebelling against Zeus piled up three mountains: Ossa upon Pelion, Olympus on top of both. See Smith, *s.v.* "Pelion".

**130** Author's marginal note: "Not actively ["actually"?—orig. "actifs"] such but true and perfect friends."

899 Will never approve, but always the memory  
 900 Will stay within their hearts.<sup>131</sup> I seek no other glory,  
 901 Seek no other honour. Not otherwise I seek  
 902 To have our future generations of me speak.

## ÉPERNON

903 One must not decide what to do with what one gets  
 904 Until it is first caught, secure within our nets.

## L'ARCHANT

905 Ah, Sire, please, Sire, I pray you have no fear  
 906 That he will not be punished well, once he is here  
 907 And in my hands.<sup>132</sup> Thus may high heaven, where its place  
       is,  
 908 Cause ever to shine upon me your kindly grace's  
 909 Radiant sun,<sup>133</sup> in which alone my joys consist,  
 910 Where my desires, honour, good and life exist.  
 911 This hand rejoices, with ravishing pleasure thrills,  
 912 That now it will dampen that hot furnace of ills  
 913 Where the hostile sky forges all your woeful plights,  
 914 Your cares and troubles. Already more than three nights  
 915 Entire have seen me with that one thought obsessed,  
 916 While all, sunk deep in slumber, profited from rest.  
 917 Thus will I rush on them, with such blows wreak their  
       harm,  
 918 In this manner bring down on them my rigid arm;  
 919 Thus will I plant—and in their filthy breasts make  
       holes,  
 920 To set free from that prison their viperous souls<sup>134</sup>—  
 921 My steel-tipped dagger, well prepared to drink its fill  
 922 Of their free-flowing blood, which over me will spill.  
 923 It laughs, scarcely able its pleasure to contain,

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**131** Author's marginal note: "The expression and behaviour of a tyrant."

**132** Author's marginal note: "Like master, like servant."

**133** The translation attempts to capture the contorted grammatical structure of the opening of this sentence, which conveys a grotesque obsequiousness: "Ainsi le haut ciel fasse / M'éclarer à jamais de votre bonne grâce / Ce soleil radieux". As the speech develops, the contorted syntax mirrors a cruelly twisted mind.

**134** Author's marginal note: "To please his master, the flatterer insults those he knows to be hateful to him."

924 To think how their putrid skins of blood it will drain.  
 925 Yes, and I will also with my own teeth<sup>135</sup> divide  
 926 From their bodies, while still breathing, those heads,  
         inside  
 927 Of which there has been forged many an enterprise  
 928 Against you, as well as any good man you prize.<sup>136</sup>  
 929 Indeed, I shall do it, so that covered in blood,  
 930 As theirs pours from my mouth on my breast in a flood,  
 931 I may cry out to the crowd, all taken aback:  
 932                 “Now our King is king. Liberty, newly brought back  
 933 To the King’s loyal subjects, on them will confer  
 934 Life as they desire it and pleasure for ever.  
 935 Our cruel foes<sup>137</sup> of their mortal garment to strip  
 936 Has freed us from tutelage and guardianship.  
 937 Royalists, rejoice, let your pleasure freely show:  
 938 They have bitten the dust and departed below  
 939 To tell Pluto the story of their sad adventure.”  
 940 So it pleases me well to render unto nature  
 941 The tribute of death that our fatal lot ordains.  
 942 Most willingly, then, will I too endure death’s pains:  
 943 Blessèd is the subject who, his king to defend,  
 944 By a becoming death all his blood can expend.<sup>138</sup>

## ÉPERNON

945 Sire, what now is on your mind? What thoughts torment  
         you

- 
- 135** “[W]ith my own teeth”: orig. “à belles dents”. The expression is still current in the metaphorical sense of “with great strength”, but ll. 930 and 1063 especially match evocations of cannibalism in more extreme League propaganda, where Henri was portrayed as revelling in the dismembering and destruction of the Guises’ bodies and assimilated to Atreus, who in Seneca’s *Thyestes* gloats over serving his victim his own children’s flesh. (I am grateful to Charlotte Bouteille-Meister for supporting this reading with extensive documentation [private communication].) See also below, V.1176-77 and n. 249. L’Archant’s function, not simply as executioner of the King’s murderous purpose, but also as a symbolic projection of his sadistic perversity, is confirmed by the representation of Henri in the final act.
- 136** Author’s marginal note: “Rather, many good and healthful counsels for the preservation of the King and the entire Catholic people.”
- 137** Author’s marginal note: “[Enemies] of all the vices, of all devourers of the people, and of heretics.”
- 138** Author’s marginal note: “Yes, indeed, if he is a Christian, not an atheist and a tyrant.” The language in the original (“Bienheureux est celui qui...”), as in the translation, ironically echoes Christ’s words in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12).

946 With restlessness? Is this not enough to content you?

HENRI

947 I foresee a great evil threatening my head,  
 948 A great squall, a great tempest giving cause for  
       dread,<sup>139</sup>  
 949 A storm full of terror, a gulf of miseries,  
 950 A harvest of attacks, a sea of agonies.  
 951 Right now I see revolt in all my provinces:  
 952 If I command today the killing of those princes,  
 953 Against me I will have the population arming.

ÉPERNON

954 Who will lead them? Who will dare to assail his king  
 955 With weapons drawn?<sup>140</sup> Royal authority surpasses  
 956 All things in this chief respect—that the slavish  
       masses  
 957 Are obliged to endure, approve and tolerate  
 958 All their king wants, and all his deeds to celebrate,  
 959 Deservedly or not. Know that a victory  
 960 Which comes to us without danger confers no glory:  
 961 It's when danger is great fair green laurels we gain.<sup>141</sup>

HENRI

962 Vengeance for these deaths they'll seek by law to  
       obtain.

ÉPERNON

963 Only for the common sort the laws one fashions,  
 964 In order to repress their wild and reckless passions,  
 965 Keep in check their ungoverned strength. And not for  
       kings,  
 966 Kings who make law, decide the rights of underlings.<sup>142</sup>  
 967 The king need merely keep the people firmly tied

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**139** The repetition of “great” (“grand[e]”) is in the original.

**140** Author's marginal note: “Even the best kings are very often corrupted by the wicked counsel of foolish and frivolous men.”

**141** Author's marginal note: “Vice conceals itself with the shadow of virtue.”

**142** Author's marginal note: “The atheist thinks that all is permitted to a king.”



968 And trust his own desires as his only guide.  
 969 The king who to the law gives up his prior claim  
 970 Has nothing royal in him but the empty name.  
 971 Holiness, piety, justice, faith and forbearance  
 972 Should in a king be nothing more than mere appearance.<sup>143</sup>  
 973 It is enough for him to have that reputation  
 974 To content the people in their duteous station.  
 975 But if against that obedience they rebel  
 976 Which they must always owe, then—clemency, farewell!  
 977 Say good-bye to piety, farewell gentleness!  
 978 Justice goes by the board, and farewell holiness!  
 979 Great kings with such a heavy hand must show their power  
 980 That the rebellious subject feeling it will cower.  
 981 If patiently you bear the wrong that he does you  
 982 Today, then tomorrow his acts he will renew;  
 983 To pardon one injury another induces:  
 984 That perverse effect a wicked nature produces.  
 985 You have known it too well for ten or twelve years now;  
 986 Those Idumean dukes<sup>144</sup>—they have treated you how?  
 987 Put aside all the troubles, put aside the insults  
 988 They offered you: what were the Barricades' results,<sup>145</sup>  
 989 Thanks to that scar-faced Guisard?<sup>146</sup> From Paris  
 expelled?<sup>147</sup>

**143** Author's marginal note: "An abominable precept of the atheist Machiavelli opposing kings to the people."

**144** Author's marginal note: "Because they are descended from Godefroy de Bouillon, King of Jerusalem [d. 1100]. But he seeks to denote them as foreigners." The achievement of conquests in Edom, part of ancient Palestine, was a commonplace of the glorious crusading heritage celebrated by the House of Lorraine. See René Taveneaux, "L'Esprit de croisade en Lorraine aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles", *L'Europe, l'Alsace et la France: Problèmes intérieurs et relations internationales à l'époque moderne. Etudes réunies en l'honneur du doyen Georges Livet pour son 70<sup>e</sup> anniversaire* (Colmar: Les Éditions d'Alsace, 1986), pp. 256-63. Cf. below, IV.1274-77. See also the proud allusion by Mary Stuart, daughter of Marie de Guise, in Antoine de Montchrestien, *The Scottish Queen (La reine d'Écosse)*, trans. and ed. Richard Hillman, online publication, "Scene Européenne—Traductions Introuvables", Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours, 2018 (<<https://sceneeuropeenne.univ-tours.fr/traductions/queen-scotland>>; accessed 20/03/2019), V.1244, and Introduction, p. 14. The foreignness insinuated by Épernon's sneering inversion of the compliment relates to the fact that Lorraine was not part of the kingdom of France.

**145** See above, n. 102.

**146** "[S]car-faced": see above, I.177 and n. 46.

**147** Author's marginal note: "Everyone knows that the truth is quite the contrary."



990 All your men murdered? Think, if you'd been caught and  
held!<sup>148</sup>  
991 As king you've never been secure one single day.  
992 Begin, and take your vengeance for it right away.  
993 What are you waiting for? Why do you hesitate,  
994 When the moment and the gods for us militate?<sup>149</sup>  
995 You do not rise to the occasion, and that, missed  
996 Once, is lost, will never again for us exist.

## HENRI

997 I have sufficient will but do not see the way.

## ÉPERNON

998 Ah, what causes such cold hesitancy today?  
999 Just yesterday you'd make earth and heaven change place;  
1000 Now the feeble commoners make you hide your face.  
1001 Where is that courageous heart of a warlike Gaul,  
1002 The Valois strength that makes them Herculese all?  
1003 Forever, then, will that harpy of Guise torment you,  
1004 Poor blind Phineus? Then my hand must here be lent you:  
1005 A Zetes and a Calais for you I must be,  
1006 This monster to banish from your entire country.<sup>150</sup>  
1007 Tell me, with what death do you wish me at this present  
1008 To send him below, to the gloomy tenement  
1009 Of the Stygian marshes in the gulf of Pluto?

## HENRI

1010 That is not what I seek: you would end by that blow  
1011 His pains and his woes. Myself, I want him served  
1012 As cruelly, or nearly, as his crimes have deserved.<sup>151</sup>  
1013 Let the timid tyrant cause suddenly to die  
1014 Those he hates; for my part, I prefer to apply

**148** “[C]aught and held”: orig. “surpris”.

**149** Épernon’s paganism is actively functional here.

**150** Zetes and Calais were wing-footed Argonauts who drove away the harpies tormenting their blind brother-in-law, King Phineus. Belyard’s immediate source may be Ronsard’s “Hymne de Calays et de Zethés” (CB-M/MM).

