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The Guisian

by Simon Belyard

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

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by Simon Belyard
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Introduction

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There are solid grounds, I believe, for encouraging historians of early modern English drama to make the acquaintance of Simon Belyard's tragedy *The Guisian* (1592)—something this translation aims at facilitating—but these do not necessarily extend to the literary merit of the play (depending, of course, on one's understanding of that criterion). Certainly, viewed in relation to much neo-Senecan French Humanist tragedy of the later sixteenth century, as epitomised by the work of Robert Garnier, it risks appearing clumsy and derivative. Nor, as far as I know, is it suspected of influencing subsequent dramatists.[1] By comparison with *The Guisiade* of Pierre Matthieu (1589)—the only other surviving contemporary tragedy based on the assassination of Henri, Duke of Guise, at Blois on 23 December 1588, and an equally hard-line piece of propaganda for the ultra-Catholic Holy League (*Sainte Ligue*)—it is less sophisticated in both dramatic nuance and poetic expression (if capable at times of remarkable verbal vigour and imagistic vividness).[2]

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1 Nevertheless, certain similarities to turn-of-the-century tragedies of Antoine de Montchrestien are close enough to suggest specific influence; see the translation, nn. 87, 223, 227 and 239. More generally, it seems possible that in *Hector* (1601-1604?), the later playwright recalled his precursor's presentation of Guise and Madame de Nemours in portraying the hero, dauntless and doomed, as defying Andromache's supernaturally founded persuasions.

2 *The Guisiade* (*La Guisiade*), unlike *The Guisian*, has received considerable attention, including an English translation-edition: Pierre Matthieu, *The Guisiade*, *The Tragedy of the Late Admiral Coligny* [by François de Chantelouve] and *The Guisiade*, trans. with Introduction and Notes by Richard Hillman, Carleton Renaissance Plays in Translation, 40 (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 2005). Subsequent references are to this edition.

Some of the very features by which Belyard's work might be judged defective from a French literary-historical perspective, however, point to its potential interest from an English one. Furthermore, that such interest existed at the time (although not necessarily for aesthetic reasons) can be demonstrated. While Christopher Marlowe's familiarity with Matthieu's tragedy may only be inferred from his treatment of the same episode in *The Massacre at Paris*, there is conclusive evidence of his direct use of Belyard's version of the murder scene itself.[3] This evidence collaterally supplies a *terminus a quo* for the English play of 1592, the publication year of *The Guisian*.

The very fact that there exists a murder scene in Belyard's work marks a departure from the French Humanist norm, as sanctioned by Horace in the *Ars Poetica*, and a stark contrast with *The Guisiade*, in which the Duke's killing takes place offstage and is recounted by the ubiquitous Messenger, as with violent action generally in both Seneca's theatre and its French Humanist derivitives.[4] In Belyard, too, a messenger is provided to transmit the news (V.1545 ff.)—likewise to the bereft mother, Madame de Nemours, and likewise with morally and pathetically charged embellishments. But in Belyard's treatment such embellishments are conveyed with rhetorical and imaginative extremity and culminate in the sympathetic messenger's physical support of the stricken lady. (He is not just a neutral figure, moreover, or even a Guise partisan, but a presumably hardened soldier nonetheless horrified by such immoral barbarity.) The case is interesting not merely for its overkill (as it were) in support of its relentless message—the monstrous tyranny of Henri III (the terms "tyranny" and "tyrant" being repeated *ad infinitum* from the title onwards)—but for this dramaturgical doubling. Indeed, one might speak of a tripling, since we are offered a conspiratorial scene in which the chief assassin (L'Archant, captain of the King's guard[5]), grotesquely imagines and seemingly even mimes (III.917 ff.) the murder he will commit. It is as if Belyard, steeped in the neo-classical conventions though he obviously was (whatever the depth of his scholarship, which sometimes seems dubious[6]), could not resist the temptation to compound his tragic centrepiece by show-

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3 This evidence is detailed in Richard Hillman, "Marlowe's Guise: Offending against God and King", *Notes and Queries* ns 55.2 (2008): 154-59.

4 There are exceptions to the exclusion of violence from the stage. On Seneca's own practice, see A. J. Boyle, *Tragic Seneca: An Essay in the Theatrical Tradition* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 133-34. In France, the tragedies and tragicomedies of the post-1600 "*âge baroque*" moved away from such restrictions: thus, e.g., in Alexandre Hardy's *Coriolan* (*c.* 1607), the hero is murdered, and his mother commits suicide, onstage. Nevertheless, Belyard's play makes a rare early specimen.

5 See the translation, n. 15.

6 For instance, in his citation of the anecdote regarding Plato and Lysander's judgement (see the translation, dedicatory epistle, "To *Monsieur le président des trésoriers*", p. 7, n. 13).

ing as well as telling. Contemporary English playwrights and their audiences understood this impulse and procedure very well.

The Guisian in Its Time and Place

It may (or may not) bear on its divergence from *The Guisiade* on this point that Belyard's tragedy is known to have been staged, as the author informs the reader in an introductory epistle. This was presumably in Troyes (in the Guises' fiefdom of Champagne), where he was settled as a schoolmaster,[7] although we know nothing of the circumstances. (The name of the person he thanks for facilitating the production is otherwise unrecorded.) Of course, Matthieu's work may well also have been mounted, perhaps multiply, as an adjunct to its wide diffusion in printed form: this would fit with the concerted campaign of League propaganda that immediately followed the event. (There were three successive editions of *The Guisiade* within 1589, the third revised in the wake of the King's own assassination on 2 August of that year, and numerous copies of the text survive.) Not only was Matthieu far more prominent as a propagandist for the League and a political figure within it (as a lawyer and municipal councillor in Lyons), but he was an accomplished poet and playwright, and some of his previous dramas had certainly been represented.[8]

By contrast, Belyard's seemingly lone venture into drama was clearly a more isolated, local and personal affair. *The Guisian* exists in a single edition, printed in Troyes in 1592, of which there are four extant copies.[9] The volume, in which Belyard humbly solicits the patronage of the mayor of Troyes, whom he praises in his dedicatory letter as a militant

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7 He speaks of composing *The Guisian* in hours of recreation when not occupied with his young pupils; see the translation, dedicatory epistle, p. 6. Apart from the little he himself discloses in this dedication, virtually nothing is on record concerning Belyard. See Jean-Claude Ternaux, "Simon Belyard, Ronsard et Garnier", *La Poésie de la Pléiade. Héritage, influences, transmission. Mélanges offerts au professeur Isamu Takata par ses collègues et ses amis*, ed. Yvonne Bellenger, Jean Céard and Marie-Claire Thomine-Bichad, Rencontres 1 (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2009), pp. 275–95, esp. pp. 275-76.

8 For a summary of Matthieu's long career, which paradoxically included a position as official historiographer of his erstwhile enemy Henri IV, see *The Guisiade*, ed. and trans. Hillman, Introduction, pp. 57-63.

9 Simon Belyard, *Le Guysien ou perfidie tyrannique commise par Henry de Valois es personnes des illustriss. reverdiss. & tresgenereux Princes Loys de Loraine Cardinal & Archeuesque de Rheims, & Henry de Loraine Duc de Guyse, Grand Maistre de France* (Troyes: Iean Moreau, 1592). According to the Universal Short Title Catalogue (online at <https://www.ustc.ac.uk/>; accessed 08/06/2019), the four extant copies are held in the British Library, the Bibliothèque Municipale of Chalôns-en-Champagne, the Bibliothèque Méjanes (Aix-en-Provence) and the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (Vienna). A modernised edition (as *Le Guisien*) is currently in preparation (see the translation, Note on the Translation, p. 4).