**151** Author’s marginal note: “The tyrant cannot be cruel enough to satisfy his heart.”

1015 To my foes cruelties and tortures truly dire.  
 1016 What, under me give the wicked (as they desire  
 1017 In their torments) a clean death suddenly inflicted?  
 1018 That is the haven much longed-for by the afflicted.  
 1019 Piety, if sometimes within my breast I find you,  
 1020 Quickly withdraw yourself.<sup>152</sup> There, now, reprobate crew  
 1021 Of rages, furors, conflicts with discordant sound  
 1022 Of merciless monsters that storm deep underground,  
 1023 Come lodge within me. Come, Alecto, with your torments;  
 1024 Bring your two sisters.<sup>153</sup> With fire cruel, intense,  
 1025 In flame my courage, my heart with hatred ignite,  
 1026 With cruelty extreme, deadly rancour and spite.  
 1027 Not yet with ardent heat is my heart seething well:  
 1028 I seek a greater monster now its size to swell!

## ÉPERNON

1029 Let us for the moment think how the fish to draw,  
 1030 Which just three days ago took the hook in its maw.<sup>154</sup>

## HENRI

1031 What I feel is nothing like mere angry emotion;  
 1032 All tortures combined would not make a proper one.  
 1033 My heart can never of cruelty get its fill.

## ÉPERNON

1034 By the sword?

## HENRI

That's not enough.

## ÉPERNON

By fire?

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**152** Author's marginal note: "The voice and action of a tyrant."

**153** Ironically, the influence of all three Furies has been established from the start; see above, I.55-56.

**154** Author's marginal note: "The holy sacrament of the altar, which Monsieur de Guise received along with the tyrant, which he mocks here like an atheist."

## HENRI

Less still.

1035 A boiling tumult all throughout my entrails churns,  
 1036 Rages wild within me and my thoughts overturns.  
 1037 Furor transports me—I cannot tell to what place,  
 1038 But it transports me, and follows me pace by pace.  
 1039 I hear roaring beneath me within the earth's bowels,  
 1040 Have heard at calm nightfall<sup>155</sup> the thunder as it grows:  
 1041 The sun with a russet cloak has itself concealed;  
 1042 The sky has with thick clouds turned confused and  
                   congealed;  
 1043 The chateau has fractured, as if ready to crumble  
 1044 In ruins, and into a gaping mine to tumble.<sup>156</sup>  
 1045 Let it be done! So be it, O gods, as you fear;  
 1046 So be it, since hateful to you he does appear.<sup>157</sup>

## ÉPERNON

1047 What strange death and barbarous cruelty unsparing  
 1048 Is your frenzied heart now for these traitors  
                   preparing?<sup>158</sup>

## HENRI

1049 I don't know with what furor my heart is ablaze:  
 1050 It swells, grows larger; from its normal state it strays  
 1051 In rising up so. My very hand does not dare,  
 1052 Like a coward, perform such a deed. This affair  
 1053 Is great; it must be done. Come, my courage, my heart—

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**155** “[At] calm nightfall”: orig. “Par le serein du ciel”. The standard dictionary definition of the noun “serein” is dew that forms in the evening, but the contrast here suggests the influence of the identical adjective meaning “calm”, “serene”, often used for the weather.

**156** In siege warfare, mines were often dug beneath walls or ramparts to provoke their collapse. Henri's image reflects his mad delusion and evokes his own undermining of the seat of royal power (identified here with the château of Blois).

**157** Author's marginal note: “The voice of a furious tyrant.” It is characteristic of the maniacally vengeful tyrant (Atreus being the outstanding example) at once to identify himself with the will of the gods and to set himself up as their rival in terrorising power—hence, the ambiguity of the omens they send, signalling at once their encouragement and their own fear. The mechanism of Henri's identification with divine power here, effectively pointed up by the rhymes in ll. 1045-46 (“o Dieux” / “odieux”), highlights his abandonment of all Christian pretence.

**158** Author's marginal note: “Because they oppose his evil will.”

1054 To exercise your rancour at once you may start,  
 1055 Surpassing the furor, with fullest strength released,  
 1056 Of tiger, lynx, wolf, famished bear—the fiercest  
           beast.  
 1057 Go on, do some harm that’s worthy of your degree.  
 1058 That’s fine, more than fine! Why, isn’t he there before  
           me?  
 1059 Come on, why has my hand so long been innocent?  
 1060 Ever and always my eager eyes represent  
 1061 My cruel murder’s victim flitting here and there.  
 1062 I see, I see the fire like a glutton glare,  
 1063 Of which with bloody morsels I must feed the maw.  
 1064 What, my heart, are you afraid? Coward, you withdraw?  
 1065 Courage, it must be dared. Come on.

## L’ARCHANT

But with what lure

1066 To tangle his feet in our snares can we be sure?  
 1067 Never in your good faith has he placed confidence.

## HENRI

1068 He’ll come, he’ll come, you needn’t fear. The  
           hopeful sense  
 1069 He has of ranking foremost in France, next to me,  
 1070 And also of being king some day—finally  
 1071 (As in a recent promise to him I professed,  
 1072 With a solemn oath that we had his mass<sup>159</sup> attest)—  
 1073 That hope, without a doubt, to show his face will  
           lead him;  
 1074 Never can fear of death from doing so impede him.

## ÉPERNON

1075 That hope of his<sup>160</sup> will make him fly by sea and land  
 1076 When Jupiter is hurling thunder from his hand;

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**159** “[H]is mass”: orig. “sa messe”. Author’s marginal note: “He declares himself to be a heretic, and my lord of Guise protector of the faith and the Catholic religion.” The mass was held in contempt by Protestants.

**160** Author’s marginal note: “Rather, obedience.”

1077 That hope by itself will cause his vessel to go  
 1078 Where reefs obstruct ships and one cannot even row;  
 1079 Will make him dare the barking Scylla<sup>161</sup> to pass by  
 1080 And the frightening waves of Etna's monster ply;<sup>162</sup>  
 1081 Make him between the clashing Cynaeae steer:<sup>163</sup>  
 1082 That hope will inspire him to make his way here.

## HENRI

1083 His ardour is dampened for eternally being  
 1084 In conflict with me. He supposes he'll be freeing  
 1085 Himself, and after these Estates will dwell in peace,  
 1086 Since the need to bear Mars's heavy charge will cease.<sup>164</sup>

## L'ARCHANT

1087 A thousand combats in France and in fields elsewhere  
 1088 Have rendered Mars's burden light for him to bear.

## HENRI

1089 You're wrong. The sense of evils from day to day grows  
 1090 In every man, and abatement never knows.

## ÉPERNON

1091 To endure a certain time is an easy task,  
 1092 But always to endure is a great deal to ask.

## HENRI

1093 My heart feels easier, so it needs to be done.

## ÉPERNON

1094 Have him sought out.

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**161** Scylla was the monster, with a body including fiercely barking dogs, that lived opposite Charybdis on the strait of Messina and devoured mariners.

**162** The giant Enceladus, defeated by Athena, was supposed to be buried under Mount Etna in Sicily, where his movements were responsible for volcanic disturbances.

**163** The Cynaneae are small islands close together at the narrow entrance of Bosphorus, which were supposed to come together and stop the passage.

**164** Author's marginal note: "For such effeminates as you."

## L'ARCHANT

But to one thing please pay  
attention:

1095 Your messenger must give no sign of what awaits;  
1096 A changing expression, the way one hesitates,  
1097 Will often the best hidden secrets manifest.  
1098 Even the most astute can find themselves hard-pressed  
1099 Successfully to dissemble when stakes are high.

## ÉPERNON

1100 He will not know.

## HENRI

Only be careful to apply  
1101 Yourself to your duty once he has come indeed,  
1102 And do not be the means of making known the deed.

## L'ARCHANT

1103 On that point love and fear both warn me to take care,  
1104 But still more does the faith that in my heart I bear.

## CHORUS

1105 Two vessels serve for store  
1106 At the door  
1107 Of Jupiter's high dwelling:  
1108 One harbours happiness;  
1109 Wretchedness,  
1110 From the other, plagues all living.

1111 All sparingly he deploys  
1112 Earthly joys  
1113 With his left hand clutched tight.  
1114 He loads us with many sorrows  
1115 And hard woes  
1116 Prodigally with his right.

1117 Indeed, we are aware,  
1118 Too, of care  
1119 Mingled with our happiness.

1120 For, freely giving ill,  
 1121 With joy still  
 1122 He intersperses sadness,  
  
 1123 But rarely does he bitter bile  
 1124 With the smile  
 1125 Of sweet honey counteract.  
 1126 We have in long careers  
 1127 (Twenty years)  
 1128 Too amply known that fact.  
  
 1129 The welcome Ledean fire  
 1130 The ire  
 1131 Of Neptune to calm restored,<sup>165</sup>  
 1132 When the Gallic vessel<sup>166</sup> quailed  
 1133 As it sailed  
 1134 Where dangerous Scylla roars.  
  
 1135 But having now found support  
 1136 In the port,  
 1137 It is securely tied,  
 1138 If these Estates enforce  
 1139 The sound course  
 1140 That their debates provide.  
  
 1141 You, great God, who hold in place  
 1142 Heaven's space,  
 1143 Make it that with these calm seas  
 1144 No new tumultuous storm  
 1145 Starts to form  
 1146 To trouble again our ease.  
  
 1147 Again comes the day of days  
 1148 Which always

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**165** The "Ledean fire" is the so-called "St Elmo's" fire, a favourable omen for sailors associated with the constellation Gemini, hence with the twins Castor and Pollux, sons of Leda, whom sailors considered as their protectors. Cf. above, II.396-97.

**166** "Gallic vessel": the French ship of state, according to the familiar metaphor.

1149                   We hold sacred, and must so,  
1150                   When our means of salvation,  
1151                   God's dear son,  
1152                   Chose to be born here below.

1153                   All the people now shout "Io",  
1154                   Laugh and bellow,  
1155                   Making joyous holiday,  
1156                   Such as must be free from woe  
1157                   And from sorrow,  
1158                   Which depress and on us weigh.

1159                   I fear that affliction sent  
1160                   At this moment  
1161                   Of two-fold bliss will be double.  
1162                   Permit us to keep our joy  
1163                   And enjoy  
1164                   A good that no ill will trouble.



## Act IV

My Lord of Guise, Madame de Nemours, [L'Archant, Murderers, Chorus]

GUISE

1165 No—I am going to meet with him. Do not plead.

MADAME

1166 Will you thus accord my counsel so little heed?

GUISE

1167 Since he summoned me, Madam, I will go—excuse me.

MADAME

1168 What I ask of you, then, you really will refuse me?

GUISE

1169 Let fear hold me back? The dishonour is too great.

MADAME

1170 Fear can quite often conduce to a happy state.

GUISE

1171 No fear can be found where there is nobility.

MADAME

1172 What, then? So you will go alone? Oh, wretched me!

GUISE

1173 That is no cause why you should fear impending harms.

MADAME

1174 Alas! Do not go alone, or at least with arms.

GUISE

1175 If I did, his former anger I would revive.

MADAME

1176 Be on your guard—it is still partially alive.

GUISE

1177 To carry arms would make a negative impression.<sup>167</sup>

MADAME

1178 Your mother pleads from the depths of her soul's  
oppression.

GUISE

1179 What? Would you have me then give credence to a dream?

MADAME

1180 No, but for my heart-rending grief show some esteem.

GUISE

1181 That grief stems from a vision and an idle fear.

MADAME

1182 Do it for me, however false they may appear.

GUISE

1183 That could bring me disgrace with shame that would be  
endless.

MADAME

1184 That could preserve you from a death most merciless.

GUISE

1185 Mother, cease to be afraid.

MADAME

Son, take risks no more:

1186 If you choose utterly my counsel to ignore,  
1187 Do nothing to relieve my sorrows and my fear,  
1188 At least take to heart the unfeigned words that I hear  
1189 Repeated to me endlessly by some who know.

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**167** Author's marginal note: "The virtuous man not only does no one harm but even fears to give any occasion of offending ["offenser"] someone." The language enters into the recurrent discourse regarding Guise's supposed *offending* of the king; see Hillman, "Marlowe's Guise".

1190 Already at least two, perhaps three, days ago  
 1191 I had one worthy of belief to me convey  
 1192 Word of the death which is ordained for you today  
 1193 By that false dissembler you are going to see.<sup>168</sup>

GUISE

1194 He could have easily invented such a story.

MADAME

1195 Throughout this whole city the rumour circulates.

GUISE

1196 And so such idle chatter your attention rates?

MADAME

1197 Yet it may well be true.

GUISE

Or false equally well.

MADAME

1198 Better it be so than that truth it should foretell.

GUISE

1199 Often common rumours, like those visions that grieve  
   you,  
 1200 Instead of truth speak nothing but lies to deceive you.

MADAME

1201 Often we think false such a warning premonition,  
 1202 Which shortly shows itself as a true apparition.

GUISE

1203 I never shall believe that in a royal mind,  
 1204 Perfidy and treacherous hatred we will find.<sup>169</sup>

**168** The warning transmitted by Madame de Nemours, with Guise's reply affirming belief in the King's good faith, have a historical basis. See Chevallier, p. 667.

**169** Author's marginal note: "The upright and honourable man always thinks the best of others."

## MADAME

1205 Because, like the immortal dwellers in the skies,  
1206 You are pure in spirit, you think others likewise.

## GUISE

1207 No judgements should be made about uncertain things.

## MADAME

1208 The certainty of death no need for judgement brings.

## GUISE

1209 With whom, if not with our friends, shall we feel at  
ease?

## MADAME

1210 Whom also shall we fear, except our enemies?

## GUISE

1211 Mother, I beg you; I beg you, mother, again,  
1212 Banish from your heart this acrimonious pain.  
1213 If he did have against us some rancour and hate,  
1214 All is appeased. Never has a heart that was great,  
1215 Never, never has a noble heart harboured ire.<sup>170</sup>  
1216 Recall a moment the character of his sire,  
1217 Of his two royal brothers and all his ancestors,  
1218 True lovers of the faith and everywhere protectors  
1219 Of the Roman Catholic church and its religion,  
1220 Where amity and kindness make their habitation.  
1221 He has, by an oath most sacred, solemn and binding,  
1222 Sworn on the body of the great God everlasting,  
1223 By the voice of the priests in the mass consecrated,  
1224 That his promise to me would not be violated.  
1225 What is there to a man more than his faith and oath?<sup>171</sup>

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**170** Author's marginal note: "To become angry is a natural human quality, which the prudent man knows how to manage well, but to harbour and dissimulate hatred, as our tyrant does, is worse than brutish."

**171** Author's marginal note: "Indeed for the upright man, not the tyrant and traitor."

1226 Upon that very day when he engaged his troth  
 1227 Always to preserve his faith unbroken and true,  
 1228 And purge his court of that damnable plaguy crew,<sup>172</sup>  
 1229 He sent them all away, at least the most depraved.  
 1230 And if some as yet from banishment are still saved,  
 1231 The season is not fitting: one must wait a while.

## MADAME

1232 Delay raises doubts—beware of misleading guile.  
 1233 To remain on the alert is always in season;  
 1234 You know well one must not incur risks beyond reason.  
 1235 They seek, with diligence, any means you to quell;  
 1236 The King cannot shake them: he is under their spell.

## GUISE

1237 Their efforts are in vain—they do not make me cower.

## MADAME

1238 The King may have in mind to put you in their power.

## GUISE

1239 When might he succeed at that, unless I delay?  
 1240 But I've remained too long; adieu, I'm on my way.

## MADAME

1241 You are staunchly resolved to bring your death about.  
 1242 Death comes to us soon enough; you must not run out  
 1243 Ahead of it. Wait!

## GUISE

Let the faint reclusive spirit,  
 1244 Cowardly, idle, feeble, for country games fit,  
 1245 Feel fear when uncertain death wields its cruel dart:  
 1246 No man fears its power who has a noble heart,  
 1247 And especially when he possesses a conscience

---

172 Author's marginal note: "Fools who have wholly brought the people to ruin."

1248 That can be counted free from sin.<sup>173</sup> A stalwart patience  
 1249 Does not desert him if misfortune comes his way.  
 1250 Thus often, on foot or mounted, when in the fray,  
 1251 With armed men all around, the threat of death I  
                   spurned,  
 1252 As the points of their weapons against me they turned;  
 1253 Thus many troops of soldiers to earth I threw down;  
 1254 Thus I brought back many laurels of great renown.  
 1255 Thus Turkish audacity trembles at my name;  
 1256 Thus the German army I was able to tame  
 1257 With my conquering arm, and great honour procured.  
 1258 Thus everywhere I've had the happiness assured  
 1259 Of always honourably gaining victory,  
 1260 And my name adorns the temple of memory.  
 1261 So frequently have I braved the cannons' astounding  
 1262 Thunder—all-smashing, terrifying, high-resounding;  
 1263 I never feared at all the drums' and trumpets' clamours;  
 1264 And now am I to fear some feeble words that stammers  
 1265 A fearful woman?

## MADAME

                  Mortal danger lies that way.  
 1266 My son, do not go.

## GUISE

                  What would the foreigner say?  
 1267 "That famous Guisard, whom we think so terrible,  
 1268 That famous Guisard, whom one terms invincible,  
 1269 A god of warlike deeds and of the battlefield,  
 1270 One whom bloody assaults mere sweet amusements yield,  
 1271 Dreading a woman's dreams, belies his reputation."  
 1272 Nothing would induce me to risk such defamation,  
 1273 Losing in a moment the honour I obtained  
 1274 With so much sweat and toil. He who the conquest gained  
 1275 Of the lands of Palestine with his mighty armies,

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**173** Author's marginal note: "Innocence renders a man self-assured and bold."

1276                   Crowning with Idumean palms his victories,<sup>174</sup>  
 1277                   That valiant Godefroy, of the Guises the forebear,  
 1278                   Living in Elysium, would blush with shame there,  
 1279                   Seeing such dishonour assigned to our account.  
 1280                   Eustache, too, and Beudoin, of Flanders that great  
                                 count,<sup>175</sup>  
 1281                   Would not acknowledge me as being of their race.  
 1282                   I prefer—rather than my forebears to disgrace—  
 1283                   I prefer, Madame, prefer that my life should be  
 1284                   Ravished five hundred times with cruelty from me.

## MADAME

1285                   Then my tears to you no influence can impart?  
 1286                   My prayer is incapable of moving your heart?  
 1287                   Heart<sup>176</sup> triply turned to stone! The Marpesian rock<sup>177</sup>  
 1288                   Has not such hardness. Of courtesy no more stock?  
 1289                   Of succour, duty, reverence and amity?  
 1290                   Of filial affection, gentleness and pity?  
 1291                   If of our hardy ancestors you bear the wisdom—  
 1292                   If with their virtue, courage, patience, strength you  
                                 come,  
 1293                   Their prudence and intelligence, with their good  
                                 judgement—  
 1294                   For me now banish equally your harsh intent,  
 1295                   In this to me displaying that merciful side  
 1296                   Which, by them, you know may be with prudence allied.<sup>178</sup>

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**174** See above, III.986 and n. 144.

**175** Brothers of Godefroy de Bouillon: Beudoin I of Jerusalem and Eustache III of Boulogne.

**176** “Heart”: orig. “Cœurs”; the plural does not agree with the singular participle (“empierre”/“turned to stone”), and logic seems to confirm an error.

**177** “Marpesian rock”: of proverbial hardness, named for the Amazon queen who built a citadel in the Caucasus mountains. The most famous occurrence of the image was probably in *Aeneid*, VI.471, where Virgil uses it to describe the indifference to Aeneas’ penitent tears of the ghost of Dido, when he encounters her in the underworld.

**178** Ll. 1285-96: the rhetoric of the original is equally suggestive of a mixture of distracted urgency and coaxing. The contrast in ll. 1294-95 between “harsh intent” (“rigueur”) and “merciful side” (“clémence”) resonates with the “clémence/rigueur” debate standard in Humanist tragedy. (See Gillian Jondorf, *Robert Garnier and the Themes of Political Tragedy in the Sixteenth Century* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], pp. 105-13.)

## GUISE

1297 Madam, I would willingly meet death for your sake;  
 1298 For you, all kinds of dangers would I undertake.

## MADAME

1299 Then avoid, for my sake, danger and retribution;  
 1300 Then avoid, for my sake, a cruel execution.

## GUISE

1301 What danger, retribution? What death is in view?

## MADAME

1302 The one the tyrant prepares, for us and for you.

## GUISE

1303 But what firm opinion, or what fantastic fright,  
 1304 In so tormenting you, holds your spirit bound tight?

## MADAME

1305 From enemies one does well oneself to defend.

## GUISE

1306 Your sorrow and weeping would constrain me to bend  
 1307 To your wishes; his power, on the other hand,  
 1308 Imposes obedience to the king's command.  
 1309 I am like a vessel on the swells of the ocean,  
 1310 Which the west wind's tempest, with its turbulent  
                         motion,  
 1311 By its blustering breath in its violent blowing,  
 1312 Tosses here and there on the waves to great height  
                         growing  
 1313 (Sometimes as they encounter rock,<sup>179</sup> sometimes a bar  
 1314 Of sand heaped underwater), drifting with no spar,  
 1315 Without oars, without sail, at cold Boreas' will,<sup>180</sup>  
 1316 And the wild south-easter and the blast irascible

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**179** The imagery and syntax in this passage are confusing, but I take it that the waves are pushed higher by underwater obstacles; if the ship were to strike a rock or sandbar, it would obviously be wrecked.