League supporter, was obviously produced in very different circumstances, including greater temporal distance from the event and from the "tyrant"'s own death. The distance is not precisely calculable, but ancillary evidence provides some indication. All four surviving copies are bound together with a much slighter companion work, which features a separate dedication (to a distinguished local ecclesiastic) and pagination, but is identically identified as to printer and date; this piece is not a play, however, but a poem, a pastoral dialogue, roughly on the model of Virgil's *Eclogues*, presenting a political allegory. The title is *Charlot. Eglogve pastorelle sur les miseres de la France, & sur la tresheureuse & miraculeuse deliurance de tresmagnanime & tresillustre Prince Monseigneur le Duc de Gvyse*. For composition of this work, at least, a later *terminus a quo* is established by the event memorialised, and this time not deplored but celebrated: 15 August 1591 was the date of the sensational escape of Charles de Guise, the fifteen-year-old son of the murdered duke, from the chateau of Tours, where he had been imprisoned.

Whether they were originally conceived as complementary or not, it is striking to what extent Belyard's two volumes constitute mirror images converging, and pivoting, on the same ideological focal point. The common impulsion is aggressive mythologising: on the one hand, demonisation of the tyrant, who forfeits not merely royal legitimacy but humanity itself; on the other, near-deification of his chief victim's son, whose miraculous escape heralds a new Golden Age: "*Sou [*sic*] Charlot tous-jours regnera / Saturne en cette terre* [Under Charlot Saturn shall forever reign over this land]" (*Charlot*, p. 14).[10] It seems clear that he is envisaged as the heaven-sent future king of France—as indeed briefly seemed a possibility to some partisans. In fact, Belyard's double publication coincided closely with the "Estates" summoned in League-controlled Paris by Charles, Duke of Mayenne, chief of the League since his brother's assassination, for the purpose of electing a new king, Henri of Navarre being disqualified *a priori* by his religion, as had been confirmed by papal excommunication. (Belyard's only allusion to him in either work is in *Charlot*, as the "*Porcher Nauarrin* [swineherd from Navarre]" [p. 20] who welcomes pillaging German mercenaries into France.) Various proposals were advanced involving a marriage with the Spanish *infanta,* Isabelle-Claire-Eugenie, who was of French royal descent (as the grand-daughter of Henri II and Catherine de' Medici), but the Salic law against female descent of the royal line posed a major obstacle, and the delegates of

10 Cited is Simon Belyard, *Charlot. Eglogve pastorelle sur les miseres de la France, & sur la tresheureuse & miraculeuse deliurance de tresmagnanime & tresillustre Prince Monseigneur le Duc de Gvyse* (Troyes: Jean Moreau, 1592), from the copy in the British Library.

Troyes, in fact, were notable for insisting on a king "*de la nation françoise* [belonging to the French nation]".[11]

All in all, it seems probable that *Charlot* did not merely issue from a general engagement in the quasi-apocalyptic fantasies associated with the League in its spiritual aspect but constituted a pointed political intervention at a moment fraught with tension and in a place menaced with turmoil.[12] Such a perspective may in turn shed further light on *The Guisian*, to which *Charlot* makes a pointed supplement and counterpart—not only in its references to the larger-than-life Henri de Guise who will be reincarnated in his son, but in a distinctive paratextual feature. As the message of *The Guisian* is bolstered in Belyard's volume by a selection of anagrammes exposing (as was the pervasive fiction) the "true" identity, villainous and diabolical, lurking within the name "Henri de Valois", so corresponding anagrammes are deployed illustrating the divine virtues and destinies of two "Charlot"'s—both Charles, Duke of Guise, and Charles, Duke of Mayenne.

There may be particular contextual reasons, therefore, why Belyard, in harking back to Guise's assassination, simply effaces Henri of Navarre, who had been actively excoriated as a heretic in *The Guisiade*,[13] while reviving and amplifying the most extreme League accusations against Henri III, such as mutilation of his victims' bodies, even cannibalism, in a way that far exceeds Matthieu. For the author of *The Guisiade*, Henri is a psychological weakling on the jealous defensive, hence subject to manipulation by diabolical forces, especially as transmitted by his most notorious *mignon*, the Duke of Épernon, who avowedly serves as Navarre's agent.[14] The King cannot resist, despite the contrary influence of his mother (Catherine de' Medici). For Belyard, Henri is a perverted and sadistic monster, established from the first as possessed by the Fury Alecto. Not even the Queen Mother is present to offer interference. Hence, his reflexive recourse to fitting

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11 Cited by Arlette Jouanna, "Le temps des Guerres de religion en France (1559-1598)", *Histoire et dictionnaire des Guerres de religion*, ed. Arlette Jouanna, Jacqueline Boucher, Dominique Biloghi and Guy Le Thiec (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1998), pp. 3-445, p. 379, who provides a highly useful summary of the events and issues (pp. 378-84). See also, in this volume, the article, "Guise", by Jacqueline Boucher, who adds the information (p. 961) that Charles (1571-1640), failing to live up to his heroic-romantic promise, was shunted aside from any royal prospects by his jealous uncle, the Duke of Mayenne. In 1594, as governor of Reims (the capital of Champagne), he came to terms with the newly Catholic Henri IV (as did almost all Leaguers), who with his usual finesse prudently put him out of the way as governor of Provence.

12 The dedicatory letter to *The Guisian*, with its comparison of Troyes to Corinth under siege and reference to subversive Huguenot machinations (see the translation, p. 6), suggests that even in this region, long dominated by the Guises, the hold of the League was far from secure, as events would shortly confirm.

13 See Matthieu, III.ii[b].1151-60

14 See Matthieu, III.i.807-8, 861-66. There is no hint of such an alliance in Belyard.

instruments, not just to serve his ends, but to goad his resolution when mere cowardice (hardly conscientious misgivings) makes it falter—Épernon, of course, but also the literally blood-thirsty L'Archant, with his fantasies of drinking Guise's blood and tearing off his victim's head with his teeth (III.921 ff.). The King's deliberations with himself and with them in Act Three, which sometimes border on the hysterical, have nothing to do with morality or justice but turn only on the questions of resolution and practical means: "I have sufficient will but do not see the way [*J'ai bien la volonté, mais je ne vois comment*]" (III.997). And the ultimate challenge for him is to conceive a vengeance adequate to his obsessive hatred:

> Let the timid tyrant cause suddenly to die
> Those he hates; for my part I prefer to apply
> To my foes cruelties and tortures truly dire.
>
> [*Que le tyran craintif fasse soudain mourir*
> *Ses haineux ; quant à moi je veux faire souffrir*
> *Aux miens des cruautés et gênes misérables.*] (III.1013-15)

On this basis, one might take a further conjectural step and understand Belyard's "excesses", including the murder scene itself and the climactic violent confrontation between Henri and Madame de Nemours, as compensating for a perceived reticence, indirectness and understatement in *The Guisiade*, where those two key opposing figures never meet. (In structural terms, Belyard's tragedy might be taken to arrive at a corresponding closure with the Chorus's lament at V.1707-34, before being given, in effect, a second wind with that confrontation, which contributes nothing further to the action.) Certainly, Matthieu's play, while no less militant, is complex in ways that might appear to mitigate its message. That Belyard was actually, in part, reacting to *The Guisiade* receives backhanded support when he implies, in his dedicatory epistle, that he knows of no other such dramatic exaltation of the Guises and invites critics of his own, which he presents with due modesty as a clumsy beginner's effort, to do better themselves in that noble cause.[15] Given the demonstrably wide diffusion of Matthieu's prior tragedy, certainly within League circles, this sounds more like than disingenuous diversion than modesty, whether true or false.