**180** "Boreas": personification of the north wind, as "Euros" (l. 1317) is of the east.



1317 Sea-stirring Euros blows, to the ship boding wrack  
 1318 As it cleaves old father Neptune's expansive back.  
 1319 Just so, on one side lie tears and bitter lament—  
 1320 The fear, the pain, mother, that you feel in your  
                 torment;  
 1321 On the other, the King's command keeps me confined.  
 1322 On this journey, blocked in both directions, I find  
 1323 Myself a traveller whose way remains unknown,  
 1324 Unable to determine which should be his own.  
 1325 You will not cease, in your sorrowful state, to protest  
 1326 If I leave you now, contrary to your behest.  
 1327 If, obeying you, I risk the slightest delay,  
 1328 I shall incur the King's displeasure by my stay.<sup>181</sup>  
 1329 But, in brief, your concerns I can quickly appease  
 1330 When again you see me safe. If now I displease  
 1331 The King, whose wrath, once aroused, knows no  
                 mitigation,  
 1332 There is no further chance of reconciliation:  
 1333 His hatred of me will eternally persist.  
 1334 Now, it is better to die than always exist  
 1335 In discord and in fear, as we did formerly,<sup>182</sup>  
 1336 Our France has been tainted by blood sufficiently  
 1337 For twenty-five years, shed by the seditious actions  
 1338 Of Frenchmen divided into several factions.  
 1339 In the city of Blois, the three Estates of France  
 1340 Are here assembled now for her deliverance.  
 1341 Such a raging fire, if they should be disrupted,  
 1342 Kindling all France—as one in dense woodland erupted  
 1343 Consumes small shrubs and pines that soar into the air,  
 1344 Flames towering on all sides—will no person spare.<sup>183</sup>  
 1345 I cannot be the cause of such unhappiness.  
 1346 Now, then, the die is cast; abandon your distress—

**181** L. 1328: orig. “J’offenserai le roi par ma longue demeure”, again introducing the question of offence against the king.

**182** Author’s marginal note: “The virtuous man deprives the wicked of all pretext for doing ill.”

**183** Ll. 1341-44: the translation attempts to smooth out the tangled syntax of the original.



GUISE (*alone*)<sup>187</sup>

1363 Sun, honour of heaven, who with your brilliant light  
 1364 Upon the spacious round placed under you shine bright,  
 1365 Now lighting our horizon, now the Antichton,<sup>188</sup>  
 1366 Who daily all regions of earth gaze down upon,  
 1367 Have you, from Atlas to Ganges, once seen a thing—  
 1368 Or from Thule to the Nile—more worthy of praising  
 1369 Than warlike France: the honour of the universe  
 1370 For virtue, piety, science and arts diverse?  
 1371 But she lacks peace—Peace, goddess of beneficence,  
 1372 Whom everywhere I have sought out with diligence.<sup>189</sup>  
 1373 Now this time the merciful God and gentle father,  
 1374 Extinguishing the brazier of his righteous cholera,  
 1375 Will send her back to us, and Justice in her train,  
 1376 With Faith and Piety, who by the vicious bane  
 1377 Of lawless men, slaking their thirst with heresy—  
 1378 Hypocrites, cruel, slaves to all depravity—  
 1379 Were chased from this lower world, and again took flight  
 1380 Toward their father in heaven, which the stars make  
         bright.  
 1381 At that time when I see them again in France flower,  
 1382 Most warmly, my God, I welcome my dying hour.  
 1383 If the Estates, God, by your holy mercy, yet  
 1384 Pursue with such rigour the course that they have set,  
 1385 I have good hope that before too long all sedition  
 1386 Spawned by the cursèd Huguenot with his religion—  
 1387 Fraudulent, immoral, underhand, inhumane—  
 1388 Will yield to the faith of the Roman Church again.<sup>190</sup>  
 1389                   But what is this sudden shiver? Here—my leaping  
                     heart  
 1390 Seems to my chest incessant throbbing to impart.

**187** A staging in which Guise remains on one side of the stage until Madame de Nemours exits seems preferable to having him leave and reenter for his soliloquy, as is also possible.

**188** Antichton: originally, a hypothetical planet conceived by Pythagoras as counter-balancing the earth, but here the term's later application to the southern hemisphere seems intended.

**189** On the tradition of the personification of peace in divine, or semi-divine, form, in the context of the French civil wars, see Richard Hillman, *Shakespeare, Marlowe and the Politics of France* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 124-29.

**190** Author's marginal note: "The house of Lorraine has always been wholly opposed to heresy."



1410 That we would get him, and—once and for all—he’s  
                   caught.  
 1411 Thanks to a cunning ruse with tender care invented,  
 1412 The prey jumps into our nets—and is quite contented.  
 1413 This town of Blois confines, enclosed within its  
                   ramparts,  
 1414 The Guisard, his people, imprisoned in all parts.  
 1415 They are taken this time; we shall do throughout France  
 1416 Whatever pleases us. Who will offer resistance  
 1417 When within a tomb the Guisards, the people’s mainstay,  
 1418 Are shut up? Oh, by God, I... But calm, now,<sup>195</sup> I say:  
 1419 Better be cautious with such high stakes in the game.  
 1420 Yet my furious anger I can scarcely tame.  
 1421 I feel myself carried away, just like a bloodhound  
 1422 That works his way through the woodland, with head to  
                   ground,  
 1423 Sniffing the earth in seeking about for the scent,  
 1424 And still far off, broad muzzle crinkled up, is bent  
 1425 On tracking throughout thick groves the bristling wild  
                   boar,  
 1426 Not obliging the huntsman to let him range more,  
 1427 But almost with calm patience pursuing his quarry.  
 1428 Yet as soon as he’s in the beast’s vicinity,  
 1429 When he smells, then spies it, he twists his throat in  
                   rage,  
 1430 Writhes as he struggles the strong leash to disengage;  
 1431 He growls, he yelps, he drags his master all around,  
 1432 Till by force from restraint he breaks free with a  
                   bound.  
 1433 And nevertheless my heart is struggling within me  
 1434 Against my own will, the more closely I can see  
 1435 The prey approaching. O my noble warlike band,<sup>196</sup>  
 1436 He’s here—be ready! Bit by bit with his own hand  
 1437 He winds the same credulous fish into our net

**195** “[C]alm, now”: orig. “tout beau”—an expression used, significantly, given what follows, to restrain hunting dogs in the presence of the prey.

**196** “[N]oble warlike band”: orig. “cohorte gentille”—an ironic distinction for what was widely dismissed as a group of brutal thugs.

1438                   That swallowed three days since the baited hook we  
                               set.<sup>197</sup>  
 1439                   Look, the man so unsteady on his feet appears  
 1440                   He's taken some soporific!<sup>198</sup> The pale Fate's shears  
 1441                   Are cutting his thread already. He's here. Advance!  
 1442                   Now—ready, loyal fellows! Devise the best stance  
 1443                   Among yourselves for bringing to shore this great pike,  
 1444                   Which eats up all the others.<sup>199</sup> Wait no longer: strike  
 1445                   Quickly now, as soon as he is well in the net.

GUISE [*entering*]

1446                   You are good at catching fish.<sup>200</sup> But is he up yet,  
 1447                   His Majesty? But why?

L'ARCHANT

For an hour and more.

GUISE

1448                   And he does not at all my tardiness deplore?

L'ARCHANT

1449                   I'm sure not, my lord.

GUISE

But he plans to journey where?

L'ARCHANT

1450                   To fulfil his vow.

---

**197** Author's marginal note: "In mockery, like that of Épernon earlier". (Cf. above, III.1029-30.)

**198** Spoken, I take it, to encourage the assassins, who would have had reason to fear the strong and courageous Guise.

**199** Author's marginal note: "Ambiguous words, so that he will not be understood by Monsieur de Guise, who is already close."

**200** Orig.: "Vous estes bon Pécheur", which conveys an untranslatable pun on "pêcheur" ("fisherman") and "pécheur" "sinner" (CB-M/MM). (The slight difference in pronunciation in modern French, at least for some speakers, may well not have been evident for Belyard's audience.) There also seems to be an ironic allusion to Jesus's often-cited recruitment of his first disciples to be "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:18-22, Mark 1:16-20, Luke 5:1-11). Again, the conclusion of a speech is unintentionally overheard (if here not fully grasped).

GUISE

What vow? I am not aware

1451                   Of any vow he made.

L'ARCHANT

I don't know what to say—

1452                   That's all I know. But he desires anyway

1453                   To have a word with you before.

GUISE

His worthy vows

1454                   I would not delay. I will<sup>201</sup>—

L'ARCHANT

Then these are his vows!<sup>202</sup>    [*Stabs him.*]

GUISE

1455                   Oh, my God. I—

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

There's what you have richly deserved,

1456                   King of Paris!<sup>203</sup>

GUISE

Alas, is this what I've deserved?

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1457                   Now we get to take our turn. [*They stab him.*]

---

**201** “I will”: orig. “Je m'en” (without following punctuation). He is evidently about to say something like “I will go right now” when he is interrupted by L'Archant's attack. In the absence of original indications, the proposed staging of the murder scene remains conjectural.

**202** Ll. 1453-54 and 1455-56 likewise rhyme identically in the original, as part of the heightened dramatic effect.

**203** A common scornful epithet among Guise's enemies, bestowed on him by the King himself, according to Pierre de L'Estoile, *Registre-journal du règne de Henri III*, ed. Madeleine Lazard and Gilbert Schrenck, 6 vols, vol. VI (1588-89) (Geneva: Droz, 2003), p. 87.

GUISE  
Oh!

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]  
So much for you!

1458 GUISE  
Mercy, my God!

L'ARCHANT  
Guisard, now you have had your due.

1459 CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]  
Beg the King for mercy!<sup>204</sup>

GUISE  
The King?

1460 L'ARCHANT  
Your arrogance  
Has now been well and truly crushed.

GUISE  
O God, you— [*Faints.*]

1461 L'ARCHANT  
France  
Has only one king now.

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]  
You desired to reign.

1462 L'ARCHANT  
The holding of the Estates you had to obtain

---

**204** Author's marginal note: "Why, when he has never offended ['offensé'] him?" The sequence evokes the ritual of *amende honorable*, in which a condemned criminal was expected to beg for pardon from both God and king before execution. See Hillman, "Marlowe's Guise", esp. p. 158.



1463 From your King, and rival his great authority.<sup>205</sup>

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1464 He's dead.

L'ARCHANT

Strike again.

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1465 He won't try to bite us. In God's name,<sup>206</sup> if you ask me,

L'ARCHANT

He's punished for his fault.

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1466 We've made him execute<sup>207</sup> a pretty somersault.

L'ARCHANT

1467 When all is said and done, the traitor always dies  
1468 Who offends his king. Unpunished forever lies  
1469 No crime someone, either weak or strong, has  
committed.<sup>208</sup>

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1470 He has stopped breathing and is turning pale: he's dead.

L'ARCHANT

1471 I'll go tell the King in order to soothe his worry.

---

**205** Author's marginal note: "The *Politiques* [i.e., Royalists] falsely accused him of this, for it was the tyrant's initiative to entrap him."