At the same time, the fact that Belyard opens his address to the reader by deploring accusations that he endorsed the very crimes he was condemning might suggest that his dramaturgical excess paradoxically backfired in some quarters. Such charges came, he maintains, from "some ignorant persons (or, rather, slyly feigning to be so) [*quelques*

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15 See the translation, p. 7.

ignorants, ou plutôt qui malicieusement le feignent être]".[16] Even if one allows for the defensive sensitivities of an aspiring poet (which are also plentifully evident in his dedicatory epistle), the printed text effectively acknowledges the potential for misunderstanding in performance, if only on the part of those "ignorant" of theatrical conventions and, especially, of Senecan models. (One might expect such to be more numerous in a provincial centre such as Troyes.) For Belyard supplements the dialogue as printed, especially that of the evil characters, with extensive marginal notes making the moral explicit and registering condemnation of the vices displayed—sometimes to the point of addressing principal villains directly.[17] It is not so much, perhaps, that he fears his own sentiments might be identified with those expressed on stage, as that he has dared to enter sensational theatrical territory where the moral frame may seem inadequate to hold in place a simple distinction between hero and villain. The culmination undoubtedly comes with the fifth-act entrance of Henri, after the murder, in a delirium of triumph, ventriloquising the boasting Atreus of Seneca's *Thyestes*: "As high as are the stars triumphantly I stride / And, head raised to the top of heaven's vault in pride [*Aux astres clairs égal je marche triomphant, / Et d'un chef élevé aux pôles hauts touchant*]" (V.1783-84).

Seneca's notorious lines had also been adapted, as Jean-Claude Ternaux points out, by Garnier in *Les Juifves*,[18] but there they come attached to a tyrant—Nabuchodonosor—already formally identified as such on divine authority and circumscribed within it. The tyrannical status of the nominally "most Christian" King Henri must be established by the dramatist, and shown to extend to extremes of cruelty and usurpation of divine authority that are grotesquely diabolical. The process begins with his unwitting inspiration by the Fury Alecto, who revels in anticipated evil over her monologue of nearly three hundred lines, which comprises (with the Chorus) the entire first act.[19] Perhaps most tellingly, in sharp contrast with the concluding portrait of the absent Henri evoked in the curse of Madame de Nemours in Matthieu's tragedy—for she imagines him as plagued by conscience in the form of her son's ghost—Belyard's tyrant is wholly without conscience. On the contrary, he is left at the end sadistically thriving on the prospect of the bereft mother's further suffering; hence, he refuses her plea to be killed like her son:

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16 See the translation, "To the Reader", p. 5.

17 See, most remarkably, the translation, IV.1468-69, n. 208.

18 Ternaux, "Simon Belyard, Ronsard et Garnier", pp. 292-95.

19 The ultimate inspiration for the Fury's initial influence is doubtless the opening of the *Thyestes*—preparation for its echoing at later points. Insofar as the curse extends to the ruin of France through bloody civil discord, however, Belyard's immediate model is the adaptation of the convention by Garnier in *Porcie* (1568), which opens with the Fury Mégère's similar curse on Rome for its pride, itself an evident allusion to France's situation.

In that way I would put an end to your tormenting:
My aim is to prolong your sorrow and lamenting,
So that, while you maintain your wretched life in anguish,
You die a thousand times each day.

[*Ainsi je mettrai fin à tes graves douleurs;*
Je te veux prolonger tes regrets, et tes pleurs,
Afin que, retenant ta misérable vie,
Tu meures mille fois le jour.] (V.1851-54)

Implicitly, the only resolution possible is the intervention of divine justice, which, in 1591, would have been understood as having duly taken place, in the double form of the tyrant's assassination and the redemptive liberation of Charles de Guise. The latter virtually reincarnates Henri's chief victim for the sake at once of that victim's actual mother and, symbolically, of France itself, which had been left likewise weeping and desolate. It takes the supplement of *Charlot*, however, to move that message of *The Guisian* beyond the implicit, whereas, left on its own, the tragedy might well have threatened to escape its ideological bounds and take on independent theatrical life. As his letter to the reader maintains—with some anxiety showing through—Belyard may well, before publication, have consulted "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 holy Union [*trois, voire quatre très doctes et très fameux docteurs en la sainte théologie pour ne commettre par ignorance quelque chose contre la foi et la sainte Union*]."[20] This does not preclude the work's potential on stage for setting in motion, as extreme theatre has a tendency to do, meanings beyond the author's control.

It seems possible that some sense of the potential for ideological instability through character portrayal, however positive or negative in moral terms, led Belyard to limit the self-expositions of his hero and villain. It is to Guise himself, and not to a Fury, that Matthieu assigns his own play's extensive opening soliloquy, and the character actually rehearses the allegations against him, if only to refute them with evident sincerity. Shortly afterwards (in Act Two, Scene Two), he is shown urging firm action against heresy upon the hesitant and duplicitous King, and while his moral credentials have been established beyond doubt, their exchanges could suggest (with good historical reason) a struggle for power. By contrast, anything that might resemble political manoeuvring or ambiguity

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20 See the translation, p. 5. The Edict of Union, imposed on Henri III by the League after his expulsion from Paris in 1588, amounted to a virtual theocratic constitution, centred on the eradication of heresy. (See Jouanna *et al.*, eds, *s.v.*). As Belyard's attitude shows, it came to take on quasi-mystical status as a metonymy for "pure" Catholicism.

is kept out of Belyard's presentation. His Guise is never shown together with the King. As Belyard's Henri is allowed cowardly hesitation but not the slightest misgivings or motivational complexity, the heroic stature of his Duke is insisted on—by himself and by others—in straightforward terms: a warrior's heroism on behalf of France and the true faith; a strong man's resistance to a feeble woman's admonitions and premonitions; an unswerving commitment to honour and reputation at any personal cost. Matthieu's King wavers at length in soliloquy right up until the decisive moment, both agonising over the political pros and cons and struggling with an active conscience (IV.iii.1911-92). He is not seen afterwards. When Belyard's Henri soliloquises in the final act, having proceeded to action after thoroughly assimilating the goading encouragements of Épernon and L'Archant, who have thereby been rendered theatrically redundant, it is merely to ventriloquise a Senecan discourse of extreme monstrosity. All in all, one gets the impression that, for Belyard, to show characters unfolding from within, however slightly, might have threatened to blur a dramatic picture that must remain indelibly clear and sharp.

The Guisian across the Channel

When *The Guisian* arrived in England shortly after publication, as Marlowe's use of it confirms that it did, it probably did so for most readers—Marlowe presumably excepted—without its full ideological baggage. Still, the political application of flagrant and sensational neo-Senecan dramaturgy, enhanced by key moments of action and confrontation, would have made for a much closer fit with Elizabethan dramatic practices than did most contemporary French theatre, certainly including the work of Garnier. Among the surviving English specimens of such a mélange, the most extreme is perhaps John Marston's Antonio plays, which actually deploy (in Latin) some of the same Senecan tags to embellish brutal revenge.[21] But whatever their precise dates, these are products of the turn of the sixteenth century, and whatever their precise tone (there is no scholarly consensus as to the degree of parody involved), they are clearly self-conscious and mannered. By contrast, Belyard's earnest medley of neo-Senecan rhetoric, mythologised recent history and spectacular action arrived on the English scene at a moment when similar kinds of generic bending and stretching, thanks largely to the innovations of Marlowe and Thomas Kyd, were in active exercise and ferment there.

From this perspective, the closest affinity of *The Guisian* as a study of monstrous tyranny is perhaps with Shakespeare's *Richard III*, which likewise combines a tendentious historical picture (already skewed in the English chronicles) with a heavy over-

21 See the translation, V.1783-84, n. 249, and 1791-94, n. 251.

lay of Seneca-inspired emotion and rhetoric, especially in scenes of confrontation. Shakespeare's intertwined sources for all these elements have naturally been explored at length; they include (almost certainly) one heavily Senecan play in Latin (*Ricardus Tertius*, by Thomas Legge), probably dating from 1579, and another anonymous one in English (*The True Tragedy of Richard III*), whose composition has been conjecturally placed between 1590 and 1592.[22] No definitive date has been established for Shakespeare's own play, but majority scholarly opinion opts for 1592-93, probably 1592.

If *The Guisian* and *Richard III* were virtually contemporary, and given Marlowe's evident familiarity with the French tragedy, it is impossible to resist sifting through the familiar multiple heritage of Shakespeare's play, including its panoply of Senecan effects, to judge whether any "unaccounted-for" elements point to a specific knowledge of Belyard. Finally, conclusive evidence is lacking, but the French and English plays distinctively concur in deploying their rhetorical and theatrical devices to portray larger-than-life tyrants at recent dynastic junctures in the respective national histories (the advent of the Tudor line lending nearly equal contemporaneity to the English events). In Shakespeare's case, such extreme treatment stems, as is well known, from Thomas More's *Life of Richard III*, as incorporated in Edward Hall's Chronicle;[23] Belyard draws on the more lurid fabrications of League propaganda. But both playwrights develop the "unnatural" dimension of their villains beyond the "historical" sources and Senecan precedents. They also agree in presenting the villainy not just directly but also by proxy, through the tyrant's actions and agents.

There is particular overlap in this respect between the same murder sequence that Marlowe drew on in *Massacre* (Belyard, *Guisian*, IV.1454 ff.) and that of the murder of George, Duke of Clarence (Shakespeare, *R3*, IV.iv), where mockery and the waiting reward are also featured and the question of the victim's "offending" is likewise introduced. Indeed, on the last point the resonance is so strong as to suggest the French play as a model, whether directly or indirectly. For when Clarence demands of the murderers, "Wherein, my friends, have I offended you?", he receives a reply that distinctly recalls L'Archant in Marlowe's *Massacre*, as mediated by Belyard's commentary: "Offended us you have not, but the King" (*R3*, IV.iv.166-67).[24]

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22 For an astute overview of the probable sources for various elements, see Geoffrey Bullough, "Introduction to *Richard III*", *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*, ed. Geoffrey Bullough, 8 vols., vol. 3: Earlier Engish History Plays: *Henry VI*, *Richard III*, *Richard II* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul; New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), pp. 221-48, esp. pp. 233-40.

23 Edward Hall, *The Union of the Two Noble… Famelies of Lancastre and Yorke* (1548), excerpted in Bullough, ed., pp. 249-301.

24 See Hillman, "Marlowe's Guise", p. 158. Cf. the translation, n. 204, as well as V.1884 and n. 275.

The most notable unhistorical innovations linking Belyard's play with Shakespeare's, however, involve the female characters. The only substantial one in *The Guisian* is Madame de Nemours (born Anne d'Este), the victims' mother, but she is placed at the centre of a nexus of suffering femininity, thanks both to the usual neo-Senecan confidante-figure identified as her Nurse ("*La Nourrice de Madame*") and to her attendant Young Women ("*ses demoiselles*"), who intervene as a Chorus and also through a single voice ("*La Demoiselle*"). It is they who get the last choric word, as fits with other contemporary feminine figurations of "*la France*" in lamentation. The effect is compounded by having Madame de Nemours's fears and losses concentrated and mythologised—she notably assimilates herself to Hecuba and Niobe[25]—in the cause of inflating the tragic doom of the House of Lorraine.

In fact, not only were "all" of Madame de Nemours's children not massacred, as the character half-fears, half-affirms deliriously,[26] but since 1566 she had had a second husband (from whom she derived her current title) in the place of François, Duke of Guise, whose Senecan ghost haunts her in Belyard and whom she longs to rejoin in the afterlife.[27] Despite the anticipations of her own death, the real Madame de Nemours was merely imprisoned briefly by Henri III and, at the time of *The Guisian*'s performance, was alive and well (as the saying goes) and living in Paris.[28] The presentation of the character by Matthieu, although impressively pathetic (even without mention of the Cardinal's fate), is thus more judiciously non-committal: he reserves her single appearance for a concluding lament and a solemn curse upon Henri, whom she never encounters.

The Guisian presents a closer parallel, however, with the employment of suffering female victims by Shakespeare, and particularly with his evocation of Queen Margaret, whose role in *Richard III* has no historical warrant whatever. In effect, the English playwright unhistorically brings Marguerite d'Anjou back to England from France, where she had lived in exile after being ransomed following the Lancastrian defeat at Tewkesbury and the death of Henry VI, specifically to renew her grief and grievances and to preside over the virtual vengeance visited upon England under Richard's tyranny. The text insists

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Cited is William Shakespeare, *King Richard III*, ed. Antony Hammond, The Arden Shakespeare, 2nd ser. (Walton-on-Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1981).

25 See the translation, II.453-58 and IV.1699-1702.

26 See the translation, IV.1693-94.

27 See the translation, V.1539.

28 She would live until 1607, when she was almost eighty-years-old, closely associated with the court and active in both political and family affairs. Moreover, she would be thoroughly reconciled with Henri IV and attend his marriage with Marie de' Medici in 1600. See Jacqueline Boucher, "Este, famille de", Jouanna *et al.*, eds, pp. 893-95, esp. p. 894.

on this French connection, beginning with Richard's reminder of her banishment, to which she retorts,

> I do find more pain in banishment
> Than death can yield me here by my abode.
> A husband and a son thou ow'st to me. (*R3*, I.iii.168-70)

And in the end, her farewell to the grieving women whose losses enact fulfilment of her curse sets the seal on the cross-Channel transference: "These English woes shall make me smile in France" (IV.iv.115).

The essence of this Frenchwoman's curse, which Richard turns back on her—more neatly but no more effectively than the mocking Henri does that of Madame de Nemours—is, of course, his monstrosity, inward as well as outward:

> Thou elvish-mark'd, abortive, rooting hog,
> Thou that wast seal'd in thy nativity
> The slave of Nature, and the son of hell.
> Thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb,
> Thou loathed issue of thy father's loins,
> Thou rag of honour, thou detested—(I.iii.228-33)

The tone and the terms, *mutatis mutandis*, certainly bear comparison with those employed by Guise's mother, whose moral condemnation of Henri takes on a physical aspect:

> You tyrant unnatural, contemptible creature,
> Who when you were born struck fear into Mother Nature!
> Hypocrite and atheist, villain and murderer,
> Full of impiety, of ill-repute the sewer,
> Fen of all filthiness, gulf of iniquity,
> Cruelty's dwelling-place, abode of tyranny.
>
> [*Tyran dénaturé, infâme créature,*
> *Qui fis peur, en naissant, à la mère Nature !*
> *Hypocrite, meurtrier, athéiste, vilain,*
> *Cloaque d'infamie, et d'impiété plein,*
> *Gouffre d'iniquité, bourbier de vilenie,*
> *Séjour de cruauté, manoir de tyrannie!*] (Belyard, *Guisian*, V.1829-34)

If there is less physical repulsiveness to start with in Henri's case, his outward appearance changes to match his inward nature. So the Young Woman conveys on seeing him enter, just prior to the confrontation with Madame de Nemours:

O murderer—see him savour his wrathful deeds!
Cruel man. Anyone can see that his heart feeds
On nothing but blood. Menaces teem from his eyes;
His gait, as he stalks puffed with pride, all shame defies.

[*Ô meurtrier, je le vois, qui remâche son ire,*
Le cruel. L'on voit bien que son cœur ne respire
Rien sinon que le sang. Il a l'œil menaçant,
Et marche, enflé d'orgueil, d'un pas tout indécent.] (V.1777-80)

Margaret's broad projection of her grief is most immediately grounded in the murder of her son Edward (the future Queen Anne's husband), as represented in *3 Henry VI*, where Richard first emerges as a monstrous villain and her special anathema, although his brothers follow his lead in stabbing the Prince at Tewkesbury. Restrained by the future King Edward from killing Margaret as well, Richard rides off in haste to "root… out" (*3H6*, V.v.48)[29] the Lancastrian line by murdering King Henry in the Tower—a match with Henri's obsessive desire to eradicate the House of Lorraine.

The scene of Prince Edward's slaughter is also notable for the neo-Senecan device of a grief-stricken victim begging for death, and here there is a specific parallel with *The Guisian*, where Madame de Nemours, gesturing towards (or perhaps even seizing) Henri's sword, similarly exhorts him and is gloatingly denied:

Here, maddened murderer, for me take this sword—take it![30]
And then in my blood also a thousand times slake it.
Henri. In that way I would put an end to your tormenting.