**206** "In God's name": orig. "Cap de Diou"—"By God's head" in Gascon dialect, thereby signalling the regional origin of the assassins (CB-M/MM). The expression is actually supposed to have been used by one of them in assuring the King that they would carry out the deed. See Chevallier, p. 668.

**207** The play on words is the translator's but suits the grim humour of the scene.

**208** Author's marginal note: "Thus you will perish miserably, both you and the tyrant your king and all his accomplices. God is just."

## CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1472 Worry? What does he fear?

## L'ARCHANT

1473 Fortune's uncertainty:  
She has so often mocked his efforts made in vain.<sup>209</sup>

## CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

1474 When we undertake a thing, the effect is certain.

## L'ARCHANT

1475 Drag him in there. There's something else I'm sure in  
stating—

1476 That our reward is already prepared and waiting.  
[*Exeunt.*]

## CHORUS

1477 O blessed sheltered seat  
1478 Of virtue, O glorious land of France,  
1479 You who all for grandeur and dominance  
1480 Leave behind in defeat.

1481 What unfortunate star  
1482 Has so envied your honour and your glory  
1483 As to blot from eternal memory  
1484 Great feats once famed so far?

1485 Now to twenty accrue  
1486 The times the Cynthian saw Capricorn,  
1487 By opening New Year's gate with his horn,  
1488 The twelve-month round renew,<sup>210</sup>

1489 Since throes of misery  
1490 Have not an instant ceased to make you grieved;

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**209** Author's marginal note: "Not having been able to catch my lords of Guise as he desired."

**210** An astrological evocation of France's twenty years of civil wars (more, in fact, since the first broke out in 1562). The winter solstice marks the sun's entry into the house of Capricorn. (Apollo, the sun-god, is "Cynthian" because of his birth on Mount Cynthus on the island of Delos.)

1491 Now, when you think yourself once more relieved,  
1492 They swell your agony.

1493 How hope fades in an hour  
1494 For all mortals—O hopefulness too vain!  
1495 You have, O France, when hopes were high, seen wane  
1496 All your good and power.

1497 The Duke of Guise is dead,  
1498 The Guisard, of combats and assaults the hero;  
1499 France, melt in weeping, in groaning and woe,  
1500 By his death devastated.

1501 You heavens, earth and air,  
1502 You night, you day through which dark clouds now  
blow,  
1503 Sky-borne spirits, infernal shades below,  
1504 Contend in your despair.

1505 Twenty years have gone by  
1506 With nothing seen but outrage upon outrage,  
1507 Deaths upon deaths, and carnage upon carnage:  
1508 Will that not satisfy?

1509 Destiny inhumane  
1510 Takes all virtuous souls before their time,  
1511 Letting the vicious practisers of crime  
1512 Live out their evil reign.

1513 Now take to weeping ever.  
1514 The wrath of God is clear to understand,  
1515 Since the good he gathers into his hand.  
1516 Come, let us weep forever.

## Act V

Madame de Nemours, Nurse, [Soldier, Young Women, Henri]

MADAME

1517 My chilling horror swells without ever relenting;  
 1518 My trembling fear increases ever its tormenting.  
 1519 Palpitation ever more perturbing my mind,  
 1520 Pervading my body, which quakes with fright, I find.  
 1521 Fear and grief, each lying imprisoned in my heart,  
 1522 Debate which shall outlast in me the other part.  
 1523 I feel my heart seize up, with nervous tingling sway  
 1524 Within my breast, heaving, menacing to give way;  
 1525 My blood runs cold as ice within my frigid veins,  
 1526 And always my troubled liver adds to my pains.<sup>211</sup>

NURSE

1527 What new terror to swell your sorrows now appears?  
 1528 My lord will very soon be here to dry your tears.

MADAME

1529 Ah, Nurse, I fear it—alas, I so fear it, Nurse:  
 1530 He won't return. The hate is too great to disperse  
 1531 Of the raging tyrant. The chateau is shut tight  
 1532 Where he went in—alone, unarmed for any fight.  
 1533 He is lost, alas, I'm sure that he is lost.

NURSE

1534 It is still just morning. Madam,

MADAME

1535 Alas! A soul I am  
 Forced to dwell—oh, why?—in this wretched fleshly  
state,  
 1536 So that I must endure the blows of adverse Fate,

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**211** The liver was imagined as the seat of passions.

1537 Which woe upon woe and grief upon grief give me.  
 1538 Fate, cut my thread, cut my thread, faithless enemy!  
 1539 Why delay? Send me to my husband's side below.

## NURSE

1540 There I see a soldier who has left the chateau,  
 1541 Coming our way and speaking. Let us hear his speech.<sup>212</sup>

## MADAME

1542 Nothing he will tell me, I know, can comfort teach.  
 1543 He's seized with fright; his thoughts this way and that  
                   are tossed.  
 1544 Alas, my son is dead! Alas, now all is lost!

SOLDIER<sup>213</sup>

1545 You global round, whose gaping inward regions fix  
 1546 The abode of that Jupiter who rules the Styx,<sup>214</sup>  
 1547 Where panic and fear are perpetually dwelling,  
 1548 And night filled with sorrowing, crying out and yelling,  
 1549 Weeping, cares, griefs, the brutal torments of the  
                   Furies,  
 1550 Horror, fright, terror, further plagues that devils  
                   please,  
 1551 The tortures of the damned, as they lie cruelly bound—  
 1552 Dense mass we tread on, you thick sole upon the  
                   ground,<sup>215</sup>  
 1553 Whose weighty roundness supports, in many a place,  
 1554 Wicked men encamped on the flatness of your face,<sup>216</sup>

**212** This comment is interesting from the point of view of staging: apparently, such a monologue could sometimes, at least, be imagined as in progress. The treatment of the space associated with Madame de Nemours in this act is notably flexible: the Soldier is evidently seen to be coming from the chateau; later she will be taken off to bed; finally, Henri will appear and she will re-enter.

**213** The speech-heading in the original is “Le Soudard”, a term which usually carries pejorative connotations of baseness and brutality; these are so far out of keeping with the character's attitude, however (not to mention his erudition), as to suggest a conversion experience.

**214** “[T]hat Jupiter who rules the Styx”—i.e., Pluto.

**215** “[T]hick sole upon the ground”: orig. “sabot de nos pieds”—a strained image, like several in this sequence.

**216** Ll. 1553-54: orig. “Portes de toutes parts de ta rondeur pesante, / Un camp d'hommes méchants, sur ta face gisante”. The contrast between roundness and flatness appears important to the rhetorical

1555           Open your gaping bosom and greedily swallow  
 1556           Such vicious men, and so make them by feeling know  
 1557           That in heaven's vault, which encompasses all things,  
 1558           A God of justice reigns, who to the good grace brings  
 1559           And to doers of evil crimes harsh punishment.  
 1560           Open, swallow to the depths of your vast extent  
 1561           All of those living men who are replete with vices  
 1562           Gross, abhorrent, deserving most the fell devices,  
 1563           The tortures and serpents, that are for vice ordained,  
 1564           With which all the unhappy damned in hell are pained.  
 1565                        There, Earth, may you everywhere, in hollow pits  
 1566           Uncovered to show where the house of Pluto sits,  
 1567           Take all of us mingled together to be hurled  
 1568           In his vast lakes and be with burning sulphur whirled.  
 1569           Why don't you drown us in the waters of Taenarus?<sup>217</sup>  
 1570           Why in the Stygian marshes' slime not bury us?  
 1571           Why do you not raze this town of Blois from the maps?  
 1572           Why do you not make the whole land of France collapse?  
 1573           We should all be straying among the mournful shades  
 1574           In bleak hell, where no one Tisiphone's wrath evades.<sup>218</sup>  
 1575           Overturn all that is from high heaven distinguished  
 1576           And see it again in primal chaos extinguished;  
 1577           Take with you that round construction which is the  
                               world—  
 1578           Strike down the tyrant, in its ruined enfoldings furled;  
 1579           Let this entire world, all broken, smashed and  
                               shattered,  
 1580           No longer loaded on your back, be ever scattered.  
 1581           Swallow us in Acheron's tearful agonies,<sup>219</sup>  
 1582           Beneath Phlegethon, where the three Eumenides  
 1583           Pursue us endlessly, wielding gigantic whips,

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effect intended.

**217** I.e., presumably, at the very entrance to the underworld, supposed to be located at Cape Taenarus in the Peloponnese. This entire series of apostrophes is addressed to the earth (original "Terre"), sometimes with redundant incongruities.

**218** Tisiphone: see above, n. 20 and I.56.

**219** The original of the line is at least as elliptical: "Cache-nous sous le cours des pleurs achéronitides". The soldier's infernal geography is only marginally clearer than that set out in Alecto's opening speech.

1584 With foul stinking torches, with snakes in frightful  
strips  
1585 Making horrid their heads. Come, Earth—in brief, amass  
1586 All the world in hell. You are merely now a mass  
1587 And a useless burden. Virtue, humanity,  
1588 Faith, mercy, piety, justice and amity  
1589 Have from today abandoned you, and in their place  
1590 Perpetual frauds forever shall rule in grace—  
1591 Dissimulations, treasons and rank treacheries,  
1592 Hatreds, murders, discords, assassins, cruelties.  
1593 O human life, how you are wicked and deceitful!  
1594 O faith without loyalty, a hundred times doubtful!  
1595 O majesty feigned! O falseness of countenance!  
1596 O hypocrite heart, on fire with jealous substance!  
1597 O feigned devotion, O penitence likewise feigned!  
1598 O feigned piety! O mercy all-too-much feigned!  
1599 O feigned holiness, which on a grave countenance  
1600 Appears, hiding a filthy mind that will advance  
1601 To gravest vices! Mildness hides audacity,  
1602 Contenance impudence, frankness mendacity.  
1603 The foolish Mygdonian<sup>220</sup> becomes a wise Plato,  
1604 Sensual Sardanapalus an austere Cato.<sup>221</sup>  
1605 That penitent devout, good and chaste in our sight,  
1606 That plain-mannered hermit, holy Hieronymite,<sup>222</sup>  
1607 Today did a cruel deed all credence to defy—  
1608 Of gross barbarity such that the vaulted sky  
1609 And the air and the waters, the earth and the stars,  
1610 With horror shudder at it. At it the sun bars  
1611 His eyes behind a cloudy cloak, the sight forsaking.  
1612 What, then? Did it not suffice you, tyrant, the taking

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**220** A reference to ancient Phrygia, hence to its king Midas, who was famously foolish on two counts: for having requested the “golden touch” and for deserving ass’s ears for preferring the musicianship of Pan over Apollo.

**221** Sardanapalus was the fabled ancient Assyrian monarch whose predilection for orgiastic luxury made him a byword for moral degeneracy, as opposed to the Stoical uprightness of the Roman senator and historian Marcus Porcius Cato (“the Elder”, d. 149 BCE).