[*Tiens, meurtrier enragé, tiens, prends-moi cette épée,*
Qu'elle soit mille fois dans mon sang retrempée.
Henri. *Ainsi je mettrai fin à tes graves douleurs.*]
(V.1849-51)

For her part, in *3 Henry VI,* Margaret addresses herself first to King Edward, then to George, Duke of Clarence, who likewise denies her such a refuge from her pain:

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29 Cited is William Shakespeare, *King Kenry VI, Part III*, ed. Andrew S. Cairncross, The Arden Shakespeare, 2nd ser. (London: Methuen, 1964).

30 "[F]or me take 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 present it to him.

> Here sheath thy sword; I'll pardon thee my death.
> What, wilt thou not? Then, Clarence, do it thou.
> *Geo.* By heaven, I will not do thee so much ease. (V.v.68-70)

The onstage action and emotional dynamic here make effective preparation for that which Richard will instigate, and turn to his psychological advantage, in wooing the doubly bereft Anne:

> If thy revengeful heart cannot forgive,
> Lo here I lend thee this sharp-pointed sword,
> Which if thou please to hide in this true breast,
> And let the soul forth that adoreth thee,
> I lay it naked to the deadly stroke,
> And humbly beg the death upon my knee. (*R3*, I.ii.177-82)

Indeed, the precedent involving Margaret makes it easier to see to what extent, in the later encounter, Richard is artificially inverting the roles of murderer and victim as an expression of his own "revengeful mind" at work.[31]

A progression from grieving to abhorrence of unnatural monstrosity is also outlined in *3 Henry VI* by the doomed king himself on the point of his murder. Like his Queen, Henry would rather die at once than live with his losses ("Ah, kill me with thy weapon, not with words!" [*3H6*, V.vi.26]), but he knows he will shortly be getting his wish and utters a prophecy of England's desolation under Richard's tyranny as foretold by his unnatural birth. Thus provoked, the tyrant acts his part self-consciously ("For this, amongst the rest, was I ordain'd" [58]) and with a sadistic humour that recalls the exulting of Belyard's Henri over the extermination of the Guises—"How many Hydras did I just decapitate? [*Combien ai-je en un coup pu d'hydres tronçonner?*]" (V.1808)—his superfluous stabbing of the duke's dead body, even L'Archant's thirsty and laughing dagger (III.921-24):

> What, will the aspiring blood of Lancaster
> Sink in the ground? I thought it would have mounted.
> See how my sword weeps for the poor King's death.
> O, may such purple tears by alway [*sic*] shed
> From those that which the downfall of our house!
> If any spark of life be yet remaining,

---

31 Boyle, p. 149, points out the parallel between the wooing scene, unprecedented in Shakespeare's sources, and the (failed) wooing of Megara by Lycus in Seneca's *Hercules Furens*. Boyle is surely over-hasty, however, in identifying the "threatened sword-thrust" as simply "borrowed" from that tragedy's final act, where the despairing hero prevents his father Amphitryon from committing suicide.

> Down, down to hell; and say I sent thee thither.
> (*3H6*, V.vi.61-67)

Richard's "purple" glances at royal pretension, of course, and parallels Henri's punning taunt of Madame de Nemours, when she reminds him of the blood-tie between the Guises and the Valois, with the "favour [*faveur*]" he will show her "blood and race [*le sang, et race*]" (Belyard, *Guisian*, V.1889) by having her "purpled cardinal [*cardinal pourpré*]" (1892) bloodily cut to pieces.

The question of whether *The Guisian* could have been accessible when these scenes in *3 Henry VI* were written leads into murky territory entailing the date, the original form and title of the play, and indeed its authorship. Marlowe, long proposed (among others) as a collaborator with Shakespeare on parts of the so-called First Tetralogy, has recently been accorded "official" co-authorial status by the editors of the Oxford Shakespeare—a claim by no means accepted universally and ultimately unprovable, as tempting as it might be as support for influence of *The Guisian*.[32] The dates of the original and of its possible revision are also grey areas, although most scholars would be happy with a *terminus ad quem* of early 1592,[33] which would probably leave room for Belyard's work to enter into the picture. Cumulatively most convincing, perhaps, remains the multiple echoing of Madame de Nemours in *Richard III* by women lamenting the slaughter of their children and decrying monstrous royal tyranny in a chorus of voices led by one that resounds across the Channel.

It is hardly surprising that some specific resemblances can be traced between Belyard's tragedy and English theatrical productions of the early 1590s, even without the encouragement offered by its single clear point of contact with *The Massacre at Paris*. We are dealing fundamentally with neo-Senecan modes like those that were then feeding into the mainstream of English historical and quasi-historical drama. (Indeed, "quasi-historical" would allow for most of the tragedy produced in early modern England, including Shakespeare's.) I have elsewhere proposed that the major French influence on this evolutionary process entailed the application of such conventions, directly or (more usually) indirectly, to political subjects.[34] *The Guisian* goes further by grafting onto a per-

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32 For a balanced overview of the issue, see Lois Potter, review essay, *The New Oxford Shakespeare, The Complete Works: Modern Critical Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), ed. Gary Tayor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus and Gabriel Egan, *Cahiers Élisabéthains* 94.1 (2017): 148–56, esp. p. 154, who points out the difficulty of identifying instances of Marlowe's authorship amid material composed in a "Marlovian" manner.

33 See, e.g., Geoffrey Bullough, Introduction to *3 Henry VI*, Bullough, ed., pp. 157-71, p. 158, and Cairncross, ed., pp. xliii-xliv.

34 Richard Hillman, *French Origins of English Tragedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), esp. pp. 33-61.

ceived contemporary act of tyranny, intensively evoked through Senecan conventions in extreme form, the supplement of scenes of sinister conspiracy, onstage violence and bitter confrontation. That combination, innovative in French theatrical terms, seems ample reason for historians of the English theatre to take notice.

Scène
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introuvables

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by Simon Belyard

Translated, with Introduction and Notes,
by Richard Hillman

Référence électronique

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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).[1] 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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1 Simon Belyard, *Le Guysien ou perfidie tyrannique commise par Henry de Valois es personnes des illustriss. reverdiss. & tresgenereux Princes Loys de Loraine Cardinal & Archeuesque de Rheims, & Henry de Loraine 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*.[2] 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.[3] 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[4] 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:[5]

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.[6]

---

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[7] 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.[8] I know that some Attilian[9] 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.[10] Young men worn out and wearied by carrying arms spend some time in the honest exercise of the *jeu de paume,*[11] while tired old men, exhausted by long management of public affairs, when they visit each other play at trictrac,[12] 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—

---

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."[13] 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[14]
L'Archant[15]
  and Chorus of Guards
My Lord of Guise
Soldier (as messenger)
Chorus

---

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*, tans. 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

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

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

---

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.

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

---

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.

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

---

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 "Gê". 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-Sahara, renowned for ferocity; see *Oxford English Dictionary* online (<www.oed.com>, accessed 7 September 2019), *s.v.* "lycaon". The particular pertinence here, if any, is unclear.

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

---

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, I.iii.77).

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

34 Ll. 129-30: "Ausonian" (orig. "ausonienne") and "Agamemon" (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.

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

---

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. "Trozœnien") 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.

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

As his body of its great capacity tells.
That Guisard hero, by that very injury
Yet more emboldened, has honour supreme from me
On thousands and thousands of occasions obtained.
        Still, for the longest time the hope I entertained
That by constantly stirring up new wars I must
Cause him in fairly short order to bite the dust.
But as in vain I wait, the more he's flourishing:
From that thick and growing trunk the more branches
        spring.
Never did new births in such numbers Crete adorn,
By offspring of Rhea, great mother-goddess, born,[47]
As France is with princes and lords so well supplied,
With brave chevaliers and brave governors beside—
Royal companions, who high majesty sustain,
Who are born every day from the race of Lorraine,
Like a green willow, which, by cutting back reduced,
Sees always more and more prolific shoots produced.
        I have to extirpate entirely that race,
In order to reign in France with the god of Thrace.[48]
Enyo[49] will drive, as our rolling chariot goes,
The fierce dark horses, stained with blood that slowly
        flows
Of men in all the corners of France massacred.
On, right now, I wish it! Let no quarter be offered.
Try all of you—I say!—of harm who can do most.
Now let one, now the other of victory boast.
Let anger have no end nor mix with any shame;
May blind rancour in perpetuity inflame,
And fury, the spirits of men with minds obsessed.
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*, *Œvres 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 imprede furor and ire
222 In their free scope to do whatever they desire.
223 Quickly, now, go quickly, advance, my snaki-kins,[50]
224 Slink into the heart of the King and his assassins,
225 Who are waiting for day that work to undertake.
226 The chateau[51] has perceived the entry of the snake:
227 The contact causes it with horror back to shrink;
228 They're[52] 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.
234 All is done. I see already[53] with inhumane
235 And brutal thrusts by thousands the Guisard laid low,
236 Subjected to many a thousand[54] dagger blow,
237 Spreading blood all around him in his futile strife
238 Against the raging murderer taking his life.
239 As when one goes to sacrifice a burly bull
240 To Mars or Neptune, and he tries away to pull—
241 Pulls hard, to no avail, and the sturdy rope strains,
242 Then, when a stroke from the weighty axe he sustains,
243 He lurches this way and that with a fierce bellow,

---

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.

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

---

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.

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

CHORUS

Nothing remains entire,
As was sung with such grace
By the truthful lyre
Of the priest from Thrace,
As those rocks and trees bowed
His voice with ears endowed;[61]

Who turned back to their sources
Great rivers in their might,
Who drew toward him the courses

61 Evoked is Orpheus, the mystic poet-priest.

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

Once more in this world present,
To the Getae[62] he said,
Striking his instrument,
That Jupiter instated
The rule that applies
To all beneath the skies:

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

Many a trophy ruinous
Of those Greeks venerated
Makes us trust in Orpheus,
His song thus validated,
When they to Romans fell—
Their strength,[63] their tongue as well.

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

The destiny assured
Of Hector's rescued son,
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.

In us is truly won,
All kings consigned to cares
By Francus's proud heirs.[64]

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

Nail, great God, I appeal,[65]
With a nail of adamant
Her[66] too-much rolling wheel,
That these Estates[67] may grant
We will maintain in peace
Our fair state without cease.

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

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

68 "[C]ourage": orig. "cœur".

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

NURSE[71]

Scarcely are Phlegon's noisy nostrils, in his pasture
Undersea near Nabathaea's fields,[72] the obscure
Shadowy night respiring, as azure steals
Upon the vault of heaven; Hecate[73] 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

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

MADAME

When kind heaven by welcome death is pleased to send
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 Alcycone 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

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

MADAME

Whom cruel stepdame Fortune everywhere pursues.

NURSE

Whom everywhere she follows, and benefits strews.

MADAME

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

NURSE

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

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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. Szőnyi, Symbola et Emblemata 7 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 7-17, p. 14.

MADAME

Ah, Nurse, I fear, I fear!

NURSE

What is it that you fear?

MADAME

I fear.

NURSE

But what?

MADAME

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

NURSE

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

MADAME

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

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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,

Alas, if that cruel tyrant and hypocrite
His cursèd cruelty to use on them saw fit![80]
Ah, my God, how fearful I find that apprehension!

MADAME

But whatever engenders in you that conception?[81]
Your children have now been restored to the King's grace.[82]

MADAME

He nourishes rancour behind his laughing face.

NURSE

Never has such vice been found in a heart that's royal.[83]

MADAME

He has always been perfidious and disloyal.
Neither faith nor loyalty goes with heresy.
Ah, I spy well enough: his false hypocrisy
Has some evil in store for me. My eyes can see,
My spirit sense it. And indeed the gods agree
By sending nightly presages by way of dreaming.[84]
Pray, gods, bring it about that this is mere false seeming!
Again only this morning (alas, what a vision!)
I seemed to see myself sleeping in an effusion[85]
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 "appréhension/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

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

MADAME

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

NURSE

What? Will you then let a vain dream cause you such
trouble?
It is a deceiving phantom, a mere illusion.[87]

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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 Belyard, is found in the exchanges between Andromache and her Nurse in Antoine de Montchrestien,

MADAME

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

Hector: Tragedy, ed. and trans. Richard Hillman, Scène Européenne—Traductions Introuvables (Tours: Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, 2019) <https://sceneeuropeenne.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.

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

NURSE

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

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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.

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

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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, beginnng with his victory at Dormans in Champagne (1575). See Richard Hillman, "Pharaon et le duc

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

MADAME

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

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.

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

NURSE

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

MADAME

That neither the King nor his courtiers contents.

NURSE

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

MADAME

Forget those presents—they are treacherous, mere ruse.

NURSE

Something useful to me I will never refuse.

MADAME

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

NURSE

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

MADAME

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

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

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.

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

NURSE

Madam, put yourself in a better state of mind;
For far too long your eye with weeping has been blind.
Good and ill change like winter, summer, fall and spring.[103]

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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

Good fortune is more distant than some evil thing.

NURSE

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

MADAME

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

NURSE

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

CHORUS

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

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

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.

Secure, again he sees it hide.
Constant, he lets the vulgar prate.
  Just as his fancies please,
  Amid soft chirping sounds,
  He slumbers at his ease
  On the grass which surrounds,
  On their banks of rich verdure,
  The gentle streams that wander.

From larks and finches, free from care,
From nightingales' and linnets' throats
And other songsters of the air,
The beautiful and warbling notes
  In soothing harmony
  His hearing gently takes—
  Not the clarion's frenzy,
  Which, as it bursts forth, wakes
  Men into sudden bounds
  When the assault it sounds.

He savours the sweet soothing fragrance
Flora divine comes to diffuse,
When spring perfume the air enchants
And flowers' hues the earth suffuse.
  Later he mows the fields,
  Working with tied-up hair,
  And, threshing what that yields
  In the place they prepare,
  Watches the sparkling grain,
  At the flails' blows, remain.

What pleasure to see Bacchus fume,[104]
Because in casks enclosed he stays,
And boiling out of them in spume
Through the unstable autumn days.
  The trunk that saw his care

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.

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

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

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

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

Act III

Henri, Épernon, L'Archant

HENRI

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

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

---

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 Guisiade*, 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 longuets-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;[118]
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,[119] must let the other calmly in France reign.[120]
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.[121]
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,[122]
832 Honour of all the kings who have ever been crowned
833 In this our lower world,[123] suspended by its weight;[124]
834 You who stand above both the rights and laws of state,[125]
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,

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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."

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

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

HENRI

But that will not be sufficient. I cannot tell
What punishment will be severe enough, and cruel.
I seek to see inflicted such great cruelty
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."

Will never approve, but always the memory
Will stay within their hearts.[131] I seek no other glory,
Seek no other honour. Not otherwise I seek
To have our future generations of me speak.

ÉPERNON

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

L'ARCHANT

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

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

ÉPERNON

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

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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,[139]
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?[140] 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.[141]

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.[142]
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."

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

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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[e] et XVII[e] 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[e] 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'Escosse*), 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."

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

HENRI

I have sufficient will but do not see the way.

ÉPERNON

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

HENRI

That is not what I seek: you would end by that blow
His pains and his woes. Myself, I want him served
As cruelly, or nearly, as his crimes have deserved.[151]
Let the timid tyrant cause suddenly to die
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."

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

ÉPERNON

Let us for the moment think how the fish to draw,
Which just three days ago took the hook in its maw.[154]

HENRI

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

ÉPERNON

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.

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

ÉPERNON

What strange death and barbarous cruelty unsparing
Is your frenzied heart now for these traitors preparing?[158]

HENRI

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

---

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."

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

L'Archant

But with what lure
To tangle his feet in our snares can we be sure?
Never in your good faith has he placed confidence.

Henri

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

Épernon

That hope of his[160] will make him fly by sea and land
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."

That hope by itself will cause his vessel to go
Where reefs obstruct ships and one cannot even row;
Will make him dare the barking Scylla[161] to pass by
And the frightening waves of Etna's monster ply;[162]
Make him between the clashing Cyaneae steer:[163]
That hope will inspire him to make his way here.