**222** Hieronymite: the allusion is to the religious Order of Saint Jerome, much patronised by Henry III, who participated in retreats in the monastery he caused to be constructed for it. See Chevallier, pp. 549-50.

1613 With countless blows, of his life in its honesty?<sup>223</sup>  
 1614 Did that not slake the thirst of your most cruel envy?  
 1615 What monster without reason, what Sinis, Phalaris,  
 1616 What outrageous Procrustes, what evil Busiris,<sup>224</sup>  
 1617 Was not content once he had caused the soul, prisoner  
 1618 Of the broken body, that fragile bark to enter,  
 1619 Which, frail and over-freighted, the foul water plies,  
 1620 Crossing incessantly the stream of tearful cries?<sup>225</sup>  
 1621           Oh, our happy fathers, who are of vital fire  
 1622 Bereft, who are not here to view this brutal ire—  
 1623 More than brutal: the lion, his noble name earning,  
 1624 Though bristling with anger and with fearful eyes  
                   burning,  
 1625 Is content with seeing his mortal enemy  
 1626 Sprawled at his feet, not doing further injury.  
 1627 Likewise wicked bears, tigers and wolves in their rages  
 1628 Do not beyond death inflict on their prey<sup>226</sup> outrages.  
 1629 What wretched destiny further my life prolongs  
 1630 To see after his death, itself the worst of wrongs,  
 1631 That dwelling-place of virtue, honour of warriors,  
 1632 Mutilated, butchered by impious murderers?  
 1633 And again assailed with many a shameful flout,  
 1634 Which the raging traitors upon him vomit out,  
 1635 As they strike countless times the body void of breath?  
 1636 Just so, as a mighty lion lies still in death,  
 1637 The little fearful rabbit and the timid hare  
 1638 Attack his lips with feeble bites, his whiskers tear.<sup>227</sup>

**223** The Soldier's subsequent account of Henri's degrading treatment of the treacherously murdered Guise anticipates that of Montchrestien's Messenger with regard to the mutilation of Hector's body by the equally treacherous and cowardly Achilles; cf. Montchrétien, *Hector*, V.2198-2206.

**224** Sinis, Phalaris, Procrustes, Busiris: legendary murderers and torturers, notorious for violating the laws of civilised behaviour; see Smith, under individual names.

**225** [T]he stream of tearful cries": orig. "le larmoyant ruisseau". The reference, of course, is to Charon, ferrying souls across the Styx.

**226** "[P]rey": orig. "leurs hôtes"—an unusual application of the word, commonly used in the sense of "guest" or "dweller", but the intended meaning seems clear.

**227** CBM/MM, ed., persuasively attributes this image to an emblem, which can be documented at least from 1691. It is also adapted, in the related context of the fall of Troy and death of Hector, by Montchrestien, *Hector*, I.43-45:

The lion, overthrown upon a field soaked through



1639                                Yet still—oh horror! O Earth, let your sudden  
  gaping  
1640                                Swallow that tyrant—a murderer, not a king!  
1641                                The inhuman tyrant goes probing with his blade  
1642                                To find out which of the wounds was the deepest made<sup>228</sup>  
1643                                And reward that impious sharer in the act  
1644                                Who delivered the blows that had the greatest impact,<sup>229</sup>  
1645                                While scolding those who had inflicted hurts less  
  mortal.  
1646                                Ah, and yet that is not all. You powers immortal,  
1647                                Who view it from the heavens, see this great crime  
  punished!  
1648                                Wild with furor, not content with this deed  
  accomplished,  
1649                                From a minion there<sup>230</sup> he grabbed the sword in his grip,  
1650                                Took it several times in the noble blood to dip  
1651                                Of the body extended on the bloody tiles.<sup>231</sup>  
1652                                Then he climbs upon it, with trampling it defiles<sup>232</sup>  
1653                                And cries out, “I am King, I am the King of France!  
1654                                No longer will anyone offer me resistance.  
1655                                Prompter of rebels and stupid Paris surprises<sup>233</sup>—  
1656                                He lies dead at my feet, the eldest of the Guises!”

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With tears and blood, and now by the timorous crew  
Of hares assailed, as they assemble without fear,  
Shows that with his failing life hope must disappear.

**228** Author’s marginal note: “An act beyond the tyrannical.”

**229** Author’s marginal note: “What evil will the wicked man not commit, since the greatest reward is given to him who will do the most[?]”

**230** “From a minion there”: orig. “De l’un de ses mignons”—presumably a reference to the noble favourites, Épernon chief among them, who were so detested by the League, since the term would hardly apply to the murderers themselves. The latter, moreover, are said to have used daggers (see below, ll. 1673-74), whereas the sword is a gentleman’s weapon.

**231** Author’s marginal note: “Cruelty more than brutal.”

**232** Author’s marginal note: “Rage more than brutal and unheard-of.” The shift to the more vivid historical present tense reproduces the original. In *The Guisiade* (Matthieu, V.2081-88), Henri tramples on his victim’s face but actually gives him his death blow, as is marginally less degrading.

**233** “[S]tupid Paris surprises”: orig. “sots Parisiens”. The translation sharpens the apparent reference to the Day of the Barricades (“surprise” in contemporary French having a common application to violent political acts).

## MADAME

1657 I always spoke truth, alas! My dream told me so.  
 1658 Alas, such was my fear! And falsehoods never show  
 1659 In dismal dreams, but only in those that bode well.  
 1660 Alas, alas!

## NURSE

Alas, sir, how was it? Now tell.

## SOLDIER

1661 In his study, that blood-thirsty criminal crew  
 1662 Spent last night, when thick shadows dimmed with gloom  
                   the view,  
 1663 Locked with the tyrant in damnable conference,  
 1664 To implement at day-break their deadly intents.  
 1665 Scarcely had the dawn, decked out with pearl-studded  
                   dew,  
 1666 Begun the blight of darkness to banish anew,  
 1667 When he despatched a boy, my lord to him to call.  
 1668 No sooner had he come than—O misery!—all,  
 1669 All of the cut-throats,<sup>234</sup> those murderers full of fury,  
 1670 Who were concealed all round behind the tapestry,  
 1671 Threw themselves on him, raging, with united effort,  
 1672 Slaughtering France's honour and its chief support  
 1673 With countless mighty blows, as their dagger points tore  
 1674 Into limbs they held fast and soaked the ground with  
                   gore—  
 1675 That crimson purple which, spouting into the air,  
 1676 Soiled my lord, his assassins, and everything there.  
 1677                 Then the news, by one treacherous killer  
                   conveyed,  
 1678 Was at once to the traitor-atheist relayed,  
 1679 Yet the coward still did not dare to venture out  
 1680 Until his dearly-loved minion removed all doubt,  
 1681 Sent for the purpose.<sup>235</sup> Then, trembling, to perjury

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**234** “[C]ut-throats”: orig. “coupe-jarrets” (lit. “cutters of hamstrings”), the standard term but too strange-sounding in English.

**235** Presumably Épernon, but there were perhaps others on hand; see above, l. 1649 and n. 230.

1682 He joined much cruelty and godless mockery.  
 1683 Both my heart and the light of day would sooner fail  
 1684 Before I could recount all these things here in detail.  
 1685 After fits of furor and vicious teasings proffered  
 1686 By thousands, with rude jibes and scornful insults  
 offered,  
 1687 He caused as well the other Guisians to come  
 1688 And all to whom he knew his favourites were not welcome.

MADAME

1689 Alas, alas, my God, alas! God, has his rage  
 1690 Added still more bloodshed to this terrible carnage?

SOLDIER

1691 No, he's keeping them under guard, as prisoners.

NURSE

1692 Madam, do you hear?

MADAME

Oh, they are such brutal hunters.<sup>236</sup>  
 1693 All my children dead?<sup>237</sup>

NURSE

Madam, do you understand?  
 1694 He just detains them.

MADAME

Ah, all dead? I cannot stand.

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**236** “[S]uch brutal hunters”: orig. “Ô cruels buissonniers”, which refers to the assistant huntsmen who helped to entrap the animals within nets. Cf. the imagery of Épernon at III.896-97, above.

**237** She is obviously delirious, but there is confusion later (see below, l. 1858) as to how many other sons she actually has. At this point, the Duchess's only other surviving sons by François, Duke of Guise, were Louis, Cardinal of Guise, who would indeed be murdered on the following day, and Charles, Duke of Mayenne, who escaped Henri's clutches and succeeded the Duke of Guise as head of the League. (The Duchess also had two other sons by her second marriage to Jacques de Savoie, but neither they nor her second husband figure in the dramatisation; see Introduction, p. 13.)

## NURSE

1695 Girls, come support her.  
 [*The Young Women come forward.*]

## MADAME

1696 O tigers! Wolves all too fierce!  
 All dead? My God, all dead?

## SOLDIER

1697 By no means—do you hear us?  
 He's holding them prisoner. Madam, come, take heart!

## NURSE

1698 I think she's dying.

## MADAME

1699 What new shock gives me a start?  
 Solid rock fills and stiffens all my limbs, gone frigid;  
 1700 Support me, girls! I cannot walk—my legs turn rigid.  
 1701 Too much more wretched than Niobe have I grown:  
 1702 I am transformed as she was into weeping stone.<sup>238</sup>

## NURSE AND YOUNG WOMEN

1703 Madam, alas, Madam! Don't fall, you'll come to harm!

## MADAME

1704 Alas, I'm falling now—

## NURSE AND YOUNG WOMEN

Come, take her by each arm.

## MADAME

1705 Ah, come, Death, hard Death; by you let me be comforted!

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**238** Ll. 1701-2: orig. "Malheureuse trop plus que n'a été Niobe, / Je me change comme elle en un larmoyant globe." The image, perhaps dictated by the need for rhyme, seems too awkward to translate literally.

## SOLDIER

1706 Let's bring her to her bed.

## NURSE AND YOUNG WOMEN

Alas, she's surely dead.

[*Exeunt.*] <sup>239</sup>

## CHORUS

1707 Fortune, ever in movement,  
1708 Who never are content  
1709 Without in your hands seeing  
1710 Each human being—

1711 Thus to France you have lent  
1712 Power of such extent  
1713 For her self-abnegation  
1714 And ruination.

1715 How far are you unjust  
1716 In putting down the just<sup>240</sup>  
1717 To lend impiety  
1718 Prosperity!

1719 And treacherously now  
1720 The wicked you endow  
1721 With grandeur, goods and dues  
1722 The righteous lose.

1723 Who fitter seems to us  
1724 Than Guise illustrious  
1725 Of France the royal state  
1726 To dominate?<sup>241</sup>

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**239** Again, it seems that Montchrestien may have had this sequence in mind in having Andromache faint and be carried off by her women (*Hector*, V.2079-82). Like Madame de Nemours, she will return and dominate the mourning at the conclusion.

**240** Ll. 1715-16: the identical rhyme follows the original (“injuste”/“juste”).

**241** Ll. 1725-26: orig. “Pour en France regner, / Et dominer?” An unusually explicit endorsement, for the League, of the Duke of Guise’s entitlement to the throne.