HENRI

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

L'ARCHANT

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

HENRI

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

ÉPERNON

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

HENRI

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

ÉPERNON

Have him sought out.

---

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

Épernon

He will not know.

Henri

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

L'Archant

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

Chorus

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

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

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

For, freely giving ill,
With joy still
He intersperses sadness,

But rarely does he bitter bile
With the smile
Of sweet honey counteract.
We have in long careers
(Twenty years)
Too amply known that fact.

The welcome Ledean fire
The ire
Of Neptune to calm restored,[165]
When the Gallic vessel[166] quailed
As it sailed
Where dangerous Scylla roars.

But having now found support
In the port,
It is securely tied,
If these Estates enforce
The sound course
That their debates provide.

You, great God, who hold in place
Heaven's space,
Make it that with these calm seas
No new tumultuous storm
Starts to form
To trouble again our ease.

Again comes the day of days
Which always

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.

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

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

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

Act IV

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

GUISE

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

MADAME

Will you thus accord my counsel so little heed?

GUISE

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

MADAME

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

GUISE

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

MADAME

Fear can quite often conduce to a happy state.

GUISE

No fear can be found where there is nobility.

MADAME

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

GUISE

That is no cause why you should fear impending harms.

MADAME

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

GUISE

If I did, his former anger I would revive.

MADAME

Be on your guard—it is still partially alive.

GUISE

1177 To carry arms would make a negative impression.[167]

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".

Already at least two, perhaps three, days ago
I had one worthy of belief to me convey
Word of the death which is ordained for you today
By that false dissembler you are going to see.[168]

GUISE

He could have easily invented such a story.

MADAME

Throughout this whole city the rumour circulates.

GUISE

And so such idle chatter your attention rates?

MADAME

Yet it may well be true.

GUISE

Or false equally well.

MADAME

Better it be so than that truth it should foretell.

GUISE

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

MADAME

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

GUISE

I never shall believe that in a royal mind,
Perfidy and treacherous hatred we will find.[169]

---

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

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

GUISE

No judgements should be made about uncertain things.

MADAME

The certainty of death no need for judgement brings.

GUISE

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

MADAME

Whom also shall we fear, except our enemies?

GUISE

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

---

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."

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

MADAME

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

GUISE

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

MADAME

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

GUISE

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

MADAME

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

GUISE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Crowning with Idumean palms his victories,[174]
That valiant Godefroy, of the Guises the forebear,
Living in Elysium, would blush with shame there,
Seeing such dishonour assigned to our account.
Eustache, too, and Beaudoin, of Flanders that great count,[175]
Would not acknowledge me as being of their race.
I prefer—rather than my forebears to disgrace—
I prefer, Madame, prefer that my life should be
Ravished five hundred times with cruelty from me.

MADAME

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

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

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

176 "Heart": orig. "Cœurs"; the plural does not agree with the singular participle ("empierré"/"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 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

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

MADAME

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

GUISE

What danger, retribution? What death is in view?

MADAME

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

GUISE

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

MADAME

From enemies one does well oneself to defend.

GUISE

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

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.

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

And when I must die,[184] God forbid you should act so:[185]
He who has known how virtue's perfect course to follow
In his life cannot too soon end his earthly lot,
But often does too late. With the body to rot
In a filthy coffin his fame can never do.
To die thus is to live.

MADAME

Ah, then my prayer to you
Now has no chance at all of ever being granted?

GUISE

Fear nothing, Madam. Adieu—with that, all is said.

MADAME

But wait a little, exercise a little patience.

GUISE

That God who knows all things with certain providence
Could not divert me now. Adieu, again I say.

MADAME

Alas, great God, alas! Now he is on his way.
If ever, my God, I have you sacrifice tendered
That pleased you, to him, ah, let your favour be rendered.[186]
Preserve poor France, its healthy state lend sure support,
And from the evil I foresee save my sole comfort!

[*Exit*.]

---

184 Author's marginal note: "They have never spared their means, not even their lives, for the preservation of France."

185 Ll. 1346-47: The original's syntax and punctuation are ambiguous to the point of permitting different readings. I have chosen what seems the most logical and natural.

186 This is hardly the play's only intermingling of pre-Christian religious discourse, as has been seen, but the contrast is especially sharp with Guise's reverence for the mass as expressed earlier in the scene (ll. 1221-24).

GUISE (*alone*)[187]

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

I feel something—I know not what— within me churning
My entrails, as in a gulf a ship is set turning.
On my way out, I stumbled three times in a row.
Could that perhaps portend some kind of hidden woe?
That would cause our King thoroughly with fear to quake.
But I have never had a soul that one could shake
With superstition, and to that I firmly hold!
Ah, what if it refers to what I was just told?
I wonder what it might mean. You, great God, who sway
Our actions all, know all that happens on our way,
Turn aside, I pray you, all evil from my head
And keep this country from mischance and ill protected.[191]
I go. I will probably have to wake the King—
If he is up, that is a miraculous thing.
And yet the messenger told me that it was so,
And to the country he's almost ready to go.
[*Exit*.]

L'Archant [*entering, accompanied by murderers*[192]]

He's even got his boots on as if he'll need lodging.[193]
Manly courage[194] serves for nothing without shrewd dodging.
All is unfolding as we wish. We never thought

---

191 Author's marginal note: "The man of good will takes a rapid resolution and places his entire trust in God."

192 This seems probable, despite the original S.D. "seul" ("alone") introducing the monologue, since he addresses them below (ll. 1435 ff.). They probably remain in the background until spoken to. If they were to appear only then, their entry would virtually coincide with that of Guise. Cf. the preparation for the murder as presented in Matthieu, IV.iii.

193 L. 1407: orig. "Voire, il est jà botté pour coucher à la ville." L'Archant is apparently reacting to Guise's last line. The King is already prepared for travel as part of their plot, of which L'Archant begins by boasting. Henri had announced his intention of making a pilgrimage after the Council meeting to Notre-Dame-de-Cléry, about forty kilometres distant (though it would seem from Guise's subsequent speech that he is unaware of this). He had changed his pretended purpose, however, for a stay at his nearby country house at La Noue and ordered his carriage to be ready for after the meeting. See Chevallier, pp. 665-66.

The device of having one character react to another's soliloquy is innovative. Cf. the author's note at l. 1444 below (see n. 199), where it is made explicit that L'Archant is afraid of being overheard by the approaching Guise.)

194 "[M]anly courage": orig. "vertu", whose moral sense is hardly dominant here.

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

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

GUISE [*entering*]

You are good at catching fish.[200] But is he up yet,
His Majesty? But why?

L'ARCHANT

For an hour and more.

GUISE

And he does not at all my tardiness deplore?

L'ARCHANT

I'm sure not, my lord.

GUISE

But he plans to journey where?

L'ARCHANT

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
Of any vow he made.

L'ARCHANT
I don't know what to say—
That's all I know. But he desires anyway
To have a word with you before.

GUISE
His worthy vows
I would not delay. I will[201]—

L'ARCHANT
Then these are his vows![202] [*Stabs him.*]

GUISE
Oh, my God. I—

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]
There's what you have richly deserved,
King of Paris![203]

GUISE
Alas, is this what I've deserved?

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]
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!

GUISE
Mercy, my God!

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

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]
Beg the King for mercy![204]

GUISE
The King?

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

GUISE
O God, you— [*Faints.*]

L'ARCHANT
France
Has only one king now.

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]
You desired to reign.

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.

From your King, and rival his great authority.[205]

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

He's dead.

L'ARCHANT

Strike again.

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

In God's name,[206] if you ask me,
He won't try to bite us.

L'ARCHANT

He's punished for his fault.

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

We've made him execute[207] a pretty somersault.

L'ARCHANT

When all is said and done, the traitor always dies
Who offends his king. Unpunished forever lies
No crime someone, either weak or strong, has committed.[208]

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

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

L'ARCHANT

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]

Worry? What does he fear?

L'ARCHANT

Fortune's uncertainty:
She has so often mocked his efforts made in vain.[209]

CHORUS [OF MURDERERS]

When we undertake a thing, the effect is certain.

L'ARCHANT

Drag him in there. There's something else I'm sure in
stating—
That our reward is already prepared and waiting.
[*Exeunt*.]

CHORUS

O blessèd sheltered seat
Of virtue, O glorious land of France,
You who all for grandeur and dominance
Leave behind in defeat.

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

Now to twenty accrue
The times the Cynthian saw Capricorn,
By opening New Year's gate with his horn,
The twelve-month round renew,[210]

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

---

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.)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Act V

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

MADAME

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

NURSE

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

MADAME

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

NURSE

Madam,
It is still just morning.

MADAME

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

---

211 The liver was imagined as the seat of passions.

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

NURSE

There I see a soldier who has left the chateau,
Coming our way and speaking. Let us hear his speech.[212]

MADAME

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

SOLDIER[213]

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

---

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

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

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 achérontides". The soldier's infernal geography is only marginally clearer than that set out in Alecto's opening speech.

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

---

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.

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

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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

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

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

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

NURSE

Alas, sir, how was it? Now tell.

SOLDIER

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

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.

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

MADAME

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

SOLDIER

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

NURSE

Madam, do you hear?

MADAME

Oh, they are such brutal hunters.[236]
All my children dead?[237]

NURSE

Madam, do you understand?
He just detains them.

MADAME

Ah, all dead? I cannot stand.

---

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

Girls, come support her.

[*The Young Women come forward.*]

MADAME

O tigers! Wolves all too fierce!

All dead? My God, all dead?

SOLDIER

By no means—do you hear us?

He's holding them prisoner. Madam, come, take heart!

NURSE

I think she's dying.

MADAME

What new shock gives me a start?

Solid rock fills and stiffens all my limbs, gone frigid;

Support me, girls! I cannot walk—my legs turn rigid.

Too much more wretched than Niobe have I grown:

I am transformed as she was into weeping stone.[238]

NURSE AND YOUNG WOMEN

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

MADAME

Alas, I'm falling now—

NURSE AND YOUNG WOMEN

Come, take her by each arm.

MADAME

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

---

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

Let's bring her to her bed.

NURSE AND YOUNG WOMEN

Alas, she's surely dead.

[*Exeunt.*][239]

CHORUS

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

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

How far are you unjust
In putting down the just[240]
To lend impiety
Prosperity!

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

Who fitter seems to us
Than Guise illustrious
Of France the royal state
To dominate?[241]

---

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.

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

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

[*Enter the Young Woman.*]

YOUNG WOMAN

He who wishes to see how harmful Fate torments
The good at all times with disastrous accidents,
Who wishes to see how he has little assurance
Who on the goods of this world places his reliance,
Who wishes to see how inconstant and how vain
Are the blessings Fortune promises all can gain,
And how her favour is short-lived to those so blessed,
By how many griefs those abandoned are distressed—
Let him come see you, France. Truly, not till this moment
Has Fate before displayed a case so evident
Of sudden change and the flight with celerity
Of that blind goddess, feigning in prosperity,
Who long sustains our minds with hopefulness quite hollow,
And then, deceitful, laughing at us, makes us swallow,
All of a sudden altered, our great foolishness,
Inflicting some great woe that makes us see her falseness.
Just when we thought that we would always live in peace[242]
And, wielding power, reap due honour without cease

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

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

[*She sees Henri approaching.*]

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 stanched. It bleeds more profusely from day to day."

Cruel man. Anyone can see that his heart feeds
On nothing but blood. Menaces teem from his eyes;
His gait, as he stalks puffed with pride, all shame defies.
But alas, he's here. I'll go now, since he has come,
To warn my lady, languishing in martyrdom.
[*Exit*.]

[*Enter Henri.*]

HENRI

As high as are the stars triumphantly I stride
And, head raised to the top of heaven's vault in pride,[249]
I see beneath my feet all who on earth hold sway,
From where Thetis shows to where she covers the day.[250]
From this time forth I carry in pomp and in splendour
This handsome royal sceptre. And, brimming with grandeur,
Having Fortune's prosperous gift anticipated,
Upon my father's throne, revered, I am instated.
Rule your heaven, gods (if any exist on high[251])—
I am not jealous: I care nothing for the sky.
I hold tightly fastened the goal of my intent,
My wishes' fruit in hand; with that I am content.[252]

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249 Ll. 1783-84: by translating here the well-known opening lines of Act V of Seneca's *Thyestes*, Belyard clinches the comparison of Henri with Atreus, the archetypal villain-avenger (often evoked, as well, in early modern English drama). Cf. above, n. 135, and see Introduction, p. 9. Seneca's character proceeds to place himself above the gods, in keeping with Henri's "atheism", and the remainder of the act concerns the cannibalistic culmination of his revenge, which will also be echoed by Henri.

250 Thetis, a sea-nymph (Nereid), is here metonymic of the ocean, whose extremes of east and west delimit the sun's rising and setting.

251 Author's marginal note: "Now he declares openly that he is an atheist." Henri's appropriation of pagan mythology is thus rendered highly functional. His lines again virtually translate the vaunting Atreus, who is actually cited in the original by John Marston's caricature of a Senecan villain-revenger in *Antonio and Mellida*, ed. G. K. Hunter, Regents Renaissance Drama series (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), I.i.59: "*Dimitto superos, summa votorum attigi* [I dismiss the gods above; I have attained the utmost of my prayers]". Marston's double play, which ends in a cannibalistic revenge, deploys Senecan tags bearing witness to the ubiquity and adaptability of such material in early modern dramatic culture.

252 Author's marginal note: "All his hypocrisy aimed merely at putting to death our good princes so

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

---

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,[259]
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,[260]
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."

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

HENRI

He has not been subjected to sufficient torment.[261]

MADAME

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

HENRI

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

MADAME

Here, maddened murderer, for me take this sword—take it![262]
And then in my blood also a thousand times slake it.

HENRI

In that way I would put an end to your tormenting:
My aim is to prolong your sorrow and lamenting,
So that, while you maintain your wretched life in anguish,
You die a thousand times each day, dogged by the wish
To follow them[263] below and finish your distress
With a welcome death. But before that you shall witness

---

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.

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

MADAME

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

---

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 Guisiade* 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 Guisiade*, Introduction, pp. 30-31.

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

HENRI

As a favour, because the blood and race of Guise
Of the Valois heritage are indeed allies,
To appease my ire and my furious throes,
Your purpled cardinal[277] shall have a thousand blows
Only of those great halberds, with blades long and square,
That my guards are accustomed before me to bear,[278]
Then, still quivering, be devoured by the fire,
Or thrown to crows so they can eat all they desire.
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 I.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.

I might have caused you on their roasted flesh to dine,[279]
So that the place in which they were conceived, your womb,
The same children who issued from it would entomb.

MADAME

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

Ha! So you're leaving, bandit! Go, show everywhere
That God, wherever it is you are, is not there![281]
You have had put to death the very one whom France
Had counted as her comfort and her firm assurance.
This death will confound her wholly, in tears subsumed;
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.

Let us weep, girls, let us weep, in tears melt our eyes
For the death of my son, who in war took the prize.[282]

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

For us it is not something new
To weep. Come, then, let us renew
The tears, the wailing, the regret
Of France since she, with anguished face
And in her torment, had to place
The second Henri in his casket.[283]

MADAME

Come, my companions true and good,
Weep with me in your maidenhood;
The hair of all, let it be torn;
Let's strike our faces till they bleed;
Let our grief all other exceed,
As my noble[284] Henri we mourn.

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

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

MADAME

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

---

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.

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

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

O soul blessed by sanctification,[285]
Fair Astraea's true habitation,
For you we make resound our cry,
From the earth to the stars ascending,
For we see countless ills impending
Over us because you will die.

MADAME

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

CHORUS OF YOUNG WOMEN

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

MADAME

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

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.*

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

END

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.