1727 What soul in this world placed  
 1728 More wicked and debased  
 1729 Than that Henri of Valois,  
 1730 King of the Gaulois?

1731 And you now from mere hate  
 1732 The Guisards ruinate,  
 1733 That fierce wolf's will to grant—  
 1734 Murderer, tyrant.

[*Enter the Young Woman.*]

YOUNG WOMAN

1735 He who wishes to see how harmful Fate torments  
 1736 The good at all times with disastrous accidents,  
 1737 Who wishes to see how he has little assurance  
 1738 Who on the goods of this world places his reliance,  
 1739 Who wishes to see how inconstant and how vain  
 1740 Are the blessings Fortune promises all can gain,  
 1741 And how her favour is short-lived to those so blessed,  
 1742 By how many griefs those abandoned are distressed—  
 1743 Let him come see you, France. Truly, not till this  
         moment

1744 Has Fate before displayed a case so evident  
 1745 Of sudden change and the flight with celerity  
 1746 Of that blind goddess, feigning in prosperity,  
 1747 Who long sustains our minds with hopefulness quite  
         hollow,

1748 And then, deceitful, laughing at us, makes us swallow,  
 1749 All of a sudden altered, our great foolishness,  
 1750 Inflicting some great woe that makes us see her  
         falseness.

1751 Just when we thought that we would always live in  
         peace<sup>242</sup>

1752 And, wielding power, reap due honour without cease

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242 Author's marginal note: "By the conclusion of the Estates."

1753 In virtue and grandeur, and being feared by all,  
 1754 The ornament of France (oh, what grief to befall!),  
 1755 Its strength, its support, the eldest Guisian brother,  
 1756 By his cruel death brings death to many another,<sup>243</sup>  
 1757 By his cruel death deprives France of happiness,  
 1758 Of honour and of strength, of power and of greatness.<sup>244</sup>  
 1759 Alas! That noble Guisard, whose towering fame  
 1760 Can never perish, and whose illustrious name  
 1761 Makes those peoples tremble who, in warfare most fell,  
 1762 In the lands extending from Fez to Cairo dwell!<sup>245</sup>  
 1763 From our territory his invincible hand  
 1764 Has so often chased a barbarous German band.<sup>246</sup>  
 1765 Now felled by dagger-blows, he bears the mockery  
 1766 Of tyrant and murderers, traitors full of fury.  
 1767                   Alas, did it have to be, when his enemies<sup>247</sup>  
 1768 Turned pale at his name, that death he finally sees  
 1769 Dealt him by one whom, with his realm, he so defended  
 1770 That he was willing so often his blood to shed?  
 1771 Need it have been that France the honour must possess  
 1772 Of depriving herself at last of happiness?  
 1773 O tyrant triply infamous, what have you done?  
 1774 You massacre today many a holy one  
 1775 By putting to death this prince.<sup>248</sup> Alas, how much woe  
 1776 Can Madam bear, who fainted in her tearful sorrow?  
 1777

[*She sees Henri approaching.*]

1778 O murderer—see him savour his wrathful deeds!

**243** Author's marginal note: "All the true Catholics."

**244** Author's marginal note: "We all clearly discern her future total ruin, following the death of those princes—if God does not look upon us with an eye of pity."

**245** Guise is evoked here as the defender of Christendom against Islam, with a reminiscence of his family's crusading heritage. On the allegorical resonances in Chantelouve's tragedy of *Pharaon* (1577), see Hillman, "Pharaon et le duc de Guise d'après François de Chantelouve".

**246** An allusion to Guise's celebrated defeats of the so-called *reîtres*, beginning with the battle of Dormans.

**247** Author's marginal note: "Heretics, atheist profiteers and other such devourers of the people." "Profiteers" translates "gabelleux", those benefiting from the salt tax or "gabel" (CB-M/MM).

**248** Author's marginal note: "I do not know when this wound will be stanch'd. It bleeds more profusely from day to day."





1796 Come, my servants, dear partisans of royalty,  
 1797 Always to your king showing faith and loyalty.<sup>253</sup>  
 1798 That liberty is yours you have thirsted to gain,  
 1799 Which till today was far too remote to attain.  
 1800 That scar-faced Guisard, our principal enemy,  
 1801 Who harassed unrelentingly my friends and me,  
 1802 Has at long last received the recompense quite worthy  
 1803 Of his flagrant arrogance and disloyalty.<sup>254</sup>  
 1804 Come, come and see him, his blood all around him spread,  
 1805 Lying in my study, stretched out at full length, dead.  
 1806 Hercules was made a god just because he cowed  
 1807 Some monsters with his club.<sup>255</sup> How many of that crowd  
 1808 That I could never manage to manipulate—  
 1809 How many Hydras did I just decapitate?<sup>256</sup>  
 1810 How many lions strike down? Wild boars huge and savage,  
 1811 Monsters most cruel, who were accustomed to ravage  
 1812 My true subjects as far as France's land extends,  
 1813 Besides our German and English allies and friends?<sup>257</sup>  
 1814                   It's well, that is enough; I have what I desire.  
 1815 But why is it enough?<sup>258</sup> Flare up again, my ire,  
 1816 To wipe out other mortals who hold me in hate—

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that he might exercise his tyranny.”

**253** With Henri's speech here, cf. L'Archant's imaginary address at III.932-39.

**254** Author's marginal note: "For having stood in the way of his tyranny."

**255** Author's marginal note: "The tyrant-atheist reckons himself as, and boasts of being, a god". (In the original, the capitalising of "Dieu" here, although the practice was by no means fixed at the time, assists the text in straddling pagan vehicle and Christian tenor.)

**256** On the image of the Hydra, see above, III.796 and n. 113.

**257** It was a recurrent League grievance that Henri cultivated the "heretic" Germans and English. A military alliance between England and France had been in effect since the Treaty of Blois (April 1572), while Elizabeth strategically awarded Henri the Order of the Garter in 1575, the year after his accession. In *The Guisiade*, Catherine de' Medici complains of her son's "caressing, sister-like, [the English] queen" (Matthieu, II.i.389). Certainly, Henri used the English alliance as a counter-weight to the growing influence of the League. There may be a glance here at English accusations (by no means wholly unfounded) of the Guises' plotting against the rule of Elizabeth on behalf of their relation, Mary, Queen of Scots.

**258** Author's marginal note. "The tyrant's hunger for cruelty is never satisfied. He wishes that all had one single neck for him to cut off with a single blow." This allusion to Suetonius, *The Life of Caligula* (in *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*), bk. 4, ch. 30, sec. 2, confirms Belyard's recourse to widespread and anecdotal *exempla* of tyranny. Part of the neo-Roman picture is Henri's self-elevation, in his megalomaniacal imagination, from the human level to the divine, which goes beyond conventional notions of "atheism".

1817 And then to get hold of those in immortal state,<sup>259</sup>  
1818 Who are supposed to dwell above the vaults, which  
glimmer  
1819 With their little golden fires and stars that shimmer!  
1820 Now them I would like within prison walls to hold,<sup>260</sup>  
1821 To see if their defence and succour would be bold  
1822 Of my Guisard enemies, whose endless prayers call  
1823 On them from my vengeful hand to rescue them all.  
1824 I'll make a true test to see if grim death, deployed  
1825 Against those so-called gods, is really null and void.

[*He spies Madame de Nemours.*]

1826 Who is that?—ah, it's the mother!—who now  
approaches.  
1827 Let us see in what form her rancorous reproaches  
1828 Will first of all pour forth—what tint, what  
colouring,  
1829 What signs will manifest her grievous suffering.

[*Enter Madame de Nemours with Young Women.*]

MADAME

1830 You tyrant unnatural, contemptible creature,  
1831 Who when you were born struck fear into Mother Nature!  
1832 Hypocrite and atheist, villain and murderer,  
1833 Full of impiety, of ill-repute the sewer,  
1834 Fen of all filthiness, gulf of iniquity,  
1835 Cruelty's dwelling-place, abode of tyranny.  
1836 What? Is this your accord? Is this the friendliness  
1837 Of blood-relation? Is this the mercifulness  
1838 Of a faithful Christian? Is this the promise made,  
1839 The faith at the most holy mass by oath conveyed?  
1840 Is this the vow of peace—O impious, rage-driven!—  
1841 That on the holy sacrament we had been given?

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259 That is, the saints, venerated by his Catholic enemies (CB-M/MM).

260 Author's marginal note: "The voice of a true atheist."

1842 Coward, womanish, vessel of debauchery,  
 1843 Thief who robs the people, the Church's enemy—  
 1844 Why, in your wickedness, why did you cause to perish  
 1845 The very one you ought to honour and to cherish?  
 1846 At least grant me the body for his monument.

HENRI

1847 He has not been subjected to sufficient torment.<sup>261</sup>

MADAME

1848 What? Say, torturer inhumane, is he not dead?

HENRI

1849 Yes, but I will ensure you can't be comforted.

MADAME

1850 Here, maddened murderer, for me take this sword—take  
 it!<sup>262</sup>

1851 And then in my blood also a thousand times slake it.

HENRI

1852 In that way I would put an end to your tormenting:

1853 My aim is to prolong your sorrow and lamenting,

1854 So that, while you maintain your wretched life in  
 anguish,

1855 You die a thousand times each day, dogged by the wish

1856 To follow them<sup>263</sup> below and finish your distress

1857 With a welcome death. But before that you shall witness

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**261** Orig.: “Il n’a encor’ assez enduré de supplice.” The ambiguity of “il” (“he” or “it”) cannot be preserved in the translation, but “enduré de supplice” suggests that Henri conceives of the corpse as a living entity. According to Jean-Marie Dargaud, *Histoire de la liberté religieuse en France et de ses fondateurs*, 4 vols (Paris: Charpentier, 1859), IV: 213, Henri acceded to Madame de Nemours’s request for her sons’ bodies, then deceived her. They were in fact mutilated (though not by Henri personally) and burned, with the ashes thrown into the Loire. Belyard typically magnifies Henri’s tyrannical cruelty.

**262** “[T]ake this sword—take it”: orig. “tiens, prends-moi cette épée”. Several stagings seem possible: Henri could have entered with the sword in his hand; he could draw it to threaten her; she could gesture towards it still in its scabbard; she could even draw it and offer it to him.

**263** “[T]hem”: orig. “les”, as is no more explicit.

1858 Your cardinal struck down, and bloody carnage made  
 1859 Of all your other sons.<sup>264</sup> You shall see, too, displayed  
 1860 A fire greedily feeding on heaps imbrued  
 1861 With blood that oozes from their limbs in pieces  
 hewed.<sup>265</sup>  
 1862 Then, once into finest ashes they are consumed,  
 1863 I'll have them swept by wind<sup>266</sup> and into cloud subsumed,  
 1864 So that still greater torture for you may be forged.  
 1865 And, to content my heart, with cruelty engorged,  
 1866 I will set aside a certain head<sup>267</sup> in its gore,  
 1867 All fouled with clotted blood and bits of brain that  
 pour  
 1868 Along its filthy forehead into rotted eyes,  
 1869 Which daily will feed mine a sight that satisfies.<sup>268</sup>

## MADAME

1870 What fierce Henioch<sup>269</sup> from the wild Caucasian desert,  
 1871 What dweller on Phasis' banks,<sup>270</sup> who delights in hurt,  
 1872 What barbarous Gelon,<sup>271</sup> what Sarmat<sup>272</sup> inhumane,  
 1873 Whose hand, too cruel, is freshly marked with the stain  
 1874 Of an enemy's blood, whose courage he highly rated,  
 1875 Such brutal acts of rage has further perpetrated?  
 1876 This crime has exceeded all other cruelty.

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264 See above, n. 237.

265 Author's marginal note: "Cruelty worse than barbarous".

266 "[W]ind": orig. "autan", strictly meaning a particularly cold and strong south-east wind identified with the South of France but obviously used in a more general poetic sense here. See *Trésor de la langue française, s.v.*

267 "[A] certain head": orig. "quelque tête"—a taunting reference, it would seem, to the Duke himself.

268 Ll. 1868: orig. "Dont je veux que les miens soient tous les jours nourris."

269 The Heniochi, from the Black Sea region, were also associated with cannibalism: see Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. and ed. Benjamin Jowett, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), I: 248 (bk. 8, ch. 4).

270 Phasis: the ancient name for the Rioni river in Georgia, which flows from the Caucasus mountains to the Black Sea. It was a marker of remoteness for the ancient Greeks.

271 Gelon: tyrant of Syracuse (5th cent. BCE).

272 The Sarmats, another reputedly barbarous people, were associated with Scythia and Poland (see below, ll. 1880-81). In League discourse, the association had been extended to Henri III. Catherine de' Medici in *The Guisade* tells him he has "a Scythian or a Sarmat's heart" (Matthieu, II.I.251). See also Matthieu, II.ii.471, V.2095 (where the speaker is Madame de Nemours), and Hillman, ed. and trans., *The Guisade*, Introduction, pp. 30-31.

1877 Is this your great thanks rendered for your royalty,  
 1878 Received by his means? You are much more violent,  
 1879 Furious, ferocious, than the freezing breath sent  
 1880 By pitiless Aquilon.<sup>273</sup> You are countless times  
 1881 More barbarous and cruel than those of Polish climes,  
 1882 Who wander across the fields of frigid Scythia,  
 1883 Kept shivering by the chill spouse of Orythia,  
 1884 Where Guise,<sup>274</sup> that you might reign in France, had them  
                   seek you.  
 1885 Now, had he offended you,<sup>275</sup> a pardon was due.  
 1886 Yet as thanks, wicked man, you ordered his blood spilt  
 1887 By traitors in this chateau his forefathers built.<sup>276</sup>  
 1888 Alas, did they so to lose their posterity  
 1889 Because of you? So much for consanguinity!

## HENRI

1890 As a favour, because the blood and race of Guise  
 1891 Of the Valois heritage are indeed allies,  
 1892 To appease my ire and my furious throes,  
 1893 Your purpled cardinal<sup>277</sup> shall have a thousand blows  
 1894 Only of those great halberds, with blades long and  
                   square,  
 1895 That my guards are accustomed before me to bear,<sup>278</sup>  
 1896 Then, still quivering, be devoured by the fire,  
 1897 Or thrown to crows so they can eat all they desire.  
 1898 Oh, but now I'm sorry I told that plan of mine!

**273** Aquilon: i.e., the Roman north wind, the counterpart of Greek Boreas, who was married to Orythia (see l. 1882).

**274** Guise: the original merely has “il” (“he”); it seems useful to clarify. Nothing, however, appears to substantiate a role for Guise in having Henri return after the death of his brother, Charles IX. This was surely effected according to Catherine de’ Medici’s wishes—and his own. See Chevallier, pp. 226-31.

**275** “[O]ffended you”: the notion and the term (“offensé”) are resonant. See above, nn. 167 and 204.

**276** It was Louis XII, Guise’s great-grandfather, who had the chateau of Blois constructed (CB-M/MM).

**277** “[P]urple cardinal”: orig. “cardinal empourpré”—a combined evocation of the cardinal’s robe and of his blood, with an echo of Alecto in l. 249-50. An author’s marginal note adds: “Impious cruelty of the tyrant of a kind hitherto unheard-of.”

**278** Dargaud, IV: 212, does have the Cardinal cut down by the Scots guards’ halberds under the direction of L’Archant.

1899 I might have caused you on their roasted flesh to  
 dine,<sup>279</sup>  
 1900 So that the place in which they were conceived, your  
 womb,  
 1901 The same children who issued from it would entomb.

## MADAME

1902 You, great Jove, who high rocks in vain to powder dash,  
 1903 This villain blast with sulphur, with your lightning  
 smash.  
 1904 O righteous wielder of thunderbolts, strike the head  
 1905 Of the barbarous tyrant for this crime committed.  
 1906 Be sparing to the cloud-veiled crags of Rhodope,  
 1907 Of sky-scraping Athos and of the rocks still snowy  
 1908 Atop Enceladus' fiery mountain tomb;<sup>280</sup>  
 1909 Spare the forbidding peaks that over Atlas loom.  
 1910 With one blow hurl all your bursting thunder is worth  
 1911 Upon the tyrant, unworthy to live on earth—  
 1912 Worthy of all the woes that are endured below  
 1913 In hell, and of still worse, if any we could know.  
 1914 O tyrant devil-driven! O vile hypocrite!  
 1915 Murderer, who all the tortures of damned souls merit—  
 [Exit Henri.]

1916 Ha! So you're leaving, bandit! Go, show everywhere  
 1917 That God, wherever it is you are, is not there!<sup>281</sup>  
 1918 You have had put to death the very one whom France  
 1919 Had counted as her comfort and her firm assurance.  
 1920 This death will confound her wholly, in tears subsumed;  
 1921 This death will be the end of me, with griefs consumed.

**279** This fantasy sets the seal, of course, on Henri's resemblance to Atreus.

**280** Enceladus: see above, n. 162.

**281** An echo of the final cry of Jason as Medea soars into the air on her chariot after murdering their children: "Per alta vade spatia sublimi aethere, / testare nullos esse, qua veneris, deos [Go travel through the lofty spaces of high heaven: show that there are no gods where you pass by]" (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Medea, Tragoediae*, ed. Rudolf Peiper and Gustav Richter (Leipzig: Teubner, 1921), ll. 1026-27). (Online at the Perseus Digital Library: <<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/>>; accessed 24 May 2019.) This seems a daring borrowing in the context, even if the absence of God is implicitly made a reflection of Henri's atheism.

1922 Let us weep, girls, let us weep, in tears melt our eyes  
 1923 For the death of my son, who in war took the prize.<sup>282</sup>

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

1924 For us it is not something new  
 1925 To weep. Come, then, let us renew  
 1926 The tears, the wailing, the regret  
 1927 Of France since she, with anguished face  
 1928 And in her torment, had to place  
 1929 The second Henri in his casket.<sup>283</sup>

MADAME

1930 Come, my companions true and good,  
 1931 Weep with me in your maidenhood;  
 1932 The hair of all, let it be torn;  
 1933 Let's strike our faces till they bleed;  
 1934 Let our grief all other exceed,  
 1935 As my noble<sup>284</sup> Henri we mourn.

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

1936 For you, great Duke of Guise, Henri,  
 1937 Our mainstay and our liberty,  
 1938 We shall forever rend our garments;  
 1939 For you, your noble rank adorning,  
 1940 We shall cry out, not cease our mourning,  
 1941 Increasing always our own torments.

MADAME

1942 Let everywhere your cry resound,  
 1943 Be heard through Echo's voice all round,  
 1944 But not as normally employed:  
 1945 I wish her wholly to relate

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**282** “[W]ho in war took the prize”: orig. “la gloire des alarmes.” The point is to insist on his death as a cowardly act.

**283** The death of Henri II in a tournament in 1559, although accidental, was widely blamed by Catholics on the Protestant Gabriel de Lorges, Count of Montgomery, and viewed as initiating the years of religious strife that ensued, with the first War of Religion breaking out in 1562.

**284** “[N]oble”: orig. “virtueux”, as often connoting both moral and physical excellence.

1946                   A cardinal of Guise's fate,  
1947                   Who shall by fire be destroyed.

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

1948                   O soul blessed by sanctification,<sup>285</sup>  
1949                   Fair Astraea's true habitation,  
1950                   For you we make resound our cry,  
1951                   From the earth to the stars ascending,  
1952                   For we see countless ills impending  
1953                   Over us because you will die.

MADAME

1954                   Let us assume our tearful stream  
1955                   And weep for our own woes extreme.  
1956                   Alas, alas! Now free from care,  
1957                   They will not see throughout our France  
1958                   Wolves ravaging at every chance  
1959                   The fearful flock they have left there.

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

1960                   Live, live, most holy souls, on high;  
1961                   Live, with tears and laments put by,  
1962                   Such as will blight us all our days  
1963                   For what your absence does to us.  
1964                   O France made three times ruinous,  
1965                   France to be made unhappy always!

MADAME

1966                   Why do we linger here? Let us go, go lamenting,  
1967                   Our lives to consume. Let us go: of our tormenting  
1968                   We never can slow down the fixed, relentless course;

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**285** “[S]oul blessed by sanctification”: orig. “âme sainte et sacrée”. Given that this “soul” is addressed using “tu”, as often traditionally in prayer, and that the stanza anticipates retribution for the death to come, the Chorus is evidently taking up Madame de Nemours’s exhortation to extend their mourning to the doomed cardinal. The latter’s murder, as condemned by the Faculty of Theology in Paris and Pope Sixtus V, was a major factor in de-legitimising Henri as monarch and justifying rebellion. (See Jouanna *et al.*, eds, p. 348.) In his sacred virtue, the Cardinal is identified with Astraea, goddess of justice and innocence, who lived on earth only during the Golden Age and then departed to heaven as the constellation Virgo; see Smith, *s.v.*



1969                    We never can dry up the lively flowing source.  
1970                    Come, let us pour forth such tears that our bodies,  
                              drained  
1971                    Of vital fluid, may soon, in the tomb contained,  
1972                    Return our spirits to their dwelling in the skies.  
1973                    No human being finds happiness till he dies.<sup>286</sup>

END

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**286** L. 1972: a common aphorism passed down from the ancient Greeks, which was attributed to Solon and famously cited by Sophocles at the opening of the *Trachiniae* (where it is Hercules' wife Deianeira who speaks) and in the concluding Chorus of *Oedipus Rex*. Belyard thus effectively enlists both feminine and choric resonances for Madame de Nemours. For a useful commentary on the saying, see Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, trans. and ed. Thomas Gould, Greek Drama Series (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1970), n. to l. 1528.

